| Rating: | Mature |
| Archive Warning: | No Archive Warnings Apply |
| Category: | F/M |
| Fandom: | Star Wars: Rebels, Star Wars: The Clone Wars (2008) - All Media Types, Star Wars - All Media Types, LEGO Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures (Cartoon), Star Wars Original Trilogy, Star Wars Sequel Trilogy, The Mandalorian (TV) |
| Relationship: | Ezra Bridger/Sabine Wren, Kanan Jarrus/Hera Syndulla, Lux Bonteri/Ahsoka Tano, Leia Organa/Han Solo, Obi-Wan Kenobi/Satine Kryze, Padmé Amidala/Anakin Skywalker, Rey/Ben Solo, Mara Jade/Luke Skywalker, Rowan Freemaker/Alora, Kordi Freemaker/Wedge Antilles, Poe Dameron/Mira Wren-Bridger, Thrawn/Rulla, Jacen Syndulla/Princess Skye, Caleb Wren-Bridger/Minxha Bonteri, Zander Freemaker/Becky, Cassian Andor/Jyn Erso, Ephraim Bridger/Mira Bridger, The Mandalorian (The Mandalorian TV)/Omera (Star Wars), Din Djarin/Omera |
| Character: | Ezra Bridger, Sabine Wren, Kanan Jarrus, Hera Syndulla, Ahsoka Tano, Lux Bonteri, Thrawn, Mith'raw'nuruodo, Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa, Han Solo, Garazeb "Zeb" Orrelios, Chopper, Ketsu Onyo, Ryder Azadi, Alexsandr Kallus, CT-7567, Rex, Anakin Skywalker, Darth Vader, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Jacen Syndulla, Rowan Freemaker, Kordi Freemaker, Zander Freemaker, CC-2224, Cody, Mara Jade, Yoda (Star Wars), Padmé Amidala, Snoke (Star Wars), Satine Kryze, Rey (Star Wars), Ben Solo, Alora (Star Wars), Poe Dameron, Jyn Erso, Cassian Andor, Tristan Wren, Ephraim Bridger, Mira Bridger, Qui-Gon Jinn, Mace Windu, Plo Koon, Winta (Star Wars), Baby Yoda (The Mandalorian TV), The Child (Star Wars), The Mandalorian (The Mandalorian TV), Omera (Star Wars) |
| Additional Tags: | Lemons, Fluff and Smut, Obi-Wan is a Goner, If only I could pretend Jar Jar didn't exist, Lux is a Goner, Sometimes being a Parent is Hard, Kallus needs a Hug (and a bacta tank), Vader still has heart buried in there Somewhere, Dancing Twi'leks are hell on a man's self control, Kanan can distract me any day, Never waste a Waffle, The Call of the Kyber Crystal, You'd need a crowbar to pry them apart, Just when you thought they were leaving..., Sex is so much better when you're not a Projection. :P, When you resent the War..., Ahsoka Tano Lives, Purrgil... Not just a filler episode. lol, The consequences of war, Never Piss Off a Purrgil, Ezrabein, Sabezra - Freeform, kanera - Freeform, Luxsoka, hanlea, Obitine, Anidala, Reylo - Freeform, Lukara, Jynian, Miram - Freeform, Thralla, Ursich, When it feels like you've lost Everything, Even the villains deserve a Happy Ending, Making myself Cry, When the only choice is a Bad One, Jacen is the Luckiest boy in the Galaxy, I Heart the Freemakers, Because every little boy needs a Kitten, Anakin's journey of Forgiveness, Kanera are finally Together Again, Because Baby Yoda is just too frickin cute, Young Anidala makes me Smile |
| Stats: | Published: 2018-12-29 Updated: 2020-01-09 Chapters: 91/? Words: 334281 |
*Chapter 4, 'Padme's Boyfriend', is new!*

A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away, there lived four generations of Jedi and the incredible people they loved. They defied the rules. They defied the odds. Sometimes, they even defied their fate. This is the sort of cannon version of secret relationships that flows into a very a.u. version of a much better future than Disney gave us. A work in progress that jumps all over the timeline as I juggle too many couples to count. :D
Hello there!

Thank you all sooooo much for checking out my story! If you like it, it would make my day if you let me know. Every kudos, sub, or nice review makes me want to write that much more for you. :D :D :D :D :D

If you have an idea for a story, check out my profile to find out details on the chance to have a one shot written for you.

I now have a Facebook page where I post sneak peaks for every new chapter I write. It also has my updating schedule for the those wanting to know what I’m working on next. And if any of you are artists, I'd love if you shared your fan art with me. :) It would make me very happy if you took a minute to give my page a gander and maybe hit the Like button?

Just search for 'Thelonerebel's Stories' in your Facebook search bar and you should find me. :D

If you like what you're reading, maybe consider buying me a hot chocolate via Ko-Fi?
Always nice to feel appreciated, trust me. :P

You'll find this one on Ko-Fi as TheLoneRebelsStories.

Disclaimer: I don't own anything Star Wars. (But man, I wish I did.)

A few pieces of this story are co-written with MaybeImARebel

Author's Note:

This story is currently the dumping grounds for a bunch of stories that all fit in the same A.U. It might not make a lot of sense and chapters are gong to be restructured and revised on a regular basis as I slowly write the individual stories for the characters. Thank you in advance for reading this very long-term mess. :P

New chapters will be added in chronological order so I'll put a little note in the synopsis of the story letting you know where you can find the most recent chapter.

There will be notes all over the place letting you know what's new and what is going to be added to, so be warned. :P

Flame of Hope - Everyone

This (very very long) story will focus on the following pairings in a mix of canon and alternate universe that is meant to be enjoyed for what it is. Some of these relationships were kept hidden for one reason or another.
Obi-Wan Kenobi and Satine Kryze
Anakin Skywalker and Padme Amidala Barrie
Han Solo and Leia Organa
Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade
Ahsoka Tano and Lux Bonteri
Kanan Jarrus and Hera Syndulla
Ezra Bridger and Sabine Wren
Thrawn and Rulla (OC)
Jyn Erso and Cassian Andor
Ketsu Onyo and Joshua Azadi (OC)
Rowan Freemaker and Alora Sunchaser
Jacen Syndulla and Princess Skye (OC)
Ben Solo and Rey Skywalker
Ursa Wren and Alrich Kryze
Ephraim Bridger and Mira Seraphia
Tia Fisto and King Wayve (OCs)
Prince Raign and Krystal (OCs)
Poe Dameron and Mira Wren-Bridger (OC)
Din Djarin and Omera Blackwolf

Other pairings that are in the story but are not focused on are:

Qui-Gon Jinn and Tahl
Wedge Antilles and Kordi Freemaker
Zander Freemaker and Becky Smoochenbacher
Asajj Ventress and Quinlan Vos
Kit Fisto and Aayla Secura
Bo-Katan Kryze and Fenn Rau
Caleb Wren-Bridger and Minxha Bonteri (OCs)

Other characters in the story that are main characters but are not in a pair are:

Chopper
Garazeb Orrelios
Alexsandr Kallus
Captain Rex
Commander Cody
R2-D2
C-3PO
Chewbacca
Padme Skywalker
Anika Skywalker

Other characters in the story but are not main characters are:

Darth Sidious/Emperor Palpatine
Darth Maul
Count Dooku
Yoda
Mace Windu
Plo Koon
Ki-Adi-Mundi
Lando Calrissian
Mon Mothma
Bail Organa
Hondo Ohnaka
Cikatro Visago
Jar Jar Binks
Baby Yoda

I'm sure there's more that I've forgotten but I will add them when I notice that they're missing.

My Calendar:

The made up calendar is based on a 365 day year since that is the rotation period for Coruscant.

BBY means Before the Battle of Yavin and ABY means After the Battle of Yavin.

Unlike the Star Wars timeline that seems to think there can be both a 0 BBY and a 0 ABY, which would never really happen if you know anything about math (there is only one zero when running from negatives to positives), my calendar runs from 1 BBY to 0 ABY and then 1 ABY and so on. This means that I've got almost everything happening a year earlier than Star Wars says, and yet, in some strange way, the ages still work?. (Live with it).

30 days equal a month and 10 days equal a week. There are no set names for months and weeks though. It's just a way of naming a certain amount of time.

The following timeline is mostly based on vague information from Wookieepedia and the chronological order for 'The Clone Wars'. This is my interpretation of events as I see them and occasionally how I want them to be. All of my stories will follow this timeline except for the ones that throw the canon timeline to the wind. :D (Some events cover many days; I've only listed the first day the event begins.)

Oh, and SPOILERS!

(This isn't finished yet, but it's exhausting to do.)

Timeline:

D245/3984 BBY - Mira Seraphia (Bridger)'s Birthday
D80/272 BBY - King Wayve's Birthday
D7/270 BBY - Tia Fisto's Birthday
D43/267 BBY - Kit Fisto's Birthday
D266/84 BBY - Sheev Palpatine's Birthday
D96/57 BBY - Obi-Wan Kenobi's Birthday
D101/54 BBY - Satine Kryze's Birthday
D3/53 BBY - Fenn Rau's Birthday
D300/50 BBY - Alrich Kryze's Birthday
D78/49 BBY - Ursa Wren's Birthday
D118/49 BBY - Bo-Katan Kryze's Birthday
D5/46 BBY - Padme Amidala's Birthday
D88/45 BBY - Ephraim Bridger's Birthday
D221/44 BBY - Garazeb Orrelios' Birthday
D324/43 BBY - Lando Calrissian's Birthday
D163/42 BBY - Alexsandr Kallus' Birthday
D26/41 BBY - Anakin Skywalker's Birthday
D98/41 BBY - Obi-Wan meets Qui-Gon
D146/41 BBY - Baby Yoda's Birthday (real name unknown)
D321/41 BBY - Riyo Chuchi's Birthday
D150/39 BBY - Lux Bonteri's Birthday
D19/36 BBY - Ahsoka Tano's Birthday
34 BBY - Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon guard Duchess Satine Kryze
D323/33 BBY - Caleb Dume/Kanan Jarrus' Birthday
D358/33/BBY - Captain Rex and Commander Cody's Vatday
D63/32 BBY - Invasion of Naboo by the Trade Federation
D64/32 BBY - Qui-Gon finds Anakin on Tatooine
D70/32 BBY - Battle of Naboo
D86/32 BBY - Peace Celebration on Naboo
D81/32 BBY - Boba Fett's vatday
D299/32 BBY - Han Solo's Birthday
D185/30 BBY - Lando Calrissian's Birthday
D56/29 BBY - Hera Syndulla's Birthday
D118/26 BBY - Cassian Andor's Birthday
D301/26 BBY - Din Djarin's Birthday
D78/25 BBY - Omera Blackwolf's Birthday
D291/23 BBY - Wedge Antilles' Birthday
D10/22 BBY - First Battle of Geonosis
D41/22 BBY - Battle of Christophsis
D346/22 BBY - Corruption (Mandalore arc)
D348/22 BBY - The Academy
D357/22 BBY - Assassin
D358/22 BBY - ARC Troopers (Attack on Kamino)
D361/22 BBY - Sphere of Influence (Ahsoka and Chuchi)
D18/21 BBY - Jyn Erso's Birthday
D44/21 BBY - Evil Plans (Cad Bane arc)
D46/21 BBY - Hostage Crisis
D48/21 BBY - Hunt For Ziro
D136/21 BBY - Heroes on Both Sides (Ahsoka meets Lux)
D140/21 BBY - Pursuit of Peace
D141/21 BBY - Overlords (Mortis arc)
D142/21 BBY - Alter of Mortis, Ghosts of Mortis
D154/21 BBY - The Citadel (Prison escape arc)
D155/21 BBY - Counterattack, Citadel Rescue
D168/21 BBY - Padawan Lost (Ahsoka and Chewie arc)
D170/21 BBY - Wookie Rescue
D171/21 BBY - Nightsisters (Savage Opress and Ventress arc)
D173/21 BBY - Monster
D175/21 BBY - Witches of the Mist
D180/21 BBY - Water War (Mon Cala and Gungan arc)
D181/21 BBY - Gungan Attack
D182/21 BBY - Prisoners
D185/21 BBY - Shadow Warrior
D190/21 BBY - Sabine Wren's Birthday
D192/21 BBY - Mercy Mission (Artoo and Threepio arc)
D194/21 BBY - Nomad Droids
D201/21 BBY - Darkness on Umbara (Umbara arc)
D202/21 BBY - The General
D203/21 BBY - Plan of Dissent
D204/21 BBY - Carnage of Krell
D264/21 BBY - Kidnapped (Zygerrian Slavers arc)
D266/21 BBY - Slaves of the Republic
D268/21 BBY - Escape from Kadavo
D280/21 BBY - A Friend in Need (Ahsoka, Lux, and Death Watch)
D300/21 BBY - Deception (Obi-Wan undercover arc)
D306/21 BBY - Friends and Enemies
D308/21 BBY - The Box
D310/21 BBY - Crisis on Naboo
D350/21 BBY - A War on Two Fronts (Ahsoka, Lux, and the Guerreras on Onderon arc)
D352/21 BBY - Front Runners
D354/21 BBY - The Soft War
D356/21 BBY - Tipping Points
D2/20 BBY - The Gathering (Ahsoka and the Younglings arc)
D3/20 BBY - A Test of Strength
D4/20 BBY - Bound for Rescue
D5/20 BBY - A Necessary Bond
D8/20 BBY - Massacre (Ventress arc)
D15/20 BBY - Bounty
D18/20 BBY - Secret Weapons (Droid Spies arc)
D20/20 BBY - A Sunny Day in the Void
D21/20 BBY - Missing In Action
D23/20 BBY - Point of No Return
D26/20 BBY - Depa Billaba wakes from coma
D30/20 BBY - Brothers (Savage and Maul arc)
D35/20 BBY - Revenge
D41/20 BBY - Eminence (Rise of Maul arc)
D49/20 BBY - Shades of Reason
D53/20 BBY - Lawless (Death of Satine)
D78/20 BBY - Sabotage (Framing Ahsoka arc)
D80/20 BBY - The Jedi Who Knew Too Much
D81/20 BBY - To Catch a Jedi
D83/20 BBY - The Wrong Jedi (Ahsoka leaves the Order)
D112/20 BBY - The Unknown (The control chip arc)
D114/20 BBY - Conspiracy
D115/20 BBY - Fugitive
D117/20 BBY - Orders
D129/20 BBY - An Old Friend (The Clovis arc)
D132/20 BBY - Rise of Clovis
D134/20 BBY - Crisis at the Heart
D135/20 BBY - Anakin and Padme make up and Luke and Leia are conceived
D148/20 BBY - The Disappeared
D176/20 BBY - The Lost Ones
D188/20 BBY - Voices (Yoda's journey arc)
D189/20 BBY - Destiny
D190/20 BBY - Sacrifice
D194/20 BBY - Attempted bombing of Jedi Temple, stopped by Caleb Dume and Depa Billaba
D195/20 BBY - Obi-Wan and Anakin are sent to deal with the Outer Rim Sieges again
D201/20 BBY - Vos and Ventress team up to try and take down Dooku
D298/20 - Crystal Crisis on Utapau episodes
D320/20 BBY - Fort Anaxes and the Bad Batch episodes
D344/20 BBY - Battle over Coruscant, Battle on Mandalore with Maul, Ahsoka, and Rex
D345/20 BBY - Padme tells Anakin she's pregnant (at 7 months along. He hasn't seen her for five months.)
D365/20 BBY - Anakin turns into Darth Vader, Obi-Wan vs Grievous on Utapau, Order 66, Ahsoka and Rex fake their Deaths on Mandalore
D1/19 BBY - Ezra Bridger's Birthday, Temporarily Empire Day
D2/19 BBY - Yoda fights Sidious on Coruscant, Obi-Wan fights Anakin on Mustafar

D3/19 BBY - Luke and Leia's Birthday (40 days premature but healthy anyway), Padme dies, the rebirth of Darth Vader

D58/17 BBY - Mara Jade's Birthday

D175/17 BBY - Kordi Freemaker's Birthday

D64/15 BBY - Zander Freemaker's Birthday

D1/12 BBY: Imperials take Ezra's parents away.

D99/11 BBY: Hera and Kanan meet on Gorse.

D137/10 BBY - The Machine in the Ghost

D15/8 BBY - Rowan Freemaker's Birthday

D176/8 BBY: Kanan and Hera rescue Zeb from the ruins of Lasan.

D1/7 BBY: Sabine escapes from the Imperial Academy. Joins Ketsu Onyo as a bounty hunter.

D182/5 BBY - Entanglement, Property of Ezra Bridger

D190/5 BBY - Hera find's Sabine and asks her to join their crew.

D201/5 BBY - Spark of Rebellion (Ezra joins the crew)

D202/5 BBY - Droids in Distress

D211/5 BBY - Fighter Flight

D226/5 BBY - Art Attack

D228/5 BBY - Rise of the Old Masters

D229/5 BBY - Breaking Ranks

D312/5 BBY - Out of Darkness

D1/4 BBY - Empire Day

D2/4 BBY - Gathering Forces, Path of the Jedi

D47/4 BBY - Idiot's Array (Hello, Lando)

D98/4 BBY - Vision of Hope

D140/4 BBY - Call to Action

D141/4 BBY - Rebel Resolve

D143/4 BBY - Fire Across the Galaxy (The Rebellion gathers for the first time to rescue Kanan above Mustafar. Ahsoka's back!)

D147/4 BBY - Siege of Lothal
D198/4 BBY - The Lost Commanders, Relics of the Old Republic (Rex is back!)
D221/4 BBY - Always Two There Are
D242/4 BBY - Alora Sunchaser's Birthday
D243/4 BBY - Brothers of the Broken Horn (Hondo is back!)
D267/4 BBY - Wings of the Master
D291/4 BBY - Blood Sisters
D321/4 BBY - Stealth Strike
D362/4 BBY - The Future of the Force
D1/3 BBY - Legacy
D2/3 BBY - A Princess on Lothal (Hello, Leia)
D46/3 BBY - The Protector of Concord Dawn
D80/3 BBY - Legends of the Lasat
D87/3 BBY - The Call (not just a filler episode)
D102/3 BBY - Homecoming
D111/3 BBY - The Honorable Ones
D132/3 BBY - Shroud of Darkness
D168/3 BBY - The Forgotten Droid
D170/3 BBY - The Mystery of Chopper Base
D185/3 BBY - Twilight of the Apprentice (Ahsoka vs Vader)
D362/3 BBY - Steps Into Shadow
D1/2 BBY - The Holocrons of Fate
D17/2 BBY - The Antilles Extraction
D38/2 BBY - Hera's Heroes
D81/2 BBY - The Last Battle

D117/2 BBY - Imperial Super Commandos (First cartoon episode of Star Wars I ever saw. Needless to say I was hooked and then went binge watching on youtube and PVR'd everything Disney Channel would show.)
D142/2 BBY - Iron Squadron
D169/2 BBY - The Wynkahthu Job
D201/2 BBY - An Inside Man
D249/2 BBY - Visions and Voices
D261/2 BBY - Ghosts of Geonosis
D279/2 BBY - Warhead
D290/2 BBY - Trials of the Darksabre
D310/2 BBY - Legacy of Mandalore
D316/2 BBY - Through Imperial Eyes
D322/2 BBY - Secret Cargo (Hello, Mon Mothma)
D341/2 BBY - Double Agent Droid
D357/2 BBY - Twin Suns (Obi-Wan vs Maul one last time)
D365/2 BBY - Zero Hour
D2/1 BBY - Heroes of Mandalore
D6/1 BBY - In the Name of the Rebellion
D10/1 BBY - The Occupation
D14/1 BBY - Flight of the Defender
D15/1 BBY - Kindred
D16/1 BBY - Crawler Commandoes
D18/1 BBY - Rebel Assault
D20/1 BBY - Jedi Night (Kanan's ultimate sacrifice)
D21/1 BBY - Dume
D22/1 BBY - Wolves and a Door, World Between Worlds (Hello, Ahsoka!)
D26/1 BBY - A Fools Hope, Family Reunion and Farewell (Goodbye, Thrawn and Ezra)
D363/1 BBY - Battle of Scarif, Jacen Syndulla's Birthday
D1/0 ABY - Battle of Yavin (Destruction of Death Star)
D135/1 ABY - Minta Blackwolf's Birthday
D255/2 ABY - Poe Dameron's Birthday
D349/3 ABY - Battle of Hoth
D11/4 ABY - Princess Skye's Birthday
D198/4 ABY - Yoda passes into the Force.
D200/4 ABY - Battle of Endor (Destruction of Second Death Star and Death of Emperor Palpatine
and Darth Vader.)

D105/5 ABY - Ben Solo's Birthday

D159/5 ABY - Caleb Wren-Bridger's Birthday

D160/5 ABY - Minxha Bonteri's Birthday

D201/5 ABY - The Battle of Jakku and the final defeat of the Empire.

D337/5 ABY - Padmer & Anika Skywalker's Birthday

D2/8 ABY - Mira Wren-Bridger's Birthday

D104/9 ABY - Din Djarin finds Baby Yoda

D93/15 ABY - Rey Skywalker's Birthday (adopted)

D280/15 ABY - Defeat of the Far Outsiders (Yuuzhan Vong)

D78/20 ABY - Rey is found on Jakku!

D134/20 ABY - Defeat of Snoke and the First Order
Obi-Wan's Mission:

*D7/34 BBY, Coruscant*

Obi-Wan Kenobi walked beside his Master, Qui-Gon Jinn, as they made their way through the Jedi Temple to the top floor and the High Council chamber. He glanced at the taller man curiously as they walked, hands tucked neatly inside his robe's sleeves. "Do you know what this is about, Master?"

Qui-Gon's mouth quirked in amusement. "My answer is still the same as it was the last two times you asked in slightly different fashions, Obi-Wan. Aside from it pertaining to a new mission, no, I don't. Have I not taught you anything about patience?"

Obi-Wan raised a single copper brow, feigning surprise. "There were lessons on patience? I must have missed those ones. I'm afraid you'll have to teach them to me again, Master."

Qui-Gon snorted softly so as not to be heard making such an indelicate sound by the Temple Guards they were approaching. He shot his student a disapproving frown out of principle, but the underlying humour bounced back and forth in their bond, not bothering to hide it from his snarky Padawan that kept him endlessly entertained.

The Guards opened the Council chamber doors for them and they walked into the large circular room surrounded by windows, giving a fantastic view of the never-ending city of Coruscant no matter which way you looked except for backwards.

Master and Apprentice came to a stop at the edge of the circle of chairs containing the High Council of the Jedi Order when Master Windu raised a hand and indicated they should stop there and then waited patiently to be addressed while doing a very good job of not squirming under the studying gazes of the Council.

After a minute, Windu spoke. "Are you aware of the situation on Mandalore?"

Qui-Gon glanced at Obi-Wan, since his padawan was more likely to keep track of galactic affairs.

"Yes," Obi-Wan said. "A civil war has broken out between the New Mandalorians and the Traditionalists. The war is spreading across the entire Mandalorian controlled section of the galaxy planet by planet. Millions are killing each other every day." He didn't say it was dreadful, but the unspoken words hung in the air with the tone of his voice.

"Correct you are," Master Yoda said with sadness in his voice. "But interfere we can not."

"Due to the nature of the Mandalorians, they would not accept our help," Master Windu continued. "They would be more likely to turn on us. But there is one who has asked for help and we have decided it is prudent to do so." He touched a button on his chair and a hologram of a beautiful young woman in Mandalorian armour, carrying her helmet under an arm, and covered in a hooded cape appeared. "This is the recently elected Duchess of the New Mandalorians. We received this transmission a few hours ago. I'll let her explain the situation." He touched another button and the recording began to talk.

*I am Duchess Satine Kryze of House Kryze. I am appealing to your supposed good natures and your reputations as Peacekeepers. My people are dying. Millions and millions of Mandalorians are...*
dying because they will not listen to reason. Please. I need help to stop this war before there is no one left but the children. I cannot even address them anymore. Everytime I appeared in public as myself, someone tried to assassinate me. If you have received this and are willing to help, please come find me, for I cannot afford to risk sending any more transmissions. I am now trapped in the palace in Sundari. The Traditionalists have it surrounded and no one is allowed in or out. They're trying to get me to surrender and give up my position, but I will not do that. As long as I am alive, I will continue to hold true to my beliefs. I AM the Duchess of New Mandalore and fully intend to remain so for as long as my people wish to support me!" She paused for breath and settled herself back down. "Please. Do what you're reputed to be and come restore peace to my world. End this war that is destroying us from the inside out. You're my only hope."

The hologram disappeared and the room was silent.

Obi-Wan was still entranced from the vision of the young woman whose image was now imprinted in his mind forever. She was astonishingly beautiful, even in the monotonous blue shade of a hologram. Her voice was like smooth honey and her spirit shone through with every word she spoke. She was magnificent.

She needed help.

Obi-Wan's protective instincts came roaring to the surface and he was suddenly extremely anxious to get going and rescue the fair maiden from the fire breathing dragon that was the warriors of Mandalore. "When do we leave and how many are coming with us?"

Qui-Gon shot him a look of reprimand. "They haven't even said that this is our mission yet, Padawan."

"But it's obvious," Obi-Wan said in his defence. "Otherwise they would not have brought us here and shown us the recording."

"Your padawan is correct, if a little forward, Master Jinn," Windu said with the slightest narrowing of his eyes in disapproval. "We are sending you to Mandalore. But as I said before, we are not going to attempt to stop their war. We have fought with the Mandalorians before and lost too many Jedi to count. We will not do it again. But we do think that extracting the Duchess from her current situation would be a prudent course of action. When the war is over, she can return to Mandalore and resume her rule over whatever people remain."

"But..." Obi-Wan started.

Qui-Gon poked him with a mental 'shut it' over their bond.

"No," Windu cut him off as well. "Just the two of you. Rescue the Duchess from the palace and get her off the planet and protect her until the war is over. That is your mission."

Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan bowed over their tucked in sleeves hands. "Yes, Master Windu," Qui-Gon said. "We shall leave immediately."

"Good," he replied with a dismissing motion of his hand. "May the Force be with you."

"Thank you," Master and Apprentice said in unison and then turned to leave.

Obi-Wan was both excited and indignant as they strode towards their quarters deep in the Temple to pack the necessities. "I like this mission, Master. I think it will be great fun."

Qui-Gon smiled at him indulgently. "It certainly has more appeal than retrieving Force sensitive
"By a lightyear," Obi-Wan said dryly. "But I still think more than us should be going. There are thousands of relatively bored Jedi like us. I'm sure they wouldn't mind fighting for a good cause."

"That is not our call to make, Obi-Wan. You shall simply have to be content with rescuing the Duchess."

"Oh, I'm quite on board with that, Master," Obi-Wan said quickly, hiding how much the thought of seeing her in real life made his heart pound and skin tingle with excitement. "I just don't understand why the Jedi are so reticent in regards to ACTUALLY doing something that would qualify as bringing peace."

"That is a question I often asked myself, and one of the reasons why the Council and I don't see eye to eye." He glanced at Obi-Wan as they walked. "You do realize we're being sent as scapegoats. They don't expect us to actually survive such a dangerous mission. But their consciences will be clear because they TRIED to send someone to rescue the Duchess and when we fail, it will justify their belief that the Mandalorians are not worth helping."

"Then we shall simply not fail and prove them wrong," Obi-Wan said confidently.

Qui-Gon raised a brow in amusement. "I think a little more lightsabre practice on the way there is in order."

"I'm all for that, Master," Obi-Wan said with a grin.

Two days later, Qui-Gon landed their newly acquired, somewhat used, YT-1300 Corellian freighter its first owner had dubbed 'The Falcon' in the shipping yards of Sundari under the pretext of delivering crates of fresh produce to the city. They actually had no intention of handing over the supplies on their ship, despite the cargo hold being stocked to the brim with crates.

Not knowing how long they would have to keep the Duchess in hiding, they had acquired about a year's worth of fresh produce and dried rations to keep them going.

On the flight in to the domed city, they had seen explosions scattered around the entire city and an all out line of battle taking place in the centre of the city on what looked like the main street.

The landscape outside the city was barren desert and mountains and looked rather inhospitable. Despite this, there were camps of Mandalorians and their ships scattered all over the desert and a real war taking place on a large flat piece of land with thousands of bodies clashing together.

The situation on Mandalore was even worse than either of them had imagined.

Walking down the ramp, they were met by the Shipping Master. His eyes immediately narrowed in suspicion upon seeing their robes. "You don't look like any freighter crew I've ever seen. Why, if I didn't think it was total lunacy, I'd say you look like Jedi."

Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan glanced down at their outfits and then at each other in alarm.

Qui-Gon stepped closer to the suspicious man and waved his hand subtly as he said with a push of the Force at the man, "We are just normal freighters and you have already accepted our shipment and paid us. Our ship is fine where it is until we are ready to leave."

The man relaxed and smiled at them, tapping something into the datapad in his hand. "Thank you
for your business. Fresh produce is so hard to come by at the moment. Your ship is fine there for as long as you want, but I don't recommend exploring the city much at the moment. There's something of a war going on right now." He laughed at his own wit and then turned and left them.

"Nice fellow," Obi-Wan remarked as they wandered through the shipping yards and towards the center of the city, keeping to the shadows of towering crates as much as possible and avoiding any wandering workers. "When do I get to do the mind trick thing? You hardly ever let me practice."

Qui-Gon snorted. "Like you need practice. You're much too good at it as is, my whiny Padawan. But you can do the next one, I suppose."

They stopped at the edge of the shipping yard and looked out into the city streets, wincing as a nearby building went boom as someone chucked a grenade into it.

"I think," Qui-Gon said dryly, "That it would be best if we waited for dark to get the Duchess."

"A change of clothes wouldn't be amiss either," Obi-Wan said, noticing that every single person actually daring to walk the city streets right now was wearing armour.

"They don't exactly sell that in a store, Obi-Wan."

"Then we'll have to acquire some the more interesting way, won't we, Master?" Obi-Wan said with a grin.

Qui-Gon just sighed and started back towards their ship.

It was now dark. The city was somewhat quieter as most people gave up on their demonstrations of warfare for the day to get some sustenance and a little rest. Two unfortunate warriors were now sleeping in the deep shadows of a maze of crates near the Falcon in just their underwear and the two Jedi were slipping into their 'acquired' bodysuits and armour.

Although slipping might be a bit of an exaggeration. It was more like struggling.

"How do they wear this day in and day out?" Obi-Wan wondered. "It's so confining."

"I'm sure you get used to it." Qui-Gon said with a slight eye roll.

"And where in the galaxy am I supposed to hide my lightsabre? You can't tell me carrying it on our belts in plain sight is a wise idea."

Qui-Gon sighed. "Break it down into pieces and put it in the pouch compartments on the belt. It's probably best if we don't use them unless we absolutely have to."

"Yes, Master," Obi-Wan said mournfully as he took apart his precious lightsabre and stuffed the pieces into a pouch. He held up one of the twin WESTAR blasters that had come with the outfit and admired it. "At least we've trained with something like this on occasion and I actually know how to hit something with one. But nothing this nice, that's for sure. It's a shame we can't keep it."

Qui-Gon glanced at his apprentice as he affixed the last piece of armour to his bodysuit. "I'm sure those warriors are quite attached to their armour. I think I heard something about beskar armour being handed down from generation to generation. Keeping it would be a terrible crime."

"Oh, I wasn't talking about the armour," Obi-Wan said with a twinkle in his blue grey eyes. "I can do without that, thank you very much. I was talking about the WESTARs. You can't tell me this,"
he held up the practically new looking blaster, "is generations old."

Qui-Gon raised a brow and inspected his own set of blasters, which didn't look anywhere near as nice as Obi-Wan's but were functional still. "I suppose you can keep them. They may be useful in protecting the Duchess in the future."

Obi-Wan whooped quietly and holstered the blaster, then shifted his shoulders uncomfortably under the bodysuit and the weight of the armour.

"They could also be useful bartering items," Qui-Gon added, smirking slightly as Obi-Wan's face fell. "So don't get too attached to them."

"Yes, Master," Obi-Wan said obediently. He brightened. "My lightsabre is a more elegant weapon anyway."

"Very true, Obi-Wan. Very true," Qui-Gon said approvingly. He looked them both over, double checking that everything looked right. "Tuck in your braid," he said as he gathered his long brown hair into a quick bun at the top of his head so it wouldn't show once his helmet was on.

Obi-Wan glanced down at the long narrow braid hanging over his shoulder and huffed, then tucked it into the neck of his bodysuit. "Better?"

"Better," Qui-Gon said with a smile. "Shall we go rescue a Duchess?"

"Let's." Obi-Wan grinned, plunked the matching helmet on his head, and then practically bounded out of the Falcon's cargo hold.

Qui-Gon chuckled and followed at a much more dignified pace. "Oh, to be that young again," he said quietly under his breath.

They mingled with the Mandalorians encircling the large durasteel and glass palace, assessing the situation, and then retreated to a side road to talk quietly. "It looks like the best way into the palace is via the roof of the building next door. We can jump across to a balcony and sneak in," Qui-Gon said softly.

"Sounds good to me."

So that's what they did, landing on the balcony neatly with hardly a sound, the crowd of guarding Mandalorians completely oblivious to the two Jedi leaping across the distance between buildings like it was nothing.

Obi-Wan undid the lock on the glass door with a flick of his hand and into the palace they crept, walking into a library and a blaster pointed at them from the Mandalorian guard.

Being closer, Obi-Wan knocked the blaster from the female's hand before she could pull the trigger and then grabbed her hands and held them behind her back when she tried to punch him, holding her back against his chest with an arm around her throat. "Tell me where the Duchess is."

"Draar! mir'osik," the female spat through her helmet.

Obi-Wan looked at his Master and Qui-Gon shrugged slightly. Neither of them knew any Mando'a. Perhaps they should have studied it as well as training on the long trip to this corner of the galaxy.

"I take it that was a no?" Obi-Wan asked his captive.
"Gar mirsh solus meh gar mirdir ni kelir rejorhaa'ir gar mayen."

"Not helpful," Obi-Wan said dryly, not understanding a word. But the tone certainly wasn't nice.

"Leave her," Qui-Gon said. "We'll find her on our own. At this time of day, she's probably eating dinner."

The female stiffened slightly in Obi-Wan's hold and he smirked. Pressing his will into her mind he waved his hand in front of her helmet. "Sleep." She slumped in his hold and he lowered her to the ground. "Thank you," he said, looking down at her form. "You've been most unhelpful." Obi-Wan turned his focus back on his Master. "Any guesses where the main dining hall is?"

Qui-Gon shrugged. "No. But we shall find it nonetheless. We'll start by heading down and aim for the biggest congregation of Force signatures."

"Oh, smart," Obi-Wan said admiringly as they walked into a hallway and started searching for a staircase or elevator. "Have I mentioned lately that you're the best Master?"

"Last week, I think," Qui-Gon said dryly. "But the week before that, you said I was the biggest pain in your rear end the Force could possibly have placed in your life. You really need to make up your mind, Obi-Wan," he said teasingly.

Obi-Wan flushed slightly in shame under his helmet. "You weren't supposed to hear that."

Qui-Gon laughed quietly as they finally found a staircase and made their way downwards.

Four floors later, they could hear the murmur of many voices and they tensed as they approached the big open doors of a massive dining hall.

"Now what?" Obi-Wan whispered.

"We could just stroll in there like we belong," Qui-Gon suggested in an equally quiet whisper. "We are dressed the part, I believe. Then we figure out which one is the Duchess, which shouldn't be too hard; we have seen her face, after all. Then we wait for her to leave the dining hall and follow her to her rooms. We'll take her from there."

"I like it," Obi-Wan said. "There's just one problem. If we take our helmets off to eat too, they're sure to notice that we're strangers."

"We'll have to risk it."

So into the dining hall they strolled.

They glanced around, observing what had to be over a hundred people eating at long tables, and saw a massive buffet laid out against the back wall of floor to ceiling windows.

As they walked towards the buffet, the room slowly but surely silenced itself as people observed them and stopped eating. They tensed as the atmosphere instantly turned hostile and the next thing they knew they were being shot at by a multitude of blasters. They dived under the nearest buffet table just in time and knocked it over to make a shield, sending platters of sliced fruits to the floor with a bang.

"I think your plan is officially a no go," Obi-Wan said calmly as blaster shots pelted the table and they quickly assembled their lightsabres with sure fingers.
"Don't get cheeky, Padawan," Qui-Gon chided.

"Sorry, Master."

Qui-Gon stuck his helmeted head up over the table for half a second to assess the situation and found it not good at all. The Mandos were lining up neatly so as not to hit each other and blocking their exit. And someone that he assumed to be the Duchess was being escorted out of the dining hall at a swift pace. They could go out the windows, but that would then put them in the line of fire of the waiting Mandos outside who were blockading the palace, and that wouldn't get them their Duchess.

Making a split second decision, Qui-Gon leapt up from behind the table, flipping high and far above everyone's heads, igniting his green lightsabre as he did so. He landed in front of the party trying to leave the room.

Obi-Wan followed his Master half a second later, doing the exact same manoeuvre and landing beside his Master with his own blue lightsabre flashing.

They blocked the group from leaving with their bodies and their lightsabres, and started deflecting shots into the walls as the Mandalorians caught up to their movements and targeted them again.

"Stop!" rang out a cry from a female voice.

All of the shooting stopped in an instant.

The Jedi waited to see what was going to happen next, bodies tense and ready for anything.

"I asked them to come," the female said as the bodyguards around her parted and let Duchess Satine walk forward.

Obi-Wan's breath caught to see her in real life. Her long braided hair that hung over her shoulder was silver blond and her eyes were the most intriguing shade of turquoise. And she was most definitely exquisitely beautiful. She walked with a calm grace that suited her lithe and curvy frame encased in green, blue, and silver armour and draped by a floor length silver cloak. She was also even younger than he'd thought; eighteen or nineteen at the most.

Obi-Wan had to steady himself on his feet as his world turned on its axis and everything he'd believed in as a Jedi turned to dust. He turned off his lightsabre and hooked it to his belt and then pushed the offensive helmet off his head so he could gaze at her in bemused awe more clearly.

Obi-Wan had just found his new purpose in life.

_Mando'a words:

*Draar! mir'osik.* – Never! dung for brains.

*Gar mirsh solus meh gar mirdir ni kelir rejorhaa'ir gar mayen.* – You're a moron if you think I will tell you anything. (Or more literally: Your brain cells are lonely if you think I will tell you anything.)
Anakin's Angel:

D64/32 BBY, Tatooine

"Are you an angel?"

Those are the first words nine year old Anakin Skywalker ever says to the girl who had haunted his dreams for as long as he could remember. What else was he to think when he's seen her in so many beautiful dresses? When he's seen her always fight for what was right? Always have the needs of the people first and foremost above her own? And then show up in Watto's shop like his own personal saviour? She must be an angel.

His first sight of her in real life is sooo much better than the dreams. She was beautiful, which he already knew, but what really stood out was how she glowed with an inner light that he just knew was her innate goodness. Most people barely shone at all, and some were just empty. Watto had no inner light, for example. Anakin's mother, on the other hand, glowed almost as fiercely as this girl did. They were his angels.

He was never sure how old she'd be when they'd first meet, because he'd seen her at a variety of ages, from about ten years old to some sort of adult age. He does know that they'll be together someday when he's all grown up too. He's seen it. He's not thrilled that she's already a teenager, but he figures that's not too far off his own age and she obviously doesn't hold his younger age against him. At least not when they're older. For now, he was just happy to see that his dream girl was real.

"What?" Padme Naberrie, aka Queen Amidala, recently elected at just fourteen years of age, startles as she turns to look at the adorable blond haired boy that just ran in after being summoned by the toydarian shop owner and is now sitting on the counter and cleaning some unknown metal part with a rag.

"An angel," he explains patiently. "I heard the deep space pilots talk about them. They're the most beautiful creatures in the universe. They live on the moons of Iego, I think."

Padme is startled and a little bit flattered. As the Queen, she'd received multitudes of compliments that felt like empty words. In the guise of one of her own handmaidens, people rarely ever paid her attention. She liked it that way, to be honest. But from this boy, the compliment felt truly sincere and she found that she didn't mind. "You're a funny little boy. How do you know so much?"

Anakin wasn't sure if he liked being called 'funny', but the rest seemed like a compliment, so his opinion of his dream angel remained the same. "I listen to all the traders and star pilots that come through. I'm a pilot you know. And some day, I'm going to fly away from this place."

Padme was amused that such a small child could claim the title of pilot, but she decided to indulge in his fantasy. "You're a pilot?"

"Umm hmmmm. All my life," Anakin said proudly. The reality was more like the last three years, ever since Watto had found him playing with his podracer and thought it would be fun to put the kid in a race, just for laughs. No one was laughing when Anakin actually walked away from the race in one piece, even if the pod sputtered to a halt right before the finish line. That was still better than three quarters of the field who never even finished the first or second lap. Needless to say that Watto had put Anakin in every race since. (Mostly so he could bet against him, but Anakin didn't
care; he just loved flying and how his blood sang at the extreme speed and sheer danger of it.)

Padme smiled at the boy's wishful thinking. There was once a time when she'd dreamed that she was a dancer and had pirouetted all over her home. Now she led her people and her childish fantasies were long behind her. "How long have you been here?"

"Since I was very little. Three, I think. My mom and I were sold to Gardulla the Hutt, but she lost us betting on the pod races."

Padme's breath caught at what she thought the child just said. "You're a slave?" she asked, just to clarify. She'd never seen a slave before, believing slavery to be abolished from the galaxy long ago.

She'd found the one subject Anakin was incredibly touchy about. "I'm a person!" he said loudly. "And my name is Anakin!" He hated that he and his mother were owned by other people just like livestock. He hated that they had no choice in where they lived or what they did. He hated being a slave.

Padme was taken aback by his vehemence and was quick to apologize. "I'm sorry. I don't fully understand. This is a strange place to me," she glanced around at the old junk shop as an example. But in reality, absolutely everything on Tatooine was strange to her. The heat. The sand. The animals. The monotonous beige colour that coated everything. The vague air of hopelessness in the people. None of it felt even remotely like her beautiful home of fresh green grass, clear blue water, gleaming white buildings, and healthy, happy people.

At least, they were healthy and happy until the invasion of Naboo yesterday. She couldn't bear to think about how many had already been injured or even killed by the Federation's ruthless droid army. But as the Queen, she had to, which is why she was here, trying to get to Coruscant, so she could plead her case to the Senate and save her people.

Anakin calmed down almost immediately at her apology and realized she meant no offense. He smiled back at her in his own apology for being too loud. "That's okay. Tatooine takes some getting used to, I guess. But I still hate the sand, even though I've been here for six years. It gets in everything!"

Padme giggled at his annoyed expression. "I noticed." She had found the sand was quite annoying on the walk from the ship to the spaceport city of Mos Espa, finding its way into her shoes, causing her to have to hop on one foot while she dumped the sand out and tried to keep up with Master Jinn and Jar Jar, who both seemed oblivious to the discomfort.

Padme smiled wider as Anakin beamed at her for agreeing with him. The boy was incredibly likable, which she found refreshing, not feeling like she had much in common with younger kids any more. Her duties as Queen had forced her to grow up faster than most.

And then there was Jar Jar Binks, her new acquaintance/friend? The gungan seemed to be permanently stuck in an awkward teenager stage, even though he was a male in his prime. She'd never seen a more naturally clumsy being in her life. At least he was entertaining.

He was demonstrating that right now, in fact, as he fell all over everything in the shop trying to catch the little droid that he'd accidentally activated. For the sake of politeness, she was holding in her laughter, but a snort almost escaped as he caught it by the neck and the little droid kicked him in the knee.

Anakin was appalled by the gungan as he destroyed his carefully organized chaos of a shop. "Hey!" The gungan looked over at him, carelessly holding the little droid that Anakin had spent days
"Put the nose."

"Ohhh," the gungan said and did as ordered. The little droid went back to sleep mode, curling in on itself as it settled on the floor at his feet.

"Jar Jar," Padme gently admonished. "Didn't Master Jinn just tell you not to touch anything?"

Jar Jar hung his head for a moment, long ears drooping. "Yesa. But mesa so curious. Thersa so much fun tings."

"Just... Be more careful," Anakin said on a sigh. "I'm the one who fixes all this stuff so Watto can sell it to some poor nerfherder for more than it's worth."

"Okeyday," Jar Jar says, happy again. He wonders off and picks up three power couplings. "Yousa wanna see mesa juggle? Isa good, Isa swear."

"Sure, Jar Jar," Padme said, to appease the gungan. She rolled her eyes slightly at Anakin and they shared a grin. "Did you really put all this stuff together?"

Anakin nodded enthusiastically. "I like fixing stuff. My mom makes decorations from the parts I can't use. You should see it. It's pretty. At least I think so. Between my mom's art and my repair work, we keep Watto pretty well supplied with credits."

Padme frowned at the thought that the boy and his mother didn't work for themselves like they should be. With their skills, they should be fairly well off, but judging by the boy's clothes, which were of a very rough material, they were only kept well enough so that they survived. From what he'd said, it sounded like the boy was nine years old, but he was as small as most six year olds. He obviously wasn't getting as much nutrition as he should have to grow properly. It made her heart hurt to think of it. "From what I've seen, it looks like you're very good at what you do. Your mas... umm, Watto, is lucky to have you." She was impressed that a boy so young was capable of putting that much of his attention into something useful. Most children only knew how to focus on games.

Anakin beamed at her again, his vivid blue eyes lighting up in gratitude for her not saying 'master' and at the compliment, as they both kept half an eye on Jar Jar, who was actually doing not that bad with his attempts at juggling. If he practiced, he might actually get good at it, which would be astonishing considering how clutzy he was.

"He wouldn't have lasted long anyways if I wasn't so good at building things," Anakin said, stating a fact without too much boasting in his voice.

Anakin turned slightly as the long haired man his angel had arrived with came back into the shop, trailed by his silver and blue astromech droid and Watto. Anakin wondered about him. He glowed with an inner light too, but it was different than any he'd seen before; stronger somehow. But not brighter than his angel's. No one would ever be brighter than his angel. There was a sense of contained power about him that made Anakin VERY curious.

"We're leaving," Master Jinn said as he strode through the shop, looking fairly displeased, with Artoo (the name she'd given R2-D2 after he'd become her favourite droid after he saved their lives while running the Federation blockade around Naboo) following him. He only glanced at Jar Jar, who fumbled the power couplings at his look. "Jar Jar, you too."

Padme reluctantly followed after her protector, finding it strange that she didn't actually want to leave the boy's company. Maybe he was reminding her that life wasn't all about politics and that there could still be some fun and dreams in it. "I'm glad to have met you, Anakin," she said as she
walked backwards towards the door of the shop.

"I was glad to meet you too," he called after her, and she smiled to herself, quickly catching up to Master Jinn.

"That was a waste of time," the astromech droid beeps at his people as he left, making Anakin smirk to himself. He'd always liked when droids had a less than perfect sense of obedience to their masters. It made him wish he could rebel just as easily, but most didn't understand binary, so they could get away with it. He could not, and he had the whip scars on his back to prove it and many days of no food to teach him to keep his mouth shut. His mom had always despaired that he'd never learn to keep his sarcasm to himself, but Anakin finally had, mostly just to keep his mother from crying over him anymore.

The last one out the door was Jar Jar and he somehow managed to turn the wrong way, which Anakin had to snort at. How could a relatively intelligent being be so incredibly incompetent?

Watto hovered beside him. "Outlanders. They think they know everything," he complained in Huttese.

"They seemed nice to me," Anakin replied in kind, having learned the native language of the planet years ago.

Watto didn't seem impressed with his assessment. "Clean the racks, then you can go home."

Sweet! That meant he had a chance of catching up to the angel and her party before they left the city. And failing that, he might actually make it home in time for lunch today, which would make his mom happy.

Anakin jumped off the counter with his rag and rushed to the side room to clean up the mess Jar Jar had made, swiping off any dust that had settled on flat surfaces. He moved like a whirlwind and was done in half an hour flat.

Padme followed Master Jinn around the dusty 'city' as he talked to other junk dealers, but no one had a hyperdrive for a Naboo ship, and no one would take Republic credits for them to buy something else to barter with the toydarian for his hyperdrive.

It was a weird feeling, being rich and yet penniless.


"We'll get lunch soon enough, Jar Jar," Master Jinn said in a relatively patient voice. "It looks like there's only one more shop to check anyway."

"Okiday, Massa Qui-Gonsa," he said dejectedly.

"But first..." Master Jinn pulled out his comm and called Master Kenobi. "Obi-Wan, can you check the ship and see if there's anything of value on board that we could use to barter with? No one here will take Republic credits and we need at least the equivalent of twenty thousand."

"Yes, Master. I'll comm you back shortly," came back the amused sounding reply.

Padme raised an incredulous brow at Master Jinn as he tucked his comm unit away. "You know, you could have just asked me. I know exactly what's on that ship, and I can tell you right now, it's not worth a hyperdrive."
Master Jinn raised a sardonic eyebrow in return. "Forgive me for assuming, but in this case, it never hurts to double check."

Padme hummphed and just barely stopped herself from crossing her arms over her chest and stomping her foot like a little girl. This man was determined to frustrate her with his inability to see her as something other than a child and she refused to add to his mistaken impression of her. (Not that her training would let her do anything so childish anyway.) But stars, why couldn't he see that she was smarter than her age made her look? There was more than one reason she embraced the tradition of wearing heavy makeup and wore elevated shoes to make herself look older when she was being a Queen. (The other was to hide the fact that her double wasn't exactly her lookalike and was somewhat taller than her.) "Next time, ask," she said imperiously.

He bowed his head slightly, mockingly. "Yes, Your Highness."

Padme narrowed her eyes at him. She was sorely tempted to tell him just how accurate that statement was.

While they waited for Master Kenobi to call them back, they went into the last shop for a whole minute. Master Jinn talked to the blue rodian behind the counter, got laughed at, and had a spare part hucked at his head, which he ducked handily.

The part hit Jar Jar in the foot and he spent a minute hopping and cursing while the rodian laughed some more. Padme came to the conclusion that she definitely didn't like this planet and she felt more sorry than ever for little Anakin.

"Right. Let's hope Obi-Wan finds something," Master Jinn said as they returned to the too bright light of outside.

Padme rolled her eyes at his back, refusing to actually say anything more on the matter.

Master Jinn led them to a shady alcove, perhaps feeling the heat just as much as she was. (No one needed to know she was a pool of sweat under her clothes.) She was grateful for the respite from the pounding suns.

"Now what?" Jar Jar said plaintively. "Mesa no liken this place."

Master Jinn's comm chose that moment to chime and he answered it. "Tell me some good news, Obi-Wan."

"I'm afraid there's no good news to share, Master. Unless we start tearing the ship itself apart, which would be counterproductive, there's not much of value here."

Padme shot Master Jinn an 'I told you so' look, which he chose not to see.

Master Jinn was pretty good at keeping his emotions to himself, but his face fell slightly, showing just how disappointed he was. "Are you sure there's nothing left on board?"

"A few containers of supplies. The Queen's wardrobe maybe, but not enough for you to barter with. Not in the amount you're talking about."

Padme growled under her breath, disgusted Master Kenobi would even think of trading her dresses. (She wondered what kind of hullabaloo that had caused when he tried to look at them.) If only he knew how much the spare wardrobe she kept on her ship was worth, he wouldn't be so quick to dismiss it. But she was glad he did as she needed those dresses for her time on Coruscant and there would never be enough time to have another wardrobe made for her before she had to be seen in

public again. Besides, she doubted very much that anyone on this stars forsaken planet would want her gowns or pay a fraction of what they were worth.

"Alright," Master Jinn said resignedly. "I'm sure another solution will present itself. I'll check back later." He moved to go back out into the market place, but Jar Jar stopped him.

"No again. No again. The beings hereabouts are cwazy! Wesa be robbed and crunched."

"Not likely," Master Jinn reassured him patiently. "We have nothing of value. That's our problem."

Padme smirked as she followed them. Men were such idiots sometimes.

"Hey! I'm worth something!" Artoo beeped indignantly.

Padme paused and put a hand on his dome. "I know," she whispered. "But let's not tell them that, shall we?"

Artoo trilled out a confused sounding, "All right?"

"Trust me. It's for the best. You do not want to get stuck on this sand ball."

"Okay," he beeped.

Spotting a slimy looking man eyeballing her hungrily, Padme shuddered and quickly caught up to Master Jinn, walking as close to him as propriety allowed. Master Jinn did have his uses.

Two minutes later, Padme was not surprised to find that Jar Jar wasn't following them anymore.

"Where'd he go, Artoo?" she asked the droid, since he was better at keeping track of their easily distracted companion than she was.

He turned his dome back the way they came. "J.J. Bumblehead stopped back there."

Padme giggled at the nickname Artoo had given Jar Jar. "Master Jinn... Jar Jar's..."

Master Jinn sighed and they headed back. "I don't know why I brought him with me when we left Gunga City."

"Because you're just a big softy on the inside?" Padme teased him.

Master Jinn smiled. "I suppose I am, but don't tell that to my Padawan. Obi-Wan is bad enough at listening to me."

Padme laughed softly, having observed their friendship on the flight to Tatooine and knew he was just joking. Mostly.

While making his way through the city to where his apartment was on the opposite side from Watto's shop, keeping an eye out for his angel and her companions, Anakin saw the gungan on the ground with a male dug standing over him. Worried for the friend of his angel, Anakin quickened his pace and parked himself in his rival's face. "Careful, Sebulba," he said in Huttese. "He's a big time Outsider. I'd hate to see you diced before we race again."

Sebulba, of course, wasn't even remotely intimidated. He snarled back, "Next time we race, boy, it will be the end of you. If you weren't a slave, I'd squash you now."
Anakin smirked at him, grateful for the only advantage to being a slave. "Yah. It'd be a pity if you had to pay for me."

Sebulba snarled again and spat out a foul curse before returning to his table. Anakin watched him carefully, since the dug was known for pulling dirty tricks. He was a being with absolutely no light of goodness in him.

Anakin turned his focus to the tall man his angel had called Master Jinn as he helped Jar Jar off the ground. "Hi."

"Hi, there," Master Jinn replied, paying attention to Anakin for the first time that day and giving him a slight smile.

Anakin grinned back up at him. "Your buddy here was about to be turned into orange goo. He picked a fight with a dug, an especially dangerous dug, called Sebulba."

"Mesa hate me crunchin'. That's the last ting mesa want." Anakin thought the gungan was going to have to get a whole lot wiser if he was going to avoid getting himself killed if they planned on staying on Tatooine much longer. Jar Jar was like a walking sign that said, 'Bantha Fodder' in big letters.

Apparently Master Jinn agreed, because he said, "Nevertheless, the boy is right, and you're heading into trouble." He turned his attention back to Anakin. "Thanks, my young friend."

Anakin shrugged it off, but he couldn't help but notice that his angel was smiling at him as well, and that made him feel special. He liked that feeling. A lot. It made him want to do whatever was necessary to keep her smiling at him.


Anakin watched the strangely mismatched group for a moment before he jolted into action and ran after them. "What are you looking for?" he asked once he was in front of Master Jinn and jogging backwards. "Maybe I can help. I know everything and everyone in this city."

Master Jinn paused and looked at him assessingly. "At the moment, we need spare parts for a J-type 327 Nubian ship. Aside from that, where's a good place to get some lunch?"

Anakin shook his head sadly. "Watto is the only one that has parts for that class of ship right now. And if he won't deal with you..." Anakin shrugged but brightened. "As far as lunch goes, I have a friend who makes the best flatbread sandwiches."

"That sounds lovely," Padme said, thankful he hadn't suggested something that sounded like a stomach churning fried rodent. (She'd seen enough of those displayed for sale.) "Thank you, Anakin."

"Ani," he said with a big smile. "My friends call me Ani."

"Ani it is then." Padme said, returning the smile. "And my name is..."

"Padme," Anakin cut her off quickly with a beamed smile.

Padme was shocked, to say the least, since she was positive no one had said her name in his hearing. "How did you know?"

"I heard it in a dream," Anakin explained as if that was a perfectly normal thing.
Everyone gawked at him and Anakin just smiled wider then turned and led the way towards Jila's shop. He could feel Master Jinn's eyes on him as if he were trying to look right through him, which was somewhat disconcerting, but Anakin figured it was just because he knew something he shouldn't have again.

His mom had told him to be careful about that, since it made people nervous, so he tried to pay attention to what he should know and only say that. But sometimes, like now, Anakin didn't care if someone like Master Jinn thought him strange. He just wanted to impress his angel.
Padmé's 'Boyfriend'

A/N: I wrote this as a prologue for 'Life Day Revelations' but it also fits perfectly into this universe, so I'm posting it here too. :D

Padmé's 'Boyfriend:

D85/32 BBY, Naboo

Padmè Naberrie, only fourteen years old and better known as Queen Amidala of Naboo, groaned in protest as the first rays of sunrise suddenly hit her right in the face, accompanied by the sound of swishing curtains.

She rolled over onto her back, arm thrown over her eyes in protest. "Stars, is it morning already?" she mumbled.

A tinkling laugh answered her as more curtains swished open in her massive and ridiculously ornate bedroom, flooding it with dawning light. "Yes, I'm afraid it is, Milady."

Padmè moved her arm just enough to squint at her best friend and handmaiden, Sabè. "Not fair. I swear I just got to bed three hours ago."

"You did. And you have a meeting with Governor Bibble in an hour and a half."

Padmè sighed pathetically as she literally rolled her tired body off the soft bed big enough to sleep at least six people. (She knew this because all of her handmaidens had crashed with her after a long giggle fest inspired by too much cider and the girls' fascination with the dreamy topic known as the freshly promoted Jedi Knight, Obi-Wan Kenobi.) "I know. I just wish those Gungan peace parties wouldn't go so long into the night. And that they'd stop asking me to dance. Kriff, I hurt."

Sabè appeared at her side, holding up a comfortable robe for her to slip her arms into. The young Queen mumbled her thanks as the older girl said, "Only one more night of celebrations, then the big parade and formal ceremony tomorrow afternoon. I have faith that you'll survive till then. And… you have three hours of free time this afternoon. I won't tell if you want to take a nap."

Padmè shot her friend a grateful look over her shoulder as she stumbled over to the refresher door. "Thank you, Sabè. You're the best."

"And don't you forget it." The cheeky reply just made it to Padmè's ears before the sliding door closed completely.

Smiling to herself, Padmè went about waking herself up with her normal refresher routine.

When she emerged twenty minutes later, she was squeaky clean, covered only by her soft robe, and her long brown hair was flowing in waves down to her waist. She immediately aimed for the bay window with the spectacular view of a waterfall and the little table within that held a covered tray with her breakfast and a datapad already loaded with the morning news reports from Coruscant. (A queen must keep up with all the latest news and gossip, donchaknow.)

Sitting down, she tuck into her eggs and bacon with gusto, interspersed with liberal sips of chocolate flavoured caf. At the same time, she scrolled through the news.
BRAN PITERS AND ANJIE JOLLY BACK TOGETHER AGAIN?

The famous acting couple were seen holding hands as they left the set of their latest movie project, Malignant Spies. Will they tie the knot for the fifth time?

She snorted. *Maybe, but I give it a month before they get divorced again. They've broken up how many times now, if we count the times that didn't include actual marriage? Twelve? Thirteen?*

DELVIS SIGHTING ON ALDERAAN CAUSES 12 SPEEDER PILE UP!

*Is the singing sensation actually back from the dead or is it just another wannabee?*

*Wannabee, no question. My parents went to his funeral.*

PODRACE ON MALASTARE LEAVES 9 DEAD AND ONLY 1 FINISHER!

*Is this sport really worth the thrills? Cast your vote now and see if you're in the majority!*

Padmè immediately pushed the 'No' button and growled when she the results popped up. *How can ninety-five point six percent of the galaxy think that those flying death traps are something worth watching? I am so glad that Ani isn't flying those awful things anymore. There's no way a little kid should ever have been put in one in the first place. Stupid nerferdgers. They could at least make an age limit rule.*

*Hah. Like that'll ever happen. Kriffing Hutts like their gruesome entertainment too much to give it up.*

Shaking off her anger, she delicately shoveled in another bite of perfectly prepared scrambled eggs and smiled almost evilly at the next headline.

IN THE WAKE OF THE NABOO CRISIS, SENATE VOTES TO PLACE MORE RESTRICTIONS AND TAXES ON THE TRADE FEDERATION! VICEROY GUNRAY FUMES!

*Sources say the Neimoidian was heard cursing the Republic and that they would pay for their stupidity. Should we be worried?*

*Yes.*

After reading the entire article about the Republic Senate's decision and sending the concise story to a file folder labeled 'Important Political Poodoo', she scrolled on.

*New opera house opening on Hosnian Prime to feature Lava Plaguna? Maybe I'll go there for my next holiday. When is my next holiday, anyway? Or right, I don't get holidays. Maybe I can sneak in a show the next time I'm there for a political function; her voice is the best in the galaxy and I've never seen her live.*

Sports, civil war on some Outer Rim planet I've never heard of, more sports, somebody I don't know just got hitched to somebody else I don't know. More sports. What's up with all the sports? *Ooooo. Queen Breha finally picked a husband from all of her suitors! Good for her. I think I've met Bail Organa, haven't I?*

*Stars, even more sports. Who cares about spaceball? New hyperspace lane in development in the Mid Rim? That's worth reading at least.*
She almost selected the story when the next headline caught her eye.

**YOUNGEST PADAWAN IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEDI?**

Is Anakin Skywalker, former slave and winner of the deadly Boonta Eve Classic, the youngest Padawan to ever pass the Initiate Trials?

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After only residing at the Jedi Temple for a week and a half, the young boy (9 galactic standard years), who was barely allowed into the Order in the first place due to being considered too old to learn their ways, has already been publicly listed as a graduate of the Initiate Trials.

Go, Ani! I knew he'd pass.

We don't claim to know much about the ever mysterious Jedi, but even to this author, this seems practically miraculous. We can only conclude that Skywalker is a phenom with the Force.

Yes. Yes he is.

Or is he?

What?! You doubt my Ani?! How dare you!

Is it possible that the Jedi Council is simply expediting the normal processes to please the new Chancellor, who was heard publicly praising the boy for his starring roll in the Nabooan victory over the Trade Federation?

This author believes so.

Bitch.

It would seem even the monk-like Jedi are capable of kissing up to important rear ends, no matter how unattractive they are.

Okay, that was kind of funny; Sheev does have a rather scrawny arse. His sons have the same unfortunate problem. The girls have most certainly never sighed over a Palpatine arse the way they have over Kenobi's.

What do you think? Leave me a comment and let me know.

I might just do that, you trumped up nerf.

One thing we do know for sure is that the Chancellor and the entire High Council of Jedi have just been seen boarding a ship destined for Naboo to attend the Peace Ceremony between the aquatic Gungans and their human neighbors. And accompanying them was one recently Knighted Obi-Wan Kenobi and his new (official) Padawan, Anakin Skywalker.

Yay! Ani's coming back! I knew Master Kenobi would be able to talk his way onto that ship! That man has one of the smoothest tongues I've ever heard. He should go into politics; he could be the next Chancellor if he wanted. The girls will be happy to see him again, too, that's for sure.
What possible reason could the (somewhat older than normal and drop dead handsome) new Knight have for going back to the scene of his Master's death?

Further investigations? Facing his demons? Or perhaps the Knight is breaking tradition and following his heart? He did spend quite a few days in the company of a certain young queen and her pretty, if a bit cookie cutter handmaidens, after all, as their protector.

One can only speculate.

Force knows, this author is.

You can speculate till the nerfs come home, you sleemo. You'll never guess that they're coming back because Ani wants to see me again. It certainly isn't because Kenobi wants to come anywhere near my handmaidens. He seemed kind of scared of them, actually, and avoided them as much as possible. Clearly a dedicated practitioner of the Jedi Code.

Unlike Ani, who ate up any attention he could get.

Stars, that boy is the cutest thing.

He's going to be a heartbreaker when he grows up, I just know it.

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Next time on Jedi Watch: We explore the possible reasons why Obi-Wan Kenobi wasn't Knighted until the age of 25 when the average age is closer to 20.

That's actually a really good question. Maybe I'll ask him when he gets here so I can scoff at whatever speculations Skeeta Ritz comes up with.

Despite how much she hated the author of the article, Padmè sent it to the recently added 'Ani and Co.' file, where she'd already accumulated a few stories regarding one Anakin Skywalker and his fellow Jedi, whom she had recently become quite fascinated with. (No idea why. Honest.)

Her favourite article so far was the story about his win in the big pod race on Tatooine, because it came with a picture of Ani sitting on Master Jinn's shoulder as they celebrated his victory. The dirt covered boy had been looking down at the man with such devotion and Master Jinn had the most genuine smile of pride she'd ever seen on his usually serious face. She and his mother had been in the picture as well, but you could only see the back of their heads in the bottom corner. She had to fight tears every time she looked at it, because of the lost father/son relationship that had developed right in front of her eyes, but she loved it anyway. If Anakin hadn't seen it already, which she hadn't the heart to ask yet, she was going to send him a copy for his next birthday or Life Day, whichever came first. (She needed to ask him when his birthday was.)

At least he had Master Kenobi to fill the gap in his life that should never have had to be filled. (Twice.) The good news was that Ani had finally accepted Kenobi as a replacement male adult figure, but she could tell from some of the offhand comments he'd made during their daily comm chats that Ani would never let himself think of another man as a father because losing the first one to adopt that roll for him had hurt too much to possibly repeat. She could only hope that Ani and Kenobi could find a different kind of love between them and not get stuck in the 'no attachment' rule she'd read about; brothers would work, especially if they both associated Master Jinn as their father figure.

She was chugging the last of her cooling chococaf and reading the article about the new
hyperspace lane when Sabè swept back into the room with Eirtaè and Rabè right on her heels, all done up in flowing grey dresses that transitioned from white at the top to the darkest grey by the bottom hemline with decorative silver belts in the middle. They looked beautiful while still maintaining an air of simplicity that Padmè envied.

"Time to turn you into a Queen, Milady," the head handmaiden said brightly as she opened the doors to the small apartment sized dressing room filled with enough expensive dresses and robes to have alternatively funded the entire population of a small planet for a year. (At least.)

Padmè pushed off the chair with a stifled groan inspired by sore thighs (the Gungans had WAY too much jumping in their native dances) and brought the datapad with her to read while her handmaidens went to work making her look like a Queen.

As Padmè sat down in front of a huge vanity for the long process of applying her makeup and finagling her hair into something insane but beautiful, a comm link in Sabè's pocket chimed. (She kept Padmè's comm in case the Queen wasn't available to talk, which happened a lot.) She pulled it out and checked the frequency before placing it in front of her on the vanity. "It's your boyfriend," the handmaiden couldn't help but tease.

Padmè rolled her eyes. "Please. He's NINE."

The girls giggled at the absurdity of such a suggestion as Padmè answered the still chiming comm link. A small holo of Anakin popped up, sitting cross-legged. Most of his hair had been cut short since she'd talked to him yesterday, with a tiny braid starting near the back of the right side of his head with what was left. *I bet there's a tiny ponytail at the back too.* He was also wearing a more formal looking Jedi outfit than the simple tunic and slacks he'd worn for their previous calls. Included with the layers of beige tunics and tabard was a fancy new leather belt. And hanging off his belt was a small lightsabre that she knew he had built himself only a few days ago. (He was very proud of it, understandably.)

"Ani! Look at you! You look like a miniature version of Master Kenobi!"

Anakin blushed dark enough with pleasure and embarrassment to be visible through the holo. "Thanks, Mey. Considering the Temple of Beige Monotony supplied the new outfit, though, are we surprised?"

The girls giggled.

Anakin smirked.

*Stars, he's a clever boy.* Padmè shook her head at him fondly, inspiring a hiss from Rabè, who was working on her hair. (Sabè was theoretically picking out a morning dress appropriate for meetings while blatantly eavesdropping.) "Well, I'm sure if you ask nicely you can convince them to let you wear somewhat different colours. Darker one's maybe?"

Anakin tilted his head, thinking. "I've always wanted to wear black, but it's just an insane idea on Tatooine, unless you like frying in the suns, so Mom always vetoed it."

"Well, there you go. Ask for black tunics. Or at least dark brown ones."

"I don't know..."

"You should."

"Fine. I will. But it's your fault if they all think I'm falling to the Dark side already."
"How could they? You're the sweetest boy. Just smile at them with your bright blue eyes and any ridiculous thoughts like that will fly right out of their heads."

Anakin looked at her like she'd hung the stars. "Force, Mey, you always have the answer for everything. I guess that's why you're the Queen?"

The girls snickered behind the hands.

"Something like that. Just out of curiosity, why does it look like you're sitting on the floor?"

Anakin snorted softly. "Because I am. I'm supposed to be meditating while my Master and the High Council entertain the Chancellor, but that got boring about half an hour ago. So I sat here and started thinking about all the modifications I'd like to make to the incredibly slow Temple speeders, which seemed meditative enough to me. And I'm still in the position, so that has to count for something, right? And then I got this urge to call you that I couldn't resist no matter how hard I tried, so I did."

Padmé could only smile indulgently at his spew of speedy words; no other response seemed appropriate. "Well, if it's any consolation, you finally caught me at a good time."

"Really?"

"Really. I'm not in a meeting, or in the shower, or in the middle of getting dressed, or sleeping, or eating. Frankly, Ani, your timing was actually kind of perfect for once. And I even have a good ten minutes left while the girls play with my hair and face before I have to move."

Anakin blinked with wide eyes. "Whoa. I wish I could tell all of the Masters you said that. According to them, I have yet to show up on time for any of our lessons. I can't help it that the Temple is massive and I keep getting distracted by the cool stuff in it and I keep meeting new people who want to talk to me."

"Poor Ani. Things will get better, I'm sure."

"Yeah. I'll be old news eventually."

"Oh. Eirtaè is frowning at me. That means I need to keep my face still now. Why don't you tell me about your Initiate Trials while she finishes my makeup?"

Anakin literally lit up at the suggestion. "Sure!" He squiggled around a bit, crossing his legs the other way. "Well, first I had to recite the Jedi Code from memory, which was easy. And then I had to assemble my lightsabre with nothing but my mind, which was awesome. And I could sense how proud Master Kenobi was of me and how shocked the other Masters were that I could do that already – they thought Master Kenobi was insane when he requested that I take my Initiate Trials after less than a month of training - but he said I was ready, and I really wanted to be able to call myself a proper Padawan and not just a poser with special privileges, so he convinced them. And then…"

Anakin was so amusing and adorable as he talked animatedly about his Jedi accomplishments, Padmé had to keep reminding herself to keep her face still so that Eirtaè would stop growling at her. And the whole time, one thought niggled at the back of her mind:

*I don't know how this little boy has wormed his way into my heart, but I don't regret it for one minute. His comm calls are honestly the best part of my day.*
Lux was almost eighteen when he first met the Jedi padawan, Ahsoka Tano. It took him maybe five minutes of conversation with her to come to the conclusion that she was amazing.

But his first impression hadn't quite been so flattering, despite how beautiful she was.

When he first saw her, he was sitting on the duracrete ledge that framed the stairwells and balconies of the mansion that his family had moved to just over a year ago when their home planet of Onderon had joined the Confederacy.

His mother was the Senator of Onderon, resulting in a move to the Capital of the Confederacy that had made a big impact on Lux's life. He'd left all his school friends behind when they moved, leaving him feeling lost on a new world for a while until he made new friends at the private academy he was sent to to finish his education. He also found himself living the politician's life of parties and meetings more than ever as his mother was feeling rather lonely as well, and begged his attendance as her escort.

Lux’s father was hardly ever home after the move, being an officer in the new Confederate Military. And then he was killed by the Republic clone army while setting up a base on Aargonar. That was almost a year ago now. Lux still missed him desperately.

Lux was admittedly biased against the Republic based on this alone.

But Dooku's evidence against the Republic Senate was also very convincing. The corruption, hypocrisy, and uncaring attitude of the Senate as a whole made it easy for planets like Onderon to seek out another option, and for young people like Lux to grow up with a whole new view of how the galaxy should be run.

Meeting Ahsoka had been the catalyst needed to change Lux's mind about which side of the war he should fight for.

But it wasn't instantaneous, that's for sure.

Lux was wistfully remembering happier times when his father was still alive and the galaxy still made sense when his mother's transport landed in front of their home. He knew she'd gone to pick up Padme Amidala from the spaceport, and was curious to see the Naboo Senator again.

Lux had fond memories of Padme. His family used to go on vacations to Naboo to visit her family when she was still the queen and he was just a little kid. Despite seeming cold and formal in public, the pretty queen was fun and exuberant when away from her duties. She always made a present appear for him too, every time they visited her house. (Palace.)

He wasn't surprised that Padme had been accompanied by a guard, but he was surprised at the guard she had chosen. At first, he thought the togrutan girl accompanying Padme was a political protégé or something, albeit a strangely dressed one, until he'd spotted the lightsabres hooked to her belt.

He was so surprised to see a Jedi that it took him a moment to register his mother's call to come
carry their guests' baggage.

When he did, Lux hopped off the railing and walked down the stairs with calm dignity, in complete defiance of the rush he was first inclined to do. 'A senator's son does not run' had been drilled into him long ago by his teachers and had eventually stuck.

Lux walked up to Padme and they exchanged smiles of greeting as he gallantly took her bag. Then he moved on to the Jedi girl and received a sullen glare. Lux backed off with a 'what's your problem?' look and let the girl carry her own bag.

She proceeded to glare at him every time he happened to look her way for the next hour while his mother showed their guests to their rooms and then offered them a light repast, since dinner was a few hours off yet, but they'd come from a different time schedule where it was already past their dinner time.

After listening to the two older women talk about old times for a while, and watch the girl say absolutely nothing, Lux excused himself from their presence, not wanting to weather anymore of the strange combination of boredom and discomfort that assailed him.

Ahsoka watched the boy leave from the corner of her eye, not sure if she was grateful he was gone or not.

He disconcerted her greatly, to be honest.

She didn't know how to act around him. He was the son of Padme's friend, so therefore, someone who should be treated with respect. But on the other hand, he was a Seppie, and she'd spent almost two years destroying their droids and watching her fellow Jedi and her clone brothers die at their hands.

Lux Bonteri was the enemy.

And yet, he wasn't. He was just a boy. A pampered aristocrat boy with a cultured accent, soft looking hands, and a body she bet didn't have a single scar on it (or any muscles). He was so far out of her realm of experience, it was laughable.

And despite all that, she also felt drawn to him in some strange fashion, like the Force was tugging her in his direction like it knew something she didn't. Maybe he'd be important in some way in regards to the war, but she couldn't see how, so Ahsoka had done her best to ignore him.

After he left the room, she found out that his father had been killed by her army, and she felt a little bit bad about being so rude to him. She hadn't even said hello. Ahsoka didn't know what it felt like to lose a parent, since she'd never had any that she could remember. She'd been living with a distant relative when Master Plo Koon had found her when she was three years old and brought her to the Temple where the Jedi had become her family. The closest she could come to sympathizing with Lux was to imagine losing Plo Koon or Obi-Wan. Just the thought of that possibility hurt more than she cared to think about.

So she excused herself as well, and went out onto the balcony that overlooked the backyard gardens and gazebo, knowing perfectly well that Lux was out here as well.

Ahsoka walked past him and down the stairs, where he was perched on a ledge yet again. He reminded her of a pretty bird with his penchant for ledges and fine clothes. He probably only parroted what his elders said as well, without a mind of his own.
Lux was surprised when the girl came outside and walked past him. But curiosity made him open his mouth and spit out the first thing that came to mind. "You're a Jedi, aren't you?" Then he mentally facepalmed for asking something so obvious.

Ahsoka turned and looked back up at the boy, astonished he'd worked up the guts to speak to her. She deigned to answer. "Yes. Why do you ask?"

Lux tried to keep it cool. He could roll with this. "Before the war, I was always told Jedi were good."

Ahsoka raised a brow marking him. "And now?"

Lux jumped off his ledge as gracefully as he could manage, feeling all shaky and idiotic all of a sudden. Why did this girl affect him so? He'd conversed with beautiful princesses and never felt this nervous. He told himself she was just a girl, and to get a grip as he walked down the stairs to her level. "I don't know anymore. There are a lot of terrible things happening. A lot of killing. And now my friends are saying the Jedi are to blame."

That was disturbing to hear. The Jedi were supposed to be peacekeepers and symbols of hope, not something one should fear. (Unless you were a battle droid, then all bets were off.) Ahsoka pushed that to the back of her mind for now as they walked down the rest of the stairs together. "I'm the first Jedi you've ever met, aren't I?" she asked the boy.

Lux was surprised by the question. "Well...um, yes."

Ahsoka planted her feet at the bottom of the stairs and half turned towards him, crossing her arms over her chest. "Look at me. I'm not so bad, am I?" She was trying to show him that the Jedi weren't scary, that she was just a normal person. That didn't exactly turn out the way she thought it would.

Lux's breath caught when she posed for him and he couldn't help but look at her closely from top to bottom and back again. Her white and blue striped montrals and lekku intrigued him. Her orange skin with the white face markings covered and framed features that could only be called pleasing to the eye and exotic. Her massive sky blue eyes were the prettiest he'd ever seen. Her lush lips looked oh so kissable, even in their set position. Her body was slender and yet possessed of a strength that he just knew could probably throw him across the lawn if she had a mind to. There was enough of a curve to her chest and hips to indicate she was no child and hadn't been for some time. Lux wasn't sure how quickly togrutans matured in comparison to humans, but if he had to guess, he'd say she looked about sixteen, which was close enough to his age that they should be compatible.

And... he didn't know why he'd just thought that. She came from the opposite side of the war. But stars, she grew more gorgeous the longer he looked. Lux gulped and managed to speak normally when she raised a brow at him again for taking too long. "No, not bad at all." He congratulated himself for coming up with something that didn't sound too stupid (like: you're the most beautiful girl ever. Wanna make out?).

Ahsoka rolled her eyes and turned away as she felt the wave of desire roll off of Lux. She'd experienced more than her share of that emotion from males of many species already. Why did they see a pretty togruta or twi'lek girl and immediately think she was good for one thing only? And how come it hurt that Lux had turned out just like any other boy? "Ugh," she practically spat out. "It seems boys are the same whether they're Republic or Separatist." Ahsoka walked away from him, back towards her destination of the pretty gazebo, where she thought she might find a peaceful place to meditate for an hour or so to kill some time. (Not that meditating was her...
favourite pastime, she'd much rather practice her Forms, but it did have its benefits when she was feeling agitated.)

Lux watched her stiff form walk away from him for a couple of seconds, shocked that she seemed to be offended by his compliment. What had he done wrong? Nothing, as far as he knew. Could she not take a compliment from him because he was the enemy? And why did he care? Only the stars knew why he ran after her (he should have just turned and left her alone), but he did. "Wait," he called. "How many Separatists have you met?"

Ahsoka stopped and turned back in surprise. "What?" she blinked at him as he caught up to her, now only feeling sincerity from him.

Lux hurried to explain himself as they started walking together again. "Well, I mean, you think we're all the bad guys. But how many of us have you actually met? And droids don't count," he quickly added at the end.

Ahsoka thought that was actually a valid question. "Well, other than military officers like Dooku and Ventress, none, I guess," she admitted. "You and your mother are the first."

Lux stopped and semi copied her pose from a minute ago. "Well, look at me. Am I so bad?"

Ahsoka stopped as well and really took the time to study him, since he was being so serious about it. On the outside, his features were a little too aristocratic and perfect for her taste (not that she was supposed to have any preferences, but she was still a girl), but he was handsome enough. His brown hair suited his light coloured skin, but was too neatly kept, making her wish a strong breeze would mess him up a little. His grey eyes, though, they were kind of fascinating; a hundred different shades of grey competing within them for dominance from silver to almost black in tiny shards. And they were looking at her with something that looked a lot like hope and intelligence. Perhaps he wasn't just a parrot?

So Ahsoka did something she didn't normally do with a standard issue civilian; she closed her eyes and studied his Force signature.

Lux was taken aback when she closed her eyes. "What...?" he started, but she raised a finger in the universal wait sign, so he closed his mouth with a snap and did so, looking at her a little suspiciously now. Was she doing some sort of strange Jedi thing to him?

Ahsoka was surprised by what she found in his signature. It was warm, like a sun, where she expected it to be cold and pitiless. It was also vibrant with energy, the opposite of what she'd expect a lazy preening bird boy to display. There was nothing in his signature that even whispered evil or danger or unfeeling cruelty. He felt kind and caring and compassionate, much like a Jedi should. Ahsoka opened her eyes and stared up at him in surprise. "You are not my enemy."

Lux was surprised by her proclamation, but he felt himself smiling in a ridiculous sense of pride for passing whatever test he'd just been put through. "I am glad to hear that." He held his hand out. "Shall we start again? Hi, I'm Lux, and welcome to my home."

Ahsoka blinked at his hand for a moment and then found herself smiling back up at him in an equally ridiculous fashion. She took his hand and shook it firmly. "I'm Ahsoka, and thank you for your kind hospitality." She was also pleasantly surprised to note that his grip was firmer and his hand wasn't as soft as she expected it to be; there were calluses similar to hers on his palm. Perhaps he fenced? That was considered an acceptable pastime for the nobility, she'd heard. There was also a tiny jolt of electricity where their hands touched that she was firmly ignoring right now.
Lux wasn't surprised that she gripped his hand with easy strength. From what he knew of Jedi, they had to be very fit to do what they did, as the Force didn't do everything for them. It just sort of helped on occasion? Perhaps, now that they'd established something resembling friendly relations, he could ask. Lux was very curious about her and how she lived.

He maintained his grip on her hand and led her the last few steps to the seat under the gazebo and then inclined his head to indicate she should sit.

Ahsoka's eyes were wide as she did so, and then widened even further as he raised her hand to his mouth and kissed her knuckles like a gentleman, meeting her eyes at the same time with a twinkle in his. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, my Lady Ahsoka," he said in his cultured accent that didn't sound so stupid anymore all of a sudden. Ahsoka's lips parted, but no sound came out as she was quite speechless. No one had ever treated her like a lady before. A slave? Yes. A warrior? Yes. A child? Yes, yes, and yes. But a lady? Never. What a novel experience. The little thrill that went through her at the warmth in his eyes was harder to ignore than the first jolt, but she told herself it was nothing.

Lux reluctantly let her hand go and sat a respectable distance away on the long bench, facing her. "So," he started. "Now that we've established we're not enemies, perhaps we could be friends?"

Ahsoka smiled softly at him. "I think I might like that. Tell me. What's it like on your side of the war? Because my side is all: take down droid after droid after droid, occasionally chase after and try not to get killed by Grievous or Ventress, watch my friends get killed one by one, and then listen to the Jedi Council and the Senate try to justify it all for hours on end. It all seems so pointless to me."

Lux felt his chest hurt for her at the almost hidden despair he heard in her voice. He'd had no idea that it was that bad in the thick of the war. "It is pointless!" Lux said passionately. "I know why the war started, and I agree with the concept that the galaxy needs to be run in a better fashion, but I think everyone has gone about it the wrong way. I hear things in the political circles on my side that make me think that no one actually knows what they're doing except for maybe Dooku and his immediate underlings. Both sides are just throwing lives and credits away like they mean nothing for a cause that is going nowhere. Why? What for?"

Ahsoka shook her head slowly, amazed by his passion. Had she actually found a likeminded individual? Were there more like him? Because the galaxy could really use more people like him and Padme, who also thought the war was needless. "I don't know, Lux, but that's why we're here. Padme is trying to bring this war to an end as best as she can. But she's just one person amongst trillions. More than just us are needed to make a difference. A lot more."

Lux scooted just a fraction closer to her without even realizing it. "I completely agree. I just can't see that happening anytime soon. Not with the way things are going." He snorted. "It's almost like someone is playing everyone like a giant dejark board and laughing in glee as the players destroy each other. The question is, who? Who wins in the end if both the Republic and the Confederacy lose?"

"I don't know that either," Ahsoka said with a tired sigh, suddenly feeling like the weight of the galaxy was resting on her shoulders. "Who else is there?"

Lux shrugged. "No one? I know it's a silly idea, but I haven't been able to shake it since I thought it a few weeks ago." He sighed too and mustered a smile. "How about a happier topic?"

"Like what?" Ahsoka asked curiously.
"What it's like being a Jedi? Aside from the war, that is? What's it like being able to feel the Force? What's it like being able to float stuff and read minds and whatever else you do?"

Ahsoka giggled at his enthusiasm. Now he reminded her of a puppy. She liked puppies. A lot. "To put it in one word, I'd have to say amazing." She teased him deliberately with the short answer, curious to see how he'd react.

Lux groaned. "Come on, you can do better than that. Please?"

Ahsoka couldn't help but grin at the puppy eyes he was giving her now. She'd never think of him as pretty bird again. And she put him out of his misery. She settled onto the bench in a kneeling position, facing him and much closer than they'd started. "The Force really is amazing. If you can feel it, you can feel everything, because it resides in everything. It's like I can become the wind, or the trees, or the sun if I sit still and just listen to it. It can fill you with energy or peace..."

Lux listened to Ahsoka talk about the Force and her life growing up in the Temple in fascination for what had to be at least an hour. And then she got him to talk about his childhood, comparing the two vastly different lifestyles curiously. They stayed outside talking until they were called in for dinner, and even then, they talked some more, much to the amusement of Padme and Mina. And they talked after dinner too, neither feeling tired at all as they sat in front of a fire in the main living room well into the night.

Eventually, silence took over and they just sat watching the flames for a while, neither wanting to be the first to say goodnight and leave the other. So neither did.

When Lux woke up as the first rays of sun flittered through the window and touched his face in warmth, he found Ahsoka sleeping against his shoulder, a soft smile on her lips, her eyelashes looking impossibly long against her cheekbones, and her body curled up tight beside him, keeping the right side of his body pleasantly warm with the heat she radiated.

It was in that moment that Lux realized he'd found the one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with, and was hit with the crushing realization that he never would.

Because she was a Jedi, and they weren't allowed to marry.

It almost broke his heart.
While talking over last minute details with Cody, Obi-Wan kept half an eye on the troops of the 212th as they filed into the transports that would take them up to the Negotiator for their latest assignment in the war against the Separatists; defending the Pantora system yet again. After close to two years of battle, his unit of clones had been almost entirely replaced thrice over. The loss of life was wearing on him more and more with every mission and he didn't know how much longer he could keep fighting like this without snapping at someone. (Preferably Windu.)

Obi-Wan honestly didn't know how Cody did it; sending his brothers into war and watching them die one after another after another. The one time he imagined the clones as thousands of Anakens, constantly sacrificing their lives for a cause they hadn't even chosen to fight for, Obi-Wan had nearly lost it then and there. He'd come so close to comming those heartless Kaminoans and telling them to stop producing clones in the name of the Council. So close to marching into the Senate and demanding that they free the clones and allow them to choose the life they wished to live. So close to storming into the High Council Chamber and telling his fellow Jedi to get their heads out of their asses and see just what the Jedi were becoming; slaves to the Republic just like the clones.

But his ingrained discipline had won once again and Obi-Wan had kept his head down and his mouth shut, like always. Ever since, he was very careful to keep that image buried in the furthest recesses of his mind, just to keep his sanity. But, oh, how that last mission to Zygerria had nearly set him off again.

The frustrated Jedi Master forced his attention back to Cody as they walked together towards the last transport to leave, Cody's matter-of-fact voice detailing the last of the intelligence reports that had come through from the Sujimis sector.

"So to sum up, we've lost our outpost on Orto Plutonia again and there's a Seppie fleet harassing Pantora's defenses?"

Cody nodded once, his golden brown eyes grim and resigned. "Yes, Sir."

Obi-Wan rubbed his already aching forehead. "Force, we're just fighting the same battles over and over again," he grumbled.

"Unfortunately," Cody muttered back on the barest hint of a sigh as they stepped into the waiting transport.

Obi-Wan gave his friend what he hoped was an encouraging smile, even though he could barely find the enthusiasm in himself to keep going through with this farce of a war.

The door was about to slide closed when Obi-Wan felt a little nudge from the Force that made the hairs rise on the back of his neck. He turned around just in time to see a navy blue, Temple issue, speeder glide into the massive landing pad with a very familiar domed skull at the controls, mostly bald pate shining in the late morning sun.

"Now what?"

Cody just shrugged. "Perhaps Skywalker crashed another speeder and you have to go kiss his
booboos better?" His voice was as deadpan as you could get, but his eyes were twinkling.

Stifling the urge to snort with much needed laughter, Obi-Wan raised a teasing brow of admonishment at his Commander.

Cody just grinned back as Obi-Wan made the doors open again and stepped back onto the duracrete. "Is something the matter?" he asked the older Jedi Master as Ki-Adi-Mundi jumped lightly out of the speeder and then reached back in for a small pack.

Ki-Adi smiled rather grimly, shaking his head in a contradictory motion to his forced showing of teeth, making his solitary high ponytail swing. "No. Not in so many words. But the Council and the Chancellor have a new mission for you. I'm to take your place with Commander Cody and deal with the latest Pantoran crisis and you're to report to the High Council Chamber right away."

"Wonderful," the copper haired Jedi replied, heavy on the sarcasm. Too tired to care about the rules regarding needless use of the Force, Obi-Wan summoned his pack from the depths of the transport that someone had already loaded for him and grabbed it from midair, slinging the strap over his shoulder.

Mundi raised a white brow, but refrained from commenting and stepped into the transport beside Cody. Obi-Wan managed a weak smile, and said in a half-hearted teasing fashion, "Try not to get killed while you're gone, Cody. You know I'd be lost without your leadership skills." And I'd miss you. But Obi-Wan refrained from adding that last part with the rather traditional Jedi Master standing right there. (He would never approve of Obi-Wan showing any real attachment for a clone, even if the man was at least sympathetic to them, unlike many others.)

Cody smiled grimly back, his eyes saying he knew the unsaid words anyway. "I'll do my best, Sir."

Glancing between Cody and Ki-Adi, Obi-Wan gave them both a serious look. "May the Force be with you."

Mundi nodded regally. "And you, Obi-Wan. And you."

As the door slid closed, cutting them off from his view, Obi-Wan's sense of dread grew. What the kriff does the Council have in store for me this time?

Hating his life right now and wishing he could just bury his head in Satine's soft chest to hide from the galaxy, Obi-Wan nevertheless sucked it up and drove the speeder back to the Temple as the transport flew away from the base.

He made a brief stop at his small apartment to toss his bag in the door, grateful that Anakin was teaching younglings today, and Ahsoka was actually attending classes like a padawan her age should be. He didn't want to have to come up with answers to questions he had no answers for yet if they had been lounging around in his space like they tended to do when they had a spare moment to be bored.

Trying not to appear as though he was trudging, but feeling like it anyway, Obi-Wan made his way up to the High Council tower via a route he could walk blindfolded he'd done it so many times. He plastered a pleasant but blank expression on his face that he'd had way too much practice doing, and nodded politely at the occasional person that he passed, hands held behind his back in a false appearance of calm.

The ten minute journey through endless hallways, stairs, lifts, and courtyards was over much too quickly and Obi-Wan found himself walking up to the big double doors that enclosed the circular
rooms that housed whatever remnants of the Jedi High Council that were still on planet. He nodded at the masked Temple Guards that were stationed at either side of the doors and pushed his way through one swinging door, burying his emotions behind a shield not even Master Yoda could see behind as he did so.

He found Plo Koon and Yoda talking quietly in the anteroom. They stopped murmuring and greeted him as soon as they saw him as if nothing was wrong, but Obi-Wan could feel their unease through the Force. *What in the nine hells is going on?*

"Obi-Wan," Plo said, walking over to him, Yoda hobbling behind. The tiny green being looked older than ever. *Is he shrinking?* "We've been waiting for you."

"I came as soon as Ki-Adi told me. Nearly missed me, too. I was only seconds away from leaving the planet. This must be important if Master Mundi is taking my place with the 212th."

"It is," Master Koon said gravely. "Something rather disturbing has come to our attention just in the last couple of hours."

*And you all decided to talk about it without me first. How typical.* "I see. I hope I can be of assistance."

"That is the point of you being here, Kenobi," Windu rumbled from the main chamber. Obi-Wan looked through the wide, arched entranceway into the room of diversely shaped chairs that were as unique as the assorted breeds of beings that sat in them, and found Master Windu waiting in something resembling patience for him, already in his cushioned chair. Windu had his hands steepled in front of him and a steely look in his dark eyes. Never a look that Obi-Wan trusted.

As Obi-Wan walked into the main, glass enclosed room, he wondered how long it would take for the older members of the Council to actually treat him as a person with an opinion that mattered and not as just another body to order around. He'd had a chair of his own in this room for nearly two years, and yet, the main players were still leaving him out of the loop more often than not. Yet another frustration to bury behind his mental shield.

Obi-Wan and the other two Council members sat in their chairs. (Yoda made a production of hopping up into his and then turning around and facing the correct way.) Obi-Wan raised an inquisitive brow across the circle to Yoda, Plo, and Windu, waiting for them to brief him on whatever crisis was in the works now.

Windu leaned forward and rested his chin on his fingers. "We pulled you from your mission because there's been a development that we all, including Chancellor Palpatine, believe that you are best suited to deal with."

*Well, there's a ringing endorsement if I ever heard one. I feel so special. Not. If Palpatine wants me to do something, then it's probably a suicide mission. He's been waiting years to sink his talons into Anakin. *You'd like me to negotiate something?* Obi-Wan asked hopefully. He was all for that. Talking with cranky people was a walk in the park compared to running through a battlefield and doing his best not to get killed while keeping as many of his men alive as possible."

"Yes. And no."

*That's helpful."

"We were thinking more along the lines of your spying and marksmanship skills."
That's just kriffing splendid. Why did I insist on learning to shoot a variety of blasters when I was a padawan? Oh, right, I wanted more excitement in my life. Force, was I ever naive back then. "I see."

"I doubt it, but I'll explain," Mace said steadily. "Last night, a male phindian called Moralo Eval, with a reputation of being a criminal mastermind, was captured and interrogated. He has admitted, quite gleefully I might add, to plotting to kidnap the Chancellor. Aside from saying that the plans were already in place, he would not give up any more details."

"And how do I come into this? I doubt I could make him talk anymore than any of you could if he's resistant to mind control."

"As Obi-Wan Kenobi, yes. But as a fellow criminal who had murdered a Jedi, you would have the opportunity to win his trust."

The previous feeling of dread settled like a boulder in Obi-Wan's stomach. "And how am I to pose as a criminal? And who am I supposed to have murdered? The vast majority of the galaxy knows my face thanks to the hungry reporters. I doubt they would believe that I had suddenly given up the Jedi way of life for a life of murder and mayhem."

"Take the place and face of a known bounty hunter, you could," Yoda said, piping up for the first time and looking rather hopeful, like he was suggesting something that was supposed to be fun but everyone knew it would just be a pain in the ass. "Die, Kenobi shall, and suspect your real identity, no one would."

It took Obi-Wan all of three seconds to process that little gem of positive thinking. He wished this was a joke, but the atmosphere in the room was anything but teasing. And then he was exploding out of his chair to stand in a vibrating mass of shocked ginger Jedi, temporarily forgetting his hard-earned calm center. "You want me to WHAT?!"

Windu looked rather pleased with himself as he said, "Die. For a week or two, anyway. Just until you uncover the plans for the kidnapping of the Chancellor and we capture anyone else who is already involved."

Somehow, Obi-Wan kept himself from leaping across the room and strangling the smug look off of Windu's face. After taking a few deep and calming breaths, his vision returned to normal and Obi-Wan's facade of peaceful amusement with the world around him was back in place. "Well, I certainly wasn't expecting this when I woke up this morning," he snarked lightly as he forced himself to sit back down with a lazily dignified posture. "I am honoured you think I'm the only one capable of completing such a dangerous mission. There's only a couple hundred other Jedi Knights that could do this just as well, I'm sure. I can't be the only one who knows how to use a sniper rifle?"

"That is true," Windu admitted. "But we need to impress Eval with a high profile Jedi kill. You and Anakin are the two most visible Jedi we have right now. We obviously can't kill Skywalker, so, since you'll be pretending to be deceased anyway, you might as well complete the mission."

"Your reasoning is, unfortunately, sound," Obi-Wan admitted. He ran a hand through his hair and then left it on the back of his neck, fingers digging into the tense muscles there. Huffing once and feeling more like a pawn than ever, he asked, "So when do I die?"

Windu looked pleased. Yoda and Plo still seemed to be remorseful. What else haven't they told me yet?
"It will take a few days to hire an appropriate bounty hunter to 'kill' you that you can also be surgically changed to resemble, so... a week?" Plo said placatingly. "That should give you lots of time to prepare yourself mentally for the task."

_Thanks_. Obi-Wan was anything but impressed with his latest mission, but one does what one must and all that. He rose to his feet. "If it's all right with you, I'd like to take a meditative retreat for a few days."

Yoda waved his cane at him. "Go. Go. Expected you to do so, I did. Clear, your mind must be."

The young Jedi Master nodded thankfully to the ancient one. "I'll leave right away then. That will give me plenty of time afterwards to prepare Anakin and Ahsoka for what's to come." This last was said as he stepped away from his chair.

The shaking of all of their heads stopped him dead in his tracks, nearly in front of their chairs.

"What is it now?"

Windu stared him down, even from his seated position. "We feel that this is a perfect opportunity to test young Skywalker's ability to let go of attachments. We feel this will be an excellent learning opportunity for both him and Tano. No one is to be told that your death is a ruse, is that understood? The entire galaxy must believe that you have perished for this to work."

_And there's the final axe to fall. The reason Plo is now all but cringing. At least someone else understands this is a very bad idea. Would anyone care if I simply walked out of here and never came back? Maybe Satine and I could finally have those kids we've been dreaming of having for so long. I can't believe Windu seriously believes that my death won't set Anakin off into an absolute rage. They'll be lucky if he doesn't literally tear Coruscant apart looking for my killer. Who is going to be me. This is absolutely kriffing insane. Maybe hiding just how powerful Anakin actually is was a bad idea. Maybe I should have told Yoda how close Anakin is to falling to the Dark Side. How he actually did on Mortis. But I didn't, and now I can't. And, oh stars, I'm going to have to go through with this. Force help me. Forgive me, Anakin._

Obi-Wan stood frozen for a full ten seconds before he blinked, then tucked his hands inside the opposite sleeves of his brown robe and bowed, keeping his eyes shuttered and his mind and emotions shielded behind an imaginary wall of durasteel thicker than he'd ever built it. "Yes, Master. I understand." His voice was cold and bland. "I'll be back in four days. My padawans won't suspect a thing, but I do intend to spend time with them, so please don't send them off on a mission to the far reaches of the Outer Rim or something while I'm gone."

"Still be here, they will, when you return," Yoda reassured. "Doing the right thing, you are."

Obi-Wan nodded his head slightly once more and then continued out of the room, his footsteps soundless and his bearing regal.

He maintained his facade of calm acceptance all the way to his apartment before the veneer cracked. The moment his door closed behind him, he spun and punched the wall, something that was suspiciously akin to rage making his limbs tremble. "Frag!" he bellowed when his knuckles bloomed with pain as at least two of them cracked.

Shaking his hand out, he stalked back and forth in his living room, four steps each way, seething. _How can they do that to Anakin and Ahsoka? Don't they know how devastated they would be if they thought I had died? This is more than a test; this is cruelty. Kriff, I should tell them anyway. Surely they can act appropriately grim and grieving to convince those old bastards that they believe the_
He stopped and buried his face in his hands, scrubbing hard. *But what if they can't and Yoda reads them like a book? I could lose my position on the Council for disobeying a direct order. They could cause the mission to fail if anyone sees them not being as mournful as they should be. It would be hard to pretend to be grieving for two weeks, every moment of every day. *"Urrgggghhh!"

Obi-Wan didn't know what to do. He couldn't think. He needed help. Still shaking, he went to his room and dug out the long range comm unit from his dresser that he'd appropriated many years ago. The unit was already preset to talk to a matching device located on Mandalore.

He quickly typed out a message. *Meet me in the usual place as soon as possible. It's important.*

Just the act of sending her a message was enough to calm him back down. Satine would know what to do. She was good like that. And she could hug him and make it all better. Force, did he ever need her arms around him right now. He could also count on her to keep his fake assassination a secret and act as heartbroken as necessary for as long as necessary. Her acting skills were excellent, as he'd learned during their year on the run.

Obi-Wan didn't care that talking to his wife would constitute as breaking a direct order. He considered her his other half and there was no way in hell he was going to let her believe he'd actually died. Knowing her, she'd bring her wrath down on the heads of the Senate and the Council until she had them all quivering in a corner from fear for letting someone kill her husband, completely forgetting that their marriage was a secret. *Force, I wish she could. That would seriously make this worth it.*

Smiling a little at the mental image, calm restored, Obi-Wan made his way through the apartment to the little kitchen and left a note on a datapad for Anakin to find the next time he raided his fridge. (Probably at dinner tonight.)

**Anakin,**

*I've been pulled off the Pantora mission for a diplomatic one. Master Mundi has gone with Cody instead. I wonder who's going to be driven insane first? I'll be back in 4 days. Be good. Try not to crash anything. And don't forget what I told you this morning; make sure you and Ahsoka spend at least an hour every evening meditating. I'll know if you don't.* :D.

**Love,**

**Your Pain in the Shebs Master**

Obi-Wan was still grinning as he shouldered his bag and left his apartment, imagining the giant eye rolls his note would receive from both of his padawans.

Fifteen minutes later, he was leaving the atmosphere in a borrowed red and white Delta-7 Aethersprite with an equally borrowed astromech because his usual fighter and droid that Anakin had modified for him were on the Negotiator and long gone by now. After letting the appropriate people know that he was taking one, Obi-Wan docked with a hyperdrive ring and a minute later, he was shooting through the streaming stars with nothing to do but think.

Since thinking wasn't very pleasant right now, Obi-Wan opted to sleep for the six hours it would take to reach Draboon.

Closing his eyes, he let the peaceful rhythms of meditation lull him into a doze that soon turned to
He woke up six hours later to the beeping of the droid, letting him know he had arrived, a grumbling stomach, an uncomfortable bladder, and the ghost of a dream about Satine and swimming in a waterfall fed pool skirting the edges of his memory. The tightness of his usually loose fitting trousers indicated it had been a rather good dream, but the stiffness in his neck said he probably shouldn't have slept that long in such an awkward position.

For the sake of discipline, Obi-Wan chose to concentrate on the stiffness in his neck, rotating his head on his shoulders and rubbing the back of it until he felt half normal again. The issue in his trousers dissipated as he ignored it. (But he did mentally promise it some action in a bit. They were seeing the galaxy's most beautiful blonde Mandalorian shortly, after all.) His stomach and bladder would be taken care of after he landed.

Focusing on the lush green and blue planet in front of him, Obi-Wan took over the controls of the fighter that the droid had already undocked from the hyperdrive ring for him, and flew down to a thick jungle near the equator. A familiar clearing soon came into view and he landed the small fighter on a patch of grass beside the pool and waterfall from his dream.

Also on the patch of grass was a Mandalorian ship that dwarfed the Jedi fighter. The blue and grey colours of Clan Kryze decorated the Kom'rk transport / fighter that no one would ever suspect the pacifist Duchess of Mandalore of knowing how to fly.

The Duchess herself was standing on the ramp, waiting for Obi-Wan in a simple (for her) emerald green dress that hugged her curves as a light breeze blew it against her. Her pale gold hair was loose and floating around her cheeks and shoulders on the same breeze. Stars, she's beautiful. I have to be the luckiest male in the galaxy.

The Jedi lost no time extracting himself from the cockpit of his fighter and leaping down to the ground, bag back over his shoulder. "Tine'ika!" He bounded up to the ramp, feeling like a teenager again with the amount of happy energy coursing through him.

She rushed to meet him halfway. "Obi! What..."

He cut her off with his mouth, sweeping her up into his arms so her feet dangled off the ground. Love. Love. Missed you. Missed you. My Satine. Mine. Mine. He didn't let her go until he'd kissed them both breathless. And even then, he kept his arms around her waist and his forehead pressed to hers, eyes closed, savouring the feel of her soft body against his, the sweet rose scent of her shampoo, and her arms hanging onto him tightly via his neck.

Satine let him stay that way for a couple of minutes, not saying anything, sensing that he needed the quiet time. But eventually her curiosity got the better of her compassion and she cupped his face, forcing him to look at her. She judged his mood by his eyes, currently looking like an overcast sky, meaning he was upset about something. "Obi'ika, what is it? What's wrong?"

Obi-Wan stroked the knuckles of his non broken hand over her satin soft cheek, staring into her tropical sea eyes, now full of concern for him. "Satine, darling, you're going to have to do some very very good acting for me in the near future."

She pulled back slightly, raising an elegant brow in surprise. "What in the world have those mir'osike asked you to do now?"

His mouth quirked at the imagined indignation on Windu's and Yoda's faces if they knew how
they'd just been insulted. "My Masters have seen fit to arrange for me to die. On purpose."

"WHAT?!"

Mando'a words:

Shebs – butt, ass, etc.

'i'ka added to the end of a name – deepest term of affection. Like darling, baby, sweetheart, and love all rolled into one.

Mir'osike – plural of dung-for-brains.
"Don wanna go bed!" the small boy dressed in nexu covered pajamas wailed as Mira chased him around the house.

Mira paused to blow a lavender lock of hair off her face that had escaped from what was once a neat bun piled on top of her head. (Bath time and wrestling Ezra into his pajamas were responsible for her new disheveled look.) Her hands came to rest on her hips as she glared after the retreating back of her astonishingly fast three and a half year old son, who was now disappearing from sight around a corner of the hallway. "Ezra Bridger! You stop Force Running this instant!"

"No! No! No!" was accompanied by the sound of little hit feet pounding up the stairs.

"Ephraim! He's coming your way!" she called to her husband over their mental bond, carefully making sure that Ezra didn't intercept the thought.

"Gotcha!" Ephraim crowed from the next floor as Mira jogged up the stairs. That was quickly followed by an, "Owwww!" and a crash. "Kriffing hell!"

Mira winced in sympathy as her husband's mental curse filled her mind and she rounded the top of the stairs to see him rubbing the back of his head with not a single blue haired menace in sight. There was, however, a broken crystal vase spilling flowers and water onto the floor.

"Oh, Raimy," Mira sighed as she carefully skirted the mess so she didn't get any broken glass in her feet. "This is getting out of hand."

Ephraim looked down at his beautiful wife, frown and worry lines sinking into her otherwise flawless skin, and sighed. "I know, Mira. He's never been violent before. And his control of the Force is getting much too good for this nightly chase nonsense to continue." He glanced at the side table the vase used to be on, a couple of metres down the hall from where he was standing to emphasize his point.

"I think it's the nightmares," Mira said as she reached up and touched the back of Ephraim's head. She closed her eyes as she focused on the location of the pain, the delicate throbbing and rising heat of the injury making its presence known to her sensitive fingertips. After concentrating the Force on the injury for a few seconds, soothing the hurt away, she opened her eyes and brushed her fingers along Ephraim's bearded jaw in a quick caress, before focusing her eyes down the hallway, sending out her senses to find the little hellion that had taken over the body of her sweet natured son.

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"I'm pretty sure he unlocked the door to the roof and flew up there to his favourite hiding spot," Ephraim said resignedly, noticing where Mira's focus was now. "I'll go get him."

Mira raised a lavender eyebrow and gave him a sceptical look. "Alone?"

He shot her a smirk over his shoulder as he walked down the hallway of bedrooms. "Where's he going to go from there? Unless he's taught himself to Force jump, too."

"Don't give him any ideas!" Mira called, shaking her head, making the loose lock of hair fall over
her eyes again. She shoved it back and then turned her attention to the mess on the floor with a sigh; she'd really liked that vase.

"Not trying to," Ephraim muttered as he arrived at the stairwell to the roof and found the door open, just as he'd suspected.

His son was too clever by half when it came to manipulating things with the Force. The lock button was definitely above Ezra's normal reach, so that left only one option; Ezra was using the Force. Again. How was he supposed to teach him that using his power was something that had to be hidden? It was getting to the point where they were afraid to take Ezra out in public for fear he would do something that would give himself away as a Force user.

The results of that would be catastrophic in this new galaxy that despised Jedi and hunted them for a hefty profit.

The idea of punishing his son for using his talent was abhorrent to Ephraim. And Ezra was still too young to understand the real concept of having to keep a secret. Force knows, they'd tried, but to Ezra, a secret was a game, and not to be taken seriously.

How do you make a three year old understand that it would mean all of their lives if he were to float a toy in public?

Ephraim was starting to think that Mira's idea of moving to the country and starting a farm was going to become a necessity sooner than later. The idea of giving up their well paying jobs for the gamble of a new profession didn't sit well, though.

Ephraim heaved a sigh as he walked through another open door and emerged onto the flat roof of their house, which was surrounded by a low wall. The twilight sky flickered with a few brave stars in one direction and glowed orange on the horizon in the other. He immediately turned to the right and walked to the garden that sprouted many green things for Mira's loving hands. Almost half the roof was taken over now by the rows of pots that contained flowers or trees or vegetables.

Ephraim smiled as he saw the first little tree that had come to live up here once it was too big to stay in the house. It was now in a massive pot and it was anything but a little twig now.

And that's where he found his son. At the base of the tree, buried amongst the willowy branches, Ezra was curled around his knees, sobbing softly. The wild white lothcat that had taken to visiting their house ever since Ezra was born was snuggled up to his side, purring comfortingly.

"Ezra," Ephraim said quietly, chest tight with emotion, as he knelt down in front of the tree's ceramic pot and the lothcat dashed away to sit on the edge of the roof wall, tail twitching with annoyance that another human had shown up. (The toka had only ever let Ezra touch it and was strangely immune to mind control.)

"M sowwy, Daddy," came from the muffled depths of his arms, Ezra not moving his head at all.

"It's okay, buddy. I'm not mad at you. Please come out."

Ezra peeked up at him, big blue eyes swimming with tears. Ephraim held his arms out and Ezra immediately launched himself into them, wrapping little arms around his neck, crying harder.

Ephraim held him and rocked him, making hushing sounds as he ran a soothing hand over the wild dark blue hair that stuck up in a dozen different directions.

Ezra's sobs eventually quieted to mere hiccups and then even those died away. Ezra pulled back a
little, standing on Ephraim's thighs with his bare feet. "M sowwy," he said again solemnly, meeting Ephraim's eyes shyly. "Did'nt mean to hurt you."

Ephraim hugged him as he rose to his feet, carrying his son back to the stairs, and brushing off a few clinging wood chips curtesy of the pot from the seat of his pajamas. "I know, little buddy. I know. Mommy made it better. Don't worry."

Even as Ezra's body went limp with exhaustion, he said, "Thas good. I jus don wanna go bed."

Ephraim kissed the top of his head and closed his eyes in defeat for a moment before walking down the stairs, closing and locking the doors behind him with a quick wave of his hand. "Do you want to sleep with us tonight?"

Ezra lit up along their bond, sending Ephraim a wave of relief. "Yes, pwease."

Ephraim met Mira's eyes as she closed the door to the closet, presumably putting away the broom and dustpan after sweeping up the glass, since the mess on the floor was gone. Knowing her, the water and flowers were already in a new vase somewhere in the house. She met him halfway and put a hand on Ezra, kissing his tear streaked cheek. "I'll go make us some popcorn and we can watch a movie until you're sleepy, okay baby?"

Ezra beamed a happy smile at her, his earlier sorrow forgotten. "Yay! Lillest Wolfy?"

Mira smiled while inwardly cringing at the thought of seeing Ezra's current favourite movie for the thirty-ninth time. "Yes, baby. We can watch 'The Littlest Lothwolf'."

Mira met Ephraim's eyes and they shared a mental eye roll before she ran her hand over Ezra's hair one more time and then turned for the stairs.

Ephraim carried Ezra into the master bedroom and got him settled in the middle of the big bed, propped up by a pillow. He then called up the movie in question and started it playing on the large holoscreen on the wall opposite of the bed.

Ezra squeaked with happiness when he saw the lothwolf puppy appear on the screen, bouncing up and down on the bed a couple of times.

Ephraim watched him with a fond smile, ignoring the movie because he honestly wouldn't mind if he never saw it again even though he used to think it was pretty good. "I'm just going to go help Mommy for a couple minutes. You okay in here if I go?"

Ezra waved him off absently, eyes glued to the holoscreen.

Ephraim felt so loved in that moment.

Not.

Laughing softly to himself, he made his way downstairs. He found Mira staring at the food heater blankly as it turned a bag of little seed kernels into fluffy white goodness.

He wrapped his arms around her middle from behind and rested his chin on her shoulder. "I guess we're not snuggling tonight, either," he said forlornly, only half joking.

Mira glanced around at him wryly as she wrapped her arms around his. "I'm pretty sure I'm starting to forget what 'snuggling' feels like, it's been so long since Ezra hasn't ended up in our bed."
Ephraim gave her a mock hurt look. "What, that hurried fumble in the shower this morning doesn't count?"

Mira giggled, kissing the large nose that was right beside her cheek. "Hmmm. That one's up for debate." She squeezed his hand as her expression fell back into serious. "I've been thinking..."

"Do I want to know?" Ephraim asked carefully when she paused and looked hesitant.

Mira sighed and turned around in his arms as they both ignored the chiming of the food heater, letting them know their snack was ready. She looked up into his stunning royal blue eyes that still made her heart and stomach flutter and said, "I think we should try and connect to Ezra when he starts dreaming. I want to know what's making him wake up every night in a sweat and screaming 'bad fire' over and over."

Ephraim nodded and leaned his forehead into hers, closing his eyes for a second as he breathed deeply. "All right. It's terribly invasive, but hopefully it will give us some answers."

"I don't see any other way," Mira said softly as she pulled out of his arms and grabbed the hot bag out of the food heater, and then poured it into the waiting bowl.

Ephraim filled three glasses with water and followed his wife up the stairs.

They found Ezra curled on his side under the covers, already sound asleep, lulled by the comforting sound of the movie. They quietly put the bowl and glasses on the bedside tables and then Ephraim turned the volume down on the movie to barely audible. They took turns using the refresher and changing into pajamas suitable for having a guest in their bed and then slid under the covers on either side of Ezra.

Ezra snuggled into Mira's side with a mumbled, "Mommy," and she wrapped an arm around him. Ephraim wrapped an arm around them both, kissed her softly, and then they settled back against the pillows to wait for the inevitable nightmares to arrive.

In the meantime, Ephraim changed the movie with the remote to something they hadn't seen four million times (in this case, a weekly t.v. show about a bumbling female bounty hunter that somehow manages to catch her prey out of sheer luck by the end of every episode), and turned the volume up slightly, not wanting to wake up Ezra. Mira put the popcorn bowl in Ephraim's lap and floated a glass of water over to her side of the bed, taking a sip before placing it on her nightstand.

They enjoyed their show while they kept a mental feel on Ezra's sleeping emotions, eating all the popcorn before the hour long show was two thirds done.

The show was down to the final chase scene when Ezra started to mumble in his sleep, turning restlessly, shivering, and frowning.

Ephraim immediately paused the show and put a hand on Ezra's head beside Mira's as he closed his eyes, diving deeply into Ezra's consciousness.

Mira's was already there, her breathing falling into synch with her son's rapidly increasing breaths. What she saw in Ezra's mind broke her heart.

*He was shivering, the winter rain cutting through his clothes to the skin beneath as he huddled in an alleyway. His ribs hurt with every shuddering breath from where the rodian had kicked him when he tried to steal a loaf of bread from the display case. His tears mingled with the rain as they streaked down his face, his stomach hurting from hunger almost as much as the ache in heart.*
"Where are you, Mommy?"

"Fly faster, Hera! He's fading!" He looks at the back of a green twi-lek's head as he clutches a man with a brown ponytail and a green shirt in his lap, blood covering them both.

He pauses on a rooftop, gazing back at their home with mournful eyes. Flames crackle through the windows and smoke billows into the evening sky. "Goodbye," he whispers.

A grey skinned pau'an male with red tattoos and Sith eyes knelt before a holo projection of the most feared man in the galaxy; Darth Vader.

"We are on route to Mustafar, My Lord. And I have found out who the wannabe Jedi really is. The padawan of Master Billaba survived, despite the reports otherwise."

The masked hologram seemed to grow in size and intensity. "He may live for now, but not for long. I look forward to your arrival. Make sure he's still breathing when you get here."

"Yes, My Lord," the pau'an said as he bowed his head humbly.

A girl with white and purple hair, dressed in colourful Mandalorian armour, kicks the brown haired man from the earlier vision off a rock ledge that looks kind of like the seats of an amphitheatre. She leapt down after him and raised a black lightsabre over her head. The man, lying on the ground, raised his hand to shield his eyes.

But the dark light of her lightsabre illuminated him. His eyes were blurred, and there was a scar across his face.

He couldn't possibly see the anguish on the girl's face as she stood over him with a lightsabre raised to kill.

He watches the brown haired man hold back an epic explosion with a Force shield while standing on top of a large round surface. The name, 'Kanan' rings through the crackling air in a female's voice. A green twi'lek in an orange prisoner outfit is thrown into his arms and then he sees those blurry eyes turn teal green again for one last second before the man is engulfed in the flames.

He screams on the inside as the woman in his arms shakes with heart wrenching tears.

"Ezra Bridger. Mine at last," a creepy voice says from inside a portal.

"Run!" a female says commandingly.

He does.

The blue flames follow.

They catch him, burning through the armour on his leg.

"He's coming through," he cries as he's dragged down the invisible path, hands clawing for purchase on the ground that isn't really there.
Evil laughter fills his mind.

The flames chase him again.

Mira's eyes popped open as Ezra woke up screaming. Tears roll down her cheeks as she gathered him into her arms and rocks him as her son sobs, "Bad fire. Bad fire," over and over.

"Shhhh. Shhhhh," she breathes. "Mommy's here. Nothing can hurt you. Mommy's here." Her eyes meet Ephraim's as he hovered over them, his hands on Ezra's back and her shoulder, sending both of them waves of comfort over their bond even as tears shimmered in his own eyes.

Mira couldn't take the fear radiating from her son anymore, now that she understood these weren't just normal nightmares of scary bogeymen. Gathering the Force around her, she closed her eyes and laid a hand on Ezra's head, diving into his mind again. "Forget the nightmares," she whispered to him. And he did, his mind calming instantly. "Sleep," she adds.

He does, his little body going limp in her arms. Mira hugs him tighter.

"Force, Mira, what are we going to do?" Ephraim whispered helplessly. "Did you see all that? Alone, like he'd been abandoned or something by us. That ponytailed man that showed up a lot. Darth Vader. The World Between Worlds. Palpatine doing Sith alchemy." Ephraim shuddered. "Is that our son's future? Is that what he sees every night?"

Mira nodded reluctantly. "That and probably much more. Our son is a Force Seer. Maybe one of the most powerful ones ever born. He's too young to deal with those kinds of visions. Too young by far." Mira trembled as she hugged her son, her purple eyes still welling with tears as a new resolve took over her. "You're not going to like this but I know what to do for him."

Ephraim didn't like the tone of her voice. It sounded much too resigned for his liking. "What?"

Mira breathed deeply as she settled within herself, knowing this was the only way. The tears dried and she met Ephraim's eyes again. "I'm going to suppress his connection to the Force."

"Mira! You can't! He's already too attached to it and dependant on it."

"I can. And I will. You can't stop me, Ephraim. Ezra can't live like this. The visions will just increase in strength and frequency to the point where he gets them at any time during the day. I've seen this before and the child was left alone to train as usual. She went insane until we completely wiped her memory and permanently cut off her connection to the Force."

"Oh, Mira." Ephraim didn't know what else to say. He didn't want his son to lose his connection to the Force, but at the same time, it would make a lot of their current problems much better. He hung his head, not able to look at her anymore as he felt ashamed at that last thought. "Just... do it."

Mira raised a hand from Ezra's back and touched Ephraim's chin, making him look up at her again, thinking he couldn't bear to look at her because of what she was going to do their son. "I'm sorry, Raimy."

"I know," he whispered back. "So am I." He leaned forward and kissed her forehead, which she took as a sign of permission.

Mira closed her eyes again and sent her consciousness back into Ezra's sleeping mind. She travelled through his brain until she found the section that interacted with the midi-chlorians and made it inactive. The Force whispered a sense of confusion to her that settled as she told it that
Ezra just wasn't ready for that kind of connection yet and that they could have him back when he was older. And then she went through all of his memories and erased anything that had to do with his Force powers or their own. And then, as the final straw that nearly broke her, she cut his bond to them so that it was nothing more than the most fragile of strings. He would probably be able to still sense if they were alive, but he wouldn't be able to hear their thoughts anymore or sense where they were.

Now that she had effectively removed her son of one of his senses, Mira opened her eyes again. "It's done. The suppression should hold until he's a teenager, at the very least, and trickle back to him in stages so he won't be overwhelmed."

Ephraim gave her a wan smile. "I understand why you had to do it, but I feel like a very bad parent right now."

Mira returned his sad smile as she lay Ezra back down under the covers and tucked him back in. "So do I. And there's something else I bet you haven't thought of yet."

Ephraim raised a brow as they settled down around their son, neither willing to leave him right now even though it was nowhere near their normal bedtime. "What's that?"

Mira gave him her best serious look. "We have to stop using the Force, too, or he'll remember what he's missing."

Ephraim sagged into the bed, staring up at the ceiling in disbelief. "Kriff, that's going to suck."

Mira snorted at that colossal understatement. "Like the vacuum of space, dear."
Mara Jade's Names

A/N: Mara Jade does not exist in canon anymore, so I felt free to give her my own version of a back story. I've never read a Mara Jade E.U. book, so I have no idea if this is similar at all. All I have to go on is what I briefly skimmed through on Wookieepedia. I may be essentially making up an entirely new character that simply has the same name and colouring as the E.U. Mara Jade. I don't know, but I hope you like her.

Luke's story is partially canon and partially my A.U.

Mara Jade's Names:

*D148/14 BBY, Coruscant*

The First Sister carried the unconscious red haired child into the Dark Lord's throne room, as requested. She'd had to make the brat sleep almost the entire trip here, which took almost two days from the girl's remote home planet of Kirtania in the Outer Rim, because she WAILED whenever she was awake, screaming for her parents. The First Sister had to Force her to eat and use the refresher, turning her into a puppet. It almost made her feel bad. But not quite, as all feelings had been torn from her long ago when she'd been imprisoned and abandoned by her fellow Jedi who'd refused to listen to her.

Now she worked for the Emperor, and in some ways it was most satisfying. Because it meant that she had been right. In other ways, it just made her colder as the years went by, the brutality of her job as a Jedi hunter wearing on the sliver of her heart left that remembered who she used to be.

The other part of her job was to seek out Force sensitive children under the age of three and execute any that were older than that.

This girl had been easy to find, she was so bright with the Force. Her parents hadn't liked the idea of giving up their daughter, though. Those pathetic souls were long cold and dead by now, having felt the First Sister's icy disdain over their pitiful attempts to stop her from taking their rather talented child.

Hopefully she was what the Sith Master wanted, despite being a few months too old. The last dozen children the First Sister had found for him hadn't been strong enough in the Force for his liking, but they'd been kept nonetheless, to be trained as Inquisitors or spies.

The First Sister approached the dark cloaked man staring out into the night of Coruscant that never slept. "My Lord, I think I have found a suitable candidate."

Darth Sidious turned around slowly, his hands tucked in his sleeves and his grotesque face shadowed by the hood of his robes. "We shall see," he said in the voice that never failed to send chills down the First Sister's already cold spine.

She set the child on the cold marble floor. "Wake her," he said. So she did, releasing her hold on the girl's mind.

The girl almost immediately awoke, sitting up and looking around frantically before she started WAILING again for her parents. The awful racket stopped almost immediately, though, as soon as the girl's wide green eyes landed on the darkly enshrouded Emperor. She gulped and scrambled
away from him, not stopping until she bumped into the First Sister's legs. Then she actually huddled against her like she was a place of safety.

The First Sister didn't know what to think about that. She was supposed to be a scary Darksider too, but obviously not. Not in comparison to HIM, anyway.

"Come here, child," he said.

She shook her head and actually wrapped her arms around one of the First Sister's legs. She not so gently removed the thin arms and took a step back, not wanting to get in the middle of this.

"Come here, child," he said again, the tone of his voice becoming more demanding and filled with compulsion. It was all the First Sister could do not to rush too him herself.

Sensing that she had no choice, the child slowly rose on her trembling legs and walked up to the Emperor, staring up at him with disdain and fear radiating from her. "I want to go home," she said to him in a surprisingly steady and articulate voice.

Sidious merely looked down at her, expressionless. "You are home now. Can you accept that?"

Her little fists balled as anger took over the fear. "Never! I. WANT. MY. MOMMY. AND. DADDY. You ugly monster!" As she spoke, the Force in the room swelled and whirled, small objects lifting on the currents she was creating.

The First Sister could sense that Sidious was pleased with the display. Very pleased. He ALMOST smiled at the girl. (What a scary sight that would be.) "Good," he said in that creepy voice. "Your anger is very good."

The girl was obviously surprised by this, as the Force stilled and the objects fell. "But Mommy always said that we mustn't get angry. Mommy says that anger hurts people."

"That's the idea," Sidious replied, and the girl took a step back again, shaking her head in denial. He ignored her as he turned his attention to the First Sister. "You have done well. Take her to her quarters and make sure she has everything she needs to remain alive, but nothing more. This one, I shall train myself."

The First Sister nodded, eyes almost sympathetic behind her mask. The girl would not have an easy time of it. "Yes, My Lord."

She waved a hand and put the panicking girl back to sleep, not wanting to carry her wailing and struggling form through the hallways (been there, done that), and scooped her up off the floor.

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D160/14 BBY

Darth Vader first heard about the girl a little more than two weeks later. He'd been away from Coruscant, putting the finishing touches on his castle on Mustafar, a project his Master knew about to cover any seeping thoughts of his other castle, the secret one on Vjun, his sanctuary.

Now he strode through the halls of his Master's palace, once a place were countless Jedi used to reside, curiosity eating at him over the rumours that Sidious had found a child he wanted to train himself. Usually, the children were trained by himself or the Grand Inquisitor, whenever they had time, or by the First Sister and a few other Inquisitors when they didn't.

If his Master was already thinking about replacing him, Vader knew his own plans for destroying
the Sith Lord would have to be stepped up. His search for his own secret apprentice would have to become a little more focused.

Following his sense of his Master, he found him in his personal training chamber, running through Forms effortlessly in complete defiance of his haggard and stooped appearance.

He didn't see the girl at first, she'd shrunk herself so far into a corner. But when he did, Vader almost felt alarmed at her appearance. Something within him knew this wasn't right, but he would never say it. Nor even dare really think it. Master was far too good at serving pain to any who opposed him. Even his ‘Apprentice’. Maybe even ESPECIALLY his Apprentice.

She was chained to the wall, her tiny wrists and ankles bloody from struggling against the manacles. Her clothing was filthy and her hair that might be red under the grime had been shorn off close to the scalp. The only real colour left in her gaunt face was her brilliant green eyes which he bet changed shade with her emotions. Right now, despite her obvious pain and hunger, they shone with cold fury as they watched Sidious train.

Vader should never have even dared to think it in the presence of his Master, but he did anyway. In this tiny life form, he may have finally found the ally he needed to overthrow his Master. It would be a long wait though. The girl was barely three years old if she was a day, judging by her small size. Vader would continue to work on his own plans, because he wasn't stupid. The girl could become just another mindless slave to the Emperor just as easily as keep that spirit of defiance.

He would have to wait and see.

Somewhere along the long painful road he'd embarked on, Vader had finally learnt patience.

To cover his thoughts, Vader drew his lightsabre and offered to spar with his Master. Sidious gladly accepted, of course, always pleased to take another opportunity to defeat his Apprentice.

Vader hated how limited his movements were in his suit compared to how agile he used to be, but he was learning to compensate. Every year spent in it was another year he came closer to being able to defeat his Master in training. Until then, he would simply keep accepting the inevitable and LEARN.

He was very careful to express the bare minimum of interest in the child when they finished training, somehow finding the perfect blend of curiosity but couldn't-care-less-what-his-Master-did-with-her attitude that appeased his Lordship.

How Vader hated him.

_D271/14 BBY_

It was months before Vader found the opportunity to speak to the girl without getting caught. He'd become adept at finding her Force signature, bright little thing that it was, and the day finally came when Sidious left the girl chained in his training chamber while he was called away to an emergency Senate meeting.

Usually, Sidious took her back to her quarters (cell) and locked her in, he also being the only one who knew the code. Any attempts to override the system would immediately trigger alarms, so Vader hadn't been able to sneak in to her room.

He felt bad for the girl, whose only source of food or water or 'freedom' was the most vile man in the galaxy. Vader knew he was a very close second, but even he had some standards left over. He
could not stand to see anyone be treated like they were a slave. And this girl, she was the most obvious slave of all of them. Technically, anyone who served the Emperor was enslaved to him, having not much of a will of their own, but they still had the illusion of freedom.

This girl had nothing.

Not even a name anymore. Sidious had stripped her of everything she valued; her family, her freedom, her pretty hair, her name.

He called her 'Girl', and when she insisted that she had a name, he punished her to yet another day without food. Vader had heard through the gossip mill that she'd finally stopped insisting that she be called by her former name. In the end, it was probably for the best. It was easier to become a new person if you didn't cling to things like your old name, or your memories, or your dreams...

He shut down that line of thought quickly as he strode into the training chamber like he belonged there. The girl might not be able to keep her old name, but that didn't mean she couldn't have a new one. She just had to keep it to herself until Sidious was in the right mood to call her by a name that wasn't 'Girl'. She could suggest it then.

Vader strode across the large room to the girl's usual corner, finding her with her arms wrapped around her knees and her eyes barely peeking up at him over the edge of her arms, distrust readily apparent in their depths. She was still a little too thin, but at least she was clean. She must have been well behaved enough lately to earn her a bath and clean clothes. Vader remembered baths wistfully. He used to love immersing himself in water. He particularly remembered baths with Padme...

And... he's slamming the door shut on those memories too. It had been five years, and it still hurt just as much as the day he'd lost her. Only to himself, would Vader ever admit that he was still a wreck of a man, longing for what he once had, and loathing himself for losing it all.

Emmy watched the man in the breathing suit come towards her and immediately suspected the worst.

So far, no one in this horrible place had been nice to her. She missed her parents terribly, but she'd lost the ability to cry weeks ago. Any time the Evil One caught her crying he filled her with pain just by thinking her nerves into trying to jump out of her skin. Now she didn't bother with showing her pain in any outward fashion anymore. It only brought more.

Emmy was a very smart girl, and she wasn't stupid enough to incite more pain if she didn't have to.

She was also learning to control her temper and the powers it brought. The Evil One liked it when she made things float, so she was learning to summon her anger at will (not hard to do, in her current state) and float whatever was available.

But she missed the other things she used to do with her powers before she was captured. She missed sitting in the forest as Mommy painted pretty pictures and she would close her eyes and feel the rainforest around her. When she did that, she could play with the swinging creatures in the trees high above, or fly with a bird as it soared above the canopy, or crawl amongst the fallen leaves with the tiniest of bugs. She'd had a million adventures while never moving a muscle and she MISSED it.

She also missed the hours spent in her daddy's lap as they read books together. She'd been learning to read on her own, and she'd loved impressing him by plucking the words she didn't know out of
his mind and saying them confidently. Daddy had always given her a hug and a kiss on her head when she said something difficult like 'ensconced'. (She still didn't know what that meant, but she could say it if she saw it.)

Emmy was terribly afraid that she was never going to see her parents again. The lady in black had made her sleep when she'd screamed, sensing her ill intent. The last time she'd seen her parents, they'd been running towards her, fear on their faces as she was snatched from the fenced backyard of their home.

The next time Emmy remembered being awake, she'd been on a ship in the middle of space somewhere and no matter how far she'd stretched her mind, she couldn't FEEL her parents. She didn't like to think about what that might mean, but she was afraid she knew.

The breathing man stopped in front of her, towering like an ancient tree high above her. He surprised her when he slowly lowered himself into a crouching position, his cape settling around him like a black pool.

Emmy scooted back a fraction out of reflex, but made herself stop. Flinching never resulted in anything good either. She made herself meet the cold black eyes of his mask, summoning all the courage she had. "What do you want?" she accused him.

The man reached into his utility belt and pulled out a wrapped protein bar and held it towards her. "I thought you might be hungry," he said in his deep mechanical voice.

Emmy stared at the offering suspiciously. She didn't trust this man. He was associated with the Evil One. She'd seem them training together with the red swords that snapped and hissed and cried in her mind with years of built up pain. Their swords were alive and they HURT. If they didn't know that they'd made their swords hurt, that was yet another thing to despise about them.

"What do you want me to do for it?" she asked, as she'd already long ago learnt that nothing came for free. If she wanted to eat, she had to perform. If she wanted to sleep, she had to watch hours of holovids about how to hurt and kill other people first. She rarely slept now, because she continued to see the vids in her nightmares, but they changed so SHE was the one doing the killing. Somehow, Emmy knew this is what the Evil One had planned for her. He'd never outright said it, but she knew.

"Nothing," the breathing man replied. "It's yours. I can feel your hunger. Please take it."

Emmy tentatively reached forward with one hand and grabbed it quickly, then tore the wrapping open and bit off a tiny corner, chewing slowly and savouring the bland flavour. She'd also learnt to make every bite count, because she was never sure when the next meal would be offered.

She studied the breathing man, trying to read his intentions, but coming up against a solid wall. "Why are you really here?"

Emmy felt his amusement now. He'd opened up his shields a fraction. "You are a smart one, aren't you?"

Emmy nodded once in answer as she chewed another small bite. She patiently waited for him to explain himself.

He tilted his head to the side slightly. "How good are your shields, Emmy?"

Emmy's eyes widened as she realized that he'd plucked her thoughts from her mind easily, just like she did to Daddy and Mommy. "I don't know," she answered. "HE isn't teaching me how to shield.
HE likes to have direct access to my mind. It's easier for him to control me that way."

The breathing man nodded once in understanding.

He was amused by how she saw him. It was unfortunately very accurate. His breathing ruled his life. "Vader," he said. "My name is Vader."

Emmy tilted her head to the side in a mirror of his earlier pose. "Okay, Vader. Can you teach me shields?"

"Yes, but you'll have to shield that you learnt how from me. But you'll be able to keep a part of yourself free from HIM. You won't be entirely his puppet."

Emmy thought about that as she slowly chewed through another bite. She liked that idea. She liked it a lot. She could hide the warm parts of her that the Evil One was trying to turn to ice. She could keep the memories of her parents locked in that little haven.

"All right. You can teach me," she told Vader.

He let her feel his approval and that made her a little bit warmer inside. The only thing the Evil One's approval made her feel was colder, so this was a welcome change.

"I want you to think of your name, your real name. All of it, not just the nickname part, and I want you to bury it deep at the back of your mind and then build the biggest, thickest wall of durasteel around it that you can imagine. That will be your place of safety where HE can't get in."

Emmy let his deep voice rumble through her as she closed her eyes and pictured what he was saying. Emerald Maratosi became a tiny bit of information and slowly disappeared behind a massive wall thicker than the rainforest canopy that more often than not hid the sun.

"That is very good," he said as softly as his mechanical voice could probably go. "Now here's the real test. I want you to think up a new name for yourself. Something that you won't mind HIM calling you in the future. Something that will be your ONLY name from now on, but don't let him know until he grants you permission to have a new name. Think of this name without letting me hear your decision process and hide it from me in your shield. Do you understand?"

Emmy nodded, eyes scrunched tightly shut, protein bar forgotten in her hand. She hid behind her wall with her real name and THOUGHT. A new name. It had to be simple. It had to be familiar. She wanted something that would bring her a modicum of comfort. She thought back to a conversation she had with her daddy only a few days before she was taken as they were discussing different types of precious stones during a lesson. She'd come across a picture of a bright green stone with the label of 'emerald' and gotten all excited.

"That's my name, Daddy!"

"Yes, it is, sweetpea," he said, stroking her long curls fondly. "We named you after the colour of your pretty green eyes. But we almost called you Jade, since they look that colour too, in a different light."

Emmy turned the pages in the picture book until she found a lighter green stone labelled 'jade' and touched it fondly. "Jade. That's a pretty stone too, Daddy. I wouldn't have minded if you called me that."

The memory decided it for her. She had her new name.
She opened her eyes and looked at the mask of Vader again. "I know what I want to be called."

"And I don't know what it is," he said, more warm approval flowing over her. "You did very well. Now finish your bar and I'll take the wrapper. No one can know that I helped you, so you need to bury that under your shield too, okay?"

She nodded quickly and ate the rest of the bar in three quick bites. She didn't want to get him in trouble, not if he was going to help her. And she sensed that he would whenever he could. He was letting her feel that. The newly renamed Jade didn't feel quite so alone now.

She wouldn't say she'd made a friend exactly, but he most certainly wasn't her enemy.
Kanera Begins

A/N: This is currently an interrupted dream / memory. I'll expand it soon. :D (At least, sometime in the next year soon?)

Kanera Begins:

D332/12 BBY, Feriae Junction

The lighting was dim in the slum cantina in the backwater town in the middle of nowhere. Hera snuggled just a little closer into Kanan's side, soaking in his warmth since her skimpy outfit left much to be desired in the way of keeping her warm. But, oh, was it worth it to see how Kanan couldn't keep his eyes off her. They were pretending to be lovers while they waited for their contact to show up. Pretending was so much fun right now, especially since she could tell how very much Kanan wanted it to not be an act but a reality. Kanan's semi chaste kisses on her neck drove her insane with want. Running her hands over the muscles of his arms and chest was a guilty pleasure she'd wanted to indulge in for so long. She was THIS close to giving in to the urge to pull his head down to hers and kiss him for the very first time, when the contact showed up and slid into the booth across from them, giving Hera a fake leer that felt all too real.

"Bartender says you have a slave girl you're looking to sell?" the spy working undercover for the Hutt that controlled the trade planet asked Kanan with a raised brow.

"Yes, if the price is right." Kanan answered. "She's been a good slave, but I'm short a few credits right now. Feeding her is more than she's worth." Hera had to suppress the urge to roll her eyes. Kanan was playing his part a little too well for her liking.

"She's pretty enough I suppose, but kind of skinny. Maybe her dancing will make up for it." The spy nodded towards the dance floor. "Show me what you've got, girl."

Hera nodded meekly to the spy, wishing she could punch his smirking face even though she knew it was an act, and got up from the booth, shooting Kanan a look under her eyelashes that should have burnt him on the spot for not protesting the too skinny jibe. It's not her fault they'd been living on ration bars for the last couple of weeks so they'd have enough credits to keep fuel in the Ghost. A real meal did sound like heaven right now. And they'd get it too, if the info the spy was going to give them turned out as profitable as they'd been told. As Hera stopped a couple meters in front of the booth with her back to the men, she closed her eyes and found the beat of the music playing in the background of the noise of many voices talking, raising her arms above her head and letting her body and lekku sway with the music, resolved to dance as though Kanan and her were the only ones in the room.

The noise level in the bar slowly dropped off as Hera danced, making the music more audible, all eyes on the beautiful light green twi'lek gyrating and spinning to the beat. Hera dipped low to the floor and her eyes met Kanan's as she slowly rose back up, making sure he was getting the full show. Kanan's teal eyes literally smoldered back at her, making her smirk ever so slightly. She tossed her lekku and pirouetted away, circling the dance floor before stopping in front of Kanan's booth again, chest heaving as she came to a sudden stop with the end of the track, eyes locked with Kanan's, the spy forgotten in the moment.

Kanan stood up and pulled Hera close to his chest, gliding a kiss across her cheek as he whispered, "You make me forget everything but you, darling. I swear you're torturing me on purpose." He
glanced down at the spy. "Sorry, I've changed my mind. She's not for sale anymore."

The spy laughed once. "I don't blame you, man. That is one hot piece of merchandise." He stood as well and handed Kanan a data chip. "Here's my contact info if you change your mind again. My boss is always in need of a good dancing girl. He has a bad habit of getting bored with them and tossing them to his pet nexu."

Hera sucked in a breath at the rage that tore through her at that statement, but a squeeze from Kanan's arm calmed her down. Hopefully the info on that chip would help end this particular Hutt's slaving ways at least.

Kanan pocketed the chip with a nod and escorted Hera out of the cantina with a hand wrapped around her bare waist, conversations picking back up as they left. The walk back to where the Ghost was parked was filled with tension as Hera and Kanan spoke not a single word, but their eyes were speaking volumes. The two years of being just friends had suddenly come to an end and they both knew it. They'd crossed a line tonight and now Hera wanted to fulfill two years worth of fantasies and longing that she'd been keeping under wraps out of sheer determination. She wasn't even sure why anymore. All she knew is that Kanan made her feel cherished and loved and safe in a galaxy where that was in very short supply. The fact that he was so kriffing handsome didn't hurt either, despite being a human and not what she'd pictured herself wanting in a mate a few years ago.

They finally finished the five minute walk to the Ghost and somehow managed to walk up the ramp in something resembling a demure fashion. Hera smacked the button to close the ramp and then basically threw herself into Kanan's arms, wrapping her arms around his neck and pressing her whole body up against his hard one.

"Are you sure?" Kanan whispered a millimeter from her mouth, teal eyes on fire as he searched her own.

Hera nodded and closed the small distance between them, rising on her toes just a bit, and pressed her mouth to his, having no real idea what she was doing but doing it anyway.

Kanan smiled against her mouth, wrapped his arms around her back and took control of the kiss, showing her how it was done with soft little kisses to start with and then touching her lip softly with his tongue, asking entrance. Hera opened her mouth and soon discovered a pleasure she never would have guessed existed as their tongues danced in her mouth. She whimpered and tightened her arms, suddenly finding her back pressed up against a wall of the cargo hold and her legs around Kanan's waist as he picked her up, never breaking the passionate kiss.

Kanan pulled back a fraction when the need for air became necessary, a content, hungry, look on his face. "So long, Hera. I've waited so long for that."

Hera nuzzled her nose against his, smiling into his eyes. "I guess I should confess that I've wanted to do that forever too. I could say I'm sorry for making you work for it, but I'm really not," she teased lightly.

Kanan smiled ruefully and pressed his forehead to hers. "I would have made myself wait too. I wasn't exactly a prize when I first met you. Thank you, Hera. Thank you for believing in me while I was going through the hard stages and giving me something to live for again. I love you, darling."

Hera felt her eyes get a little misty at his confession. She brought a hand around and caressed his cheek softly, feeling the rough stubble that was poking through his skin."Kanan..." she shook her head. "I don't know what to say. I don't know if I can say that back to you yet. It's too soon."
Kanan smiled reassuringly. "It's okay, Hera. You'll say it when you're ready. I can wait. I'll always wait for you and be there for you."

Hera leaned forward again in his grip, kissing him passionately for a minute, applying everything she'd just learnt, before pulling back, giving him her best seductive look. "I do know one thing I am sure of, Kanan Jarrus. I want you to make love to me."

Kanan gave her a beatific smile. "Now there's a suggestion I'll never turn down." He ground his hardness against her as a demonstration, making Hera gasp a little. "But not here," he said with a glance around the cargo hold. "I want to love you on a bed the first time. After that..." he smirked just a bit. "Anything goes."

Hera grinned at her chosen lover. "That sounds delightful." She wriggled out of his hold, making sure her chest brushed his as she slid down, then walked with an extra sway to her hips and lekku to the ladder and climbed up, knowing he was staring up at rear end as she climbed, only covered in a short white skirt and lacy dark green underwear. Hera might not ever tell him this, but she'd had the ending to this night in her mind ever since the plans for this op had been made. The outfit was for Kanan's benefit entirely. Her chest was covered by a matching white and dark green halter top that left very little to the imagination and a whole lot of skin bare. (Just don't tell her father. He'd probably have a heart attack. Not that they were on speaking terms right now, but just the same...)

Hera walked into her room, hearing Kanan's soft footsteps following her. She sat down on her bed and pushed the dark green dancing slippers off her feet with the toes of the other foot, then slid backwards on the bed with an inviting look. Kanan stripped his shirt off over his head, revealing the wondrous muscles she'd gotten the occasional glimpse of over the last couple years before stalking towards her with a devilish look in his eyes. He crawled onto the bed and then right over her body, perching above her and diving down to steal a kiss that lasted longer than she thought he intended because Hera didn't want it to end. She loved kissing him. He tasted amazing and his lips were softer than they looked, fitting against hers just right. Eventually, he pulled away and rolled onto his back, taking Hera with him so she straddled his waist. Hera liked the new position very much. She undid the tie that held her halter top together and then leaned down, rubbing her chest on his while kissing him again, her lekku sneaking over her shoulders and caressing his arms since her hands were occupied holding his face still for her kiss.

Kanan pulled back with a gasp, eyes wide as he glanced from one lek to the other. "Oh Force, I didn't know they could do that!"

Hera smirked, lekku still rubbing against him, loving the feel of his skin against hers, the textures were so different. "Lekku are more than they seem, love." She leaned forward and whispered a twi'lek secret in his ear. "If you touch them just right, you can make me come."

Kanan's eyes went heavy lidded as he registered that. "I'm going to pleasure you till you scream from the ecstasy," he growled as one hand trailed up her bare back and the other caressed its way downwards.

Hera smiled like a satisfied tooka and returned to kissing the breath out of her gorgeous human man. She shuddered as one of his hands found the base of a lek and tentatively ran up and down the length. That felt so much better than her own hands, even if he didn't know what he was doing yet. She gasped and forgot about kissing when the other hand snuck under her panties, unerringly finding her clit and caressing her to a near orgasm in just minutes with the combined efforts of his hands. She lost it for real when he thrust a finger into her dripping core and licked a wet line up her lek. With a cry, Hera came harder and faster than she ever had when experimenting on her own.
Kanan kept her throbbing for as long as she could take it before easing his thrusting finger from her clenching channel and leaving her lek alone for the moment. Hera collapsed on his chest, just gasping in air as his hands ran soothingly up and down her back. When she recovered enough, Hera sat up a little and kissed him gratefully. "That was amazing, love, but I know there's more to it than that and I want all of it." She wriggled her rear against the large bulge in his trousers to emphasize her point, licking her lips in anticipation.

Kanan grinned. "I'm not even close to being done with you yet, darling." He put his fingers under the waistband of her skirt and panties and tugged them downwards a bit. "You need to lose these."

Hera smiled and rolled off him. "I totally agree," she said as she wiggled out of the last of her so-called clothes. "And you, MY super hot man, need to lose your own garments."

Kanan raised a brow at her as his eyes twinkled with mirth and his hands undid the fastenings on his trousers. "YOUR hot man? You think I'm hot?"

Hera reclined on her side, hand holding her head up, waiting for the show, and nodded. "Yes. Mine. And most definitely hot. You make me want to jump on you whenever I see you without a shirt on."

Kanan laughed and pushed his pants and underwear down, revealing his towering length, kicking them off the bed and turning to face Hera in a mirroring pose. "Well, to be fair, I want to kiss you basically all the time, all over. And I think you're the most beautiful girl in the galaxy, so I think we're equal enough" He rolled over onto his back again and patted his chest. "Now come here and let me hold you for just a moment before I show you what REAL pleasure is."
Spectres Mission

A/N: The next 4 chapters are currently written in first person because they came from a different story. I will be changing the POV eventually, but for now, this is what you get. :P

Spectres Mission:

D200/5 BBY, Random space.

(Hera)

I sat back in my captain's chair on the bridge of my precious ship, the Ghost, and stared out into space. Admiring the stars, and feeling the incredible peace that the vastness of space brought me, I felt a smile play across my lips. I had just received a transmission from old Jho on Lothal. It seemed the Empire was moving some blasters around tomorrow. It was a perfect mission for my crew.

I jumped out of the chair, eager to tell my mate the good news. I made my way to the crew quarters, happy to see no one else in the hall. We'd been hiding our relationship for a couple of years now. Ever since we had taken on our first official crew member, to be exact. It had seemed the thing to do at the time; presenting a professional front. Now I wasn't so sure, but we kept up with the pretence. I was going to talk to Kanan about that eventually. Maybe it was time stop pretending we were just friends.

Entering the code to Kanan's door, it slid open to reveal my very own handsome man in his meditation pose. Not wanting to interrupt, I stepped into the room and closed the door behind me, then leaned back on it to admire Kanan Jarrus in silence.

From his long auburn hair, to his strong nose and cute goatee, he was perfect to me. He had broad shoulders over a lean but well muscled chest that tapered down to narrow hips and strong legs. He still takes my breath away, even after all this time. My mate had matured so much in the past six years. When I had first met him on Gorse, he had been a reckless, way too sure of himself jerk who drank too much. Now look at him. He was responsible, mature, and never drank anymore. He was even slowly returning to the Jedi ways, such as this meditation routine, which he could do for hours. Sometimes too many hours, but I'd take that over the drinking any day.

"I can feel you thinking about me from here. I hope they are good thoughts, darling," Kanan said without opening his eyes.

"Of course they're good thoughts, love. I was just thinking about how much you've changed for the better over the years. Although... I have to admit the bad boy version of you was hot as hell."

That was enough to make Kanan open his striking teal green eyes and grin at me. He sprang up onto his feet and prowled towards me with a glint of mischief in his eyes. "Oh? Do you want the bad boy back?" He trapped me against the door with his body leaning into mine and his hands on either side of my head. He ducked his head down and nipped my neck, making me squeak.

Giggling, I pushed him back... all the way to his bunk. When he sat, I crawled on his lap and wrapped my arms around his neck. "No love, I don't want the bad boy back. He was fun and exciting, but that boy could never be my mate. But you trained up nicely if I do say so myself. I think I did a good job turning you into a respectable mate." I had to giggle when I saw his eyes go
from proud to wide open in disbelief, once he registered what I had said.

His fingers tightened on my waist. "Hey... surely I had some say in how I turned out?"

I smiled at him beatifically. "Nope. It was all me."

Kanan hmmmphed, but he knew I was teasing. I could tell by the quirk of his mouth and the way his hands had started skating up and down my sides again in soothing caresses.

"Seriously though, my love." I put my hand on his cheek and looked at him with all the sincerity in my heart. "Of course you did. I know you would never have changed your ways unless you wanted to."

Kanan smiled his slow, gentle smile that I loved and he pulled me forward a fraction so he could kiss me gently. After pulling back, his hand settled on my jaw, thumb brushing across my lips just so. That gesture never failed to melt my heart. "You made me want to, darling."

I kissed his thumb and then reached back to pull out his hair tie, carding the soft waves over my fingers. "You've changed me a lot too, you know. I'm not the little girl who ran away from home anymore. Without you, I might have returned to my father in defeat. You helped me stay strong when the times were tough. We grew up together, Kanan. We changed each other for the better. From kids who thought they were adults, into actual adults."

His expression was that of heart melting tenderness. His hands moved to my lekku, gently stroking them, which caused my breath to hitch and my core to clench as I shivered in delight, which he knew perfectly well, the fiend. Kanan spoke in a whisper, eyes never leaving mine. "I remember the first time I saw you. I heard your voice first. It drew me to you. Have I ever told you that you have the voice of an angel?" I shook my head, eyes getting misty. "You were the most beautiful Twi'lek girl I had ever seen. The most beautiful anything girl I'd ever seen. I didn't want to help with any of your missions on Gorse, but every time I tried to say no, I looked into your beautiful green eyes and found myself saying yes to whatever you wanted. I will always say yes to whatever you want. And you have no idea how relieved I was when you said you were eighteen. I was afraid you were too young for me, being twenty-two already."

"You never told me any of this before." I whispered through a throat tight from fighting off the tears.

"Umm, well as you said, when I met you I was not in a good place, and it took me a long time to learn to express myself," said Kanan, looking bashful and apologetic.

I ran my fingers through his hair again, fingers clenching in the reddish brown bounty. "Kanan?"

"Yes, Hera?"

"Love me?"

"Always," he said, before pressing his lips to mine in a kiss of absolute devotion that went straight to my heart.

(Kanan)

I loved my Hera. Loved her with every atom of my being. She was my salvation and I'm pretty sure the sole reason my heart wasn't a cold lump of ice in my chest. So when she asked me to love her, I could only think that it would be a cold day on Tatooine before I would ever do anything else.
And, of course, she also meant love in the physical sense. Now that, I was always more than happy
to demonstrate. Making love to Hera was like embracing the sun and letting it fill you with light
and warmth until you were full to bursting. How attachments had ever been seen as leading to the
Dark side, I'll never know. Because if this is what being attached to someone meant, then I was
about as Light side as a person could get.

As I kissed her, tongue exploring the sweetest mouth ever made, my hands were busy undoing her
flight suit and pulling her shirt up and off, interrupting the kiss for a fraction of a second. That was
tossed somewhere and my hands returned to the softest, silkiest, light green skin of her slender
back.

Skimming down to her waist, I plucked her off of my lap, disappointing the hardon with a mind of
its own that she'd been rubbing against, and set her on the bed.

Standing, I had my own clothes off in a whirlwind of borrowed Force energy and was back to
finish undressing her in five seconds flat. I think she was impressed, based on how wide her eyes
got and the emotions I could feel from her. Her clothes were removed much much slower as I
skimmed the line of her shapely legs and pulled off her boots. Hands skimmed back up again and
pulled the bottom of her flight suit down along with her formfitting black undershorts that covered
her from hip bones to upper thighs.

I found her hairless skin infinitely fascinating, and her hot core even more so. I could (and have)
spend hours just exploring every single centimetre of her body from her lekku to her adorable little
toes. (Preferably with my mouth, but hands and eyes were also good.) In some strange male to
female thing, despite being only slightly shorter than me, her feet were practically half the size of
mine, not so much in length, but in how slender and delicate they were. I never understood that
one. (Shouldn't she fall over all the time?)

The last thing to come off her was the black sports bra that she preferred. It squashed her beautiful,
bountiful breasts down to something much smaller looking than they actually were, but she said
they bounced too much without it, so I lived with them being mostly hidden all the time. On the
other hand, it also meant that other guys weren't getting to see how well endowed she actually was,
so that wasn't a bad thing by any stretch of the imagination.

Hera was now completely bare before me and her eyes, quirked brow, and smile were saying,
'what ya gonna do bout it?'

That was a good question. There were so many options. I could lick her from head to toe and
especially in the middle. She liked that. (So did I.) Or I could pounce on her, skip the foreplay, and
just go straight to the main event. (I could tell by how restless her Force signature was that she
wouldn't mind that one either.) Or I could sit on the edge of the bed again and pull her back on top
of me, letting her take control of the pace. (Always a good option.) But something she'd said earlier
had taken root and I decided that we were going for the 'bad boy' today, and bad boys didn't seem
like the gentle, loving type to me. (I might have had some experience with this from my dark years
before I met Hera, but I will neither confirm nor deny any questions you might have about that.)

Planting my hands on the bed on either side of her hips, I kissed her hard and fast, leaving with a
quick nip to her lush lower lip. I then moved down to her gorgeous breasts and nipped each one on
the soft flesh just above the nipples before giving them both a lick. Then I grabbed her waist and
spun her around so she was on her hands and knees before me, knees at the edge of the bed and feet
hanging off on either side of me.

Hera made an eep sound at the sudden move and I chuckled. She looked back at me over her
shoulder, lekku swaying along her back, curling slightly at the ends, demonstrating the tension in
her body, and raised a brow at me. "Like that, is it?" Her emerald eyes twinkled with merriment.

I shrugged and stroked my hands along her lekku, revving her up more. "You said you liked the bad boy," I said by way of explanation.

Hera smirked. "By all means, continue then." She wiggled her luscious ass at me, just to emphasize her enjoyment of the turn of events.

Bending over her, I kissed that smirk right off her face until she stared at me a little glassy eyed from the pleasure. This position also had the benefit of rubbing my aching length against her wet folds. I made sure her clit was getting some of the action.

I could feel how ready she was, both in the warmth of her core and in the energy of her signature. Not waiting a moment longer, I lined up and pushed into her depths, eyes near rolling to the back of my head at the pleasure of her tight clasp around me. I would never get tired of this. Never.

Hera moaned that sexy little sound that always managed to make me harder and she clenched around me. (On purpose, I'm sure. She was good like that.) "Hera," I groaned out her name.

"Kanan," she whined mine, as I started a hard and deep rhythm right from the start. I moved my hands to her shoulders so I could pull her back against me, bottoming out in her depths with every thrust. Her lekku curled around my wrists and her feet locked behind my thighs.

We held each other and moved together. It was kriffing fantastic.

I'd like to say that I could maintain that pace for hours and give Hera a dozen orgasms, but that's not how it went. We were both too far gone already and I was feeling a great deal of what she was feeling, so my control was mostly shot right form the start. She was shivering around me and her body tensing so it felt like she might snap. I knew that meant she was close. Really close. I bent forward again and pressed my mouth to a lek near the top and kissed and nipped it lightly as I thrust even faster. (Thank the Force for that one.)

Hera screamed into the bedding, muffling her cries. (We'd gotten good at that. The walls were decently soundproof, but not enough to hide screams or extra loud groans.) She clenched around me. Tight. So tight. And hot. And wet. Very wet, as she climaxed around my frantically pounding cock.

Then the clenching turned to rhythmic contractions and I lost it. The storm building in my balls exploded out of me, sending thrills through my whole body as I came and came and came some more, filling her to overflowing. I groaned into the bedding beside her as I shook. She shook. We shook.

And breathed.

And felt.

Our hearts were pounding in sync, mine against her back, hers against the arm I'd wrapped around her front, while the other trembled but held me up from completely falling on her.

After a minute or so, I pulled out, found some tissues from the dispenser on the table beside my bunk (there for just that reason), cleaned us up, tossed them out, and then I collapsed on the bed, holding her in my arms. I felt complete, and like I'd said before, filled with her light.

I was an incredibly happy man.
We were still cuddling in my bunk sometime later. Her head was pillowed on my chest and my arms were still holding her soft and curvy body against mine. I was gently tracing the patterns on her lekku, keeping a pleasurable hum going through her body, which echoed back to mine through our bond.

Suddenly she sat up with a gasp. "Kanan, you are most definitely still a bad boy! You made me forget why I came in here in the first place. We have a mission on Lothal tomorrow!"

As she jumped off the bed, her lekku hit me in the eye, and I had to stifle the urge to yelp. I loved her lekku, don't get me wrong, but they weren't exactly light. I don't know how her neck holds her head up. (Another mystery about her that would forever befuddle me.)

(Hera)

I hopped off the bed and frantically started pulling my clothes back on as I found them scattered all over the room. Seeing him still lying on the bed with his arm over his eyes, I swatted him on the arm. "Up! Let's go." When all I got was a groan in response, I said, "Don't make me tickle your feet!"

That had him flying off the bed and putting his clothes on double time. Starting with his socks. I laughed at him. "How well I know you, love." Kanan just sighed and continued to dress. I walked back to him and caught his chin with the edge of my hand and made him look at me. "I love you, Kanan." I kissed him soft and sweet before walking out of the room.

"I love you too," I heard, just before the door closed behind me, making my smile even bigger.

I set my wrist comm to call my crew. "Everyone please meet me in the common room in five minutes. We have a new mission."

I had just sat down on the bench behind the dejark table when Kanan strolled in. He sat beside me and gave me a happy grin. Then he faced forward and put his serious face on. "Silly man," I whispered to him, watching his serious face crack into a smirk then go back.

We both looked up when my beat up old astromech droid, C1-10P, rolled in. I had saved Chopper from a crashed Y-Wing fighter during the Clone Wars when I was little. He was very loyal to me. A horrible practical joker to everyone else, but loyal, and that was good enough for me. Chopper beeped at us and pointed at Kanan. So I looked at him again, taking in the whole picture. He was dressed fine; nothing inside out. Then I looked at his head and not just his handsome face.

"What?" he said. I couldn't stop the giggles. "What it is?" he asked, still clueless.

I frantically searched my pockets for a spare elastic. I kept a bunch for just such occasions as Kanan was forever losing his. (Mostly my fault. Smirk.) Finding one, I handed it to Kanan. "Your hair, love. It's everywhere." I watched as Kanan quickly smoothed it back into its customary tail, mourning the loss of the ruffled looking Kanan, which reminded me both of a little boy and a sexy, well loved man. (Contradictory, I know, but true.) Hearing footsteps in the hall, we both tried to put on our serious faces.

(Sabine)

I was in my cabin, painting the walls of my new room, when I heard Hera's call on the comm. Kriff, I was almost done with that spot. Shrugging my shoulders in resignation, I put down my paint gun. At least we finally have a mission to go on. It was getting a little quiet around here.
As I walked to the common room, I thought back to my rescue by Hera last week.

I still couldn't believe Ketsu had left me there to die. I can only guess she wasn't really my friend, despite the years I'd known her. Good thing Hera found me before the Imperials did. Being thrown in jail for deserting the Imperial Academy would have been the worst birthday ever. Turned into a great sixteenth birthday, I guess.

Not that I'd told anyone it was my birthday. I didn't want them to feel like they needed to get me anything. I was just happy to have a nice place to live, with people that would appreciate me. I genuinely liked Hera. Kanan was alright, if a little reserved. Chopper learned pretty quick to not pull pranks on me. (Nothing like being able to take apart a droid to put some fear in them.) And Zeb. Well, the smell takes some getting used to, but he's alright. Kind of like a big furry uncle.

I think I have a new family. But I was still ready to run if I had to. I was a little short on trust these days.

As I walked into the common room I saw Hera and Kanan looking like two little kids caught snitching cookies. They were desperately trying to look innocent, but would glance at each other and grin, then repeat the process. I just raised an eyebrow and sat down beside Hera with my arms crossed over my chest. It was none of my business what the adults did. I had already figured out they were a couple, who, for some unknown reason, were trying to keep it a secret.

They were failing miserably.

But it was worth a silent chuckle to see them try.

(Hera)

I was glad to see Sabine. The girl with the blue and orange dyed hair was looking a little less haunted every day. Who knows what that girl's been through in her life, but it couldn't have been easy. She almost always wore her colourfully painted Mandalorian armour, barely taking it off to sleep at night as far as I could tell.

I was pretty sure she was a Mandalorian, but I hadn't wanted to pry, so I hadn't asked. They were a race of warriors, for the most part, who trained their children to fight from an early age. I was happy Sabine had been saved from her last job as a bounty hunter. There were better ways to use those skills. Like fighting against the Empire for instance. Apparently she was also good with explosives, but hadn't had a chance to show that yet. Tomorrow, maybe we'll get to see. I smiled at Sabine when she sat down beside me, getting a half smile in return. We all sat in comfortable silence waiting for the final member of the crew to arrive.

Eventually we heard loud steps coming from down the hall. The door opened and in stomped Garazeb Orrelios. He leaned his large purple striped body against a wall and grumbled out, "I was sleeping when you called, Hera."

This wasn't news to me. I'm pretty sure Zeb spent seventy percent of his days asleep. Must be a lasat thing. Sometimes, I even heard his snoring through the walls. That has got to be some kind of talent.

"Sorry, Zeb. I know you like your beauty sleep," I teased him.

Zeb grumbled something under his breath that I couldn't quite catch and rolled his eyes at me. It was probably best that I didn't hear his words.
Zeb was one of the few remaining lasats in the galaxy as far as we knew. Kanan had found him badly injured after the Empire had wiped out the population of Lasan, the lasat home world, a couple years ago. We had heard about the desecration by the Imperials from Fulcrum (my secret mission contact), and gone to see if there was anyone left to help.

Zeb had been the only one alive.

It still hurt to think about it, and they weren't even my people. I can't even begin to imagine how Zeb feels about it.

The annihilation of Zeb's people was yet another reason to fight against the Empire.

So that was how we ended up with our first crew member. Although, he's more like a big brother now. Both Kanan and I had grown to love the furry man who was just as dedicated to us.

"Now that everyone is here, I'll explain our mission," I said. "It should be a pretty simple one. I have word from my contact on Lothal that the Imperials are moving some blasters tomorrow morning in Capital City. All we have to do is appropriate them. Visago has already said he'd buy them." (He was a sleemo of a man, but his credits were just as good as anyone else's.)

"As usual, we are in need of the credits and are running low on everything," Kanan added helpfully.

"That's nothing new," Zeb grumbled.

I mentally rolled my eyes at our standard issue state of near destitution. "If someone didn't eat so much..." I left hanging in the air, throwing a teasing grin at Zeb.

He rolled his eyes at me and stuck his tongue out. I snorted. Zeb might be the oldest one here by more than a decade, but he was technically still in his teenage stage since his species tended to live for centuries. Sometimes, the immaturity made an appearance.

I got back on topic. "I'm going to get us to Lothal as quickly as possible so you guys have time to scout the area in the morning and set up a plan. I'll be standing by with the Ghost to pick you up once you have the items in question."

"Sabine, I have a few explosives in storage for you. See what you can do with those. We're all just dying to watch you make things go boom." Everyone laughed and agreed to that suggestion. "We'll get you a better stock once we have some credits to buy them." I saw a grin light up Sabine's face at the thought. It was nice to make the girl's day.

Standing up, I addressed my little family. "All right then. I'll go set a course for Lothal and one of you can make dinner. Chopper, you can come with me and do the hyperspace calculations." As I walked out of the common room, I heard a big argument break out as to who was going to have to cook. I shook my head, glad I was leaving that mess behind and going back to the calm tranquility of my bridge, where I could once again do what I loved most aside from spending quality time with Kanan.

Fly.
Sabine's Lothrat

Sabine's Lothrat:

D201/5 BBY, Lothal

(Sabine)

I woke up before my alarm, as usual, with a smile on my face because today was special. Today I'm going on my first mission with my new crew. Yes, it's supposed to be an easy op, but it's still a mission. I'd been trained my whole life to do stuff like this; first by my Mandalorian family and then by the Empire at the Imperial Academy. (I doubt they ever thought their training would be used against them, though. Hehe.)

Getting out of bed, I made a quick trip to the refresher, then back to the exercise mat in the middle of the floor of my room. Going through my morning exercise routine was the perfect way to calm my hyper mind. You wouldn't think I would be all that excited about stealing a few crates, but I was finally going to prove to the Spectres that I was a worthwhile member of the crew. That I was worth feeding and giving my own room to. I hated feeling like a charity case.

I had this driving urge to earn my keep and repay Hera and the others for rescuing me. They had stumbled upon Ketsu and I on Garel in a firefight with the Imps over a small misunderstanding about a bounty. Just before someone had hit me with a lucky stun bolt, I remember seeing a green twi'lek drawing the fire of some of the Imps and Ketsu making a run for it. When I woke up a few minutes later, I was being carried over the shoulder of a very smelly and large purple striped lasat as he ran up the ramp of a freighter full of crates in the cargo hold. I was grateful for the rescue, I assure you, but I never want to repeat that experience again. Not even the filters in my helmet could disguise Zeb's distinct fragrance. I swear I'm getting used to it, but you won't catch me giving him a hug any time soon. (Friendly punching's more my style anyway.)

Workout done, it was back to the refresher for a shower and then into my bodysuit and armour. After that, it was time for breakfast, and then I was going to scout the city where the op was taking place as I hadn't been to this planet yet in my travels. We had arrived on Lothal late last night; too late to scout then.

When I got to the galley, I was not surprised to be the first one there. I seemed to be the only early riser in this group. Then again, as far as I knew, I was the only one with real military training. (No such thing as sleeping in there.) After scarifying down a protein bar with still no sign of the others, I sighed to myself and left them a note on the table on a datapad; 'Gone to scout the city. Will be back in an hour. Sabine.'

I walked off the Ghost into the grey light of early dawn. Hera had parked the ship in the local spaceport, which was already starting to buzz with early morning activity. Then I wandered, searching for the Imperial Headquarters. I figured that would be the best place to start.

As soon as I left the spaceport, the giant dome was easy to spot. I snorted to myself as I headed in that general direction. Of course the Imps would park one of their portable domes in the city. I should have expected it. Based on it's location, I wondered how many buildings they'd blown up to confiscate the prime real estate near the ocean.

Shabla Imps. Steal and enslave. That's all they were good at. One day, if it took me to the end of my days, I vowed they were going down.
I woke up to the feel of butterfly kisses being scattered all over my bare back. Moaning at the delicious sensation, I reluctantly rolled over to look at Kanan. He had a big smile on his handsome face, with his eyes radiating happiness. I couldn't help but smile back at him and pull him down to me with a hand behind his neck for a luxuriously long kiss. Humming happily afterwards, I let him go and sat up, the sheets falling down to my waist and baring the girls for Kanan's admiring eyes. (I'll never get tired of that.) "Good morning, love. You sure know how to wake a girl up," I more or less purred.

Kanan looked quite pleased with himself and the view. "You're welcome, darling." He dropped a kiss on my nose before saying, "I wish we could laze about in bed all day, but we have work to do, and that girl has already gone off on her own to scout the city."

I raised a brow at that. "I knew I liked her."

Kanan chuckled as I reluctantly rose from the bed and headed for the small locker that contained my clothes. "I think she's going to be an incredible asset to our little family. She's actually got a work ethic, unlike someone else I won't name."

I glanced back at him as I shimmied into my underwear, catching his eyes watching me avidly, and grinned at my mate. "I think almost anyone has a better work ethic than Zeb, Kanan. But he does enjoy the fighting parts, and you can't deny he's good at it."

"I wouldn't do that," Kanan said. "But he could at least try not to sleep ALL the time." I laughed lightly as he sighed exaggeratedly. "I guess I'll go start breakfast and wake up the furball in question."

"You do that, dear," I said as I pulled on my flight suit and turned around to watch him leave. I held in a sigh of admiration as I watched Kanan walk out of the room. He was just so incredibly nice to look at; even from the back. (Broad shoulders, narrow waist, cute tushy, confident walk.)

Kanan banged on Zeb's door just before my door closed the sound out and I laughed as I finished getting dressed. Any day waking up with Kanan was a great day, but today felt even nicer than normal. I had a good feeling about today.

We were all chowing down on space waffles when Sabine sauntered into the galley and smiled at us. The colourful girl looked truly happy for the first time since we'd picked her up and her Force signature felt content and settled for once. She would definitely fit in with us if scouting for a mission against the Empire made her day.

Sabine propped a shoulder against the doorframe, helmet tucked under her arm, where it seemed to live if it wasn't on her head. "Hey guys. You ready to go? An Imperial Star Destroyer just stopped over Capital City. It must be the ship the blasters are being transported to. That means things are going to get rolling pretty quick. It looks like they'll load up the blasters by the main square before transporting them to a waiting shuttle here in the spaceport. The shuttle will most likely be too well guarded, but I doubt there will be much of a guard on the loading area in the main square as they wouldn't want to attract attention to what they're moving. I think we should steal them there. A little explosion for a distraction, a few appropriated bikes, Hera meets us outside of the city for a pick up, and that's it, mission accomplished."
"That sounds like an excellent plan, Sabine," Hera said, beaming at the girl.

I, meanwhile, had temporarily lost the ability to talk, surprised at how much she'd already accomplished and how simple and efficient her plan was. Hera glanced at me when I didn't say anything and then kicked me in the shin. I covered the wince with a fake cough. "Right, excellent plan," I said, recovering my wits. Shoving my half finished plate of waffles away, I nudged Zeb and said, "Let's go to work," before standing up.

Zeb looked at his plate and stabbed the last waffle with his fork and shoved the entire thing into his mouth, smirking at Hera's eye roll around the massive bite of food. I wished I could pull off the same manoeuvre, but I knew Hera would not be impressed and despite being together for years, I still couldn't bring myself to do anything that might turn her off. (Such is the life of the lovesick male.) On the other hand, I knew Hera would save my waffles for me for later, so it wasn't all bad.

Sabine had continued on while Zeb and I were having our separate resolutions about our waffles. "Also, last night I went through what explosives you do have, Hera, and I made a few presents." While I was still glancing at my waffles with a longing eye, she tossed homemade grenades to Zeb and I. I caught mine out of instinct as it sailed at my head. Zeb's bounced off his chest and then he caught it after fumbling it a few times with wide eyes. "In case you need them," Sabine continued, laughter in her voice now. "Easy to use, just push the button and wait five seconds."

I'm ashamed to say that at this point, we were both gawking at Sabine like she'd lost her mind. I swear I had no hang ups about explosives, but having one tossed at you when all you really wanted to do was finish your waffles and their equally delicious yogan syrup was just wrong.

"Umm, thanks?" Zeb managed to mumble out around his waffle that he'd yet to swallow.

Hera kicked me again. (She was so helpful.)

I put on a fake smile and tucked the grenade into a pocket. "Thanks, Sabine. This is great."

Sabine was smirking at us. She'd completely seen through my cavalier act, of course. I'm getting the feeling that nothing much gets past her. "Yeesh, you'd think no one had ever given you an explosive before. Grow a pair, boys, and let's get this show on the road." Turning her attention to Hera, she said, "I'll keep in touch via the comm, Hera. I'm going back to the main square to keep an eye on things." She turned and left the galley, radiating satisfaction into the Force.

Hera nodded in acknowledgment, but she was snorting behind her hand, holding back the worst of her laughter.

"It wasn't that funny," I complained.

Hera just raised a brow and snorted again.

I stared at her in consternation. "Really?"

Her eyes twinkled at me like emerald fire. I supposed being called ball-less was worth it to see Hera's amusement, but it was close. I sighed and rolled my eyes at Zeb. "Come on, Zeb, let's go catch up to the overly enthusiastic one."

(Hera)

I followed the guys as they ran out of the galley and watched as they dashed into their rooms, then re-emerged just a few seconds later. Kanan was strapping on his blasters on the run, and Zeb had
his bo-rifle slung over his shoulder. After they left the ship, I looked down at Chopper, who was beside me. "Well, that was entertaining. I think that girl is just what this family needs. Did you see their faces when she tossed bombs at them?"

Chopper gave some beeps of laughter. "I like her. She's much nicer than the first two meatbags you added to our ship."

"C1-10P," I scolded. "How many times do I have to tell you not to call Kanan and Zeb meatbags? They're our family. You do not call your family members a meatbag."

Chopper just gave the equivalent of a snort and rolled away.

I glared at his retreating form as it rolled down the hallway towards the bridge. "You might as well prep the ship while you're in there, so it's ready to go once they get their act together."

Chopper raised a manipulator.

I chose to interpret that as a wave of acknowledgement and not a rude gesture, and then went back to the galley to clean up breakfast. (Including the plate of waffles I had put out for Sabine, but she never took the time to stop and eat. Sigh. I'll just have to park it in front of her later.)

(Ezra)

My day started out normally enough: Wake up, ignore the grumbling from my stomach, take a freezing cold shower in the ancient refresher (because someone stole the hot water heater long ago), get dressed in my only outfit that fit (but it was orange, so it's all good), continue to ignore the grumbling from my stomach, then go outside and watch the sun rise over Capital City. My city and planet might not be the most beautiful in the galaxy but it was mine and the sunrises were worth getting up early for. The sunsets were pretty good too.

Then I went into town on my 'acquired' bike after seeing an ISD stop over the city, inspiring me to put on a little more speed than normal. Imperial ships stopped over the city often enough that it wasn't newsworthy, but it usually meant something interesting might be happening. I parked my bike in its usual alleyway at the edge of town under some garbage and then climbed up to the nearest roof to make my way to the centre of the city where things tended to happen.

Next on my list of things to do was find myself some breakfast with my usual combination of con artistry, fast hands, and trickery. Today, this meant stealing the comm unit off an officer's belt who was harassing poor Yoffar about his yogans. I called in a false 'code red' and watched the officers and troopers toss Yoffar and his yogans to the ground, wincing in sympathy. Then I helped myself to a few and stuffed them in my backpack as I helped him pick them back up. Yoffar wasn't exactly pleased, but he just shook his head at me as I dashed off and up to the roofs.

The merchants had known me long enough to consider me a helpful menace. I did what I could to keep the Imps off their backs during the day when I had nothing else better to do and they sort of turned a blind eye when I appropriated some food here and there. It beat digging through the dumpsters all the time, that's for sure.

I happily munched on a fresh purple yogan fruit as I wandered over the rooftops to see if my false code red call had caused any fun chaos. I smiled to see that it had when I got to the edge of a roof beside the main square. Two officers were having it out and they were both turning red in the face.

I laughed to myself softly so they wouldn't hear.
When I finished my yogan, I tossed the pit at a buckethead and stifled a guffaw when he jumped about half a metre in the air, then looked around wildly before settling back into his bored stance. Another prime example of the Empire's finest.

At that moment, I got one of my FEELINGS. This one was strange though. Instead of warning of danger, this one was... Uggghh. I don't know. Different? It wanted me to do something? I don't know how else to describe it, so I'm giving up.

Anyway... I followed the feeling to the other side of the roof and looked down at a tall man in green with light brown hair tied back in a tail. The feeling was definitely about him, but I had no idea why.

Suddenly, he whipped around and moved as though he was about to look right up at me. I dropped to my stomach, hoping he hadn't seen me.

About ten seconds later, I peeked over the edge of the roof and saw the man signal to a big purple... thing. It took me a moment to figure out that it was a lasat since I'd never seen one before. I had heard about them though. In fact, just a few weeks ago, one had caused complete chaos in the city. I was willing to bet everything I owned (which was basically nothing but a fine collection of Imperial helmets) that this was the same lasat. I also knew that lasats were supposed to be extinct or very very rare, thanks to the Empire wiping out the entire population of their homeworld.

Bastards.

The man then moved on to signal a female in Mandalorian armour. I think my heart stopped when I saw her.

Don't get me wrong, I'd seen plenty of beautiful girls on the holonet and occasionally wandering the city streets, but I was blown away by this one. And this was without even seeing her face, since she was wearing a helmet.

It was the way she carried herself as she strolled down the road like she owned the world. It was her lithe shape that her bodysuit and armour did absolutely nothing to hide. It was the incredibly colourful way she'd dressed herself. It was the blasters on her hips. It was the sway of said hips. It was the perfection of her rear end.

I had no idea if she even had breasts under her chest plate but that didn't really matter to me, I'd always been more drawn to a well curved backend anyway.

And to add icing to the perfection that was this girl (don't ask me how I knew she was a girl and not some forty something old person, I just did) she meandered past an Imperial air bike with troopers and officers standing near it and tossed an explosive at it and then walked away as if absolutely nothing had happened.

Five seconds later, the bike exploded and the Imps went flying.


I'm pretty sure I fell in love then and there.

(Sabine)

I watched the stormtroopers attach crates to the back of three air bikes. Kanan walked over to where I was standing, trying to look inconspicuous in my full armour. (Ha. As if I could ever be
inconspicuous.) He gave me the signal that everything was ready to go.

I casually walked over to the other side of the square, where the troopers were talking with officers. Tossing a grenade on an air bike that didn't have a crate attached to it, I walked off as if nothing was happening.

Five. Four. Three. Two. And one. The lovely sound of exploding air bike rang out behind me, and I grinned inside my helmet. While everyone was concentrating on the chaos, I quickly climbed up to the roof of a nearby building. Pulling out one of my WESTAR-35s, I set out to make sure the guys had back up if they needed it.

I gave a quick glance around to make sure the area was clear and was surprised to see someone else on the roof across the way. Seeing that he was just a boy, a street rat by looks of his clothes, I dismissed him from my mind.

From my sniper position on the roof, I watched Kanan block the troopers' exit with an appropriated speeder. Then he kicked the nearest trooper off his bike. Pulling out his blaster, he exchanged fire with them to keep them distracted from the real threat sneaking up behind them. Zeb grabbed a stormtrooper and threw him into another one, knocking them both out. Then he did it again with the last two still standing. His crude, but effective attack made me smile.

Just as they were celebrating their little victory, the boy I had dismissed earlier jumped off his roof and onto one of the air bikes. Then took off with our crates. After a second of shock, I couldn't help but admire the guts it took to steal from the stealers. I took off after him. He had stolen the bike I was supposed to ride. I was getting it back.

Racing across the roof, I came to the other side just in time to see the boy on his stolen bike pass below me. Taking a moment to calculate the distance, I jumped off the roof and thankfully landed on the last crate, barely.

When the boy turned around at the sound of my landing, I was stunned by his appearance. He had the cutest face with big eyes and shaggy black hair that I swear glowed blue in the sunlight.

"Pretty gutsy move, kid," I said to him to cover my surprise at his appearance, as I drew one of my WESTARs and pointed it at him, still determined to get my bike back.

Seeing the blaster pointed at him, his eyes widened in dismay, drawing my attention to them. They were the most amazing shade of sapphire blue I had ever seen and that was through the visor of my helmet. What would they look like in real life? After a five millisecond struggle with myself, I gave up. I just couldn't make myself shoot him.

Sighing to myself at my own gullibility, I warned the boy about Zeb. "If the big guy catches you, he'll end you." He blinked and then smirked in self confidence. Apparently he wasn't worried about getting caught. I liked that.

Cutting my losses, I shot the connector between the two crates, thankful these things were on anti grav mode. I yelled, "Good luck," to the boy, as I was left behind, still in a state of disbelief at what I had just let happen. Since when do I let a cute face interfere with a mission?

The answer: Never.

I have never, ever been so attracted to a boy that it interfered with my duty to my people or my family. I have no idea what was wrong with me now, but it couldn't be good.

I watched Kanan and Zeb speed by on their bikes, in hot pursuit of the boy. I pushed my crate into a
nearby alley. I still had to evade the Imperials until I could get to the Ghost. Based on where I was, I decided the best thing to do would be to keep to the back alleyways until I got to the Spaceport since it wasn't far.

I called Hera on the comm. "Hera, you are not going to believe what just happened over here."

"Call signs, Spectre 5."

"Right, sorry, I forgot, Spectre 2. I'm on my way to you, but you should be ready to go. There's been a small complication, and we're going to have to chase after the guys. Good thing we all have trackers in our comm links. I have no idea where they are going to end up."

(Hera)

After the call from Sabine, I turned on the tracking monitor to see where the guys were. The little dots that represented the guys were speeding through the city and towards the outskirts. Sabine's dot was almost at the ship. I started the engines.

"I'm on the ship Specter 2, let's go," came over the comm.

Hitting the button to close the ramp, I lifted off and made for where the tracking dots were headed. I arrived at the highway out of the city just in time to see Kanan and Zeb being chased by stormtroopers, also on air bikes. Zeb opened up his bo-rifle to its electric staff mode and took out a stormtrooper with it. Silent cheer. Then I saw Kanan blow up the other trooper.

I had to tell Sabine. This was great. "Hey, Sabine. Kanan just used the present you gave him," I called over the ship comm.

"Was it pretty?"

"It was a great explosion. Sabine. Good work."

I watched Kanan drop off his crates for Zeb to pick up, and then take off after another air bike in the distance. I couldn't see who was on it. Setting down on the highway, I lowered the ramp so Zeb and Sabine could load his bike and all the crates into the cargo hold. As soon as they were done, I was off after Kanan.

"Spectre 2, I'm going to need a pick up." I heard Kanan say over the comm.

"I'm almost there," I told him. Kanan was standing on the highway beside his fiery mess of an air bike. What in the galaxy happened now? I lowered the ramp once again for Kanan to jump on. At this point I decided to just leave the ramp lowered. We could fly with it down for a while.

"Okay Hera, head out across the plain to the west. We still have one more crate to get, and it's going that way," Kanan said from the hold. "Oh, and there's TIEs in the area, so keep a look out."

I quickly caught up to the air bike, with the last crate still attached to the back, but I still couldn't really make out who was driving it. Spotting a TIE in the distance, I had to wait to get close enough to shoot it. Unfortunately the TIE shot at, and hit, the air bike before I could take it out. I hoped whoever was driving the bike wasn't hurt.

There were four more TIEs coming in from behind, moving in much too swiftly for comfort. I could see a figure in orange clothes get off the ground from where he'd been thrown. He ran to the crate, which miraculously was still intact. Then he booted it towards the Ghost, pushing the crate
in front of him. I hovered as close to the ground as I could, but it was still at least four metres from
the ground since there was no time to land with the TIE’s closing in. Then the person made an
absolutely amazing jump, before disappearing from my line of sight. "What happened? Did he
make it?" I called down to the cargo bay.

Zeb's voice came back, sounding just as shocked as I felt. "Yes. He did. Crate and all."

I closed the ramp for hopefully the last time this morning, and took off towards the atmosphere,
TIEs shooting at me the whole way.

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(Sabine)

From my position inside the cargo hold, I could see the boy running toward the ship with his stolen
crate.

Kanan yelled, "Leave the crate! You'll never make it!"

When the boy made the jump with the crate in his arms, my heart stopped, I swear. He made it! I
was a bit awestruck. Even I couldn't make that jump with a crate in my arms. Without it, sure, no

We all stared at the boy in our cargo hold. Zeb was doing more of a glower then a stare. Kanan
looked inscrutable. And me? No one was going to know what I was thinking. I still had my helmet
on, and I intended to keep it there for now. It wouldn't do for anyone to realize I thought the boy
was amazing and brave and cute. My helmet was staying on until I knew I could keep my feelings
to myself.

I watched as the boy and Zeb fought over the crate of blaster rifles. His fearlessness in the face of a
much bigger opponent kept a smile playing on my lips. I was definitely enjoying the show.
Eventually Kanan must have decided he'd had enough. He pushed the two apart, before making his
way up the ladder to the bridge. This made the arguing stop for the moment and change into a
glare off.

I decided this was even funnier. Zeb easily outweighed the boy at least three or four times over.
But you'd never know it by the boys' attitude. I think he'd make a good Mandalorian. We're not
exactly known for backing down either.

---

(Ezra)

My mind was in chaos as I fought with the disbelief of where I'd ended up.

Somehow, my normal day had turned into what had to be the most interesting of my life. I was
standing in the cargo hold of a ship I'm pretty sure I've seen flying over the grasslands a time or
two, glaring at a lasat over a crate of stolen blaster rifles, and trying not to go all ballistic over the
fact that the girl of my dreams was standing not even a metre away from me with her arms crossed
over her chest and watching the lasat and I.

I'm not sure how I knew, but I was pretty sure she was amused.

So glad to be entertaining.

Better than disgusting or repulsive, anyway.
And then there was the weirdest part of it all. The feeling that had started all of this in the first place was still going strong.

It wanted me to follow the man. Why, I have no idea, but I'd had to ignore it like no tomorrow when we were both on the highway and he'd offered ever so nicely to remove my hard won crate from my care. The feeling didn't like it when I left him to get blown up by a TIE either. What was up with this? I refused to become some sort of slave to the guy, no matter how much I was drawn to him.

It was kind of creepy too, because I really don't swing that way, as my extreme attraction to the girl should attest to. Fortunately, the man didn't give off any repulsive boy wanting vibes either. (I'd felt those in the past, trust me, and I'd learned to stay far away from people like that.)

So it begs the question; What the kriff is going on with my stupid FEELINGS today?

(Hera)

I heard Kanan's footsteps climbing the ladder to the bridge, and addressed him as soon as he was close enough to hear. "You said this was a routine op. What happened down there?" Then Chopper voiced his opinion too. And it wasn't very nice. I had to agree with him. The morning had done anything but go according to plan. And I had to waste fuel flying all over the area.

"Ugh, Chopper, please. It's been a difficult morning." I could hear the stress in Kanan's voice. He sounded about ready to blow up.

"He has a point, love. We've got four TIE fighters closing in." I pointed at the external monitor to emphasize my words.

"Hera, how about a little less attitude and a little more altitude?" Kanan asked snidely.

Now, I understand that he'd had a less than an ideal mission so far. We all had. But there was no call for him to talk that way to me. So I decided to put him in his place a little. While in the guise of evading more enemy fire, I flipped the ship onto it's side momentarily. I watched out of the corner of my eye as Kanan fell into the co-pilot's chair.

Lucky for him that chair was there.

I heard Chopper hit the wall, then sidle back to the middle, so he could resume watching the action. I kept my grin to myself. That was perfect.

Kanan glared at me. "If I didn't know better, I'd think you did that on purpose."

Keeping my face straight, I said in retaliation, "If you knew better, we wouldn't be in this situation." Deciding he'd been put back in his place enough, I gentled my tone. "Seriously, Kanan, what happened?"

Kanan looked back at the cargo hold monitor and said, "He did."

I finally got a good look at the extra person in the hold for the first time and was I ever surprised. "A kid tripped you up? Must be some kid. Spill it."

"Aren't you a little busy at the moment?" I could see Kanan trying to shut me out.

"Spill." I said, with a 'do or die' look.
Zeb and the boy were still in the midst of their stare off when the Ghost suddenly tipped onto its side.

We all went flying.

The boy, being closest to the wall, hit first, but somehow he kept enough of his balance to grab me out of the air, and put me back on my feet. The feel of his hands on my waist gave me a little thrill. I could feel the lean muscles in his chest under my hands, where they had ended up in my fall. I was so flustered I couldn't do more than mumble out a, "Thanks."

I was sooo happy no one could see me blush under my helmet.

"Hey now, none of that," growled Zeb, from his sprawl on the floor. As Zeb was getting up, the boy let me go, and casually sat on his crate as though nothing had happened.

But something had. For the first time in my life, I think I just felt real desire for another person. For two whole moments I'd stared into his eyes through my visor and seen a possible future with him that scared the hell out of me. I knew Mandos were supposed to be able to tell if they'd found the 'right' person almost instantly, but I'd never believed it. Now I was starting to think there was something to the old tales. This boy was doing strange things to my insides and turning my brain to mush. I have yet to decide if I liked it.

"Look, I was just doing the same thing you were; stealing to survive," said the boy, resuming his argument with Zeb. And off they went again, neither willing to back down. Zeb poked the boy in the chest, and he jumped off his crate, to get all up in Zeb's face.

Then the ship was struck by enemy fire, and everything shook. Zeb managed to fall right on the boy. Maybe even on purpose. I wouldn't put it past him at this point.

"Ummm, Zeb? Don't you think you're taking this a little far?"

"No." Zeb bit out.

"Okaaayy." I winced again when Zeb threw the boy in the closet like a piece of trash. If that was me, Zeb would have to worry about how long he'd be living, once I got out.

I sighed, grumbled, "Fine," and gave a quick summary of my morning.
"So everything was going to plan despite the weird feeling I had for a moment. Sabine's distraction worked like a charm. Zeb and I took out the troopers riding the air bikes easily enough. And then this kid came out of nowhere and steals one of the bikes. No matter what we did, we couldn't catch him. Although I think Sabine almost did. She did get one of the crates from him." My eyes widened at what I had just said. "If she was that close, why didn't she shoot him?" Shrugging it off, I continued. "And the stormtroopers just kept appearing, trying to get their crates back. Then I thought I finally caught the brat, when he takes off again, leaving me to get shot at by a TIE. It blew up my bike, and I almost died. Then you picked me up."

Hera gasped and put her hand on my arm momentarily in comfort. "I'm sorry for being cross with you at first. I was just upset with how crazy this mission went."

I grabbed her hand and gave it a gentle squeeze, before letting it go so she could fly properly again. "I shouldn't have taken my frustration out on you, Hera. It's all that boy's fault."

"You have to admit, Kanan, the kid sounds impressive," Hera said, glancing at me meaningfully.

"You're not thinking what I think you're thinking!" I exclaimed in disbelief. Sure the kid had talent and tenacity and was almost certainly Force sensitive after making that jump and being just way too lucky, but I didn't want another kid on the ship. I liked things the way they were.

"He held onto a crate of blasters with a pack of troopers on his tail," Hera pointed out needlessly since I knew that. "I was there to save him!" I protested. "He's a street rat. Wild, reckless, dangerous and... gone?" my voice faded out as I glanced at the cargo monitor and saw absolutely no one.

"Zeb, Sabine, where's the kid?" I called on the ship comm, feeling a strange moment of panic. Why was I worried about the brat?

"Calm down, chief," Zeb said back. "He's in... uhmm here?"

"Zeb, where is he!? I had really reached the end of my patience. (My Master would be so disappointed. I should be able to keep my cool better than this, but so many years of NOT being a Jedi has let a lot of things slip. Patience being one of them, apparently.)"

"Well, he is still in the ship," Zeb pointed out needlessly, since the boy couldn't possibly be off the ship unless he jumped out an airlock while the ship was in flight in the upper atmosphere. Even in my bad mood, I didn't wish that fate on the boy.

I'm pretty sure I growled like a rabid mooka. And judging by the raised brow Hera shot at me, I think she heard me.

Fragging hell.

(Ezra)

There was no way I was staying in the closet the purple stinkball had thrown me in, not when there was a handy vent right there for me to crawl into. I've never been a fan of ductwork, but I'd spent a lot of my time in them back in the day. It's amazing what you can steal when you're small enough to crawl through vents. They were getting a little too tight these days, but I could still manage it with determination.
I'm not sure if I'm looking forward to the day I don't fit at all anymore or not.

I definitely got a kick out of hearing the stinky one that I'm assuming is Zeb get yelled at by the man.

I also learned the girl's name.

Sabine.

What a pretty name. I liked it. it rolled off the tongue just right and suited her, as far as I could tell.

"Oh, he's in the ship alright," she responded to Zeb's comment, with a healthy dose of sarcasm.

I liked her voice too, what I could hear of it through her helmet's speakers. I couldn't wait to hear her without a helmet on, not to mention see her. She just had to be as pretty as she sounded. The stars would be downright cruel if she was otherwise.

(Hera)

I smiled to myself when I heard the boy was actually IN the ship. "Very creative. Sounds like someone I used to know."

Kanan didn't seem impressed with my pointed reference to his past. He heaved a sigh and left the bridge. Presumably to find the boy.

Of course, while all the little dramas where happening, I was in my element flying my ship, with enemy fighters trying to take me down. Nothing made my day more than to test my skills against the enemy. I had finally reached open space, time to make the jump out of here.

"Battle stations everyone," I called. "We can deal with our guest later. First, lets get out of here. Shields are holding for now, but you need to buy me time to calculate the jump to lightspeed."

"Buying time... Now!" my always reliable mate called back. I gave a silent cheer when one of the TIE's blew up.

Go Kanan!

Have I mentioned lately how much I love him?

(Sabine)

At Hera's call to battle stations, I dashed into the bridge and down the ladder to the nose gun.

Somehow, I wasn't surprised to see the boy sitting in the chair. He HAD been headed this way.

He appeared to be a bit awestruck by the view in front of him. Space was impressive for those who had never seen it before, I supposed. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to indulge in his gawking. I grabbed him by the back of his vest and literally tossed him out of my chair.

Taking off my helmet, I glared down at the sprawled out boy for slowing me down. He was now staring at me with the same amazement he'd looked at space with, his beautiful blue gem eyes wide in admiration. It was really flattering to be as awe inspiring as space, but there was no time to talk. Duty calls. I sat at the gun and started shooting at the TIE's, determined to get at least one.
"My name's Ezra, what's yours?" came from behind me a few seconds later, in a ridiculous, over affected voice from the boy. I rolled my eyes at the silly attempt at flirting. Couldn't he see I was busy right now?

(Ezra)

The stars were more than kind to Sabine.

She was absofrickinlutely the most gorgeous girl I'd ever seen.

I think I sighed like a fangirl.

She didn't hear me, thank the stars, since the cannons covered the wimpy sound.

But geez, what else was I supposed to do? Sabine was perfect. Her hair was blue and orange. Her eyes were huge and an incredible shade of rare amber. And her face was sculpted by a master.

Oh, and she was shooting at TIEs like she had a serious vendetta against them. I had no problem with that. Her fierceness just turned me on more.

The fact that she might be a year or two older than me did absolutely nothing to discourage me either. Age was only a number after all.

Too bad she came with a giant purple bodyguard.

"My name's Zeb, you lothrat." I heard Zeb growl from behind me before he picked me up and glared right in my face. I gulped and then put on my most charming smile. No surprise it didn't work. Zeb just growled some more.

A female voice that I didn't have a name for yet came through the comm system. "Calculations complete, but I need an opening."

This distracted Zeb enough that I was able to wriggle out of his hold and scoot closer to Sabine again. She was still shooting at the TIEs.

She grinned when she finally lined up the perfect shot. "Found one!" she called excitedly.

The pilot quickly took advantage of the opening in the enemy line, and jumped to hyperspace.

Now, I thought normal space was pretty awesome to look at, since I don't remember ever being up here before, but hyperspace was in a whole other league.

It was better than a hundred sunrises all put together. I think I was mesmerized as I stared at the blue and white lights zipping past.

(Sabine)

I looked back at Ezra to see his eyes as wide as saucers. He definitely had never been to space before. I was glad I got to see that with him. His face was so expressive. And cute. Did I mention cute? His copper skin shone in the reflected light. His nose was a little big maybe, but it suited him somehow. His slightly parted lips looked kissable, and I'd seen his smile enough to know I liked it. And those eyes. I'd never seen such a vibrant colour of blue on a human before. And for some reason, my fingers desperately wanted to run through his hair to see if it was as soft and silky as it looked.
Yeesh. I needed help.

Zeb started to drag Ezra away by the arm.

"Wait! My backpack," he said, trying, and really really failing, to drag Zeb back towards me. Now that was a funny sight. I'd remember that one for a long time. I looked at the floor by my chair, and there was a backpack. I threw it to Ezra. "Thanks, beautiful," he said, before being cuffed on the back of the head and dragged away by a grumbling Zeb.

I was glad they were gone because my cheeks felt aflame. No one had ever called me beautiful before.

My Mandalorian family wasn't given to needless compliments that had nothing to do with training. When I was in the Imperial Academy, fraternizing had been strictly forbidden and we were all too scared of the officers to even try and disobey that rule. And the bounty hunting crew Ketsu and I occasionally hung out with had all been waaaay older than me. If anyone had thought it, no one had dared to say anything inappropriate to a minor.

So here I was, blushing because a cute boy had called me beautiful. Even if he was at least a year younger than me. And a bit shorter. And I could probably kill him in a fight. None of that mattered because I knew he'd grow, and I knew he was a fighter at heart and could learn to fight hand to hand if he didn't know how. The thought of teaching him how to spar made me blush harder as I pictured our bodies touching and hands grabbing body parts. A wave of heat swept through me and I buried my face in my hands as I tried to think of something less... erotic, and failed miserably.

I needed to get myself together. This was ridiculous.
Kanan's Bane:

D201/5 BBY, The Ghost

(Hera)

After making a quick trip around the Lothal system in hyperspace, the Ghost resumed normal space, with the planet Lothal back in sight. The door to the bridge opened, and Zeb dragged in a protesting boy. "Let me go. You can't keep me here. Take me back to Lothal."

"Calm down. That's exactly what we're doing," I told the boy.

His striking blue eyes widened in disbelief. "Wait. Right now? With Imperials chasing us?"

"We lost the TIEs when we jumped, and the Ghost can scramble its signature so they won't recognize us when we return," I said, proud of my ship.

"Oh, that's pretty cool," exclaimed the boy. "Is that Lothal? I've never seen it from space before. It's beautiful."

I looked at the pretty blue and green planet we were approaching with new eyes. "Yes it is. I guess I should introduce myself. My name is Hera Syndulla. You can call me Hera. I see you've already met Zeb."

"Yeah, we've met." I could hear the disdain dripping from his voice. Those two were not off to a good start. I hope that didn't cause problems in the future. I had a feeling the boy was going to be sticking around for a long time. "My name's Ezra, Ezra Bridger. Thanks for picking me up, but I should be on my way. So just drop me and my blasters outside Capital City and..."

The door opening fortunately interrupted him. "They're not your blasters," said Sabine.

"And we're not going back to Capital City. The job's not done," added Kanan.

"What do you mean? I stole them. They're mine!" Technically, he was right. But we needed the credits more. And I was going to keep him anyway, so he wouldn't need those blasters for his own survival. My mothering instincts were going nuts with every desperate word he spoke.

I'd only seen him for maybe a minute, but I could tell by his somewhat ill-fitting, patched, and stained clothes that he wasn't well off. And was, in all likelihood, homeless. There was a slight gauntness to his face that indicated he wasn't particularly well fed, which just made me want to sit him down in the galley and make him the biggest plate of pasta he could stomach.

I also had the urge to hug him from now until the end of time, because there was a slightly broken look in his eyes that I just wanted to heal. I may not have the Force like Kanan, but I could recognize the look of hunger and loss from a lightyear away due to the almost constant war on Ryloth when I was growing up. This boy... he looked like a survivor of a war. Someone who'd lost everything but was still trudging on because he refused to give up.

There was no way I was letting him go back to the streets.

My (somewhat peeved at said boy) mate had continued on the discussion, oblivious to my
"And we stole them back," said Kanan, a bit too smugly in my opinion. "We already have a buyer for the blasters." Then Kanan looked at me. "Oh, Hera, I looked in the other crates. Most of them are full of fresh fruit. More than we can possibly eat before it goes bad."

Now that was good news that I could get behind. We exchanged knowing grins.

"That works out well." I said before turning my attention back to piloting the Ghost. "Tarkintown is close to Visago's meeting spot. I'm sure they would love some fresh fruit."

A couple minutes later, I landed the ship on the opposite side of the planet from Capital City. Tarkintown was visible at the bottom of the hill. It was still dark on this side of the planet but dawn was just about to break. Kanan left the bridge as I was powering down the Ghost. I told Chopper to mind the ship while we were gone. "And Zeb, watch Ezra. But no more closets." I laughed quietly when both Zeb and Ezra groaned. We all made our way down to the cargo hold to catch up to Kanan, who had the crates organized. As soon as I opened the ramp, Ezra was off the ship and out into the open air. I guess he was feeling somewhat imprisoned in here. Poor kid.

There were three crates of extra fruit. Zeb and Sabine took those, while Kanan and I went off in a different direction with the two crates of blasters to meet with Visago.

(Sabine)

As we made our way off the ship, pushing the anti-grav crates, I saw Ezra standing in the grass looking a bit lost. Feeling sorry for him, I said, "Grab a crate, pull your weight." Okay, that sounded better in my head. Oh well.

I wasn't sure if he was actually going to come help, but a few moments later, he ran up and took Zeb's second crate. As we entered the little tent village Ezra and I looked around in wide eyed interest and dismay at the depressed and downtrodden people. "Lived on Lothal my whole life. Never been here." Ezra said. Neither had I, but I'd heard of it. Zeb and I explained how these people had been kicked off their farms by the Empire. Specifically by Grand Moff Tarkin, the Governor of the Outer Rim.

We made our way to the center of the little village, where Zeb pulled the lid off his crate and called out, "Who wants free grub?"

The hungry people were very grateful for the food. When one of them thanked Ezra personally, I saw his expression fall. "But I didn't do anything," he protested. The sorrow on his face was painful to see. Then he turned and left for the ship. I couldn't really blame him for leaving. It's hard realizing that your life isn't quite as fulfilling as you thought. This was my first charity run with my new crew, and I understood how he felt. Everything I'd done before had been for my family, or the Empire, or myself. This really was a big wake up call. I hoped I lived up to Hera and Kanan's standards. They were such good people.

(Ezra)

I walked back to the ship, sank down onto a rock near the ramp, and had a really good think about my life. It seemed so empty and meaningless all of a sudden, but I wasn't sure if there was a way to change it. What could I do as a penniless street rat? Nothing. I was a nobody and barely educated. Technically, I was only one step up from those poor needy people in Tarkintown, since I actually
had a home of sorts. My tower wasn't exactly a palace, and I was basically living there illegally, but it was better than a tent.

And I had a lot more hope and enjoyment in life than these people. The sense of despair had literally wafted through the air in the 'town'. It was kriffing depressing.

I suddenly remembered something my parents were always saying when I was little. It was the job of the more fortunate to help those less so. It should be the goal of all intelligent livings things that EVERYONE had a comfortable standard of living. That we should all RISE UP and fight for what we believe in.

They had been arrested and probably killed for fighting for what they believed in with their anti-Empire broadcasts, but at least they had gone out doing something useful. Aside from pestering the odd Imp on occasion, I realized that I had done NOTHING to continue my parents' cause.

And now I felt like a failure.

Shoulders slumping, I drew my knees up and hugged them, watching blindly as the sun rose over the mountains in the distance.

I realized then that if there was a way for me to be useful, my life would have to change in some drastic fashion.

I just didn't know how.

Sighing forlornly, my eyes closed defensively as the sun shone directly into them, but I didn't have the energy to turn my head away. So I sat there and felt sorry for myself, all curled up uncomfortably on a rock.

That was when I heard it. Something was singing a most beautiful song like I'd never heard before.

Feeling hypnotised, I followed the sound that reverberated through my mind into the ship, up the ladder, through the bridge, and stopped in front of one of the cabin doors. I almost felt bad for snooping, but the music in my mind was louder now; enticing, entreating, almost begging.

I tried the button for the door, but it was locked. That wasn't enough to stop me. I dug my trusty multitool out of my backpack and picked the locking mechanism. The door opened for me and in I went to a bare necessities room. Based on what I knew of the four people who lived on the ship, I was guessing it belonged to the man I still didn't know the name of.

Maybe I'll just call him Mr. Cranky Pants, since he seemed to be in a perpetual bad mood. The mere thought of calling him that to his face made me chuckle to myself. I was so doing it. I dare myself.

The singing was practically rejoicing now. I followed the sound to the bunk and sat on it and then had a moment of confusion before I realized there must be drawers under it. Reaching down, I felt for a ledge or a catch and found one. A drawer opened and I rushed to kneel in front of it.

Just like the room, the drawer was almost empty. Except tucked into the back of it were two items; a shiny blue cube of some kind and a long cylindrical object. I pocketed the cube, ignoring the little jolt of electricity that ran through my fingers upon touching it, thinking it might be worth something, and the man obviously didn't care about it if he kept it buried at the back of a drawer.

Then I picked up the cylinder.
The singing in my head was pretty much at all out hallelujahs now.

Seeing a little switch on the cylinder, I flicked it. A blue energy sword emerged from what I now knew was a hilt with a snap and a hiss, throwing blue light around the room. Holding it up, I stared at the sword in wonder as the song quieted to a contented hum in my mind.

This had to be the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

Is it possible to fall in love with a person and an object on the same day?

(Kanan)

We waved goodbye to Visago as we left his little hidey hole in the unique mountains of Lothal. He absently waved back, too caught up with his new toys to pay much attention to our departure. As soon as we were out of sight of the devilish looking devonian smuggler who inspired an almost constant niggle of warning from the Force in the back of my mind Hera grabbed my hand and threaded our fingers together. I looked down at her with a gentle smile which she returned wholeheartedly. "Well, we didn't get all the credits we should have, but his intel on the Wookies sounds good."

"We'll have to leave right away if we are going to rescue them. There is a very short window for this op. The boy will just have to come with us," Hera said as straight faced as she could manage, but I wasn't impressed with her cunning. (Okay, maybe a little impressed, but more in the way of how determined she was over the subject matter.)

"Aw, come on, Hera, can't we just leave him here? Maybe he can get a job with Visago. I'm sure they deserve each other."

"No, we are not leaving him here!" She pulled her hand from mine and poked me in the chest with a finger. "That boy is special, and you know it. Probably better than I do!" She looked glorious in her fury, emerald eyes shooting sparks at me. Is it bad to admit that I sometimes create arguments just to see her like this?

I heaved an exaggerated sigh. "I do know it. He positively glows with the Force. But maybe he's safer not knowing what he is. The Empire is still hunting Force users. They would turn him to the Dark side or kill him if they found him. You know I've hidden who I am for years. There's a good reason for that, Hera. I don't want him to have to live like I did; always on the run. As a street rat, he's just a nobody they would never look twice at. If he joined us, he'd be in danger all the time. Should we really do that to him?"

She gazed at me imploringly and I knew then and there that I was going to cave. (I never could deny her anything she wanted.) "Can we really afford not to? The Empire might find him anyway. He could be such an asset to our team. Especially if you trained him."

"But I don't know how to train anyone!" I cried. "I was just a young Padawan when my Master died." The anguish in my voice was painfully obvious even to me.

It must have been to Hera too, cause she pulled me to a stop and wrapped her arms around my waist. "I'm sorry Kanan. I shouldn't have pushed you. How about we take the boy with us for this one mission, and you can decide what to do with him after that? Give you time to meditate on it."

She looked up me with a tentative smile, her chin propped on my chest, hoping I would return it.

I stared back down at her, standing stiffly in her arms as a million doubts and warnings flashed through my mind. Eventually a shaky smile crossed my face and I stuck my chin on top of her
head. The tension left me as I wrapped my arms around her and hugged her close. "You always could talk me into anything, darling, with those great big emerald eyes of yours." I said softly with my eyes closed as I drank in her reassuring and calming aura. "You are my greatest strength, and my biggest weakness." I chuckled mockingly at myself, hugging her tighter for just a moment. "Alright, let's go save some Wookies with the brat in tow."

"Thank you, love." She whispered, pulling back a little and looking up at me with soft eyes. I knew what those eyes meant. I was about to be rewarded for giving in to her wishes in the best possible way with one of her soul stealing, heart pounding kisses. I lowered my head towards hers, looking forward to the coming moments with every atom in my body.

Then her wrist comm beeped. "What timing," she grumbled and I mentally agreed with her. She gave me a quick peck, then answered the comm. I groaned internally at missing my reward and vowed to get it at the earliest opportunity.

Chopper beeped out in excited binary, "The young crate stealer just broke into Kanan's room!"

"He did what?! Why would he break into your room?" Hera asked me.

I thought for a moment before the proverbial light bulb went off. "My lightsabre and holocron are in there. He probably sensed them." I heaved another exaggerated sigh. "I might let him keep the holocron for now, if he takes it. If he can open it, then I really will have to decide what to do with him. We better go before he kills himself."

We both took off for the Ghost that was just visible in the distance. I was sprinting for it, worried for the brat's wellbeing, when I realized I was probably going faster than Hera could keep up with. I glanced back, saw her far behind but running with grim determination, then slowed down a bit so she could catch up and keep up. I knew she would want to see what the (still nameless) brat was doing. I supposed I should find out what his name was if he was going to be staying with us. It was only polite after all. I don't think it would go over very well if I addressed him as 'pain in my backside' for the foreseeable future.

But I sure wished I could.

When we finally reached the ship, my poor Hera was gasping for air, but recovered quickly once the run was over. Chopper met us at the ramp, chirping at us to hurry up. Rushing up to the living quarters, I opened my door, and there was the brat, waving my lightsabre around like it was a toy. "Careful, you'll cut your arm off," I warned him dryly.

He spun around, eyes wide at being caught. "Look, I know you're not going to believe me, but it's like this thing wanted me to take it."

"You're right, I don't believe you. Now hand me the lightsabre." Hera gave me a squinty eyed look for lying, but I chose to ignore it. She could yell at me later if she wanted.

He looked at the weapon with awe inspired wide eyes. "Lightsabre? Isn't that the weapon of the Jedi?"

I didn't bother to answer. "Give it to me and get out." I really wasn't happy with the boy. I felt like I was being pushed in a direction I didn't want to go.

I'm sure Hera thought otherwise. She probably thought this boy was exactly what I needed to really return to my Jedi roots, as opposed to the half assed playing I'd done with some meditation and occasional cheats with the Force on missions. Perhaps it was time for me to be a Jedi again, but I
still wasn't entirely convinced. It's possible the Force brought the boy into our lives for a reason, but it or Hera couldn't make me like it. Not yet. Maybe not ever.

The boy slapped my lightsabre into my waiting hand and shot me a glare. "Whatever, Mr. Cranky Pants," he muttered as he walked past me and down the hallway towards the common room.

I snarled at his retreating back. "Watch the attitude, Pain In My Ass."

He raised a hand with a single finger pointing at the ceiling. Why did he remind me of Chopper now? Oh, that's right. The murderbot had the exact same habit whenever I told him to behave. (But only when Hera wasn't around, because he knew better.)

The Brat had so much potential but I really wished I could leave him to the life of a street rat. It was probably safer for my sanity that way.

"Ezra! Kanan!" Hera said in her 'you have been very bad' mom voice and we both froze. It's safe to say we finally knew each other's names now. "There will be no name calling on my ship and you two will respect each other whether you like it or not."

Ezra turned around and nodded respectfully to her. (He ignored me.) "Sorry, Hera. It won't happen again."

Hera smiled beatifically at Ezra. "You're forgiven. Why don't you go find something to eat in the galley? There's protein bars in there somewhere if you want a snack."

Ezra beamed at her and spun back around, a new bounce in his step. "Thanks, Hera!" he called over his shoulder just before disappearing into the next corridor.

Hera turned her no longer smiling face at me and raised a brow in disbelief. "And how old are you?"

I shrugged and winced. "I think that kid brings out the worst in me. Are you sure you want him?"

She just raised her eyebrow higher.

"Sorry, Hera," I mumbled, gazing at the decking like it was suddenly fascinating. "I promise I won't call him any more names." I peeked up at her and found her staring at me with an amused expression and I relaxed a little. "I suppose that moment we were having outside couldn't be continued now, could it?"

Hera snorted. "Keep dreaming, love."

I smiled despite her sarcasm, because she'd called me 'love' so I knew she wasn't mad at my childish behaviour anymore. Things were looking up.

"Did he take the holocron?" she asked suddenly, as I contemplated the lightsabre in my hands. It was singing to me again. I hadn't heard it sing for years. The boy really had woken up the Kyber crystal inside with his presence. A little place in my heart woke up in that moment as well as the bond between my lightsabre and I snapped back into place and another corner of my broken soul healed.

"Yes," I said absently as I sorted through everything happening inside me at the moment. "I felt it leave with him." Knowing there was no way I could make myself put my lightsabre back into its drawer, I instead broke it down into two pieces and hung them on my belt. I turned my attention back to Hera, resignation and a flutter of hope settling in me. "Now we'll see."
Ezra's Integrity:

D201/5 BBY, Lothal

(Sabine)

After returning to the Ghost I went to the galley to get some water and was happy to see that there was no one else in there so I had a moment to think on the events of the day so far. Leaning against the counter as I sipped my H2O, I wondered what I was going to do about my attraction to Ezra. He obviously thought I was pretty, but should I really let it progress beyond that? Then it struck me that I'd probably never see him again after today so it didn't matter. (Little did I know that fate was going to throw him at me and laugh like a crazed lothhyena while doing it.)

And then in walked the subject of my ruminations, looking as cute as ever. (Really not fair.) Honestly, whatever star or god or whatever had designed his colouring had to be a master artist. The midnight blue shine of his hair combined with his electric blue eyes and copper skin was the most fascinating thing I'd seen in a long time.

At least he looked happier than the last time I saw him. And that thought reminded me of how he was supposed to stay with Zeb. Not that I would stay with Zeb either, after everything Zeb had done to him already, so I didn't really blame him for disobeying orders. I just had to tease him about it, though. "Not so good at following directions are you?"

Ezra rubbed the back of his neck, looking a bit sheepish at my gentle reprimand. "Not so much. You?"

I scoffed at the idea of me following orders. So far, it felt like my whole life had been against orders and expectations. "Never been my specialty."

"Who are you people?" Ezra asked curiously. "I mean, you're not thieves exactly."

Well, we were, but only from the Empire. I'm pretty sure that didn't really count. "We're not exactly anything. We're a crew, a team. In some ways, a family."

Ezra thought about that for a moment. "What happened to your real family?"

Somehow, I wasn't surprised he figured that out; the boy was smart. But what to say? Technically, my family was still alive and well as far as I knew, but we were as far from speaking terms as you could get. I was dar'manda. Outcast. Disinherited. Tossed out like trash. However you want to put it. The short answer was that it was the Empire's fault, so I went with that. "The Empire. What happened to yours?"

Ezra never got to answer me, but the empty look in his eyes gave me a pretty good clue that his story was probably worse than mine.

The door opened and a displeased looking Zeb stuck his head in, followed by Chopper. "Kanan wants us in the common room," Zeb said to me. Then he told Chopper to watch Ezra. "If he tries anything, sound the alarm. Or shoot him." Ezra's eyes widened in alarm at that in a rather amusing fashion.

Chopper replied with, "Overkill, much?" Zeb shushed him and left. Not that Zeb understood...
binary, but Chopper was pretty good at delivering different tones and this one had 'incredulous' written all over it.

I felt strangely reluctant to leave the galley, feeling like I'd just started to have a decent conversation with someone in the same age bracket as myself for the first time since Ketsu left me. (For dead, a bitter little voice added at the back of my mind.) But duty calls and all that, so I put my cup down on in the sink, picked up my helmet, and gave Ezra one of those, 'sorry, but I gotta go' shrugs that all humanoids employed.

The little quirk to his lips and return shrug said he understood. (Gotta love body language.)

As I was walking out, I realized I had never told Ezra my name. I paused and said, "Sabine. My name's Sabine." Looking over my shoulder at him, I saw his face light up like I had just given him the best present in the world. How was I supposed to resist someone who thought the gift of a name was enough to make their day? With a mental sigh, I left Ezra in Chopper's rather questionable care.

(Ezra)

She was so kriffing beautiful, it was all I could do to remember how to speak. And those eyes; I'd never seen their like before. So big and expressive, they dominated her features. I felt like I could gaze into their amber flames for the rest of my life and be perfectly content with my lot.

And then she told me her name.

It was like a gift from the stars delivered in her melodic voice that I also wished I could listen to for the rest of my life. (I was SO gone on her after maybe fifteen total minutes in her company and I was perfectly willing to admit it.) I had already figured out her name was Sabine, but I was ridiculously happy she told me herself. To me, it was like a green light to keep trying to make friends with her.

I felt drawn like a magnet to her, my feet automatically trying to follow her when she was leaving, not even noticing that the astromech had moved in front of me until he bumped my shins and knees and scolded me for trying to leave. I glanced down at him in surprise and then gazed at the closed door longingly.

"Don't even think it," the droid beeped.

"Think what?" I said innocently. (Sort of.)

"Chasing after the female unit. She's not for meatbags like you."

I scoffed at this. "Watch me."

And with that, I was hopping up onto the counter and opening the vent.

"What ya doing?" the droid beeped curiously.

I grinned at him. "Eavesdropping, of course."

He waved a manipulator at me in a 'go ahead' motion. "Oh. Now that, you can do. Have fun."

I tossed my backpack in and shimmied myself in after it. "Thanks," I said on a laugh. What a strange droid. Wasn't sure if I liked him yet or not.
Walking into the common room, I found a spot behind the dejarik table for our meeting. Kanan and Hera explained the new mission. The short version was that there were wookiees being taken to an unknown slave labour camp and we had a tight window to intercept the ship transporting them. This sounded like a fun mission to me.

Just as Kanan was saying that he had a plan, there was a bang from inside the closet.

Looking at it, I hid a smile behind my hand. I thought it was a safe bet to say that Ezra had been vent crawling again.

Kanan opened the door and out fell Ezra. None of us were surprised.

Ezra jumped back up and tried to crawl back into the vent, but Zeb grabbed him and tossed him back on the floor. Poor boy's been tossed around a lot today.

"I ordered Chopper to keep watch," growled Zeb. And in came Chopper, beeping about how the kid had escaped, and it wasn't his fault. Zeb looked about ready to kill something. (Specifically Ezra.) "Can we PLEASE get rid of him?"

I jumped up to my feet and got in front of Zeb, putting a hand on his chest at the same time Kanan did to stop Zeb from pummelling Ezra. He leaned against our hands, but restrained himself enough to leave it at that.

"No we can't." I said sternly. Ezra looked at me gratefully from his sprawl on the floor. Oops. Too nice. No one can know I like a boy. That would really ruin my tough girl image. To cover my slip, I said, "The kid knows too much." I saw his face fall at that, making me cringe inwardly, but there was nothing I could do right now. I'd make it up to him later.

I added to the crowd keeping Zeb off of Ezra, giving him a 'behave yourself or else' look, and then helped Ezra off the floor. "We don't have time to take him home anyway. We need to move now," I said, with a quick smirk at Kanan. (Who was somewhere between Zeb's hostility and Sabine's apparently indifference in regards to what to do with the boy.) I gently pushed Ezra towards the bridge. "I'll keep an eye on him." Kanan looked unimpressed with my scheming. (Hehe) "Come on Ezra, I'll teach you how to set a hyperspace course."

"Cool. Can you teach me how to fly too?" his eyes wide and hopeful as we walked down the hallway.

"Sure, Ezra. Why not?" I was willing to do whatever it took to make the boy want to stay with us. Even (gulp) teach the kid how to fly my precious ship. (The things I did for Kanan...)

After reaching the bridge, I gestured Ezra into the co-pilot's chair. Then I explained everything I did to start the ship and get it in the air. Once we'd left the atmosphere and were back in open space, I showed him how to calculate the hyperspace coordinates.

Ezra was very bright, and picked up everything I said right away. "You're pretty good with mechanics," I praised as the Ghost settled into hyperspace.

"Thanks," he said, blushing a little as he kept his eyes firmly on the stars zipping past. "I tinker
with things sometimes, when I find something thrown out that was broken. If I could fix it, then I could sell it or trade it for food."

At the reminder of how he lived, my heart hurt for him in sympathy. I knew the feeling of absolute hunger. Of being scared and homeless. In fact, I believe every being on the ship right now could claim the same. (Wasn't sure yet about Sabine, but she had that look of empty brokenness that comes from being all alone in the world that I'd seen way too much in this war torn galaxy.)

"So where are we going?" Ezra asked randomly after a few minutes of vaguely uncomfortable silence.

"How much did you hear?" I asked him back.

"Not much." Ezra shrugged and then grinned at me. "You know, your droid actually encouraged me to escape. I get the feeling that he liked creating chaos. I swear he was laughing as Zeb was getting ready to rip my head off."

I laughed. "That sounds like Chopper alright. Watch out for him. He's a prankster." I mentally shook my head at my droid. "And regarding where we're going, we're off to rescue some wookiees the Empire has captured. They're being taken to a slave labour camp. No one deserves that." I shook my head sadly. "We like to stick it the Empire whenever we can. It's kind of our mission. I guess they'd call us rebels." I smirked at that.

Ezra chuckled. Then he was quiet for a while, spinning his chair around, thinking, I guess. Whatever had been building up in him finally burst out. "This whole mission thing is nuts. I'm not against sticking it to the Empire, but there's no way I'd stick my neck out this far. Who does that?"

"We do," I said, with calm conviction as he gave me an incredulous glance. Oh, Ezra. You have so much to learn about what being the good guy really means. I just hoped he was teachable.

The Ghost signalled the end of the hyperspace jump. Returning to real space, I saw an Imperial transport ship in front of us. Time to bluff our way onto that ship; we had wookiees to rescue. (Kanan)

I watched in relief as Hera and Ezra left the common room because I didn't need the distraction of his presence right now. We had a mission to run, and time was ticking away. I looked at Sabine, who was also looking at where Hera and Ezra had disappeared through the door. She was definitely thinking through something. I was getting the impression that Hera wasn't the only one on Ezra's side.

Her face was holding its usual mask of calm serenity when she was hiding something, but I could feel her emotions and they were all over the place; everything from amusement, to relief, to confusion, and possibly even a hint of attraction? Was Sabine interested in the boy? I winced at the mess that might turn into, because I'd have to have been dead to miss how Ezra focused on her like she was the only one in the room. I knew that feeling well, pathetic lovesick idiot that I was.

Eventually, her emotions settled into determination and she turned to look at Zeb and I, expectation now on her face for me to see.

Speaking of Zeb, he had had a low growl coming from his chest ever since Hera and Ezra left and his ears were pinned flat against his head. "Kanan, we are getting rid of him at the earliest opportunity, right? He really rubs me the wrong way."
"I'm sorry, Zeb," I replied. "Hera wants to keep him. You know how she gets when her mothering instincts kick in."

"Can't you talk her out of it?" Zeb whined.

I gave him an incredulous look. "Have I ever been able to talk her out of something she put her mind too?"

Zeb sighed and slumped a bit. "No. That is one stubborn female."

I laughed. (If anyone knew the extent of Hera's stubbornness, it would be me.) "She talked me into seeing how he did with this rescue mission. It was the best compromise we could come up with. She really wants to give him a chance to join us. Though it really is up to the kid if he wants to stay or not." I was obviously rooting for the later.

Zeb looked hopeful as his ears perked up. "Maybe he won't like us and will want to stay far far away from us in the future."

"I hate to break up this pity party, but shouldn't we be talking about the mission?" Sabine broke in, visibly repressing the urge to roll her eyes at us as she crossed her arms and tapped a foot on the floor. "It's only a short jump to where the transport ship is. We really need a plan."

"Sorry Sabine, we got interrupted..." I said, rolling my eyes. (Clearly we were all having a battle for the least mature person in the room at the moment.) "...earlier when I was about to tell you the plan Hera and I came up with. Hera is going to bluff our way onto the ship with a story about catching another wookiee. Zeb, you get to play the wookiee." Zeb chuckled at that. "Zeb and I will go find the prisoners. Sabine, you and Chopper are going to find the control room and create a distraction for us to escape. I was thinking disabling the gravity for a set time frame so I knew when to expect it, but the Imperials wouldn't. Can you do it?"

Sabine snorted at what was apparently a silly question. "Easy. With Chopper's help, we can have that done in a minute."

I grinned at her in approval. "Do you think you could set it to blow once we've made our escape? No point leaving them with an intact ship if we can help it."

She grinned back. (She had mentioned that blowing things up was her favourite pastime, right in front of painting stuff she shouldn't.) "I have a few explosives left. They should do the trick."

"Go for it. Blow up whatever you can. As long as we're nowhere near it," I said with a smirk. Sabine's smile widened impossibly further. "Welcome to the Ghost Crew, kid; where you get to blow stuff up with impunity."

"Sweet," she breathed.

"Alright people," I said, getting serious. "We'll be there any minute. Let's gear up. Hey Zeb, you know where the manacles are? You get to wear them for a minute." I laughed at Zeb when he groaned and ran away, mentally rubbing my hands in anticipation of the coming fight to get him into them. (Yep, there were zero mature people in the room right now. Don't tell Hera.)

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(Hera)

I gave a silent sigh of relief when the officer on the Imperial ship bought my story. I was worried for a minute there. Apparently my threat to throw the wookiee out the airlock was convincing.
enough for them to think I was the real deal. It didn't hurt to throw in Governor Tarkin's name either.

After receiving permission to dock with the Imperial transport ship, I called over the comm, "We're here people. I hope you guys are ready to go."

Kanan called back, sounding a bit breathless, "Yep, we're good. Just trying to wrestle Zeb into the manacles. Despite agreeing to the plan, he seems to be having some second thoughts."

From beside me Ezra piped up with, "Oh, I wish I could see this. He owes me."

I'm sure he did. "Sorry, kid. You'll just have to imagine it."

Ezra's blue eyes gleamed with a devilish light. "I can work with that." He linked his hands behind his head and closed his eyes, apparently doing just that.

I giggled a little, a mental picture forming in my mind as well of Zeb being wrestled to the floor by two people who still didn't weigh as much as he did even if you combined their weights.

Poor Zeb. (Okay, not really.) Poor Kanan and Sabine was probably more accurate.

(Sabine)

I had my arms wrapped around Zeb's upper arms from behind, while I was clinging to his back like a leech. Kanan was desperately trying to get the manacles done up, while Zeb was doing his best to shake us off. Chopper was laughing maniacally at us.

"Got him," crowed Kanan.

"It's alright big guy. You'll be out of them in a minute," I reassured the large lasat, letting go of him, and jumping back down to the floor.

"You know they'll never buy this?" grumbled Zeb. "I do NOT look like a wookiee."

Kanan patted him reassuringly on the shoulder. "It's okay, buddy. Once we get on their ship, I promise you'll get to smash some bucket heads." Zeb grinned at that. Kanan led the way to the airlock. "Everybody ready?" We all nodded.

Over the comm came Hera's voice saying, "Good luck."

The door opened to reveal two stormtroopers. Time to take out the morons trained only to count to ten and march in time. Don't ask me where the Empire found theses guys, but when I was in the Imperial Academy on Mandalore, the standard issue stormtrooper would have been annihilated on the first day of school.

(Hera)

This was the worst part for me; the waiting.

It was necessary for me to wait here so we could take off at a moment's notice, but it was torture at the same time. All the possible what if's that could happen to my family while they were on a mission would swirl around in my head. Every time, it was all I could do to keep myself in my chair. I so desperately wanted to help, even if I knew they'd be fine without me. Fortunately today I had a distraction, in the form of a boy fighting through his own demons.
Kanan called on the comm, saying something about security being soft, then all I heard was static. I tried the comms for all my Spectres, but no one answered. The comms must be jammed. That is not good. Say hello to all my fears.

Ezra looked on with worry. Then I saw him get lost in his own head for a moment, getting that blank look Kanan does sometimes. "Something's coming," he warned just as an Imperial Star Destroyer appeared out of hyperspace. We both gawked at it for half a second. "This whole thing was a set up!" Ezra stated, needlessly.

"It's beginning to look that way. You need to board the transport and warn them," I said to him in a firm voice.

"What?!" He looked at me like I'd lost my mind. "Why don't you do it?" I mentally growled at him. What an oblivious child. Apparently, I'm going to have to twist his arm into being a good person. (Sigh.)

"I need to be ready to take off, or none of us stands a chance," I explained in something resembling a patient voice.

Ezra was shaking his head adamantly. "No. No way! Why would I risk my life for a bunch of strangers?"

What could I say that would make him change his mind? "Because Kanan risked his for you. If all you do is fight for your own life, then your life is worth nothing. They need you Ezra. They need you right now." Seeing the stubborn set to his jaw, I was beginning to despair that I had made a mistake in my judgement of the boy. I had been so sure there was good in him somewhere. I was running out of ideas, and my crew were running out of time. The Star Destroyer had put a tractor beam on our linked ships and was pulling us into their hanger. "Listen, our crew boarded that transport to selflessly rescue Imperial prisoners. They have no idea they walked into a trap. No idea what's coming. You need to go warn them, Ezra."

"No, it's too late for them Hera, We should run now while..."

I cut him off before he could finish that truly awful sentence. "You don't mean that!" I watched the indecision on his face. He was really fighting with his own self preservation instincts and the something in him that wants to be good.

"I do, I swear I do. Which is why I can't believe I'm doing this," he said as he ran out of the bridge.

"I can," I said to his retreating back, with a small smile and a mental sigh of relief. Yay, there is something in there worthy of my trust. I knew it.

(Ezra)

I could NOT believe I was now running through the halls of a strange ship, looking for two men who didn't like me, a droid who thought pranking me was fun, and the hottest girl in the galaxy. I'll give you one guess as to who I was hoping to find first.

Unfortunately, I never did stumble across Sabine. Never got to play the rescuing White Knight. That would have made this worth it.

I know it wasn't all that long ago that I had just resolved to do more, be a better person, etcetera, etcetera. But that was before I was faced with the enormity of being on an Imperial ship which was
now in the belly of a Star Destroyer. There was absolutely nothing about this picture that said it was a sane idea to be here.

And I'd spent most of my life doing whatever I had to to survive.

This didn't look like surviving to me. All of my instincts were screaming, 'Danger! Danger! Bad idea!'

Listening to my instincts would lead me running back the way I came, so I compromised by pulling my energy slingshot out of my backpack and clipping it onto my wrist. It didn't really help me feel all that much better, but it helped a tiny smidge that you could see if you squint.

As I ran past an intersecting hallway, I caught a glimpse of green and purple and came to a skidding halt and backtracked. "It's a trap!" I yelled as I ran up to Kanan and Zeb. "It's a trap. We've got to get out of here!"

"Karabast," Zeb growled. (What the kriff was that?) "Kid's blowing another op," he grumbled to Kanan.

"It's not an op," I said between panting breaths. "It's a trap. Hera sent me to warn you."

At that moment, the door they'd been trying to blow open opened on its own and I saw a veritable herd of white armoured troopers standing in the room behind them.

That was most definitely a trap.

"Run!" I yelled.

As soon as the other two were clear and I was far enough away, I shot an energy ball at the bomb Kanan had put on the door controls.

It went BOOM and troopers went flying with a satisfying scream. But there were plenty more were those came from.

I ran after the Jedi washout and the purple menace, quickly catching up when they stopped to see why I wasn't with them. (Awww. They do have hearts. Somebody give them a medal.)

We took off running again. "We need to warn Sabine and Chopper," I said, worried about my gorgeous girl. "But they jammed the comms."

"They'll follow the plan. It'll be fine," Kanan reassured.

"Yah," I scoffed. "Cause the plan's going great so far."

Kanan shot me a look for my sarcasm that I was happy to ignore.

Our problems grew exponentially as another herd of stormtroopers appeared around a corner at the end of the hallway we were running down. In the lead was a man in grey armour wearing what had to be the stupidest looking helmet I'd seen yet. It had HOLES in the top. What the kriff for? Ventilation? Yeesh.

I wanted it for my collection.

"Don't stop," Kanan called as he charged towards the enemy with extra enthusiasm and what I would call stupidity. I stared at his back like he'd lost his mind. Zeb also put on a burst of speed and charged at them, roaring a challenge.
These people were nuts. I think I was starting to like them. Did that make me nuts too?

Only seconds before everyone was about to crash into each other, Kanan said something about pushing off. I didn't understand until I started floating. (Thanks for letting me in on the plan, people.)

I heard shots being fired, but I was too occupied with being weightless for the first time in my life to see who was shooting who. Then Zeb pushed me down via my head as I was apparently in his way. (I take back starting to like him.) Snarling at his broad back, I swam through the air and grabbed on to the back of his shirt and happily used him as a shield and a means of transport as we floated past the troopers and the man in grey, shots flying all over the place but somehow not hitting us.

I caught a glimpse of Kanan at that moment and I swear I saw him deflect a red blaster bolt away from him and into the wall with a subtle flick of his hand. Whoa. Maybe not quite as much of a Jedi washout as I thought. Was he keeping ALL the bolts from hitting us? Then why didn't he use his lightsabre? I knew he had it on him; I could hear the quiet song of it.

As we left the troopers behind, Zeb shoved me off him, and I looked back to see all the troopers either out by their own blaster bolts or swimming around helplessly in the zero gravity.

The man in grey was not looking so helpless though. He was pushing off walls and making quick work of catching up. Eeeeep.

I pushed off a wall and shot forward to catch up to Zeb and Kanan as the floated through the halls like they'd done this sort of thing before.

"You doin' okay, kid?" Kanan asked as he waited at an intersection for me.

"Are you kidding?!" I exclaimed. Aside from learning how to do this on the fly (hehe, I made a funny), I was doing great. "If you don't count Cheese Grader Head back there, everything's just dandy!"

Kanan chuckled at my joke, glanced back at the man who was making good progress, flicked his hand subtly, which closed the door to the hall, then shot the door controls.

"That should slow him down a bit," he smirked.

I was definitely starting to like this guy. (Zeb could fall out an airlock, though.)

With only half a hallway to go before reaching the airlock leading to the rebel ship which Hera had told me was called the Ghost, Kanan said, "Gravity's coming back on in five, four, three, two, and... now." I'd like to say I landed in a graceful crouch like Kanan did, but I ended up in a sprawl on the floor for what had to be the hundredth time today as gravity hit me.

Zeb picked me up by the backpack and we were running the last little bit to where I could see Sabine and Chopper waiting for us. Man, was I glad to see she was okay. The droid... eh. I smiled and waved like a complete dork when her helmeted head focused on me and I got the feeling she was surprised to see me.

Smooth, Ezra. Real smooth.

(Sabine)
So far, everything had gone down without a hitch. Of course the troopers didn't believe that a purple lasat was a wookiee, but Zeb smashed them into unconsciousness with one blow of his manacled hands. Then I took the manacles off him, and away we went to our separate jobs.

Chopper and I found the control room with no problems. Strangely, we didn't encounter any more stormtroopers. Security was really lax. Oh well. That just made my job easier. Arriving at the control room, I found only one officer on duty. I stunned him before he could even stand up from his chair. This was seriously way too easy.

Telling Chopper to get to work on the gravity controls, I did my part to set them on a timer. We would have exactly two minutes with no gravity. Then I put what was left of my explosives on the consoles. (Might as well blow up the most important part of the ship.) Then they'd have one less ship to their name.

I sent a silent signal to Kanan's wrist comm, letting him know the gravity was going off in three seconds. As we became weightless I grabbed onto Chopper and let him pull me through the air while he used his thrusters to manoeuvre through the hallways.

Counting down for Chopper's benefit, we had just made it back to the airlock when the two minutes were up. The two knocked out troopers had been floating weightlessly until this point. I smirked as their bodies crashed to the floor, zero sympathy in me for them.

Kanan appeared a moment later, followed by Ezra and Zeb. What was Ezra doing on the ship? And... "Where are the wookies?" I asked Kanan.

"No wookies." Kanan said in disgust. "Sabine, man the nose gun. Chop, tell Hera to take off."

I was already running onto the Ghost, following orders. It never crossed my mind that we wouldn't all make it off the transport.
Sabezra's First Kiss

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here. It takes place directly after the episodes 'Empire Day' and 'Gathering Forces'.

Sabezra's First Kiss:

D2/4 BBY, Lothal

Everyone slept the whole trip back to Lothal after the emotional rollercoaster of the last day and a half. Hera picked a random spot on the planet to park, where the sun was just coming up. (Since the whole planet basically looked the same, unless you were parked by a city, you'd never know where you were if it weren't for the navigational systems.) This time, when Sabine asked Ezra if he would go for a run with her, he was more than happy to, which made her breathe in relief. The Empire Day angst is finally over.

As they were running, Ezra kept looking around at the mountains near them, like he was searching for something.

What in the galaxy is he looking for? When a big smile broke out on his face, Sabine guessed he'd found it. He pointed them in the desired direction, and she ran after him, dying of curiosity. Ezra stopped by a cluster of mountains, pulling her to a halt with him.

Ezra turned and looked at Sabine with big eager eyes. "I don't know when your birthday is, but consider this a very late birthday present." I hope you like it as much as I loved the image of my parents.

The girl looked at him suspiciously. What could possibly be out here that he would consider a present? It better not be a kriffing lothcat. "Oookkaayy?"

Ezra just grinned and grabbed her hand, pulling Sabine into the mountain cluster. She stared at their joined hands in confusion, surprised that she didn't feel even remotely offended that he had taken such liberties. It actually felt really nice, to be honest.

When he stopped and let go of her, Sabine looked up and gasped. It's a TIE! It has to be the one Ezra and Zeb absconded with months ago. "Wha...?"

Ezra blushed and kind of stammered. "I thought, since it wasn't going anywhere, that maybe you'd like to paint it?"

Sabine gawked at him for a moment. How does he know me so well? Painting a whole TIE is literally a dream come true.

Staring into his beautiful blue eyes, she melted. Just gave up all her inhibitions and tossed them away. I'm probably never going home again anyway, so who's there to stop me from enjoying this wonderful boy who has appeared in my life like a sunrise after a week of rain?

Certainly not my 'loving' mother.

Making a decision that had been a long time coming, the Mandalorian girl grabbed Ezra's shirt and
pulled him closer as his eyes widened in shock. She mentally smirked. *He probably thinks I’m going to kill him or something.* But that was the last thing on her mind. Even though she had no clue what she was doing, except for watching other people do it, Sabine kissed Ezra like he was the last source of air in the galaxy.

_Holy nerfherders! Sabine is kissing me!_

That was the last thought in Ezra’s brain as it overloaded.

It felt like his heart stopped.

For absolutely sure, he stopped breathing.

The moment he'd been dreaming of for months had finally come true, and he just stood there frozen for at least a minute, like a complete idiot. Sabine pulled back eventually and looked at him with pain filled eyes that nearly broke his stuttering heart when she realized he wasn't kissing her back. *Force, I’m such an idiot._

Ezra gasped in a lungful of air, forcefully kick-started his stupid brain, mostly closed down the bond between him and Kanan, and gently peeled her hands off his shirt. He determinedly held onto her hands when she went to pull away. And then he started apologizing and begging as fast as he could make his tongue go before she punched him and walked away forever. "Sabine, I'm sorry. You just really took me by surprise, and my stupid brain turned off, and you stopped my heart, and would you please do it again? Because I love you and you just made my dreams come true.”

Sabine’s mouth dropped a fraction and she gave up trying to tug her hands away. *By the Manda, he’s just so cute. How can I say no to that?*

*I can’t. Plain and simple.*

She could easily read the anxiety on his face as he waited with baited breath for her to answer, and that just wouldn't do. Sabine put him out of his misery by smiling widely. He responded with a relieved grin of his own and they laughed quickly at the awkward ineptitude of the moment.

This time when she tugged her hands, Ezra let them go. He’d said his piece; it was up to her now to do whatever she was going to with it. He was vastly relieved when she put her hands back on his chest, grabbing his shirt again a little more gently than before, and leaned her face right back in front of his, narrowing her eyes at the dark blue haired boy. "You're lucky you’re so cute, Ezra, otherwise I'd have to kill you for being an idiot. You better kiss me back this time."

And oh, did he ever.

The second her lips touched his, Ezra wrapped his arms around her back and pulled her as close as her arms between them would allow. He returned her kiss with a lot more enthusiasm than skill, but he didn’t think she minded, judging by the dreamy eyes she looked at him with when they stopped to gasp in air. Her arms crept up around his neck and she stepped the last few centimetres of space closer. Ezra realized rather dazedly in that moment that they were exactly the same height now. _Hey, I grew! That is definitely worth celebrating too._

He leaned his head towards her again and she met him halfway.

Sabine had no idea how long they spent just exploring this new and wonderful way of communicating, but by the time she decided to pause for a moment, they'd definitely improved their technique. By a lot. _I think I really, really like kissing._ Ezra held her in his arms like a safe haven from the rest of the universe, and she could hear his heart pounding in time with her own. Smiling
softly, she rested her cheek on his shoulder. “Don’t tell anyone, but I love you too, Ezra Bridger,” she murmured.

He nearly gasped in shock. *I never thought I’d hear her say that. Hoped and prayed, yes. But actually hear it? No. His arms tightened around her and he kissed her hair in gratitude. “You have no idea how happy that makes me, Sabine. No idea.”*

She smiled against his shirt that smelled like fresh air and clean sweat, which she quite liked, and tightened her arms around his neck in return, fingers playing with the ends of his soft, shaggy hair. “Oh, I think I have a little bit of an idea,” she said laughingly. She slid her hips slightly against his to point out the fact that she could feel just how ‘happy’ he was.

Not that it bothered or disgusted her. Quite the opposite in fact. Sabine was actually pleased that he was feeling just as turned on as she was. It would have been disappointing otherwise.

Not that she was going to do anything about it.

Yet.

A few more months, maybe.

**Ezra momentarily thought about being embarrassed about his excited state, but then he realized that Sabine wasn’t, so he just went with it, hugging her even closer with a chuckle at her words.**

As Ezra basked in their new relationship, he realized that he could feel her happiness, more clearly than he ever had. It wasn’t usual for him to pick up on her emotions, when she felt something strongly enough, but this was different. *It's like... my bond with Kanan!*

Closing his eyes, Ezra concentrated on the Force and saw the new bond between them. It was beautiful, like a little piece of lightning stretched between their souls. *I wish she could see it too; it's amazing.*

He didn't know whether to tell her about the bond or not, afraid it would scare her. After a few moments of contemplation, he decided to leave that for another day. There were other things he’d rather be doing than explaining the whys and wherefores of Force bonds.

He reached up and touched her hair; something he'd wanted to do for ages, to see how soft it was. Ezra wasn't disappointed. It felt like silk between his fingers. He sighed in contentment and played with her perfect orange and blue hair. In his opinion, she couldn't have picked better colours if she'd tried.

Sabine echoed his sigh, liking the feeling of his fingers threading through her hair over and over. "You know, I never thought I would ever actually do this. Technically, we're still enemies."

Ezra leaned back a little so he could see her face and grinned at her. "Never say never, Sabine. I've been waiting for this to happen since the day I met you. I was going to wait for as long as it took for you to realize that you and I aren't enemies and that we'll never be, no matter what your people say. I'd even go so far as to say we're the opposite of enemies now," he teased with a smirk.

She rolled her eyes at him, punched him in the arm, and then kissed him again.

*Yep. That's my fiery Mando in a nutshell. And I think she's perfect.*

He kissed her back, pouring every ounce of his feelings into the kisses.
This time, by the time they stopped, she had both her hands buried in his hair and he had her pinned against the wall of one of the mountains with his hands on either side of her head. Ezra wasn’t even sure how they had ended up there, but he certainly thought it felt great to be pressed up so close to her. *This is definitely a day I am never going to forget.*

They stared at each other, breathing like they’d run a marathon, love and desire shining in their eyes. She’d never looked more beautiful to him, with her cheeks flushed and her lips swollen from his kisses. *I want to kiss her forever so she looks just like this every day for the rest of our lives.*

_Do you think Kanan and Hera would notice the difference?_

_Probably._

_We’re going to have to be careful about that, I suppose._

_How frustrating._

_I wonder if Kanan will be able to sense the change in our Force signatures?_

_Uggghhh. I’m going to have to figure out how to mask that too. Cause I can almost guarantee my warrior goddess is going to want to keep this a secret._

_Speaking of Kanan, why do I feel a hint of disappointment coming from him?_

Ezra carefully opened up his bond with Kanan a fraction wider, and felt even more disappointment. His eyes widened as remembrance struck.

Sabine was just leaning forward to kiss Ezra again when he suddenly pulled back and his hands fell from the rockface like he’d been burned.

“Karabast! I’m supposed to be training with Kanan right now!” Ezra kissed Sabine quickly on the cheek. “Sorry. Gotta go. See you later!” he called even as he took off like a shot.

Sabine blinked after him for a moment, her jaw dropped in surprise. Collecting herself, she huffed and crossed her arms over her chest. _Well, I know exactly where I fall in the totem pole of importance, now don’t I?_

She seriously thought about being pissed off about it, but then she turned her head a fraction and the TIE came into view again, and she was reminded about just how sweet Ezra really was.

_Fine. I guess I can take second string to Jedi training. As long as nothing else climbs above me, that is. And getting interrupted just when things are getting amazing doesn’t become a habit. Besides, who else would kiss me like I’m the most precious thing in the universe?_

Now smiling rather dopily, Sabine sank further into the rock wall and let the last few minutes replay in her mind.
Princess Interferance

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Princess Interferance:

D2/3 BBY, Lothal

As the planning session for stealing the Princess’ ships broke up, Ezra wandered into the galley, letting the door close behind him. Sabine surreptitiously tracked him with her eyes, still worried about him.

Even though he had a mission to occupy his mind, there was still a hint of sorrow in his eyes, and the set of his shoulders was a fraction lower than normal. Ezra was definitely hurting over the loss of his parents and all she wanted to do was hold him close and make him feel better.

But there were too many people wandering around the ship right now with the addition of Ryder and Organa, and she didn’t see how to make it happen.

The pampered looking Princess was talking to Hera at the moment, and Sabine swallowed the urge to growl at the other girl. Because she was looking at the galley door too, and asking Hera, “Ezra, he’s special, isn’t he?”

Not to you, bitch. He’s mine.

“We believe so,” Hera answered with a soft smile. “But what makes you think so? You’ve only just met him.”

The Princess shrugged slightly. “Just a feeling I have. And my feelings about people are rarely wrong. Plus, it’s his words that have sparked a true rally to the Rebellion’s cause. I feel like he’ll be an important player in this war one day and I’d like to stay in contact with him, if I could.”

Not if I can help it. You are not stealing my man, you hussy.

Sabine stood abruptly as Hera answered the younger girl who held herself with such poise. “I’m sure that can be arranged. I’m sure Ezra would love to have more friends his age to talk to.”

K riff, Hera, stop encouraging her. Not caring any longer what anyone thought, Sabine went into the galley as well, mumbling about getting a drink, if anyone cared to hear it.

At first, she thought Ezra had taken to crawling through the ductwork again, because she didn’t see him at first glance. But then a flash of white in her peripheral vision proved him to be propped up against the counter just to the left of the door, hugging his helmet to his chest.

Ezra rolled his head towards her and flashed a pathetic smile as she stepped in and let the door close behind her. “Hey,”

“Hey.” She gently extracted the helmet from his hands and placed it on the counter, then she put herself in the helmet’s place.
Ezra sighed softly into her blue and teal hair as her arms wrapped around his waist and she leaned her weight into him. He wrapped his arms around her in return, his soul settling at the connection. For the first time since learning the terrible news about his parents’ deaths, Ezra felt like he still had something to live for.

_Sabine will always be my happy place._

She kissed his jaw softly. “Guess what?”

“What?”

“It’s the one year anniversary of the day we first kissed.”

His eyes widened in surprise. “Force, you’re right, my birthday was yesterday.” *And it was just as wretched as ever. Thank the Force for Sabine, who always makes them better.* He touched her under the chin and brought her eyes up to meet his. “I’m sorry, I didn’t realize. I should have a present for you.”

Sabine laughed softly, looking up into the amazing blue eyes that were now a few centimetres higher than hers. “Don’t worry about it, babe. I don’t have anything for you either. But I wouldn’t mind a few more kisses to celebrate the day.”

Ezra smiled softly, fingers brushing her hair behind her ear and then tracing the shell, making her shiver in delight. “I consider every kiss from you a gift, cyar’ika.”

She melted, just like she always did when he said things like that, and cupped his strong jaw in her hands. “And that’s why you’re the only recipient of my kisses, Ezra Bridger; that honeyed tongue of yours.”

Ezra leaned closer, eyes sparking. “Oh, you like my tongue, do you?”

She closed the distance further, her own amber eyes sparking back as she murmured against his lips, “You know I do.”

Their lips met in a sweet kiss that nibbled and caressed in the most perfect way. And when she wanted more, Sabine parted her lips and invited his tongue to play too.

Ezra was happy to oblige, licking into her mouth and starting a sweet tango with her.

He would have been content to stay wrapped up with her forever, but a sudden sense of a newly familiar presence in the Force that was weirdly strong yet muted had him pulling back just as the door beside them began to open.

Sabine sprang away at the unexpected (but she should have anticipated it with so many people on the ship) opening of the door. She tried to play it cool and turn the movement into reaching for a cup from the cupboard just to the right of Ezra’s head, but the Princess’ raised brow proved that she hadn’t quite succeeded.

“I’m sorry. Am I interrupting something?”

“No. No.” Ezra’s blushing cheekbones spoke clearly how much of a lie that was.

The Princess gave him a skeptical look that clearly said she wasn’t buying it, but she let the subject drop, thankfully. “I just came in to get a drink of water, if that’s all right?”
She was still looking at Ezra, and Sabine wanted to claw her eyes out.

Because Ezra was looking especially fine in his old cadet uniform that was a year’s worth of growing too tight and the Princess was definitely noticing. Sabine could practically see all of the muscles he’d been building with his Jedi training. The white and grey looked especially nice with his copper skin tone, and the lack of colour somehow made his beautiful eyes even bluer. (Despite what the uniform represented, Sabine had always liked Ezra in it.)

Nearly snarling (but not quite), Sabine thrust the cup she’d just grabbed in the Princess’ face. “Here. Have at it.”

The Princess, curse her, smiled regally and accepted the cup. “Thank you.”

As the Princess moved to the sink Ezra shot Sabine a look that said ‘what’s up with you?’

Sabine shot him one back that said ‘I’ll tell you later.’ Then she swept from the galley before she strangled the other girl in a fit of jealousy.

It didn’t occur to her until after she’d left that she’d just left Ezra alone with the other girl.

The very beautiful other girl.
A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Sabezra's 2nd Anniversary:

D2/2 BBY, Atollon

The sun was setting over Chopper Base by the time Ezra landed the A-Wing trainer beside a line of similar one person fighters. He’d tried to get Sabine to come with him for the long trip back from the Phelbos sector, but Kanan had vetoed the idea, saying that Ezra should take the quiet time to meditate over what had happened with Maul and the holocrons.

Ezra had to admit that the time alone had worked to settle his mind, but he still regretted the missed alone time with Sabine. Sometimes it seemed like he hardly ever saw her anymore with all of the missions they were running, many of them on separate teams.

Not bothering to wait for a ladder to be pushed up to the cockpit by one of the curious people wandering out of the main facility, Ezra jumped down to the ground and then stretched out the kinks from sitting for so long. He gave Wedge a halfhearted wave as the older boy came jogging over.

“What happened? There’s rumours about kidnapping or something all over the base.”

Sighing, Ezra shook his head. “I’ll explain tomorrow, Wedge. I promise. I’m really beat and just want to go pass out.”

Disappointed, but resigned, Wedge nodded. “All right. But I’ll be your shadow at breakfast until you spill the dets.”

Ezra laughed tiredly. “If it comes with you serving me so I don’t have to stand in line, then I might even be willing to call it a date,” he teased.

Wedge rolled his eyes. “Whatever, Bridger. Go crash, you’re obviously barmy. Everyone knows you only have eyes for a certain Mando.”

Ezra winked before striding off towards the Ghost. “You know it,” he called over his shoulder, Wedge’s laughter trailing after him.

Ezra strode up the ramp of his home, soaking in the feeling of belonging that immediately came with it. The first thing he did was head for the refresher; six hours in an A-Wing with no toilet facilities would inspire that in nearly everyone. As he turned left towards his destination, he could hear Kanan, Hera, and Zeb talking in the common room from the open door to the right. I wonder where Sabine is?

That question was answered as the door to the refresher opened and out walked the girl in question.

He beamed at her, receiving an equally bright smile in return.

“I see you made it in one piece,” she said teasingly, a hint of relief under the tone.
Ezra walked into the refresher after she had walked out and leaned against the doorframe and crossed his arms over his chest. “I did.”

“And did you meditate like Kanan told you to?” she asked, leaning her shoulder on the wall, facing down the hallway so she could see if anyone stuck their head out of the common room.

Ezra smiled ruefully. “I actually did. Nearly the whole way too. It helped a bit. Maybe not so much in answers, but definitely with the guilt.”

She touched his arm gently. “That’s good. You can’t let yourself get stuck in the guilt spiral again. That didn’t go well last time.”

*Understatement of the century.* Ezra reached up, running a caressing finger over her cheek. “Yeah. I know. But I know I can always count on you to drag me back into the light, and that keeps me going.”

Sabine leaned into his touch, turning her head to kiss his palm. “Ez’ika,” she whispered. “Always.” She smirked. “Even if I have to beat you up again to make you see what an idiot you are, I’ve got you.”

He snorted. “Yeah. Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that again. You are seriously good at doing damage when you want to.”

Her smirk grew. “I’m Mandalorian. It’s what we do.”

Ezra leaned into her space. “My Mandalorian.”

She closed the distance so their noses just touched. “My lothrat.”

And just like that, their mouths were fused, his hand cupping her cheek.

A burst of laughter from the common room just down the hall had them pulling apart quickly in remembrance that this wasn’t a good place or time. But that didn’t stop their eyes from saying how much they wished they could continue.

“I guess…” Sabine said, flicking her gaze towards the other room.

He sighed. “Yeah.” Somehow, even though he’d still get to see her, having it include the rest of the family at the same time just didn’t seem good enough at the moment. “Tomorrow?” They’d finagle a patrol together or something to make some alone time happen, he’d make sure of it.

Her eyes shone with promise and banked desire. “Tomorrow,” she confirmed.

Ezra tucked his hands into the pockets of his jacket to stop them from reaching for her again. His fingers touched a square package and he lit up. “Wait,” he called softly just as she moved to walk away.

Sabine turned back. “What?”

Ezra withdrew the gold wrapped square. “I found this in the galley of that space station when we were scavenging for supplies. It might be a little stale, but it’s still chocolate.”

Sabine’s eyes lit up with nearly unholy glee. “Ezra. And you saved it for me?”

He grinned, filled with pride at his accomplishment. “Of course. Happy second anniversary, cyar’ika.”
Sabine gulped, clutching the chocolate bar to her chest. “Oh, Ez.” Glancing down the hall, she confirmed the coast was still clear, so she grabbed his jacket and pulled him back down for another quick but thorough kiss that had him floating on figurative clouds.

She pulled away just in time for Hera to stick her head out the other door. “Sabine, you want to help me make dinner? Oh, hey, Ezra. You’ve made it back all right. Excellent.” Hera beamed at the two of them. “Now you both can help me make dinner.”

They smiled beatifically at their almost mother. “Sure, Mom,” they answered in sync, laughing when they realized what they’d done.

Hera shook her head at them, grinning. “You two have come a long way from when you first met, that’s for sure.”

Sabine looked at Ezra with mirth in her eyes, raising a brow. “You could say that.”

Ezra smirked back at her.

Sabine walked to the adjoining hallway. “I’ll be right there, Hera. I just have to put something in my room.”

Ezra forced himself not to watch Sabine walk away, since Hera was watching, instead closing himself into the refresher. *Force, I love that girl.*
Sabine's Rescue

A/N: This was originally an interrupted dream, but it's going to become a real piece of a whole chapter eventually.

Sabine's Rescue:

D19/2 BBY, Montross space

Sabine stared at the spot where the CR90 Corvette had been just moments ago as the pod part of her TIE floated dead in space. She knew she'd told Ezra to leave before their Corvette was destroyed, but it still hurt to be left behind. She told herself to suck it up and just deal with it. Ezra and Kanan would come back for her when they could. She knew she could count on them. Now it was just a matter of surviving until that happened.

The next hour went by in fast forward. Being towed back to Skystrike Academy. The fight with Governor Pryce. Escaping with Wedge and Hobbie in a TIE bomber with Kallus' of all people's help. Being shot at yet again and having Ezra and Kanan come back in the nick of time to save them like she knew they would.

Then she was climbing into the corvette and Ezra and Kanan were there, both looking at her with smiles of relieved welcome. Sabine introduced their new recruits and the guys nodded to each other. While Kanan talked to Wedge and Hobbie, Ezra pulled Sabine off into a side hallway. "I'm so glad to see you're okay," he ranted, big blue eyes wide with remembered worry. "You have no idea how hard it was for me to leave you behind." Ezra ran a trembling hand through his short hair. "I hope I never have to do that again."

Sabine smiled and stopped him as he paced back and forth in the small hallway with a hand on his arm. "Hey, I'm okay. You know you did the right thing and it all worked out in the end."

Ezra closed his eyes and she could see him visibly calming himself down. When his breathing had returned to normal, he opened his eyes again and stared at her ruefully. "Yah, I know, but it was still hard to do. I've been in a state of worry for the last week while you were in there and Kanan had to keep calming me down. This thing at the end was just more than I could take."

"Ezra," Sabine sighed. "You know I can take care of myself."

"Oh, I know that," he said with a crooked smile. "You're the most capable person I've ever met. It doesn't stop me from worrying though."

Sabine reached up and stroked his cheek gently. "That's really sweet, Ezra. I worry about you too, you know, when you go on missions without me."

Ezra leaned forward so their foreheads just touched, blue eyes staring into her own. "Yeah?"

Sabine smiled into his eyes and whispered against his lips. "Yeah." Then she wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him closer as their mouths met in a gentle kiss. They pulled apart for a moment, eyes wide with wonder, before their mouths met again in an endless kiss that couldn't have been more right if it tried.

They pulled apart when Ezra sensed Kanan's curiosity for their whereabouts. "Kanan's coming," he whispered.
Sabine leaned closer again. "My cabin, five minutes," she whispered in his ear.

Ezra nodded eagerly, eyes shining love and anticipation, before leaving her to go intercept Kanan. She leaned against the wall, a soft smile on her face as Kanan asked where she was and Ezra said she'd gone to change out of the hated Imperial pilot's uniform. And wash the temporary dark brown out of her hair as well. Wow. He was really on it today, buying them time. Sabine grinned to herself and dashed to her cabin on the other side of the ship.

The moment she was in her room, she was stripping and walking into the little refresher in her room to do as Ezra suggested and wash the boring dark brown dye from her hair before he got there. Yes, it was more or less her natural colour, but there was a reason she died her hair all the time. The more permanent white, lavender and purple dye was quickly revealed as the brown dye ran down the drain.

When she emerged from the refresher, towel drying her hair, Ezra was already in her room, tossing off his clothes with enthusiasm. Sabine didn't care what excuse he gave to get away from the others, she was just glad he made it.

Ezra looked up and saw her glistening body, still wet from the shower and froze in the act of pulling off a boot. Sabine tossed her towel onto the floor and walked towards him seductively, hips swaying gently. She reached him and bent down a little, basically putting her chest in his direct line of sight, and breathed in his ear. "Like what you see, Ez'ika?"

Ezra almost fell over as he was still in the act of removing a boot. He hopped frantically, regaining his balance and pulled the boot off with a 'ha' of triumph. "Do I like what see, Sabine? I think that's an understatement. You make me any hotter, I'm going to combust."

Sabine smiled slightly and walked over to the bunk, lying down on it. "Then come and show me, babe."

Ezra's clothes magically disappeared and he was on top of her in two seconds flat, erection rubbing against her clit just right as his chest squashed hers and his mouth sealed over hers. She buried her fingers in his short hair as best as she could and clenched them tight, holding him to her as their tongues fought for dominance.

When she felt the desperate need for some air, she pulled him back with her grip on his silky blue black hair. "Kiss me lower," she whispered demandingly.

Ezra's electric blue eyes crinkled at the corners as he grinned at her. "Whatever you want, my goddess."

Sabine's eyes closed in bliss as he pressed kisses from the spot just below her neck all the way down to her breasts. He stopped as he reached the first one with a kiss to the pillowy flesh and glanced up at her with a twinkle in his eyes. "Is this where you want me?" he teased.

Sabine opened her eyes a crack and gave him a warning glare. "You know perfectly well where I want you, Ezra."

Ezra kissed the other breast. "As my lady commands."

He continued his path downwards, dipping his tongue in her belly button on the way by, making her giggle. He finally reached the destination she had in mind, pressing kisses to her mound before spreading her open so he could devote his attention to her clit. He swirled his tongue around it just the way she liked, nipping lightly sometimes too, which made her want to squeak.
Sabine felt her body tensing as the pleasure built and built within her. His tongue dipped down and delved into her channel, licking up her juices hungrily, revving her up more at how hot that was.

"You like that?" Ezra asked, feeling her tremble.

Sabine moaned in response. "More, babe."

Ezra smiled against her folds and returned to her clit. He also plunged two fingers in her soaking passage. Sabine gasped and cried out as she shot over the edge of the abyss, body arching in exquisite pleasure.

"Kriff, you're gorgeous," Ezra whispered reverently as he watched her come, fingers still inside her and feeling her pulse around them.

Sabine caught her breath and grabbed his hair again, pulling him upwards. "I need you in me. Now."

Ezra crawled up her body happily, his hard length more than ready to plunge into her depths. His mouth pressed to hers and she felt the big head of his cock press against her opening. She opened her eyes and stared into his.

"Now?" he asked.

"Now," she answered, wrapping her legs around his waist.
Kallus Escapes

Kallus Escapes:

D365/2 BBY, The Chimaera, above Atallon

"Governor! We have a problem!"

Kallus smirked in his mind as the comms buzzed loudly with chatter about the loss of the Interdictor. Stars, he wished he could see Thrawn's face when he found out that a few Mandalorians had taken out one of his prized gravity well ships. Too bad he was down on the surface of the planet right now and missing all the action up here. Kallus sent another prayer to the stars that the Ghost crew would pull off another miraculous escape.

He wanted to see Thrawn's normally expressionless face react to that occurrence as well.

Seeing Pryce on the verge of a panic attack was a pretty close second, though, in terms of satisfying things to see.

Her shoulders couldn't possibly get any tenser as she whirled on the poor Lieutenant who'd bravely tried to tell the Governor the bad news that everyone had already heard. "I don't want to hear it!" she all but yelled as she spun around to glare at the officer who Kallus thought was named Praterson or something like that. (At least, that's what he thought he heard when Thrawn had left and quietly told the man to keep an eye on Pryce.) Her fists were clenched in fists at the small of her back as she maintained a false air of military command, but her anger and frustration at the potentially battle turning loss of the Interdictor were quite obvious to see. "Just... stop them," she snarled as she returned to looking out at the space battle. "Nothing gets through."

Kallus wished he could see that Interdictor going up in flames, but it was off to the side and out of his line of sight from his current position suspended between two stormtroopers. He let them hold even more of his weight just because he could.

Unable to resist the opportunity to taunt the woman he had taken an instant dislike to when they first met (and his opinion had never improved with the years of forced acquaintance), Kallus opened his mouth. "Thrawn is not going to be happy with you making a mess of his fleet."

Oh, he had to work hard to not snicker in glee as she whirled back around with a murderous glare for him. She knew the truth of his statement and was more than willing to take out her sense of impending doom on him. "Throw this traitor out the airlock," Pryce practically growled with a dismissive gesture. (Kallus wondered how long she'd been wanting to say those words in regards to him, but he figured it was probably since he turned down her not so subtle hints of fishing for a romantic encounter with him. The very thought of it still gave him the creeps; if ever there was a human female that reminded him of a black widow spider, it was Arihnda Pryce.)

The troopers holding him up seemed a bit surprised at her spiteful command, since that was against Thrawn's direct orders, but he wasn't here, so they shrugged and turned with him, forcing him to walk on his fractured leg.

Kallus didn't have to work too hard to make his injury look as debilitating as possible as he did little happy dances on the inside as he finally saw his chance to escape.

Pryce had made another mistake.
Thrawn was going to eat her alive when he got back.

What he wouldn't give to be a fly on the wall for that one, too.

The stormtroopers drag marched him out of the bridge and down the hallway to the nearest lift. They pushed him roughly to the back and then stepped in as well, turning to face the door, leaving their backs to him.

Kallus smirked at the idiotic mistake. They deserved what they were about to get.

As the lift started zipping downwards, Kallus took his cuffed hands and slammed the helmet of the trooper on the left forward into the wall of the lift, ignoring the shriek from his cracked ribs. Idiot number one immediately slumped to the floor as his partner looked down in surprise. Kallus treated idiot number two to the same treatment, putting all of his body weight into it. The man grunted audibly as his helmet struck the wall, and then he too was down on the floor.

That was too easy. Didn't the Academies teach them anything useful these days?

Kallus carefully knelt down on his good knee, his bad leg sticking out awkwardly as he searched his guards for the handcuff key. Grunting in triumph when he found it in the belt of idiot number one, he quickly unlocked his cuffs.

For amusements sake, he snapped the handcuffs on one of each of the idiots' wrists and pocketed the key. He then snatched up a blaster and stunned them, just to make sure they stayed out. (He didn't need the ship going on alert while he made his way through it.) Unfortunately, he couldn't keep the blaster, because it was clearly stormtrooper issue and to be seen carrying one of them would raise suspicions.

By the time the lift doors opened, he was back on his feet and rubbing at his raw wrists with a grimace. (Being hung by the handcuffs was no picnic.)

Kallus rode his adrenaline high to get him beyond the pain as he walked like he belonged (with only a hint of a limp) through the hallways and down another lift to the nearest escape pod bay. He may have gotten one or two astonished glances at his rather beat up appearance, but Kallus just ignored them.

For some reason that he could only think was Thrawn's cautious and incredibly talented foreplanning, there were two guards on the door to the escape pod bay. And they knew he wasn't supposed to be free.

"Hey! How did you..."

Kallus grabbed the trooper by his chest armour and literally threw him into the other trooper. (Because of his bad leg, he couldn't do anything fancy, but his arms still worked, and he outmuscled these badly trained morons any day.) As they fell over each other, trying to maintain their balance, Kallus snatched the blaster right out of one's hands and shot them both, not even bothering to check if it was set on stun first.

As the blue laser light emerged from the blaster, he mentally shrugged.

Guess it wasn't their day to die.

Kallus tossed the blaster onto the slumped over body of the guard and made his way into the pod bay. He took the first one in the line, really not caring to walk any further.
Sinking into the chair in blessed relief, he flicked switches and was ejected out into space in thirty seconds flat.

Then, praying for another miracle, Kallus sent his spatial coordinates to the Ghost, hoping the crew was actually able to come get him and that they got the message before someone on a Star Destroyer intercepted it and sent a fleet of TIEs to come finish him off.

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The Ghost

"Hera. Hera are you alright? What was that about lightning?" Ezra's voice crackled over the comm and then became clearer as the comm computers finished rebooting after they had shorted out when Kanan's 'friend' struck them for the second time.

"We're fine. And I'll tell you later," Hera said with another glare at Kanan.

Zeb stifled a chuckle as his friend winced. For a blind man, he was incredibly perceptive to Hera's moods.

"How's it going on your end?" Hera asked the comm.

"Well, we took out the Interdictor," Ezra said triumphantly. "You're all clear." Zeb wasn't the only one who sagged slightly in relief as they (and what was left of the Phoenix and Dodonna's fleet) cleared Atollon's atmosphere.

"That's the first good news I've gotten today." Hera said in relief as she tamped down on the urge to rejoice; they weren't out of this disaster yet.

"Meet me at point eight seven. We'll lead the way."

As Hera flew towards the fleet of Star Destroyers and the thousands of TIEs that were waiting for them like hungry predators, Zeb had the random thought that Ezra was sounding more grown up every day. The brat that used to occasionally drive him up the wall was long gone. Off to the right of the line of Star Destroyers, Zeb could see a ball of light that he assumed was the downed Interdictor. The sight of anything Imperial going up in flames was always worth an internal happy dance.

"Copy that." Hera flicked off the comm and then proceeded to do a whole lot of fancy flying as she drew within weapons range of the enemy blockade. From his seat behind Hera, Zeb could see the tension in her lekku as she concentrated and flicked switches. "I'm diverting everything I can to the shields. We're just going to run right through them."

"What? We're not going to shoot back at them?" Zeb asked incredulously.

"Not this time, Zeb. We have a big enough target on our hull. We have a whole ship full of survivors and injured. I'm not taking any unnecessary risks."

Zeb had to agree that that made sense; even if it was a little disappointing.

He liked shooting at Imps.

Hera flicked the comm again and sent out a broadcast to their fleet. "This is Phoenix Leader. Raise your shields to maximum and scatter. Give them more targets to chase. We have a route out at point eight seven. The red and black Gauntlet is the point ship. Follow it if you don't see me."
A series of 'Copies' filled the comm for half a minute and then the cockpit went silent as Zeb and Kanan left Hera to concentrate on what she was doing, her eyes constantly flicking from the view in front of her to the monitor showing where other ships were in relation to her.

For about the five millionth time since he'd met her, Zeb admired Hera's flying skills. She dodged her freighter around squads of TIEs and skrimmed along the lengths of Star Destroyers to confuse sensors as easily as she took in air to breathe. Zeb could see Kanan following their flight with closed eyes, head turning this way and that as he 'sensed' (or whatever he did) the ships around them. Every thirty seconds or so, Kanan would turn his head and 'look' at Hera, and the corner of his mouth would flicker up for a second, before his face would settle back into serious.

Kanan had once told Zeb that watching Hera fly via Force Sight was one of his greatest pleasures, saying something about how she glowed like an angel. Zeb had zero Force sensitively, but even he could agree with that statement; Hera truly was meant to fly.

When they were about halfway through the blockade of Star Destroyers, the comm chimed with an incoming call. Hera answered it automatically even as she said, "We've got an incoming transmission."

A hologram of the fulcrum symbol popped up and Zeb nearly jumped out of his seat in surprise and relief. (The background worry that had been plaguing him for most of the day about Kallus' wellbeing after that cut off transmission was finally set to rest.) "It's Kallus! He's sending coordinates," Zeb said with excitement as he read what appeared on the computer screen.

Hera immediately started scanning the vicinity of the coordinates on the other monitor. "There's an escape pod on my scope."

"We have to get him!" Zeb exclaimed.

"Of course we have to get him," Hera said reassuringly. "I've already adjusted my course." She flicked the comm again. "This is Phoenix Leader again. I need anyone available to concentrate all fire on the Star Destroyer at point six two and fast."

"I'm on it," Wedge's voice came back over the comm quickly followed by half a dozen more.

"Me too," Ezra joined in. "And the rest of the Mando fighters are coming with me. They're more than happy to have a specific target to shoot at. But, I have to say, they seem like they're having the time of their life taking out a multitude of TIEs. The Empire didn't need all those TIEs anyway."

Zeb snorted under his breath. He's pretty sure Kanan rolled his eyes. Hera shook her head, sending her lekku swaying against the back of her chair.

Ezra's voice continued over the comm. "Not that I'm questioning orders, but Sabine and I are kind of curious over here about the change of plan."

"I need the distraction," Hera explained, much to Zeb's relief. (He had been very curious too.) "I'm going to pick up our intrepid Fulcrum agent before someone else uses him for target practice."

"Gotcha," Ezra said. "Glad to hear it. I'll keep an eye out for you."

"Thanks." Hera said as a tiny dot floating under a Star Destroyer came into view. She opened a return comm call to the frequency that had contacted her a couple of minutes ago. "This is Ghost. I'm going to open my cargo bay doors. I need you to fly in as I pass."

"Understood," came back the unmistakable clipped tone belonging to Kallus.
Zeb nearly sagged in his chair before he sat bolt upright again in trepidation about the risky manoeuvre they were asking Kallus to do.

Hera switched to the shipwide comm. "Heads up to anybody down in the cargo bay. In ten seconds, I'm opening the floor and raising the shield. We're picking up an escape pod on the fly and this might get messy. I highly recommend moving your feet NOW! Oh. And hang on to something!"

Zeb's sensitive hearing immediately picked up the sound of scrambling feet as people rushed to crowd under the platform or move down the ramp and get off the cargo bay floor. One person even scrambled up the ladder, turning out to be Rex.

"Who're we picking up?" Rex asked curiously as he grabbed onto the back of a chair so he wasn't thrown off his feet as Hera tipped the Ghost over onto its side. A second later, a loud crash was heard from below, indicating the escape pod had made it into the hold, but had hit a wall.

"Got him," Hera said smugly. Hera immediately hit the button to close the floor and another clang was heard as the pod settled on the decking not so gently. Zeb winced in sympathy as Hera muttered curses under her breath about damages to her ship.

"Got who?" Rex asked again, looking at Zeb.

"Kallus," Zeb replied with a grin as Ezra's ghastly coloured ship appeared in front of them and Hera immediately fell in behind the Gauntlet as they resumed their journey to the escape point.

Hera addressed the comm again. "I'm on your six, Gauntlet. Phoenix Squadron; let's get out of here!"

"Roger, Phoenix Leader. Right behind you," Wedge said cheerfully. "Your target was taken care of," he added matter of factly as they flew past a Star Destroyer in the process of blowing itself up.

Zeb smirked as he crossed his arms over his chest smugly.

Take that, Imperial scum.

When Kallus got the return comm call from Captain Syndulla, he nearly turned into a puddle of relief to know that she, at least, had escaped Thrawn's ground attack.

He only had a couple of seconds to rejoice at that little victory when he saw the Ghost approaching and immediately started piloting towards it with little bursts of the thrusters.

He clenched his jaw in concentration and then immediately relaxed it as it protested the abuse. The momentary distraction made him have to adjust course again as the freighter flew closer and closer.

And then suddenly the Ghost was sideways beside him and he was inside it. He almost fell out of his chair as his pod hit the inside wall of the cargo bay but he braced himself just in time. He regained control of the pod and hovered it inside the hold until he saw a corner of the open floor closing. After a couple seconds, he felt it was safe to land the pod.

He turned off the thrusters.

The pod fell like a rock down to the decking.

Kallus' teeth snapped together from the jarring force.
He groaned in agony, but powered down the pod anyway because he could now see a crowd of people squashed together in front of him, staring at him with wide eyes.

Forcing himself to his feet despite the desperate urge to simply sit there and pass out, Kallus limped to the back of the pod and hit the button to open the door. A white haired and bearded man that Kallus recognized from holos as General Dodonna of the Rebellion was waiting at the front of the crowd. He raised a bushy eyebrow at Kallus as he emerged, taking in Kallus grey Imperial uniform.

"And who are you?" Dodonna said curiously, holding up a hand to stop some blue uniformed Rebels behind him from advancing on Kallus with raised blasters. (Probably Dodonna's guards.)

"Fulcrum agent fifty-eight, Lothal sector," Kallus replied briskly, undeterred by the hostility shown to him by the Rebel guards.

Dodonna smiled widely. "Agent Kallus! Nice to finally put a face to the voice." He winced slightly. "Well, sort of. Glad to see you made it out, if not necessarily in the best of shape." He paused again for an awkward moment before saying, "Thanks for the warning this morning."

Kallus nodded once, not really wanting credit for something that hadn't actually been beneficial to the Rebels.

They just didn't know it yet.

"Come on, Kallus. Let's go join Captain Syndulla. I want to see what's happening and you can't see poodoo from down here. Not sure how, but I got stuck with the task of taking roll call." Dodonna raised a data pad in demonstration as he pushed through the crowd towards the engine compartment, indicating that Kallus should follow him. Kallus reluctantly did so. He'd rather sit down right where he was, to be honest. But this was technically his commanding officer now, so he sucked up the pain and followed.

Kallus raised a brow when they ended up at a ladder and Dodonna started climbing. Wouldn't it have been faster to take the other ladder up to the cockpit? Kallus glanced back through the open engine compartment door and immediately understood; his escape pod was wedged right up against said ladder.

Scrubbing a weary hand over the less injured side of his face, Kallus grabbed the ladder and started climbing.

They emerged in a hallway. Dodonna walked through a door and jogged down another hallway, looking amazingly spy for an older man. Somehow, Kallus managed to keep up, reluctant to call further attention to his injuries. Dodonna opened another door and they were in the cockpit.

Kallus glanced at the occupants in further relief to see them alive and well; seeing Captain Syndulla flying, the Jedi in the co-pilot seat, Zeb behind Syndulla, and the old clone standing behind the last chair. He wondered where the cheeky Jedi boy and the Mando girl were, but had to assume they were safe enough, since none of the people in the cockpit seemed like they were grieving. (He knew the youngest Spectres were practically family to the older Spectres.) Kallus met the clone's eyes for a second just before the Ghost launched into hyperspace.

Kallus exhaled quietly as the realization that he had actually escaped sunk in. "Thank the stars," he mumbled nearly soundlessly under his breath. He wondered if this was all just a dream and he was actually still hanging by his handcuffs in the Chimaera, passed out. Putting some weight down on his bad leg, Kallus grimaced and decided that, nope, this was probably reality.
Zeb had heard them come in, of course, but it took him a moment to realize who exactly it was that had joined them. Hearing Kallus' voice, he spun his chair around. He sucked in a breath and rose to his feet in an instant, taking a step towards Kallus before pausing awkwardly. The human looked absolutely awful. His face was covered in abrasions and his left eye was nearly swollen shut and surrounded by dark blue and purple bruising. He had an arm across his torso, as if he was holding his ribs together, and he wasn't putting any weight on his right leg at all.

Karabast.

As the last of the adrenaline from his escape abandoned him, Kallus sagged back against the wall beside the door, using it to hold him up. He smiled abashedly at Zeb's wide eyed and concerned look, shrugging slightly, and ignoring the pain of his split lip.

Kallus found himself to now be the center of attention as everyone in the cockpit turned to look at him, Captain Syndulla and the blind Jedi rising from their chairs and adopting concerned looks as well. He gave the green twi'lek a grateful and respectful nod. "Thank you for the pick up."

"It was the least we could do," Syndulla said softly. "If you hadn't warned us..." Her voice trailed off, not wanting to even think about how much worse it could have been if they hadn't had those few minutes of preparation time.

"I had to try," Kallus said, straightening off the wall determinedly; not wanting to be seen as weak as he felt.

"We're very grateful," Syndulla said. "I'm just glad we finally got you out of there. You never should have stayed behind when Ezra went to get you. Look what they did to you."

"You're right, but not because of the beating." Kallus sighed as he geared himself up for the admission to follow. "It's my fault they found your Base. Thrawn must have seen through my deceptions and he tracked my warning transmission." Kallus looked down at the floor, ashamed. "I am sorry. Your loses are all on my head."

"Kallus..." Zeb whined, ears flat to his head, unable to see the other male beat himself up over something he really didn't have that much control over.

Kallus flicked his eyes up at the lasat, grimacing as he shook his head, guilt overwhelming him as the full realization of everything that had occurred this day could have been avoided if he'd just gone with the Jedi boy when asked to.

Kallus didn't see it, but there wasn't a single person in the cockpit who wasn't looking at him with sympathy. Even General Dodonna couldn't bring himself to blame the Fulcrum agent for the destruction of most of his fleet.

"Kallus..." Booted feet appearing in his line of sight and a hand on his shoulder had Kallus looking up again at the old General in surprise. The white bearded man shook his head at him, his wise, long suffering blue eyes meeting Kallus' steadily. "You can't flog yourself over things you can't undo. Nor should you take the blame for something that may have happened anyway. We all know that Thrawn is a cunning bastard and was most likely going to find Chopper Base sooner or later. You did your job the best way you knew how and your dedication to the Rebellion in the dangerous setting of spying on Thrawn is to be commended."

Kallus didn't exactly feel better, but a modicum of the weight on his shoulders lifted. He nodded his head once in acknowledgment.
Zeb smiled in relief that someone had put Kallus straight. He stepped forward again and grasped Kallus' shoulder in a warm grip, grinning a little at the other male's surprise. "Hey. It looks like I finally get to say this." He paused for a dramatic beat and then said with a wide grin, "I told you so." (Referring to their long talk on the ice moon.) "And welcome to the Rebellion, Kallus."

Kallus snorted in amusement and found himself smiling in return as more welcomes joined Zeb's and warm smiles were given to him, people crowding around him.

Two years ago, Kallus would have called this a scene from a nightmare. But now... Now it almost felt like a dream come true.

He felt accepted and truly wanted for the first time in too many years to even contemplate.

Once he got past the irony of who exactly his new friends were, it felt bloody nice.

A/N: I just turned 2 minutes of t.v show into 4000+ words! Go me! :D I think it turned out all right.
Kanera's Parting

Kanera's Parting:

D1/1 BBY, Lothal

Kanan didn't want to leave Hera.

To be honest, he never wanted to leave Hera. He hadn't since he first met her on Gorse.

Hera had been his salvation when he was in a terribly low place in his life. She was the reason he was a Jedi again. (Perhaps not a strictly traditional Jedi, but a Jedi nonetheless.) Hera was the reason he cared about more than just surviving to see another day. Hera was the reason he had his own Padawan. Hera was the reason he wanted to make the galaxy a better place again.

He wanted to spend the rest of his life doing whatever it took to make her happy. He wanted to spend the rest of his life holding her in his arms at night. He wanted to spend the rest of his life watching her Light infused Force signature interact with those around her and see how she changed them for the better.

He wanted to marry her and have children with her. He wanted a peaceful life filled with joy and laughter. He wanted the galaxy to just magically take care of itself so Hera could enjoy life for once. He wanted his family to never have to fight again. Run for their lives again. Take the lives of others again.

There was so much he wanted that still seemed so far off. There was so much that tested his patience and made it near impossible for the things he wanted to become reality. There was always one more mission. One more battle. One more eye rolling report to file.

And yet, despite how things didn't ever seem to progress, Kanan fought on and savoured every spare moment he could find with his beloved. Because he knew that he'd rather be a planet forever circling her sun than a meteor that touched the edge of the sun, but sailed on, never to see it again.

And now he was in orbit away from Hera again.

Because Ezra was going with Sabine to Krownest and then on to Mandalore to rescue her father. And he couldn't, in good conscience, let Ezra and Sabine do that all by themselves. They were practically his and Hera's kids (he didn't know HOW that had happened, considering he was only eleven years older than Sabine and Hera was only seven, but it had), and sending them away with just Chopper as an escort was not his idea of good parenting.

So what if they weren't really his children? And so what if Ezra had literally just turned eighteen (what a birthday present the destruction of Chopper Base had been, adding to the list of horrible birthdays Ezra seemed to be cursed with), and Sabine was near the end of her nineteenth year? No matter how old they got, they'd still be his kids to take care of. The mission they were planning was bound to be a dangerous one. And even with the help of Sabine's clan, having two Jedi on a mission was always better than just one. And there was the 'small' issue of how much Mandos hated Jedi. It would be awful if Ezra went and got himself killed because he misspoke to the wrong person. (He was good at that.)

So Kanan had dragged Hera to her cabin (the only space left in the entire ship that wasn't crowded with the last of the survivors from Atallon, or taken over by Sabine's clan who had all come over
from the Gauntlet just because), ignored the knowing looks from the bystanders in the hallway, and then pinned her against the wall beside the door and kissed her hungrily. Desperately. Lovingly. Mournfully.

The attack on Atallon had left both of them feeling kind of lost and hopeless and in need of each other's touch to reaffirm that they were both still alive.

But that had had to wait while they escaped, and the vast number of people on the ship kept them busy for hours just seeing to injuries, and doing roll call, and feeding them.

And then they rendezvoused with the Gauntlet and Kanan and Hera had to hug Ezra and Sabine, ecstatic to see him alive, and her after months of being apart. Then there was the introductions of Tristan (Sabine's younger brother), and the rest of the clan members that had come with her. And THEN the gathering turned into a strategy meeting and Ezra volunteered to go back with Sabine.

So... yah. Kanan once again was left with only a few minutes to spend with his beautiful Hera and then they were going to be separated for days. It seemed like the story of his life these days. So he was taking advantage of the few minutes they had to full advantage.

Kanan ground himself against Hera, letting her feel just how much he wanted her, needed her.

Hera wrenched her mouth away from Kanan's with a gasp, chest heaving as she sucked in much needed air. "There's no time for that, love." But oh, how she wished there was. It seemed like there was never time for them anymore. It had never been her intention for her relationship with Kanan to take a backseat to the fight with the Empire, but it had. But then again, she'd fought her attraction to him for just over a year before giving in for that exact reason. She hated that she couldn't devote her entire self to him when he deserved so much better from her.

She hated feeling torn all the time.

But she could never turn him away either. Not anymore. Perhaps she never could. Kanan was her weakness and her strength. Her perfect mate in a galaxy that was far from perfect. Kanan completed her when she felt empty. He comforted her when she was down. He brought her joy with his very presence. He was steadfast and loyal. Strong and passionate. Peaceful and self motivated. And handsome. Breath stealingly handsome. Heart stopingly handsome. Couldn't forget that. She traced her fingers over his cheekbone, just below the scars around his eyes that did nothing to detract from his looks. So gorgeous. Sigh. "I wish there was, but you haven't even packed yet, and they're leaving in five minutes during the next pause between hyperspace jumps."

Kanan heaved a sigh as he rested his forehead against hers and closed his eyes in defeat. "I know, Hera. I know there's no time for us. I just... I just wish..."

Hera stopped him with her mouth, kissing him almost desperately as a tear escaped and trailed down her cheek. She pulled back and cupped his face in her hands, meeting his blind eyes, knowing he saw her in some fashion. "I wish too, Kanan. I really do."

Kanan smiled sadly and kissed the tear off her cheek. The he pressed his lips to hers one more time in a sweet kiss of parting. He stroked his hand down her lek and then hit the button to open the door. "I'll comm you when we get there," he said over his shoulder as he walked across the hallway to his own room. (A room that he rarely slept in, but his stuff was still in there.) Along with an unconscious soldier, currently recuperating in his bunk. Kanan packed a bag quietly and put on his mask, grateful for its presence so he didn't have to school his features into something pleasant right now.
After watching Kanan disappear into his own room, Hera met the sympathetic eyes of Agent Kallus, who was leaning against the wall like it was the only thing keeping him on his feet, before she retreated back into her own room. She leaned against the wall for a few minutes, just pulling herself back together.

After nearly losing him to the orbital bombardment on Atallon, Hera had been hovering on the edge of being an emotional wreck for hours. She wasn't sure if that five minute make out session had helped or not, but she wouldn't undo it for anything. He was alive. Her family was all still alive. That was all that mattered. The rest would sort itself out eventually. Wouldn't it?

Hera straightened her shoulders and left her room, just catching sight of Kanan's back retreating through the door that led to the center of the ship. She made to follow him and then a stray thought stopped her feet. She turned and looked the other way. "Kallus!" she barked in her best commanding voice.

Kallus straightened up off the wall, standing at attention, but clearly favouring his right leg. "Yes, Captain?"

Hera nodded at her room. "You look like you're about to pass out in the hallway. My bunk is free. Take it and sleep for a few hours. That's an order."

Kallus blinked at her for a couple seconds and then saluted briskly, a hint of a smile of gratitude in his eyes. "Thank you, Captain."

Hera smiled at him quickly and then turned and chased after Kanan.

She reached the hallway that led to the docking door just as the last of Clan Wren were filing back into the Gauntlet, leaving Sabine, Ezra, and Kanan still in the hall, as they were waiting for her.

She should have known they would be; Kanan and Ezra always seemed to know where she was. (That was usually a good thing, but not always.) Right now, she deeply appreciated it.

She started with a hug for Sabine and Ezra, looking at them with a brave smile. "You two take care of each other, you hear?"

Ezra grinned. "You have to know by now that that's a given, Hera."

Hera smiled wider, feeding off of Ezra's joy at being with Sabine again. "I know. I just have to say it anyway."

Sabine smirked. "It's usually me taking care of him."

"Hey!" Ezra protested.

Then Sabine grinned at him and punched him in the arm before dashing into the Gauntlet with Ezra chasing after, both of them laughing.

It was so good to see them together again, Hera couldn't help but smile stupidly at the sight. She sighed happily when Kanan wrapped an arm around her shoulders and snuggled her into his side, kissing the top of her head. "Do you think they'll ever move beyond being friends?" Hera asked curiously, because she had hopes for them. They were just so cute together.

Kanan sighed. "Honestly, Hera, yes I do. If you saw what I saw in the Force, you wouldn't even question it. Their signatures light up when they're in the same space. If those two aren't already making out when no one's around, I guarantee they will be soon enough. Sabine may just be
waiting for him to grow up a little more, or she's just being stubborn about giving in to the inevitable."

Hera looked up at Kanan, who was standing slightly higher than her on the sloped floor, wishing he wasn't wearing that stupid mask, and smiled mischievously up at him, grateful he could sense her emotions. "Like I was?"

Kanan snorted, not bothering to reply. Instead, he wrapped his arm around her waist and lifted her up to his height, kissing her long enough and deep enough to leave her lightheaded. Then he put her back on the ground and walked away, having nothing to say that his kiss hadn't already said for him.

Hera stared at the closed door of the airlock for at least a minute, waiting for the gentle shudder of the ship as the two ships undocked, before she shook herself back into motion. She had a ship full of people to take care of and a new base to get to. Not to mention the fact that the Ghost had been in the hands of AP-5 and Rex for much too long. She felt the need to fly her own ship right now, almost desperately, just so she could lose herself in the familiar routine.

Kanan commed her, as promised, after they arrived at Krownest. It also happened to be shortly after she arrived at Yavin 4, so she didn't have time to talk much. She asked him to comm again the same time tomorrow, hoping things would have settled down by then.

Turns out it had, but she hadn't had a single free minute between then and now, and she hadn't slept yet.

Settling what was left of Phoenix Squadron into the new base was a crazy job that required a ridiculous amount of paperwork and her supervision for almost every step, to make sure her people didn't get lost in the mix of so many others. (The forest moon base was home to an astonishing number of Rebels, more than she even dreamed there could ever be in her fight against the Empire.)

And then there was the extended debriefing on the attack of Atallon. High command wanted to know exactly what went wrong, who was responsible for what, everything she could remember about the Imperial fleet, and so on and so forth. It was all she could do keep a civil tone by the end of it.

When she left the room, she had to smile sympathetically at ex Agent Kallus, who was waiting his turn for his briefing next. If hers was bad, his was bound to be worse. At least he looked better rested, and someone had found him some clothes that weren't an Imperial uniform. Overall, he was probably in better shape than her right now, injuries notwithstanding.

Kallus smiled back at the exhausted looking twi'lek captain. "I wouldn't dare to give you an order, Captain, but I think you should heed the order you gave me yesterday. I even found some fresh sheets for your bunk after I woke up, with a little help from Zeb."

Hera patted him once on the shoulder on the way by. "Thanks, Kallus," she said tiredly. "Just one more thing to do before I can do that," she called as she walked away.

Kallus stared after her in surprise. Despite their original status as enemies, she was treating him like a member of her squadron already, and that felt absolutely amazing. He'd thought that, aside from Zeb, he'd be an outcast here because of who he was, but the number of people who had already accepted him into their ranks was mind boggling. Maybe the fact that Zeb kept him company whenever possible helped a lot; no one wanted to get on the bad side of someone so large.
Hera sat in her chair in the Ghost, staring absently at the lush forests of Yavin 4, as her mind replayed the attack on Atallon over and over, thanks to the debriefing, trying to find a way she could have saved more people, where any mistakes had been made in strategy that would possibly have made a difference, and came up blank. She kept going back around to the point where Kanan was outside the protective shield and the planet was being bombarded by the Star Destroyers in orbit. It had felt like her heart had ceased to beat until she heard his voice again over the comm, and she definitely hadn't breathed properly until she actually saw him again, the tightness in her chest easing somewhat when he appeared, miraculously alive and unhurt.

Hera hadn't really relaxed though, until they were all safely in hyperspace, fleeing Thrawn's fleet. Hera really really didn't like that Kalikori stealing, stuck up Imperial, blue Chiss blurrg dropping, to put it nicely. Chopper had a much fouler, and probably more accurate, description of Grand Admiral Thrawn that Hera was embarrassed to say she enjoyed hearing, even though she wouldn't dare repeat it out loud.

Hera almost jumped out of her chair in ironic surprise when the comm chimed an incoming holo call. Heart speeding up, she stood and activated the holo comm so they could see each other. She tried to play it cool as she talked to Kanan about his mission, who was already on Mandalore and heard about how their first attempt to rescue Alrich Wren had turned up empty. On the inside, she was soaking in the details of his appearance, wishing he'd take off that stupid mask so she could see his beloved face; scars, cloudy eyes and all. When he was finished with his report, she said something about him coming back as soon as the mission was completed, making Kanan smile knowingly.

"Ohhh, having trouble overthrowing the Empire without me?" he teased.

"Our team is an important asset to the Rebellion," Hera replied, trying to keep things professional, knowing their transmission was probably being monitored by the Intelligence Division.

"An asset? Is that what we are?" Kanan said with all sorts of double meanings in his voice.

Hera put her hands on her hips in amused exasperation. "You know what I mean."

"Well, you know how I feel," Kanan replied with sudden sincerity.

Hera melted a little, a secret smile hiding behind her stern façade. Not wanting to get too sappy on recorded comm time, she tried to keep it professional. "Are we still talking about the mission?"

Kanan leaned forward and somehow managed to get in her personal space, despite being just a hologram. His smirking face filled her vision. "That depends."

Hera leaned back towards his image, drawn like a magnet. "On what?" she murmured.

"You know," he said he replied huskily.

Oh Hera knew, all right. What she wouldn't give to be able to pull him across time and space and jump in his arms and kiss him senseless, immediately followed by a loooong stay in her bed.

Thankfully, before she could wrack her tired brain into coming up with a reply that wouldn't earn her knowing looks all over her new base, Chopper saved the day. "Seriously? Enough with the mushy stuff," he beeped in exasperation.

Hera glanced down at the floor, putting her wayward emotions back into order. She looked back at
Kanan and simply said, "Be careful, see you soon," with the utmost sincerity, as the holo call was ended by Chopper. Hera huffed and muttered a curse at her droid for not letting Kanan say anything in return. She might not want to talk about her feelings or their relationship over the comm right now, but that didn't mean that she didn't crave every possible second of available time to spend with him.

She almost commed him back, but stopped herself at the last second. She needed to practice some self control now that other people were monitoring her transmissions. And she needed to tell Kanan too, because he was just too good at making her forget herself. It was a good reminder that she was committed to this war every bit as much as she was committed to him. She'd worked too hard, for too many years, to take down the Empire, that she couldn't let herself get too distracted by her feelings for him no matter how much she wished otherwise. Thinking too much about how she needed him in her life because he was her soulmate and the love of her life would make her have to question her life choices. She would start wanting more. Things like a family. A proper home. Peace and security. Things that just weren't feasible with the Empire ruling the Galaxy.

Hera decided now would be a good time to go hide in her bunk and indulge in some good old fashioned self-pity for five minutes before making an attempt at getting some sleep. She doubted it would work though, despite how tired she was, due to the worry over what most of her family was doing, on a planet way too far away. She really didn't like when they were separated. Not one little bit.

After Chopper ended their call prematurely, Kanan drummed his fingers against his crossed arm in frustration, but that was all he allowed himself. He'd learnt long ago to suppress his inclination to destroy the droid whenever he did something that drove Kanan up the wall. Hera would kill him if he actually tossed the annoying rust bucket out an airlock or, even worse, gave in to the urge to crush him with the Force until he was as flat as a pancake. He knew why she loved her droid so much, given their past together, but that didn't mean he had to love him as well. Not killing him was probably as good as he was ever going to get when it came to Chopper.

He might have been a little frustrated with Hera as well.

He understood her hang ups about showing too much affection in anything that might resemble a public fashion, he really did; having a direct line to her emotions made that easy enough. But it had been YEARS, and she still couldn't bring herself to say that she loved him anywhere someone might hear her. Calling him 'love' was as close as she'd ever gotten.

He loved her so kribffing much, and just once, he wanted her to say it to him in front of everyone. Like a marriage ceremony for example. That would be good. In fact, that would be perfect, he thought as a smile crossed his face as he thought of Hera dressed in a pretty white dress and saying the wedding vows with him. One day. One day it would happen. He knew it. He really did. But the waiting was starting to wear on him.

With an internal sigh, Kanan turned away from Chopper and headed back to the others waiting on the edge of a cliff for Alrich Wren's transport to drive by. At least he could channel some of his frustration into battling stormtroopers. That was always fun. He especially liked making them look like idiots, as it always made his day. (There might have been some residual hate for clone troopers prompting that.)

Just don't tell Rex.
Sabezra's Sneaky Tryst

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Sabezra's Sneaky Tryst:

D2/1 BBY, Krownest

Sabine woke up to the feel of butterfly kisses tracing her collarbones from one side to the other. She hummed in sleepy pleasure, cracking her eyes open to see the top of her lover’s midnight blue head bent over her chest. Raising a hand, she stroked his soft, short hair as he moved his attention a little further down.

Ezra’s mischievous eyes flicked up to her as he licked and nibbled on the creamy flesh of her breast. Sabine smiled down at him. “Good morning, babe,” she murmured, finger tracing the shell of his ear. “Happy third anniversary.”

Ezra grinned, slid up her body and captured her mouth for a long kiss that had a whole lot of tongue involved. “Oh, it is most definitely a happy anniversary, my beautiful cyar’ika,” he said huskily back afterwards. He then slithered back down her body to where he’d been and continued with his worship of her breasts.

Sabine was more than happy to let him.

She closed her eyes and just let herself feel, one hand on the back of his head and the other caressing the muscles of his upper back. They’d spent nearly the entire night sating the urgency of a three month separation and now she (and he) was content to just savour the pleasure.

By the time he had both of her nipples standing up to firm attention, Sabine was close to giving in to the urge to moan.

Ezra moved on, continuing his oral exploration of her torso. He’d thought she was incredibly fit before, but after three months of training with her clan again as opposed to whatever she managed mostly on her own on the Ghost, he’d now been proven wrong. The abs that had been barely visible before now stood out in nearly stark relief in rows. Kriff, these are hot. And maybe even better looking than mine. I’m going to have to train harder to keep up with her. He licked up and down and around each abdominal muscle, making her giggle, which made him chuckle into her skin, which had her giggling harder as he tickled her unintentionally.

Sabine thought that might be a fun idea, so she dug the tips of her fingers into his ribs in the one spot she’d found on him that was ticklish, so he just had to retaliate in kind.

In seconds, they were rolling around the bed, laughing like lothloons, and in a full-fledged tickle war.

BANG! BANG! BANG! came an overly enthusiastic knock on her bedroom door.

Sabine and Ezra untangled themselves from each other, gasping for air, and looked at each other in alarm.
“SABINE!” Tristan yelled through the door that thankfully required all-out yelling to be heard through. “Mother says we’re leaving for Mandalore in FIFTEEN minutes! What the kriff are you doing in there?!"

Sabine glanced at the chrono on the wall. “Osik!” She smacked Ezra. “We’re late!”

Ezra snorted even as he rolled off the bed and started looking for his clothes which seemed to be scattered from one side of the room to the other. “I gathered,” he said dryly.

She shot him a look that he happily ignored.

“SABINE!”

Jolting into action, she scrambled into her robe that was lying haphazardly at the very end of the bed where it had been flung last night, and then rushed to the door. She only let it open far enough to stick her head out.

Tristan was standing there, helmet under his arm. He gave her a perplexed look. “Shabla, Sabine, you’re not even dressed!”

“I know,” she hissed. “I’ll be down in five minutes, okay? Stop yelling at me so the entire stronghold can hear you.”

Tristan smirked. “Why, you have something to hide? A certain young Jedi perhaps? One who’s not in his room, by the way?” (Said Jedi saluted cheekily at Tristan from above Sabine’s head as he was pulling on his t-shirt. Their eyes met in male understanding for half a moment.)

She narrowed her eyes at her brother warningly. “Don’t even think about saying anything about that to Mother, Tristan, or I will acquaint your face with the floor, you hear me?”

Tristan laughed, holding up his free hand in surrender. “Don’t worry. I’ll let you tell Mother all on your own that you’ve picked a Jedi for a riddur. Just, please let me be there when you do.” He gave her his best puppy eyes, even as the amber orbs shone with underlying mirth.

_I never could resist those eyes. And he kriffing knows it._ “Fine,” Sabine snarled at him before closing the door in his face. She turned around and glared at Ezra as she stomped over to her closet. “This is all your fault.”

Ezra grinned at her as he pulled on his orange jacket. “I didn’t hear you complaining last night when I was making you come over and over and over again.”

She threw a boot at him.
A/N: This was originally an interrupted dream, but I think I'm going to make it reality and expand this eventually.

Sabezra's Wild Ride:

D14/1 BBY, Lothal

"A Lothwolf? Like from those old cave paintings?" Sabine asked, while they knelt behind a rock, hiding from the searchlights of the Imperial gunships.

The stars were their only illumination in the hour after twilight, but Ezra thought she looked breathtaking in the low light anyway, as usual. Ezra couldn't think of a time when Sabine didn't look good. He'd seen her in every state from fresh from a shower to covered in mud, but she always managed to make it look good.

He looked past the beautiful girl's shoulder and gasped. "Unhhhh!

She turned and her eyes widened in surprise. The wolf breathed, "Sleeep," and Sabine fell into an instant slumber.

Ezra caught her before she could fall to the ground, a tiny part of him thrilling at having her in his arms, but most of him worried for her wellbeing. He glanced at her sleeping face, looking so peaceful. "Sabine?" He glared at the lothwolf. "What did you do to her?!!"

As the white lothwolf dodged the last of the searchlights from the Imperial gunships flying search patterns above them, Ezra thanked the lothwolf for carrying him and Sabine to safety. The wolf sent him back an amused 'you're welcome,' at the same time that Sabine stirred in his arms with a breathy sounding 'hmmm.'

Ezra held her a little tighter as she jolted awake so she didn't fall off the galloping lothwolf. "What the?" she exclaimed as she looked around in dismay at where they were. Sabine squiggled around just enough so she could see his face. "Erza. What is going on? And are we riding a lothwolf or am I losing it?"

Ezra smiled softly at her, keeping a hand on her helmet and the data recorder so they didn't go flying off. "You're not losing it, cyar'ika. The lothwolf saved us from the search party and he's carrying us back to camp." With his free hand, he gently pushed the strand of her purple tipped hair out of her eyes that had fallen out of place.

As the confusion drained from her eyes, Sabine smiled sweetly up at Ezra and ran her fingers over his scarred cheek. "Well, aren't you just full of surprises lately, Ezra Bridger. I knew you could control animals but this is a whole other level. I'm impressed." Ezra decided not to tell her that the lothwolf had volunteered and he actually didn't really have control of it. She wrapped her hand behind his neck and tugged him closer so their mouths were only a millimetre apart. Sabine gazed into his eyes with love sparkling in their depths for him to see in the starlight. "It seems like we have some time to kill for once. Why don't you impress me some more?"

Ezra smiled a lothcat grin and whispered against her lips. "Gladly, my Lady Wren." He touched his...
mouth to hers softly, brushing the seam of her lips with his tongue and she immediately opened for him. Ezra explored her sweet tasting mouth before meeting her tongue in a gentle duel of passion. They pushed the boundaries of how long they could go without breathing properly, loving the connection between them as they felt closer than ever, Ezra soaking in her pleasure that he could feel through the Force.

His lips left her succulent mouth for now and moved down the line of her jaw with little nibbles and kisses, making for the spot on her neck that made her shiver. Ezra paid special attention to her sensitive neck for a minute, but was careful not to leave any marks for others to question later. "Am I impressing you enough, cyar'ika?" he whispered into her cute little ear.

Sabine smiled dreamily and made random patterns on his chest with a finger. Or maybe not so random. Ezra realized she was writing her name on him in her mind, marking him as hers. He was more than happy for her to do it. She could claim him any way she wanted. It felt really nice too, even through his shirt. Sabine met his eyes before breathing in his ear with her warm breath, sending a jolt of pleasure through him. "You impress me anymore, Ez'ika, we're going to have to stop this wolf and find a comfy spot on the ground," she whispered in the sultriest voice Ezra had ever heard her make. He wished she could talk like that to him all the time. It would probably keep his temperature higher than normal, but it would be so worth it.

Ezra groaned deep in his chest and kissed her hard, Sabine returning the kiss just as roughly. Their passion was almost out of control in moments and neither cared one iota. Stopping the wolf was sounding like a fantastic idea right now. Ezra's hand pulled her closer to him, wishing he could feel more of her chest than armour plating.
Hera's Loss

A/N: This is currently a piece I wrote in a later chapter that has Hera remembering the past. I will be rewriting this whole section eventually and making it much more detailed and present tense.

Hera's Loss:

D14/1 BBY

It wasn't until they were back on Lothal that Hera finally managed to finagle some real alone time with Kanan. Yes, they'd snatched a few hours of snuggling while they slept, during hyperspace jumps or the few hours they actually spent on Yavin 4, but things had been so crazy lately, that was pretty much it in the romance department.

First, after crash landing on Yavin 4 after a terrible mission gone wrong, she finally sees Kanan and her whole family again, only to be immediately drawn into another mission to slice into an Imperial communications satellite dish. Which did not go as planned of course. Saw Gerrera had shown up, blowing up the dish instead, and absconding with her kids to run his own mission to destroy a kyber crystal.

While the kids were gone, Mon Mothma had Hera and Kanan run another mission to pick up some top secret intel from a rebel spy called Cassian, since they were out and about anyway. The kids finally came back, thankfully in one piece, after destroying a whole Imperial cargo ship and a Star Destroyer, as well as rescuing some scientists that dedicated themselves to the Rebellion. (A mission that somehow became a success when it should have been a disaster.) Hera was proud of her kids for pulling that off.

The instant they got back to Yavin 4, they turned right back around to go do something about the TIE Defender program on Lothal. There was just the one tiny problem of actually getting onto Lothal, due to the planetary blockade. Of course Ezra managed to come up with a plan that involved Visago and some illegal puffer pigs. (Which more or less worked.) They were on Lothal, past the Imperial blockade. But Hera had to leave her precious Ghost behind, in the care of Rex and Kallus, making her feel like she was missing one of her children all over again.

Last night, Hera had gotten her first real wakeup call in regards to her relationship with Kanan. They had been scouting the city after curfew, when Kanan heard someone coming. He had pulled her into a dark doorway to avoid detection by the trooper patrol passing by. As they stood there, holding each other's hands, Hera realized how long it had been since they'd actually had a real moment to themselves. The war had kept them so busy that they hardly even had time to talk, let alone enjoy the perks of each other's company. Hera could feel the weight of Kanan's blind gaze through the opaque sunglasses, hiding his scars and cloudy eyes.

He squeezed her fingers gently and said, "I wish... I could see you," making her heart break just a little, just like every other time the reality of his blindness made an appearance in their lives.

Hera reached up and pulled off the sunglasses, staring directly into his faded teal eyes, knowing that somehow, he knew where she was looking. "You could always see me," she told him. And she realized how true that really was. Kanan had always accepted her for exactly who she was. He'd never tried to change her or convince her do something else with their lives. He'd always just been there for her. Hera tilted her head up as his lowered, the moment feeling absolutely perfect. And
then her wrist comm beeped. Hera sighed in frustration, echoed by Kanan, and answered the comm. With the moment ruined, and duty calling again, Hera resolved to get Kanan alone for real, as soon as possible.

That moment was today. While everyone else spied on the TIE Defender testing grounds, Hera had declared that she and Kanan were going to do surveillance on Capital City, specifically the factories, from the safety of Ezra's tower. No one had actually commented on the fact that she had brought a blind person with her to do surveillance, but she'd seen the knowing grins from the kids, Zeb, and Ryder. Hera didn't care though. It had been way too long.

She did spend at least an hour watching the factories from the balcony, her sense of duty to the Rebellion as strong as ever. Kanan spent the time meditating inside the tower room. When he emerged, he walked up to Hera and wrapped his arms around her waist from behind, pressing a kiss to the side of her jaw, making Hera shiver in delight. "I assume you brought me out here for a reason," he whispered into her skin. Hera almost dropped the expensive electrobinoculars, her fingers forgetting to hold them. Kanan chuckled, and took them from her hand, floating them down to the ground carefully.

Hera turned around in his arms, wrapped her own around his neck, and smiled up at him. "I might have had something in mind. Hours of something to be specific. IF you're up for it."

Kanan smirked back, reaching down with one arm and picking her up, making Hera giggle with delight. "Oh, I'm always up for it, darling, when you sound all sexy like that."

Hera pulled his head down to hers, meshing their lips together, as he carried her into the tower room, gently placing her on a nest of old blankets in a corner, where Kanan proceeded to love the very breath out of her, for hours, as requested.

At some point, when they were just cuddling, fingers tracing patterns on each other's skin, Kanan pressed a kiss to her bare shoulder. "I love you, Hera," he whispered roughly. "I will always love you, until the end of my days, and even then, I'll still find a way to love you some more."

Hera looked at Kanan with glistening eyes as she reached up and softly stroked her fingers down his bearded jaw. "You always say the sweetest things, love."

Kanan smiled knowingly down at her, pressing a quick kiss to her forehead. "I only say the truth, darling."

Hera closed her eyes to hold back the tears, as she pressed her forehead to his. She wanted so badly to give him the family and peaceful life he'd always dreamed of. "Oh, Kanan. You must know how much I love you too. How much I wish things were different for us. How much I...

Kanan kissed her to quiet her. "Shhh. It's okay, darling. I know."

With a strangled sob, Hera basically attacked Kanan, burying her fingers in his hair and kissing him like he was the only air available to breathe. When Kanan smiled against her mouth and cupped her jaw with both hands to slow her down, Hera wrapped her lekku around his wrists and held him tight. She never wanted to let him go, this precious, perfect, man. With a little bit of mutual squiggling, Hera managed to get Kanan on his back and her hips over his without losing her grip on his hair or the contact of their hungry mouths.

Kanan's hard cock was pressed up against her moist opening and her breasts were smashed into his muscled chest. She wriggled a little, teasing her clit with his hardness and coaxing a little groan out of Kanan. His tongue thrust into her mouth at the same time as she rose up just enough so he could
slide inside her. She pressed back down until he was buried to the hilt and hitting every possible pleasure spot inside her. A thrill went through her and she moaned into his mouth, dancing her tongue around his.

They held still like that for a minute, just enjoying the sensation of being joined and kissing slow and deep until Hera needed to move. Needed more. She rose up, letting go of his hair and wrists and pressed her hands onto his chest to prop herself up, rising up and sliding down over and over on his hard length, bottoming out with every thrust.

Kanan smiled up at her, blind cloudy eyes seeming to see her and loving what they saw. He reached up with a hand and pulled one of her lekku over her shoulder so he could caress it, sending shivers through her with every pass of his fingers. His other hand moved to her hip and helped her move. With an impressive show of core strength, he curled up and gave her breasts some love, sucking on the nipples in turns until they stood up into hard little nubs. Every movement of his mouth sent a jolt straight down to her clit, making Hera cry out in delight.

She quickly found herself tightening with an impending climax, inspiring her to slam her hips down even harder into his. As his length found the end of her tunnel once again, she ground hard against his pelvis, putting pressure on her clit, which was enough to send her over the edge into ecstasy.

Kanan held still and savoured her clenching around his cock until she relaxed a little and then he took over, flipping them around so she was on her back and he above her without losing their deep connection. Hera wrapped her arms around his neck and held on for the ride as he kissed her quickly and then got a very focused look on his face while he thrust in and out of her slow and oh so perfectly deep for as long as he could. And for Kanan, that was a very long time. He'd already come twice in the last few hours and had an incredible amount of self control to call on.

He pushed Hera into another climax before he got serious and started looking for his own, thrusting faster and faster. Little grunts escaped from his mouth as his climax approached, which Hera thought were sexy as hell. Her hands ran up and down his back, sometimes giving a quick caress to his firm rear as it worked over her. Her fingernails dug into the muscles of his back as she felt yet another orgasm building in her center. She'd lost count at this point, but she thought it might be orgasm number eight. Her lover was incredibly capable of finding every single one of her sensitive spots and teasing them without mercy until she called his name in the throes of passion.

Knowing she was close, but not quite as close as him, Kanan grabbed a lek with one hand and pulled the end into his mouth, sucking softly. Hera's eyes basically rolled up in her head as she came hard from the stimulation. Kanan grinned smugly and then let himself go, thrusting deep one more time and releasing his seed into her clenching depths. Her cry of pleasure was complimented by his deep groan of satisfaction. He held himself there, snugly joined while they gasped in air and pressed their foreheads together, eyes closing as they savoured the long drawn out aftershocks of pleasure.

Eventually Kanan pressed a kiss to her forehead then rolled them over onto their sides, still joined together, and they fell asleep in each other's arms, contented smiles of utter satisfaction on their faces.

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D15/1 BBY

Somehow, her kids had actually stolen the TIE Defender prototype, crashed it, and absconded with the flight data recorder and the hyperdrive. Hera didn't know whether to be amazed and proud, or appalled by the lack of disregard to her orders. They were just supposed to observe the new TIE,
not take it for a test drive. Hera eventually decided on being proud of her kids. They were smart, resourceful and independent. Everything they needed to be to grow up in this war torn Galaxy.

While waiting for Ezra, Zeb, and Jai to retrieve their stolen booty, Hera was talking to Sabine about connecting the new hyperdrive to Ryder's old ship, when Kanan walked up. "This ship is old. There's no guarantee the Defender's hyperdrive will even work in this thing, never mind getting it past the Imperial blockade," he grumbled in a worried tone.

Hera kept one eye on Kanan and one on Sabine as she made herself scarce, not wanting to get in the middle of whatever argument this was going to turn into. Smart girl.

Hera knew that the mission was beyond dangerous, but she had to take the chance. "Getting this TIE Defender data to the Rebellion is vital," she told him. For the fifth or sixth time that day.

Kanan planted his hand on the recorder in question and looked at her with all seriousness. "When are you going to feel like you've done enough for this Rebellion?"

Hera was surprised by the question. "I guess when the Empire is overthrown and people are free to live their lives the way they want again."

Kanan's cloudy eyes seemed to look right through her. "And when that time comes, how do you want to live your life?"

Hera sighed. "Kanan... Don't push me right now. You know this mission is important. I do not need your angst distracting me."

Kanan's eyes fell, and his demeanour changed from confident to dejected, making Hera feel like a blurrg dropping for letting her frustration and worry bleed into her tone. "I'm sorry, I knew better than to bring up the future." he said sadly, all the while wondering how he was going to tell her that she was pregnant without her freaking out if he couldn't even get her to talk about a possible 'someday'.

She winced at his defeated tone. "Kanan, I do think about it. I wish and dream and then tell myself to stop hoping for what just can't be yet. You're just going to have to live with that," she said, crossing her arms defensively.

Kanan reached over and gently ran his hand down her arm, stopping at her fingers and holding them comfortingly. "I do. I do live with it. And I will continue to live with it until the end of time if this is all you can give me; I love you," he said softly.

Hera stared at their joined hands, as his thumb caressed her, wishing Sabine and Ryder would disappear and that the Empire didn't exist. "You know how I feel," she said eventually, looking up at him again.

A slow smile transformed Kanan's face. "Do I?" he said teasingly.

Hera glanced down again, ashamed that he was always the one to smooth things over between them. At least she knew how to make it up to him. Thinking, 'Kriff it,' she looked up and raised her face to his. Squeezing his fingers, she pulled him towards her. Kanan beamed as he lowered his mouth to hers, filling her with happiness that she could make him happy again.

They never made it, as Ryder went running past yelling something about, "We've got incoming!"

Hera sighed in frustration as she dropped Kanan's hand and ran after Ryder, drawing her blaster and pointing it at the Imperial transport that charged up to their camp.
It didn't take long for Sabine to install the hyperdrive that Zeb had brought back in the transport. Zeb had lugged it over to Ryder's ship and Kanan had easily grabbed it with the Force and lifted it up and into place on the top of the ship, making Hera smile with pride at her man. Her strong Jedi Knight. There were so few of them left in the Galaxy and this one was HERS. Sensing her admiration, Kanan looked back at her over his shoulder and sent her a wink, making Hera laugh quietly.

As everyone packed up the camp, knowing the Imperials might find them at any moment, Hera glanced at Kanan whenever she had the chance. More often than not, he caught her glances and smiled in return. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to pursue anything. Ezra spotted the Imperials coming and everything went into fast forward. As Hera was about to board Ryder's ship, she found Kanan in there waiting for her. "Hera. About what happened. I don't want you to think I'm pushing you... I just..."

Hera cut him off by reaching up and cupping his face, pressing her mouth to his. They needed this. They didn't need to talk. After the longest drawn out moment she thought she could get away with, she pressed her forehead to his before looking him in the eyes, telling him without words everything she felt. She knew he would sense it. With a final caress of his jaw, Hera left him wearing a dumbstruck, joyful look on his face. She turned around after stepping into the ship. Putting all her emotions into the words, she said, "May the Force be with you," and left him behind with a determined heart. She would see him again, Imperial blockade or not. Next time they were alone, she was going to ask him to marry her. It had taken her years, but today had gotten her thinking. She finally realized that Kanan meant more to her than the war did. She couldn't think of a better way to show him that.

Hera did break through the blockade, jumping to hyperspace right through one of their hangar bays, pulling off one of the most dangerous manoeuvres she'd ever tried. The leaders of the Rebellion agreed to send a squadron of fighters to take out the TIE Defender factory, as the Imperial fighter was deemed too destructive to be allowed to be put into production.

Hera was promoted to General, a title she didn't believe she deserved, but it made her happy nonetheless. Her squadron broke through the orbital blockade, only to be met with absolute demise by a hidden fleet of TIEs in the cloudy, smoke filled atmosphere of Lothal. Hera was one of the few that survived the crash, officially her worst ever 'very interesting landing' as she preferred to call them.

Chopper woke her up from her daze, and Hera forced her screaming body out of the mangled X-Wing and into the street. A few streets over, she found Mart, relieved to see Sato's nephew still alive. They tried to escape the city together, but Hera sacrificed herself to the Noghri assassin, fighting him with everything she had left in her, so that Mart and Chopper could escape into the sewers. Hera was stunned by Governor Pryce, waking up later in an Imperial cell. And then the torture began. Lasting for what felt like years, but was really only a couple of days. Hera couldn't decide if Thrawn's psychological torture was worse than Pryce's physical torture or not. The time he brought in her Kalikori and taunted her with it, and the death of her little brother, was the moment she vowed to herself that Thrawn would have to die.

At some point, they started drugging her to try and get her to answer their questions about where the main rebel base was, and that's when her memories became very dim. The things she did remember were just flashes. Little images that haunted her dreams and nightmares. Hera wasn't even sure if they were real.

She had an image of Kanan clinging to the glass of Pryce's office. Of looking up into his eyes and noticing that his face was clean shaven and all of his beautiful hair was cut off. Holding her
Kalikori in wonder. Another moment of flying through the air on a... glider? Her favourite was the moment she hoped was real. The one where she actually said 'I love you' with words and got to kiss him for endless moments.

And then there was the one that she wished wasn't true, but Ezra and Sabine had confirmed. Kanan surrounded by flames as his cloudy eyes transformed back to their original colour and they gazed at each other for the last time, an instant before he was consumed by the explosion.

Hera's first clear memory was of waking up in a strange cave, clutching her Kalikori to her chest and a fistful of Kanan's hair, completely freaking her out. She'd run out of the cave to find someone, anyone, to make them tell her that the flashes of memory couldn't possibly be true. She'd stumbled on Ezra, his blue eyes looking absolutely haunted, and she knew it was all horrifyingly real. Their eyes had met for a moment before Ezra had run into her arms and they sank to the ground on their knees, arms holding each other tight as they sobbed into each other's shoulders. No words had been spoken, but Hera knew that Kanan meant just as much to Ezra as he did to her. They shared their grief and it helped. A little.
Kanan's Sacrifice

A/N: This is also a piece of the story from a later chapter where Kanan is remembering the past. I will be expanding this scene at a later time.

Kanan's Sacrifice:

D18/1 BBY, Lothal

Hera! Hera was hurt! He had to go back for her. She needed help. He'd felt her crash. He'd felt her pass out and then wake up a few minutes later. He felt the pain in her arm and ribs and head, but she moved on anyway, on her way out of the city. That was good. Escaping was good. Hera would be okay. She was strong.

And then everything wasn't good anymore. She was caught! Hera was fighting! More pain! Someone was hitting her and she was letting them so Mart and Chopper could escape. Why did she have to be so self sacrificing when he NEEDED her? Needed her to be alive and keep him sane in the crazy world they lived in. Needed her to come back so they could raise their child together.

He was going to tell her about the baby before she left with the flight data recorder, but things had gotten hectic, as usual. At least he got to kiss her before she left, even if it was in front of the others, he didn't care. Sometimes, they didn't get a goodbye kiss before they were parted and he hated those times. Hera was his everything. He loved her. Loved her so much. Sometimes, he didn't think she realized how much, and then she would do something like that. Kiss him in front of everyone and say everything that needed to be said with actions alone. And that last thing she said to him: 'May the Force be with you.' It was her way of saying, 'I love you,' without actually saying the words because she was still too shy to say it in front of others and still had the natural instinct to hide their relationship under a guise of professionalism. He understood, and it was more than enough for him.

As he raced down the empty roadway, raced to his Hera to rescue her, he saw something; a flitter in the Force. And then it was more than a shadow. There was a wolf! In the road! In his way! Kanan turned the bike and hit the pavement hard, rolling with the impact. He rose to his feet, ignoring the pain as he'd been taught so many years ago in the Temple, looking for the wolf.

There was nothing. Nothing in the Force for him to see around him. The Force figure of a wolf was gone. "Where are you?" he yelled. "I don't have time for this! If you want to help, fine!" Kanan called as he stomped back to his bike, thoroughly pissed off. "Otherwise, stay out of my way!"

He straddled his bike and turned it back towards the city, and suddenly, the signature of the wolf is back, growling right in his face. Kanan startled and suppressed the urge to growl right back at it, knowing the lothwolf would probably take that as an invite to bite his head off. Literally.

Kanan forced himself to be calmer, breathing deeply twice. He got back off the bike and stared up at the massive wolf that towered above his head. "What do you want?" he asked it, as calmly as he could manage.

The wolf stared right back at him. Kanan could feel the intensity of its perusal as it studied him, deciding whether or not he was worthy. "DUME," it finally rumbled out.

Despite hearing it before from a lothwolf, it still took Kanan aback to hear his original name from
the mouth of a wolf. A name he'd given up long ago, to survive in a world where Jedi were hunted for fun, money, prestige, or by the orders of a corrupt Emperor.

As they stared at each other, connecting in the Force, the wolf showed Kanan images of what would happen if he went into the city right now. None of them were good. He would be injured. Captured. Tortured. Hera would be tortured for weeks until she finally couldn't take it anymore and gave up fighting to live. Ezra, Sabine, and Zeb would try to rescue them and fail, all three of them dying in the process.

Kanan pulled off his mask, feeling horribly conflicted and sick to his stomach, needing even the illusion of more air to breath and space to live in. After pushing aside the nausea, Kanan calmed himself once again. "I understand," he said to the wolf. "What must I do?" What would it take to get his Hera back?

More images, shocking ones. But acceptable. Hera would live. Their baby would live. Ezra, Sabine and Zeb would live. That was all he needed. And just as a little icing on the cake, the fuel depot would be destroyed and Thrawn's TIE Defenders would be put on hold. Indefinitely.

Just as Kanan was about to turn away from the lothwolf, thinking there was nothing more to see, the wolf showed him one more thing. A giant wolf, three times bigger than the rest, and this one was named Dume.

Kanan had a lot to think about as he raced to a different section of the city to rescue Mart and Chopper from the tunnels before troopers caught up to them. The wolf had shown him his immediate future, which he thought was pretty sucky, but there was a glimmer of hope at the end. The wolf implied that Kanan could move beyond what he was and live as something else, something more. Perhaps it wasn't ideal, but he would take what he could get.

The next two days were torture for Kanan. He could feel everything they did to Hera, and it was all he could do to keep himself calm so as not to alarm Ezra and Sabine even further than they already were. He spent most of his time meditating, catching glimpses of the future and snatches of the past. Mostly voices. Some images. But those were brief and often blurry. Nothing as strong as the images from the wolf. But the voices were clear, and some of them, especially Ezra's and Hera's, made his chest ache with pain.

"The Jedi Temple is in danger." (Ezra)

"We'll see each other again. I promise." (Kanan)

"Kanan, you haven't got me a present since we first met." (Hera)

"You can learn what it truly means to be a Jedi." (Kanan)

"Ezra! Is this you?" (Sabine)

"You didn't prepare me for this, Kanan." (Ezra)

"See. I can't lose. And you know we need the credits." (Zeb)

"We are fighting a bigger fight, but it's still the right fight." (Hera)

"Whatever happens next, happens to both of us." (Thrawn)

"There's something I need to tell you." (Kanan)
"I know I can always count on you." (Ezra)

"Do not say you're proud of me." (Sabine)

"You could always see me." (Hera)

"And remember, the Force will be with you. Always." (Ezra)

"Ohh, that is only funny because you're still alive. Now please, come home, love." (Hera)

His mind was so full of pieces of the future and the past, Kanan wasn't even one hundred percent sure what was going to happen anymore, at least not between this moment and the very end. That was when he decided to give the mission to Ezra to organize. Ezra's mind was clearer than his by a long shot and he was more than capable of shouldering the responsibility.

And he was right in his faith in his Padawan. Ezra didn't let him down. He came up with a brilliant plan. Kanan had never been prouder of him than he was right now. Ezra had turned into everything Kanan had always hoped he could be and so much more. Now if only Sabine would get with the program and see it too. The poor boy had waited long enough for Sabine to see Ezra as more than a child with a crush. Kanan knew perfectly well what Ezra felt for Sabine, since Ezra really wasn't all that great at hiding his feelings from their Master/Padawan bond. Poor kid had been waiting even longer than it took him to win Hera. And that had been more than long enough.

The time finally came when everything was ready to go. Everything except Kanan that is. If Kanan was going to go out in a blaze of glory, he wanted to do it as his original self and not the person he'd been hiding as for more than half his life. Not that there was anything wrong with being Kanan Jarrus. Kanan Jarrus had a lot going for him, including the girl of his dreams with the perfect, heart melting voice. But Kanan Jarrus was an image on top of reality. He was born Caleb Dume. He lived for fourteen years as Caleb Dume, the Jedi. Now he was going to end it the way it began; as Caleb Dume. In his heart, he would always be Kanan now, but the person who was going to give up everything to save everyone, that had to be Caleb Dume. To him, it felt like he was finally making up for running away, even if his Master had ordered him to. Caleb Dume should have died that day, alongside almost every other Jedi in the galaxy. He was finally making things right.

And so Kanan cut off the long hair that Hera loved to bury her fingers in. He shaved the beard that made her giggle. And he left the mask behind. Kanan felt naked. And resigned. And yet somehow, also free. For the first time in eighteen years, Kanan wasn't hiding anything of who he was. Kanan WAS Caleb Dume, and Caleb Dume was Kanan.

He was ready.

Ezra's plan worked perfectly. But they were still torturing Hera. It made it really hard to appreciate anything else.

Saying goodbye to Zeb was painful, but Kanan knew the lasat would be okay. He had a new friend to lean on.

The glider was actually fun, but Kanan was almost too worried to notice.

Saying goodbye to Ezra and Sabine for the last time, even if they didn't know it, hurt. Even more than he thought it would.

Climbing down the outside of the Dome was somewhat nerve-wracking, but again, too worried to
notice much. Hera's screams were still vibrating through his mind from minutes ago. When he sensed her Kalikori, he almost went past it, still worried about Hera, but something made him stop and get it. Maybe it was that line he'd heard her say about giving presents. Maybe it was just the fact that he knew how much it meant to her. He knew she'd rather take another minute of torture than leave it behind. So he got her Kalikori, cutting a hole in Thrawn's office window and calling it to him with the Force, despite everything in him that was screaming 'GET Hera. SAVE Hera'.

He finally made it to the office where she was being kept. Pryce's office. Nothing would make him happier than to strap that witch into the torture device she'd so happily used on his Hera, but there wasn't time. And revenge was not the way of the Jedi. Something he had to keep telling himself over and over as he found Hera drugged out of her mind and weak and pale and missing a few pounds like they hadn't fed her. But she was alive, and the life Force of their baby was still strong, despite the odds against it. Kanan had to be happy with that.

Dropping the stormtrooper out the hole in the floor he made was satisfying. Throwing the other trooper out the window more so. But what he really enjoyed was stabbing the mind probe droid and kicking it out the hole in the floor. That was something he'd wanted to do for years; ever since he'd been captured by the Grand Inquisitor and had his own week of torture at Imperial hands.

He got Hera free and he wished circumstances were different. Because a drugged up Hera had to be the cutest thing he'd ever seen. She hadn't been this carefree and fun for years. Maybe never. It made him wonder what their life would have been like if they lived past the war and she had no more worries on her mind. She even teased him about his 'present' of her Kalikori and his new hair cut. (Although she might have been serious about hating his hair.) When was the last time she teased him about anything? Three years ago? Four? Oh how he wished they lived in a different world. And now he was leaving her with even more worries and he wouldn't be there to help her. Kanan felt his heart break yet again at the thought.

He tried to tell Hera about the baby, but they were interrupted, multiple times. Eventually he just gave up. Perhaps he wasn't meant to tell her? With more fighting than he cared to think about, and the loss of his lightsabre, which almost stopped his heart, but the Force reassured him it would be okay, they finally got off the Dome and back in the air on a glider. A glider which was soon burning, the stench of smouldering cloth like an omen of doom in his nostrils. Like he needed the reminder.

Despite everything in him not wanting to go there, Kanan told Hera to aim for the Fuel Depot. The crash landing was 'interesting', but Kanan made sure Hera stayed safe on the glider while he rolled on the duracrete for the second time in three days. More pain to push away. It had nothing on the ache in his heart anyway. Knowing time was short, he practically dragged Hera to the top of the Fuel Pod.

And suddenly they had a minute. A whole minute to themselves while they waited for Ezra and Sabine to arrive. Maybe this was the perfect time to tell Hera? Kanan was just about to when she started first. Her eyes were still dilated, which meant the drug was still roaring through her system, but she wasn't being funny anymore. Hera was dead serious when she said, "Kanan, will you marry me?"

Kanan almost died of shock. Kanan almost cried at finally getting his hearts desire when the end was so near and he tried to cover it up with a joke. "That's just the drugs talking."

Hera cupped his face in her hands. He could feel her intense focus on him. "No, love. It's me. Just me. I love you, Kanan."

Kanan had no words. He cupped her face in return and they had their final kiss goodbye. It was a
perfect kiss, in his opinion. Sweet and soft, and full of all the love they had for each other. Kanan was ready to die as a very happy man.

Ezra and Sabine arrived, pulling him away from his perfect last moment with his perfect girl. He knew it wasn't possible, but Kanan wanted to live in that moment forever.

Kanan almost had Hera in the gunship when the Force rang with a warning. He ran. Only five steps, but he'd never covered five steps so quickly in his life. By the time the flames reached him, he already had a shield up. Having some warning had been helpful, but it would have been nice to get it just a couple seconds earlier.

Hera screamed his name. A scream that would haunt him into the afterlife he was sure. She ran towards him. NO! Hera couldn't do that! She must go with Ezra and Sabine. On the gunship. Back to safety. Back to where she would survive. Kanan gave up one of his hands on his shield to stop Hera. He held her in the air, almost all of his focus on her Force signature, needing to see her just one last time.

As the moment dragged into eternity, Kanan had such a connection to the Force that he suddenly knew how to heal his eyes. It was like someone just put the knowledge in his mind. So he did. He channelled a small amount of the Force that was swirling around him like a hurricane into his eyes and there she was. He was keeping his promise and finally seeing her again. His beautiful Hera. Terrified. Drugged. Floating because he made it so. But so beautiful. Her eyes were still as green as he remembered and her face just as breathtaking. The orange prison suit was a wretched colour on her but it showcased every one of her assets, which made him just a little mad that the Imperials had been ogling his Hera in that. Couldn't they have given her something a little looser to wear?

"Seriously?" a female voice said in his mind. "That's going to be your last thought?"

Kanan was almost startled but he kept his focus on his shield and holding Hera. Better last thought: I love you, Hera. He threw her back to Ezra and into his arms. And then leaving the fire to do as it wished, Kanan used all of his strength in the Force to throw the gunship as far from the blast as he could.

He had half a second to register the pain of the flames rushing over his skin before the voice in his head said "GIVE YOURSELF TO THE FORCE!"

So he did. Kanan put his entire self into the Force and left the flames behind. Only his clothes were consumed by the explosion that rocked Capital City and broke the hearts of the three most important people in his life.

Kanan stood in the utter tranquility of the Force and there in front of him was his Master. "Master Billaba! Depa!" he cried joyfully, running to hug her. "I thought I recognized your voice in my head."

Depa smiled at him and returned the hug. "It's good to see you too, Caleb. I've been watching you, and I am really proud of you."

Kanan looked down at the woman he remembered being so much taller than him. "Thank you, Master."

She stepped back and held him by his shoulders, looking very serious now. "You have a choice now, Caleb. You can stay in the Force like most of us or you can travel between it and the real world as a Ghost. There are a few other options as well, but almost no one ever takes those."
Kanan raised a brow. "Does one of the unusual options involve my becoming a lothwolf?" he managed to say completely straight-faced. "Because I saw that in a vision."

Depa blinked then laughed. "Oh, Caleb, I've missed your sense of humour. So many of the Masters here don't have one," she whispered with twinkling eyes. "Become a wolf? I don't think so. But use a wolf as a conduit? Now that we can probably do." She gestured for him to follow her. "Come. We'll have to talk to some of the others who know more about this than I. I sense you are in a hurry to get back to your family."

Kanan nodded and followed her. "Yes. Our work on Lothal is not done. The Empire is not yet gone and they have control of the Jedi Temple. The wolves are very worried."

Depa nodded in understanding. "Very well. We have much to do then if you are going to be of help to your Padawan."
Ahsoka's Saviour

(AFE stands for After the Formation of the Empire)

Ahsoka's Saviour:

D185/3 BBY (16 AFE), Malachor

Ahsoka glanced over at the energy beam coming from the center of the pyramid, while she held back Anakin's red lightsabre with her crossed silver ones. The walls shook around her and sparks flew through the air, while the screaming of the beam was almost to the point of overwhelming. She knew in that instant that if she didn't do something drastic, they were both going to die in the explosion. The cracking floor gave her an idea that she desperately hoped would work. She flung Anakin back with a Force push and thrust both her lightsabres into the floor, further weakening it. She watched the cracks grow and spread in the next few seconds that felt like time had slowed to a crawl. Ahsoka glanced up just in time to see Anakin, glowing yellow and red eye peering at her through his broken mask, raise his sabre.

Time sped up again. She knew this was the end for her. If she had to die by the hand of her Master, so be it. She had sworn she was never going to leave him again of her own free will. Anakin would have to be the one to end their connection this time. Ahsoka bowed her head and waited for the blow that never came, while she left her sabres in the floor to weaken it as much as possible. There was still a chance for Anakin to survive. All she could do was hope. Hope that he survived the explosion and that one day, he might cast off the persona of Darth Vader and return to the Anakin that she loved. Her Skyguy. Her Master.

Instead of the burn of the red lightsabre that she was expecting, Ahsoka felt a hand on her shoulder pull her backwards.

And then her world went black.

D22/1 BBY, World Between Worlds

Ahsoka sat up as she tried to shake off the pounding in her head. What had just happened? And WHERE was she? She looked at the vast expanse of black with countless stars and glowing pathways and gateways, feeling extremely confused. A familiar voice called her name behind her. "Ezra?" she asked. How was this possible? This Ezra looked at least two years older than the one she'd just Force pushed to safety not even two minutes ago. At least, she thought it was two minutes ago. Wasn't it? His hair was really short, and he'd obviously grown up a lot, if he could pull off wearing a trooper's armour without looking ridiculous. And WHAT was he doing wearing trooper armour? "You look..." the unbelievability of the situation made her lose her train of thought as she looked at her surroundings again. "Wait. What happened? Where am I?"

Ezra stammered out some sort of explanation about the gateway and her fighting Vader and how he'd just sort of grabbed her because Vader was about to kill her, and poof, here they were. Wherever here was. Ezra wasn't really clear about that either.

A gentle hooting distracted her from her thoughts, as the last moment she saw Anakin flashed
through her mind again. Ahsoka looked up at the top of the gateway. "Morai! You're here." The little green convor bird flew to the arm she offered as a perch and Ahsoka stroked her chest fondly.

"Morai?" the still unbelievably older Ezra asked.

Ahsoka smiled at the little bird. "She's an old friend. I owe her my life." She looked over at Ezra. "And now I owe you that as well." Ahsoka had to ask the two questions that were whirling through her mind as she took comfort in the presence of Morai. "How did you get here? And where's Kanan?" She immediately felt the sorrow radiate off of Ezra at the mention of Kanan. The fall of his expression just confirmed her fears.

"You've missed a lot," Ezra said despondently.

"Do you want to tell me?" she asked. "The abbreviated version perhaps?" Ahsoka tried to lighten the mood with a hopeful smile.

Ezra gave a half hearted smile in return as he reached over and stroked his fingers down Morai's back, making the little bird chirp in pleasure. "Starting with Malachor?" he asked. Ahsoka nodded. Ezra took a deep breath as his eyes went far away. "Obviously Kanan and I survived, but Kanan was blinded by Maul."

"I saw that part, and I saw Kanan defeat Maul, even without his sight. He was truly one with the Force in that moment."

Ezra nodded, a hint of pride in his eyes for his Master. "Kanan learned to see through the Force all the time. It took months though. Months in which I almost turned to the Dark Side while I was learning whatever I could from the Sith holocrorn."

Ahsoka sucked in a surprised breath. She never thought that Ezra would go down that path. He'd always been so full of light. And looking at him now, he still shone with the Light side. No hint of Dark to be found. The complete opposite of her Master.

Ezra shook his head ruefully. "Not my best times, I know. But without Kanan to guide me, I turned to whatever I could, to grow stronger so no one could ever hurt my family again. Kanan eventually returned to himself, an even better version of himself actually, and we worked through the Dark side stuff. But then Maul came back. Apparently he's really hard to kill."

Ahsoka chuckled at the half hearted attempt at humour. "You have no idea."

"You'll have to tell me some day," Ezra said with a raised brow. "We did some sort of idiotic thing with the Jedi and Sith holocrons, making us connected to each other. Maul haunted me as we both searched for answers. It turns out we were both searching for the same person for different reasons. Master Obi-Wan Kenobi. We found him, or really, he found us, on Tatooine."

Ahsoka gasped. "Obi-Wan's alive?!" She felt almost faint with relief. All these years, she'd thought that he was dead. Just like she thought that Anakin was dead. In this case, she was glad she was wrong.

Ezra nodded. "Yes, he is. I got the impression that he had a purpose for being on Tatooine, but I don't know what. Maul and Master Kenobi had their showdown, with Master Kenobi winning in only a few moves. He had told me to leave, but I looked back and saw Maul fall."

"Is that all that happened in the last... How long has it been anyway?"

Ezra shook his head and smiled ruefully. "About two years. And not even close. There was lots of
stuff going on with the rebellion. Everyone assumed you were dead. We got a new Fulcrum agent who turned out to be Agent Kallus." She raised a surprised brow at that. "Sabine found the Darksabre, Kanan and I taught her how to fight with it, and we temporarily liberated Mandalore and rescued her father. We had a few encounters with Saw Gerrera's version of the Rebellion."

Ahsoka's eyes went wider with every word he spoke. It was like her past was coming back and Ezra was living it again in some strange twist of fate. Ezra continued, blowing her mind with every word. "Senator Mon Mothma officially resigned and started a formal Rebel Alliance. Grand Admiral Thrawn found Atallon and destroyed our base along with most of Phoenix Group. Jun Sato sacrificed himself and the command ship so that what was left of us had a chance at escaping."

"No," Ahsoka said sadly.

Ezra nodded and continued. "Phoenix Group moved to Yavin 4 with the rest of the larger Rebellion. I spent maybe a whole day there in total while we ran some missions. Finally got permission to do something about the Imperial presence on Lothal, due to a TIE Defender prototype that Thrawn was putting into production. It would have wiped the floor with us if we let them build them en masse. Hera, who's now a General by the way, led a squadron of fighters to attack the Defender factory. They made it past the planetary blockade but Thrawn had another wave of TIEs hidden in the smoke and clouds. Almost the entire squadron was lost and Hera was captured. We got her back, but we lost Kanan." Ezra's voice broke for a moment and he took a moment before he could continue. Ahsoka put a hand on his shoulder comfortingly for a minute. Ezra's haunted eyes made Ahsoka's heart hurt. "They took out their own fuel depot and shut down the factories when they killed Kanan. He completed the mission. Somehow, he knew exactly what was going to happen. That was two days ago. Then this massive lothwolf that feels kind of like Kanan talks to me, and he calls himself DUME. He tells me to come to the Jedi Temple here on Lothal and to restore the past to redeem the future. Sabine figured out how to unlock the gateway and I was led to you by Morai. I think you were the past. Which means that by saving you, I have now redeemed the future? I guess?"

Ahsoka's mind and chest were literally hurting from everything Ezra had just said, and this was the brief version. "Ezra, I'm truly sorry I wasn't there for all of that. But even if we get out of here, you know I can't go back to the past and change things. I could make things even worse. The Force must have a reason for me to not be there. If you hadn't pulled me through the gateway, I would have died anyway. But I'm here for you now. I sense that you don't really need a Master anymore, but you do need friends, and I will always be your friend, Ezra."

Ahsoka watched as Ezra seemed to draw strength from her words and stood just a little taller. His eyes met hers with a maturity she never thought he'd have so soon. "Thank you, Ahsoka. That means everything to me. I don't know much about what happens after a Jedi dies, but do you think it's possible that Kanan could be the giant Lothwolf? Or even just a piece of him? He called himself Dume, which is who Kanan used to be. Maybe the lothwolf is the part of Kanan that used to belong to the Jedi Order?"

"It is possible that Kanan's will is still at work through the wolf," Ahsoka said as she started to wander the pathways curiously.

"How could that be?" Ezra asked as he trailed behind her.

"Kanan is part of the Cosmic Force now. There are ways that those who have passed on can still guide and influence the living. When it comes to the Force, nothing is impossible." Ahsoka had seen some things that most people would never believe. This place. This world between worlds full of gateways and mind blowing empty space and practically invisible pathways, was just one more thing to add to her list.
Ezra got lost in thought for a moment. "If it WAS Kanan who led me here, then..."

"What is it?" she asked.

"I originally thought I was sent to here to stop the Empire, but now that I've saved you, maybe I can save Kanan too!"

"Ezra, wait!" she called after him as he took off in a run, frantically following the sound of Kanan's voice that had magically filled the air in the endless space. Morai and Ahsoka took off after him. He eventually came to a stop in front of a portal that showed a much changed Kanan holding a Force shield against an astonishing amount of flames. Ahsoka took in his shorn hair, clean shaven face and the heartbreaking scars across his eyes. He was barely recognizable as the Kanan she knew just half an hour ago.

"I can reach him," Ezra said as he watched his Master hold back the flames.

Ahsoka felt for him, she really really did. "Ezra. Kanan gave his life so that you could live. If he's taken out of this moment you'll all die."

"You don't understand what you're asking me to do."

Ezra sounded like he was being tortured as he said the words and Ahsoka knew that feeling well. She'd just left her Master in a Temple on the verge of exploding, with no guarantee that her gamble with the floor would have paid off. "Yes, I do! You can't save your Master and I can't save mine. I'm asking you to LET GO." Ezra reached towards the figure in the portal longingly for one endless moment before his shoulders slumped and he turned and walked away. "I am sorry, Ezra. But you must see. Kanan found the moment when he was needed most, and he did what he had to do. For everyone."

Ezra stopped. "That's the lesson. I didn't see it. But now... I understand."

Ahsoka walked up to Ezra and put her hand on his armoured shoulder again. "I learned that lesson too, a long time ago. And it doesn't get easier with time I'm afraid." Ezra glanced at her with resigned eyes. Like he already knew something else that was going to happen, and he'd just needed this moment to sort it out. Ahsoka was afraid of whatever that might be. She'd seen that look before in other Jedi eyes. And she'd felt it herself, most recently just minutes ago as she waited for death to strike her down. Ahsoka looked up as the endless black space seemed to rumble ominously. "We can't stay here. You opened the portal to this world. Do you think you can close it as well?"

Ezra nodded and started walking back the way they came. "Sabine will know. Everyone will be so happy to see you."

Ahsoka shook her head. "It's too much of a change. I have to go back to where I came from. I can't go with you."

Ezra sighed. "I understand."

They both stopped and whirled when they heard the ominous laughter from behind them. The Sith Lord stared at them greedily through the portal they had just left. "Perhaps I can. Ezra Bridger. Ahsoka Tano. Mine at last."

Ahsoka felt chills run up and down her spine at his creepy voice. The Sith Lord chanted over the blue flames beside him before he directed them through the portal and at them. Ahsoka immediately pulled together a Force shield but the icy flames were too strong. "I... Can't... Hold it!" she gasped. She felt Ezra come up behind her and add to her shield with his own. She was surprised
by how much stronger his shield felt than hers. As far as she knew, he never had that kind of power two years ago. He'd grown up in more ways than one. The flames stopped, and Ahsoka collapsed to her knees, sucking in air.

Ezra helped her stand back up. "Are you all right?" he asked.

When the Sith Lord started that awful laughter again, she said "run!" And so they did. They ran for their lives as the icy blue flames chased them for what felt like hours. A tendril caught Ezra's foot and started dragging him back towards the portal. Ahsoka grabbed her lightsabres and cut through the flame, another tendril burning her arm in the process, making the Sith Lord cry out like he'd been physically connected to the Flame she slashed. Ezra got back up and they continued their run for freedom, while she held her hurt arm to her middle.

Just before they had to part ways at an intersection, Ezra called to her. "When you get back, come and find me!"

"I will. I promise!" she called back, before turning towards the portal she'd come through. Ahsoka leapt through the portal in the wake of Morai, icy flames at her heels.
Obi-Wan's Grandpadawan Returns:

D22/1 BBY, Malachor

When she woke from the second disorienting trip in the space of an hour, her head pounding yet again, Ahsoka pulled her screaming body back onto her feet. The burn on her arm made itself known the loudest. Holding her arm protectively, Ahsoka looked back at where the portal had spit her out, but there was nothing there. "May the Force be with you, Ezra Bridger."

She gathered the Force within her and sent it to the burn on her arm, sighing as she felt immediate relief. A bacta patch would be nice, but this would do for now.

Ahsoka scanned the dark Temple that she had stood in not that long ago. Nothing looked the same. With no better course of action, she started making her way downwards. When she reached the layers that had lifts, she found out that Maul wasn't kidding about the two riders necessary for them to work. She resorted to jumping down each level, using the Force to cushion the landings. When she reached the ground, she looked around and sighed. Everything was covered in rocks and ash. Making her way out of here was going to take awhile. Not that she was in a hurry or anything.

Ahsoka fully expected to have to go into hiding somewhere for the next two years until she caught up to whatever timeline the new Ezra was in. But she wasn't doing it on this black pit of despair of a planet. She needed a way off. She knew there were three Inquisitors here, not that long ago, and that they had all perished in one way or another. That meant that hopefully, at least one of their personal TIEs was still here and still intact.

It took her a whole day to find it, but she did, thanks to Morai. She almost walked right past it, it was covered in so much ash and debris from the collapsed ceiling that used to be above the Temple. The explosion must have dislodged the fragile crust. Morai stopped on top of the pile of what she thought to be just rocks and hooted at her. Ahsoka looked at the pile closer and sighed in relief. She was getting weak from lack of water and food. Nothing grew on this awful planet. At least not in the vicinity of the Sith Temple. Ahsoka closed her eyes and drew the Force to her. With the strength of the Force, she tossed all of the debris off the TIE Advanced, praying that it wasn't too damaged to fly. One of the wings was somewhat bent, but Ahsoka fixed that in a few moments with another burst of the Force.

After checking the rest of the fighter for damage, she heard Morai hoot softly at her. Ahsoka raised her good arm, and the bird landed on her wrist. They looked at each other for a minute, Ahsoka seeing unknown realms in Morai's eyes. "Thank you," she whispered to the bird as she gently stroked its head. Morai chirped once more and Ahsoka felt a sense of peace flow through her as Morai took flight. She watched the bird disappear from sight from one moment to the next, and mourned the loss of her friend and guide. "I hope we see each other again," she said to the space where Morai was seen last.

She climbed into the TIE, and the first thing she did was search it for any rations or water. The Inquisitors might be evil, but they still had to function like other beings. She almost cried when she found a compartment filled with ration bars and pre-packaged water. She gulped down some water and tore into a ration bar, inhaling it in just a few bites. Taking the water and another bar with her, she sat in the pilot chair and pressed the buttons necessary to power up the TIE. Lights reluctantly came on all around her, and Ahsoka looked over all the systems, familiarizing herself with the model that she had never seen quite this close before. Her eyebrows rose in pleased surprise when
she saw that the TIE came with a hyperdrive. That would make everything so much simpler.

Her eyes skimmed across the chronometer, then zoomed back in a double take. No. Way. The date was listed as D23/18 AFE. She'd actually lost more than a year and a half of her life. Although... That did solve the problem of having to hermit herself. That was worth something she supposed. And now the Bendu's last words to her finally made sense.

"You are set on this confrontation then?" the giant Bendu asked, before Ahsoka left for Malachor with Kanan and Ezra.

"I have to know the truth," she said in return.

The Bendu had looked down at her with sad, knowing eyes. "So be it, but understand this, much will change as a result of this encounter, including you."

"Isn't that true of all things, as time advances?"

The Bendu shook his head slightly. "My dear, when I say change, I mean death."

Ahsoka sucked in a breath. "So I will die?"

"Will you? I didn't know that. Goodbye then, Ahsoka Tano, former Jedi Knight."

In a way, she had died. Or at least ceased to exist for more than a year and half. To the rest of the galaxy, she was dead. How strange that felt. If that was true, then she was now on her third life. Ahsoka wondered how many times she was going to defy death, before it found her for real.

Ahsoka shook off the morbid thoughts and flew the TIE off the planet and set a course for Tatooine. She needed to see for herself that Obi-Wan really was alive. With everything that had just happened, she was in desperate need of a friendly familiar face, and she couldn't think of anyone she wanted to see more than Obi-Wan. Rex would have to be a very close second, but she'd just seen him two days ago. She hadn't seen Obi-Wan for more than sixteen years. (Or eighteen, if you're going by the calendar.)

While the TIE travelled to Tatooine, Ahsoka curled up on the floor behind the chair and fell into an exhausted slumber. The ship dropping out of hyperspace woke her hours later. Ahsoka dragged her stiff body off the floor and up into the chair. She let the TIE float in space as she closed her eyes and fell into the soothing rhythms of meditation. With nothing to go on other than the planet, Ahsoka was counting on the Force to guide her to Obi-Wan. Her eyes opened and a smile graced her lips as the familiar Force signature of Obi-Wan was shown to her. She followed the beacon of his Signature around to the other side of the planet and landed the TIE near his home in the rocks, surrounded by the Western Dune Sea.

As Ahsoka climbed out of the TIE, a figure of an older, grey haired and bearded man appeared to greet her. She choked back a sob and ran towards him. "Master Kenobi! You are alive!"

Ben Kenobi gazed in shock from the Imperial TIE that had landed in his front yard to the grown up version of the Togruta female that he used to know many many years ago. At the last instant he opened his arms before she barrelled into them. After a minute, he held her by the shoulders so he could look at her properly, a grin forming on his face. "Little Ahsoka Tano. How you have grown. I thought you were dead."

Ahsoka smiled back at Obi-Wan. "I thought you were dead as well, Master Kenobi. And you got old."

"You are set on this confrontation then?" the giant Bendu asked, before Ahsoka left for Malachor with Kanan and Ezra.

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Ahsoka smiled back at Obi-Wan. "I thought you were dead as well, Master Kenobi. And you got old."
Ben chuckled. "Just call me Ben, not so little Ahsoka. It's been a long time since I was a Master of anything."

Ahsoka raised a brow, but went with it. "Alright. Ben." She paused and shook her head. "That just doesn't sound right."

Ben led the way into his home. "You'll get used to it. I did." He gestured for her to sit in a chair and took a seat across from her. "So what have you been doing with yourself all these years? And there must be an interesting story behind your choice of ship."

Ahsoka leaned back into the comfy chair, exalting in the softness. "You have no idea. Do you have a lot of time? Because this could take awhile."

Ben settled deeper in his chair. "I have all the time in the world and really nothing better to do. I'd love to hear your stories."

Ahsoka shook her head ruefully. "You asked for it." She took a deep breath and began. "I suppose I should start with the Siege of Mandalore...

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Five hours, a refresher break, a bacta patch, and a meal later...

"... and that's how I'm now the reluctant owner of an Inquisitor's TIE."

Obi-Wan had given up on gawking long ago. Ahsoka's life over the last eighteen years was pretty much unbelievable, especially the last few days. But the Force did work in mysterious ways, as he'd seen many times before. "I'm just grateful that you weren't stranded on Malachor indefinitely."

"So am I. I'm not sure what Maul survived on, while he was living there. I never saw anything that even remotely resembled an edible," Ahsoka said as she scraped the last of her meal off her plate and into her mouth eagerly.

Obi-Wan chuckled at her enthusiasm. "Would you like another helping?"

Ahsoka shook her head and pushed her plate away. "I shouldn't. I've already had two. I'm full, really. Thank you." She leaned back in her chair and sighed in contentment. Her stomach was full, her arm wasn't hurting anymore, and she was with an old friend. Life was pretty good at the moment. "So what have you been up too? Ezra seemed to think you have a purpose for hiding out on this sandy hell hole, and I agree. There are much nicer places to hide. And the Rebellion could really use your help, which I have a feeling you already know all about. The fact that you are still here and not fighting with the rest of us tells me you do have a secret agenda." She narrowed her eyes at him. "So spill it."

Obi-Wan shook his head. "You're not wasted as an intelligence agent, that's for sure. Honestly though, I don't know if I should tell you. You might find it a little hard to take."

Ahsoka snorted a little. "At this point, nothing would surprise me. Just tell me."

Obi-Wan sucked in a breath and spit it out. "I'm guarding Anakin and Padme's son."

That didn't get him the reaction he expected. Instead, Ahsoka smiled like a tooka who'd just found a bowl of blue milk. "I knew it!" she exclaimed. "I knew they were a thing. I saw so many hints that they were more than friends. I'm not surprised at all that Padme was with child."

"Loving Padme was one of the reasons Anakin fell to the Dark." Obi-Wan said sadly.
"I disagree. I have seen a Jedi Knight who loved his woman with everything he had to give, and he was the most Light side Jedi I have ever encountered." Ahsoka said. "Anakin having to hide his love for Padme from the Order was a factor in his fall. My leaving him when he needed my support was another. And I'm sure there were others. The Order was flawed, and I saw it, but I never should have left him behind to deal with those flaws on his own. I should have talked him into leaving with me. Then Anakin and Padme could have had their happy ever after instead of the tragedy that befell them." She choked back a sob as a tear slowly made its way down her cheek. "I don't know if I will ever forgive myself for that. Now Anakin is something truly evil and I couldn't save him." She wiped the tear off her cheek and pulled herself back together. "I wonder though... maybe his son could? Does Anakin know?"

Obi-Wan shook his head. "I don't think so. I'm sure he would have come for him by now if he did."

"I think you're right. Is the boy trained?" she asked curiously.

"No," he said regretfully. "His aunt and uncle refused to let me. I haven't seen him in person for years. Just from afar, to make sure he's still alright. I sense though that will change soon. The Force is whispering of things to come. Events that will change the course of the Galaxy, and Luke will be pivotal to those events. Perhaps you are right, and Luke will be able to sway Anakin back to the Light side. We shall have to wait and see." Obi-Wan smiled as he thought of Luke. "You'd like Luke. He reminds me so much of Anakin when he was young. He has his father's skill as a pilot too. And his love of mischief. I was always rescuing him from one scrape or another, usually without knowing I was doing so."

"I can't wait to meet him, but I sense I am needed elsewhere. I know I will encounter Luke one day. I shouldn't even have stopped to see you, but Ezra said you were alive and I just needed to see for myself," Ahsoka said ruefully as she stood from the table. "Thank you for listening to my lengthy stories. It was nice to finally tell someone about everything I've done and had to do. I feel a lot lighter now."

"Thank you for visiting and entertaining an old man for a day," Obi-Wan replied as he also stood and walked her back to her TIE fighter. "I don't know if we'll see each other again, but I wish you luck, Ahsoka, with wherever your journey through life takes you."

Ahsoka turned and hugged him again, which he returned happily. "I wish that didn't sound like a final goodbye, but I understand that we may never see each other again. At least in this form of our lives," she said into his chest. "I've missed you. And I'll remember you. Always." She pulled away and wiped her eyes again, before jumping up into the TIE. As she lifted the Imperial fighter off the sand, she raised a hand in farewell to her Master's Master.

Obi-Wan Kenobi watched the TIE fighter fade into the atmosphere above, a tear falling down his cheek unheeded. "May the Force be with you, Ahsoka Tano, Jedi Knight," he whispered to the stars. So much had gone wrong with his past, and he'd lost so many people. Qui-Gon. Satine. Anakin. The Order. Now here was this brave female, whom the Order had wronged so badly, saving the Galaxy, righting the wrongs that the Order had allowed to happen. Because at heart, she was a Jedi. More Jedi than most of the Order could ever hope to be, no matter what she called herself. Her very resolve bolstered his own, and brought hope back to his heart.
Lux's Lost One

A/N: This one has been changed quite a bit too, so you might want to read it if you're a Luxsoka fan.

Lux's Lost One:

D24/1 BBY

Ahsoka set a course for Yavin 4, where Ezra said the Rebellion was based from now. It was time to go back to work. Oh, and find Ezra, as well. But he was on Lothal, so, she didn't think that finding him was going to be all that hard. The Force laughed at her when she thought that.

After spending a few hours meditating, Ahsoka commed Senator Bail Organa. He was the first person she thought should know she was still alive.

Bail answered his personal comm link, and almost fell out of his chair when he heard the familiar voice speaking through it. He was so surprised, he forgot he was in a meeting with the Senator of Onderon. "Ahsoka! You're alive!"

"Yes, I am," her voice said dryly. "It's a long story, but I was hoping you could give me the comm frequency of the Rebel base on Yavin 4. I'm currently flying a TIE fighter and would like to give them some warning so they don't shoot me out of the sky."

"Umm, sure. Just hold on a second. I have it here somewhere." Bail said, still in shock, as he started fumbling through his personal datapad.

Bail wasn't the only one surprised to hear Ahsoka's voice. Senator Lux Bonteri went pale like he'd just seen a ghost. In a way, it was true. He hadn't heard from or seen Ahsoka since she'd gone to Mandalore to find Maul so many years ago. He had assumed she had been assassinated with all the other Jedi. If he had known she was alive all this time, he would have searched the galaxy for her and not married that Imperial who turned out to be an awful witch. (Thank the Force that nightmare was over, and the divorce was finalized years ago.) He'd lived on his own since then, disillusioned with the idea of romance. But the very idea of seeing Ahsoka again had his heart racing. He had to make it happen. Lux quickly typed a message into his datapad and sent it Bail's.

Bail raised a brow at the message that appeared on his screen and looked at Lux questioningly. Seeing the imploring eyes, he shrugged and nodded. "Change of plans, Ahsoka. Why don't you come to Alderaan first? I'd like to see for myself that you're alright. And there's someone here who wants to meet you."

Now Ahsoka was curious. She started setting a new course in the nav computer. "Sure, boss. Whatever you want. I'll be there around dawn, your time."

The comm went silent and Bail looked at Lux questioningly. "Why do you want to meet Ahsoka?"

The younger man smiled a little dreamily. "I knew her once, when we were teenagers." (He didn't think it prudent to mention that she'd been his secret girlfriend.) "I thought she was killed with all the other Jedi. I can't believe I'm going to see her again."

Bail smiled to himself, as he saw the cementing of a new ally to his cause. He'd been tiptoeing around the issue with the other Senator, hoping to sway him to the side of the Rebellion. Now he
was sure he could talk him into joining. The more Senators they had on their side, the better. "I take it you would like to spend the night here then?" he said with a hint of laughter.

Lux focused again. "What? Oh, yes. If it's not too much of an imposition?"

Bail shook his head and smiled. "No. Not at all. The guest suite is always kept ready. Come on then, Lux. You might as well join my wife, daughter, and I for dinner, since you're here to stay."

Lux followed the older man out of the office and down the hall, steps practically bouncing with anticipation for tomorrow.

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**D25/1 BBY, Alderaan**

Ahsoka landed the TIE on Senator Organa's private landing pad by his mansion on Alderaan. The senator, the Queen, and his daughter, Leia, were all there to greet her with many hugs of welcome. She smiled at them fondly. Bail and his family was the closest thing to a family that she had.

A handsome male human stood near the building, far back from the others, and Ahsoka glanced at him questioningly, wondering at his presence. Bail was usually very careful to keep her a secret from the rest of galaxy, so they didn't jeopardize their common mission. The human felt familiar in the Force, and she felt like she should know him, but it wasn't quite clicking yet.

Bail waved the other male forward. "Ahsoka, I'd like to introduce you to the Senator of Onderon. He has just recently agreed to join our cause." Bail waited to see if that was enough to spark a memory in Ahsoka. He'd already noted that she hadn't recognized the man, but that was to be expected, if they hadn't seen each other for more than half their lifetimes.

Upon hearing the name Onderon, Ahsoka was suddenly filled with energy. She studied the man more closely as he approached. He was tall, broad shouldered and fit, with reddish brown hair and sparkling grey eyes. His clean shaven face was sculpted like he came from a long line of royalty. His eyes looked back at hers with a look of desperate hope. She'd seen that exact look before, on the wrong side of the glass of an escape pod. Ahsoka basically squealed and threw her arms around him. "Lux! It's been way too long. I can't believe it's you!"

Lux wrapped the beautiful togruta in his arms and breathed in her essence, unable to believe he was actually holding her again. He was nearly stunned by how much she'd matured over the years. She was taller, her pretty blue and white lekku were easily twice as long, and her features had settled into the sculpted look of a mature goddess. Lux was practically in awe of her. Neither of them noticed when the Organa family faded away and left them to their reunion. "Ahsoka, I missed you. So much." He pulled back just enough to study her face and her amazing crystal blue eyes. "And you're even more beautiful than I remember."

She chuckled and blushed, glad it didn't show under orange skin. "You're looking pretty fine yourself, Luxi." As she studied his radiant features, she wondered why she'd thought that letting him think she was gone had been the best thing. Now, her instinct to protect him from Jedi hunters seemed less important than stealing whatever moments they could have had together all these years. "I missed you too, Lux. I should explain why I stayed away." she said softly.

Lux smiled as he grazed the back of his knuckles over her cheek gently. "You don't have to. I think I know. I think you were trying to protect me again, like you always do. I wish you wouldn't, but I understand."

Ahsoka sighed and laid her head on his shoulder as she tightened her arms around him. "I might
have taken that a little too far this time, but if you're not attached to anyone else, I'd like it very much if you'd give me another chance," she said into his shirt.

Lux kissed the side of her montral before whispering, "Oh, you're not getting rid of me. Not this time. You have a new shadow, my Lady Tano."

Ahsoka glanced up at him and felt her heart melt. He looked so determined and very much like his younger teenage self again, the years falling away the more she looked at him. "I don't know if I want a new shadow, Lux, but I wouldn't mind a companion and mate. I've been mostly alone for a long time. Recent events have made me realize that being alone is not always worth it and that life is too short to put off things that can make one happy."

Lux beamed at her and pressed a kiss to her nose. "I'll take whatever I can get. Shadow, companion, slave, friend, mate, lover, husband, you name it, I'm yours."

Ahsoka laughed and pressed a soft kiss to his cheek before pulling away from his arms and meandering towards the door into the mansion. "All of those are sounding rather intriguing, my beloved Luxi. I might just have to take you up on them."

"Sweet," Lux breathed to himself before he bounded ahead of Ahsoka and opened the door for her like a true gentleman. "After you, My Lady."

Ahsoka paused in the doorway and grabbed his shirt, before planting a quick kiss on his lips. "You keep this up, Lux, and you're going to find yourself promoted to the last option awfully fast."

Lux grinned widely as he walked beside her down the hallway, twining his fingers around hers. "That's my intention. We have a lot of years to make up for."

Ahsoka shot him a look, but found no accusation in his adoring gaze. She squeezed his fingers and smiled at him, nudging him with her hip playfully. "You can say that again."

Ahsoka spent a joy filled day with the Organas and Lux. By the end of the day, though, she was really feeling like she was supposed to be somewhere else. With many apologies, she explained that she had to go, but she didn't know where. Ahsoka assumed it was Yavin 4. Bail commed Senator Mothma, just to see if anything interesting was happening. After she got over her shock at the news of Ahsoka's resurrection, she told them what she knew about Lothal. Bail's eyebrows rose in disbelief, his expression echoed around the room by everyone present. "They're doing what?!" he asked Mon.

"General Syndulla and Commander Bridger have decided to try and take out the entirety of the Imperial presence on Lothal on their own, with only a few others that she talked into joining her, like Commanders Rex and Kallus, for assistance," Mothma repeated again, with a little more detail. "It's a suicide mission. I tried to talk Hera out of it, but ever since she lost her Jedi, she's been unreasonable. They plan to strike tomorrow. That's all I know about their plans. This can't end well, Bail. But we can't afford to send them any help either. The planetary blockade wiped out the last squadron I reluctantly sent to that planet. I'm sorry, but I'm not doing it again."

Bail sighed. "I understand, Mon. And I agree with you. We can't afford to lose any more people on a suicide run. All we can do is pray for them." He ended the comm call with a sad shake of his head.

Ahsoka stood. "Well, I'm not just going to sit here. Those are my friends. I'm going to help them." When Bail opened his mouth to protest, she silenced him with a determined look.
Lux stood too. "I'm coming with you. I just found you again. I'm not losing you now."

Ahsoka looked at him gratefully. "All right. But that's it."

"I want to go as well."

Ahsoka pinned Leia back into her chair with a look. "You're too important to throw yourself away on a suicide run. I'm sorry, Leia."

Leia sighed and slumped in her chair. "I never get to do any of the fun missions," she grumped. "Ezra's my friend too you know."

"I know. But you still can't come with me." Ahsoka left the big family room and walked towards the exit to the landing pad, Lux and the others following behind her. She stopped and looked at her TIE for a moment. It really wasn't two person friendly. "Bail?"

"Yes?"

"I don't suppose I can interest you in a trade for a top of the line TIE for something a little more convenient?"

Bail chuckled reluctantly, despite the situation. "I think I might have something that you'll like."

"What about my ship?" Lux asked.

Ahsoka looked at his sleek personal cruiser and laughed. "Is that thing even equipped for war?" Lux shook his head reluctantly. "I didn't think so."

Bail led them to the hangar at the back of the property and hit the lights. A whole fleet of fighters, shuttles and cruisers were lined up neatly. Ahsoka eagerly looked up the line, her eyes immediately drawn to a red and white painted T-6 shuttle with side mounted guns. "Now that's more like it. It looks just like one I used to fly when I was a padawan and went on missions with Padme and my Master."

Bail laughed. "I thought you might pick that one. I'm pretty sure it is the same one you used to fly. I've had it for years. I purchased it from Padme's estate sale, along with a few other things." He gestured her towards the shuttle. "It's yours now. Good luck, Ahsoka, and May the Force be with you."

Ahsoka gave Bail and his family one more hug each. "May the Force be with you as well."
Hera's Miracle

A/N: A really small piece of a flashback that is going to be part of a much bigger chapter eventually. :D

Hera's Miracle:

D25/1 BBY

The Ghost was in hyperspace once again, on the way to pick up a few more recruits to help with Ezra's quest. Hera was happy to be reunited with her ship, but it just didn't feel the same knowing that Kanan would never step foot in it again. Mon Mothma hadn't been very happy with her when she'd appeared on Yavin 4 to steal some of her rebels, but Hera didn't care. She was never going to let the war come before her family again. She'd learned her lesson the hard way.

Knowing she needed to eat something to keep her strength up, but not feeling very hungry, and even slightly nauseous, Hera prepared her favourite tea instead, hoping it would soothe her stomach. Taking a sip, Hera paused and her eyes opened wide in surprise as she ran to the sink and spit it out. Wiping her mouth, she eyed her tea suspiciously. It tasted terrible. Glancing at the package of dried tea leaves, she sniffed it, confused, sure that she'd had some of this very same tea the last time she was on the Ghost. The tea smelt fine. The tea in her mug smelled fine as well. So why? A really ridiculous stray thought crossed her mind as she dumped out the tea in her mug and started some caf instead. There was no way, was there? Hera thought back to when she last had a contraceptive shot and realized it was well over a year ago. And they were only guaranteed for a year. With the chaos of the last few months, it had completely slipped her mind.

Hera ran to the med bay, passing a confused looking Rex and Kallus in the common room on the way by. She grabbed the med scanner off the shelf and ran it over herself, almost afraid to look at the results, not sure yet what she wanted it to say. Hera read the screen, and fell back against the wall, sliding to the floor, scanner falling to the floor with a thud as her numb fingers dropped it. It took a minute for her to process, but when it did, happy tears fell from her eyes. Hera put both her hands on her stomach in wonder. "Hello, my little miracle," she whispered to her stomach.

For it was a miracle. Aside from the fact that there was a one in a thousand chance of a human and a twi'lek actually conceiving, she'd been shot out of the sky, beaten multiple times, and electrocuted repeatedly. There was no way the pregnancy should have held. "You must be just like your daddy. You never give up." Hera smiled joyfully as the tears continued to fall unheeded down her cheeks. She'd always have a piece of Kanan now to keep with her.
Ezrabine's Goodbye, Part 1

A/N: If you've read this chapter before, be aware that I have changed the plot drastically to reflect adding the Spectres story to the whole of this one so you might want to read it again. Future chapters will also be changed to go with the new plot.

Ezrabine's Goodbye, Part 1:

D26/1 BBY, Lothal

Ezra knelt on a rock, far from camp, as a sense of imminent disaster crept over him.

HE was returning. He could feel it.

And they weren't ready yet. Hera wasn't back with their reinforcements and his plan for taking back Lothal was still living in the realm of 'this is an insane idea.' He sighed and pushed the negative thoughts out of his mind along with everything else that was bothering him. Concentrating on only his breathing and the Force, Ezra sank into a meditative state like Kanan had taught him four years ago.

And there was another thought that he wasn't letting himself think right now.

Kanan.

That just hurt too much.

With grim determination, Ezra concentrated on the Force. It had been showing him glimpses of possible paths for the outcome of this day, but he was desperately hoping for a little more. The flashes he'd seen in the World Between Worlds, in his dreams, and during his meditation sessions just weren't enough to make him feel better about what was about to happen.

He still didn't know for sure how this final battle was going to play out and what his fate would be. He had a plan of sorts for the grand finale, but it wasn't for sure, and he was counting on something that had been said to him years ago and a brief image in a portal. No one would believe him if he tried to explain it, so he didn't. It was going to be a surprise, even to him, if it actually happened. Everything up until said finale was still floating around in the air, indistinct and confusing. Thus, the meditating.

Breaths calm and steady, Ezra let the Force flow through him, lending him strength and courage. With every breath he sank deeper and deeper, until there was nothing left but his connection to the Force. And finally, the images and voices came back, giving him a better glimpse of what would happen with each possible path. Many paths lay before him but only one gave him the outcome that he needed. And it almost shattered his heart as he realized just what taking that path would entail. His family would lose another member for a long time and he really didn't want to do that to them.

Ezra went over each possible path again. And again came to the conclusion that there was only one acceptable way this day was going to end; with heartbreak. A tear crept down his cheek and he opened his eyes, hastily wiping it away as he stared blankly over the scorched grass of his home planet. Leaving was going to hurt. But the planet was the least on his list of things he didn't want to leave. He didn't want to leave his family.
He didn't want to leave Hera behind with a baby on the way. He'd sensed the new life force living within her about a week ago, while Kanan was still alive. No words were ever spoken about it, but he and Kanan had shared a long moment of joy through their bond when they realized that they both knew about it. Ezra had been waiting for Kanan to tell Hera the news, since it wasn't his to share, but as far as he knew, the opportunity had never presented itself to Kanan. And then he died. And now Ezra didn't know whether to tell Hera or let her find out for herself. He was leaning towards the later, simply because he thought breaking the news to her would be rather awkward. And with what was coming, he didn't think it would be fair to her to drop such a bombshell on her on top of everything else.

Ezra felt awful that he wouldn't get to meet his little brother for who knows how long. How much growing up would he do before Ezra came home? Who would teach him how to control the Force that was almost certainly going to reside within him in vast quantities, based on how strong Kanan was? Ezra didn't want to leave his brother feeling as confused as he had been for the first fourteen years of his life. He didn't want to leave him, and he'd never even met him yet.

And most of all, he didn't want to leave Sabine. She was his heart and soul. His reason for getting up in the morning. His everything. She was his best friend. His soul mate. His life. Ezra loved her with his entire being. No other woman could ever compare to her. No one was smarter, stronger, or more beautiful than his Sabine.

Maybe, just maybe, if she ever forgave him for leaving her at the end of the battle and he saw her again, years from now, she would finally think he was grown up enough to marry him. Force knows he'd asked her enough times over the last year, that he had her answer memorized; "We're too young to get married, Ez. Ask again when you're older." Always said with a laugh and a passionate kiss, but it was still a rejection that hurt.

Ezra sighed, chest heaving with the emotions swirling through him again. So much for calm and tranquility. Apparently he was going to have to mediate again to get that back. Ezra had just closed his eyes when he felt Sabine's distinctive energy approaching. His heart gave a little jump of joy, but Ezra told it to get a grip. Now wasn't the time to lose his cool. They were about to go to war. Emotions were just going to have to wait.

Sabine went to find him, needing to see that he was alright. He'd left hours ago, to commune with the Force or whatever it was that he did. He'd been so distant since they'd destroyed the Temple. Resigned somehow. It reminded her of how Kanan had acted before his death. And it scared her. She was terrified that something was going to happen to him too and she didn't like it all.

Watching Hera grieve for Kanan, for the love that was lost, had made her realize that maybe she should stop procrastinating about taking the last step in their relationship. Before it was too late.

Sabine found him meditating on an outcropping of rock far from camp. She had let her feet lead her to him, guided by the Force, even though she wasn't sensitive to it, she trusted it. They'd spent so many years together that Sabine was sure some of his Jedi mumbo jumbo must have rubbed off on her, because she didn't even question any of the crazy things that happened anymore.

To Ezra, it seemed like no time at all before her delightful presence was beside him and she put her hand on his shoulder. His heart jumped again and his breath caught, ignoring his pep talk from seconds ago.

"Ezra. You okay?" her beautiful voice asked by his ear, and he had to suppress the urge to shiver in delight.
He looked up at her, into her worried amber eyes, trying not to drown in their depths and let all of
his emotions show, but feeling like he was losing the battle. "Something's changed. Something's
happening," he said, admitting a little of what was going on.

"What's wrong?" she asked, concerned by the sadness, resignation, and determination she could see
in his sapphire eyes.

"I need to talk to Hera." Ezra explained. "Thrawn is on his way back. If we don't act now, we'll
lose our chance. And Hera's not back yet." Ezra stood smoothly, looking down into her eyes. He
absently wondered when she'd gotten so much smaller than him. But never weaker. She could still
toss him to the ground in a second flat if she felt like it. That thought almost made him smile, but
he repressed it. This wasn't a smiling situation. His Sabine would always be a warrior. One of his
favourite things about her. Maybe only second to her colourful and artistic side. He loved her
colour. He loved her art. He loved her.

Sabine looked up at Ezra, standing so tall and strong. He'd grown up so much in the last few
months. Not just in height, but in maturity. He wasn't the cute boy who'd once tried to flirt with her
anymore. He was a man now. Sabine would never regret kissing him that first time after he turned
fifteen. Their time together was priceless to her and he'd become the best friend she would ever
have. Their bond was forged in battle and endless hours of talking through hyperspace runs and
even more endless hours of lovemaking whenever they could get away with it. But she wished
she'd been smarter and somehow been able to see the future; she would have married him the first
time he asked. "Alright. We can comm Ryder and have him call her," Sabine said, pushing aside
the regret. Ezra turned to walk back towards camp, but she stopped him with a hand on his arm. He
looked down at her, surprised. "Ezra. There's something I need to say first. Something I should
have said months ago, but my own stupid pride in my heritage has held me back."

Ezra looked at her with wide, confused eyes. She sounded so serious. Too serious. "What is it,
Sabine? What has your culture got to do with anything? Aside from making you the strongest girl
I've ever seen," he said with a half hearted grin, in an attempt at lightening the mood.

Sabine put both her hands on his strong chest and stared up into his eyes, working up the courage
to continue with what she'd started and thinking up a good way to start. "You remember how I told
you that the Jedi and the Mandalorians are enemies?" Her amber eyes were serious as she looked at
him.

Ezra chuckled a little as he wrapped his arms around her back. "Yah. You almost left the Ghost that
day. Everything would have been very different now if you had. I am very glad you didn't."

Sabine reached up with one hand and traced the scars on his cheek. The scars that she loved. To
her they just proved how much of a warrior he really was and just added to the handsome
perfection of his features. She felt him suck in his breath just a little at the contact, and she smiled
ever so slightly, loving that she could affect him so much. "Ezra, the reason I kept turning you
down when you asked me to marry you is because I was afraid. Technically, you're my enemy, and
even though my family seems to have accepted you as my friend, I was worried about how they'll
react, how any Mandalorian would react if they found out I married a Jedi. But I don't care
anymore. They can all go hang themselves if they don't like it. You're my world, first and foremost.
I love you, Ez'ika. It would make me very very happy if you asked me again." She stretched up on
her toes and placed a soft kiss on his lips, before searching his eyes to see his reaction.

Ezra's sappy heart gave a joyful thump at that confession while he was doing his best to ignore the
jolts of electricity racing through him from where her hands were still touching him so he could
concentrate on speaking without stuttering. "Sabine Wren, will you say the wedding vows with
me?"

She nodded, smiling through misty amber eyes. "Yes, my Ezra. Yes, I will."

Ezra breathed a sigh of relief before ducking his head and kissing her quickly before pulling back. And then, like they'd rehearsed it a hundred times, the both said the Mando'a vows at the same time, voices melding as their eyes locked and their hands held tight. "We are one when together. We are one when parted. We will share all. We will raise warriors."

Sabine beamed at him for getting the complicated language correct when they were done and then leapt up into his arms and plastering her mouth to his. Ezra had never been happier in his whole life as he temporarily forgot the rest of the galaxy, his planet, his family, and everything he fought for and had lost. All that mattered to him in that moment was kissing his wife like there was literally no tomorrow because it was most likely true.

Sometime later, he wrapped his arms around her a little tighter, pulling her lithe body right into his, heart leaping in his chest at the contact. He buried his face in her gorgeous chocolate and purple hair, hiding the dopey smile he knew was plastered to his face. "My precious cyar'ika. I love you, so much," he murmured. "Since the moment I first saw you blow up that air bike the day we first met. I hadn't even seen your face yet, but I thought to myself, 'now that's the kind of girl I wish I had.' And look at us now. You're finally mine, and we're about to go to war."

Ezra pulled back a little so he could see her perfect face and reluctantly confessed some of the future because she deserved to know. "Sabine, I don't know if I'm going to survive this." He winced as she gasped but bravely forged on. "But I promise you that if I do, I will always love you. Force knows how much." Ezra bent his head towards hers, rejoicing when she met him halfway. He pressed his lips to hers in a kiss of tender affirmation of their unbreakable bond, savouring the feeling of her soft lips under his. As the perfect moments dragged into eternity, he got a little bolder and so did she. The sweet taste of her mouth was intoxicating and all he wanted to do was kiss her for the rest of his life. Before he knew it, they were full on making out and Ezra's brain completely shut down, just letting his instincts take over.

Sabine couldn't believe how GOOD it felt to finally belong to Ezra the way he belonged to her. Kissing Ezra and being with him felt like she was fulfilling her true purpose in life. Which sounded silly, but all she wanted to do for the rest of her life was keep her arms wrapped around his neck and her body pressed close to his so she could continuously feel the little shocks and shivers that ran through her at the contact. His mouth tasted like mint and he smelled delicious; kind of like grass and fresh air and man with a hint of clean sweat. The combination was just as intoxicating as the first time she'd noticed how he smelt. And it was still a good trick, considering the only grass near them was scorched and the air smelled like smoke.

Somehow, after the new best minutes of his life, Ezra managed to pull back and gasp in much needed air as he rested his forehead on hers, gazing into her shining eyes like the love drunk, dazed, and overwhelmed boy he suddenly felt like. And then he noticed the tears running down her cheeks, making him feel terrible. Ah man. Was she regretting it already? He'd all but said he might not survive the day. That was an awful thing to tell your new wife. Maybe he should have kept his mouth shut, but it wouldn't have been fair if he had.

Sabine hadn't even realized she was crying until he looked alarmed all of a sudden and she had to figure out why. "I'm just really happy, I think." she whispered. "And maybe really sad, but I don't blame you, promise. I know you'll do what you must, and so will I."

Oh. Oh good, Ezra thought. Those were happy tears. Sort of. Close enough anyway. He could live with happy tears. He choked on a laugh at his own morbid thoughts and the hand fate had dealt
them. "Figures," he said with a half roll of the eyes. "Isn't that how our lives go? Full of regrets, sacrifices, and wishful thinking, and for Force's sake, why didn't I think of that sooner?" He smiled as she snorted at his grim humour and wiped the tears off her cheeks with his thumbs, marvelling at the incredible softness of her skin for the millionth time. "No more of that. We've cried enough this last week," he said, trying once again not to think too much about losing Kanan. "I'm just happy to have this moment with you. I'm ready for whatever comes now."

Sabine's eyes went wide and he felt the surge of worry from her again. Opps. Maybe he shouldn't have said that. Too late to take it back now.

Sabine stifled a gasp and buried her face in his shoulder. That had sounded so final. Why did the Jedi have to know the future when it really mattered?

Ezra held her close, running a hand down the silky strands of her hair, sending her what comfort he could through their bond. It was never quite as strong as the bond he had with Kanan because she wasn't Force sensitive, but it still meant the world to him that he could sort of communicate with her like this, even if was just emotions. It also gave him hope that he'd always have a little piece of her with him no matter where he ended up. Because even with Kanan gone in body, Ezra could still feel a hint of their bond in the Force. Kanan was still out there, somewhere. He knew it, and was comforted by it. Kanan had once said that he would never leave him, and he'd meant it.

Sabine realized if she was going to lose him in the next few hours, she wanted more than just a kiss to remember him by. She wanted everything. She wanted all of him. No matter how insane it was or how little time they had left. She looked up at him and he felt a strange surge of mixed emotions from her. She suddenly felt determined, hesitant, brave, and a little scared all at once. "What is it, Sabine?" he asked curiously.

Sabine ran her hands down his muscled chest and closed her fingers on the bottom of his shirt. "I need you," she whispered. "All of you."

Ezra hadn't expected her to say that, but he sure wasn't going to complain about it. He grinned widely. "Alright. You have to know by now that I could never say no to you."

Sabine smiled quickly at him before she attacked his shirt, pulling it up and over his head and tossing it onto the rock behind her. Then she took a moment to admire what she'd uncovered. "Kriff, Ezra. I know I say this a lot, but Jedi training has been good to you," she breathed as she ran her hands reverently up and down his washboard abs and then back up again to his firm pecs and up to his broad shoulders that led to strongly muscled arms.

Ezra shrugged bashfully with a cheeky grin. "I'm not complaining." He leaned down and cupped the back of her head, stealing another kiss that again turned hot in seconds. Sabine moaned into his mouth as their tongues fought for dominance. This was so incredibly good. And hot. She couldn't forget hot. It felt like she was burning up, but in a very good way. She doubted there would ever come a time when Ezra didn't ignite her body in only seconds when he turned all that passion on her.

As their kiss just kept on going, Sabine grew impatient. She started pulling off her own armour with one hand while the other clung to the muscles of Ezra's bare back. His skin felt amazing under her hand, soft and yet somehow feeling thicker and stronger than hers.

Ezra pulled back from the kiss and helped her remove her armour when she wasn't doing it fast enough. He wanted to take it slow and draw this out for hours but there just wasn't time, so he let himself get carried away in her urgency.
Soon enough, there was pieces scattered around them and her gun and utility belts lay on the ground as well. That inspired her to go after his belt, making him chuckle softly. She had it off in five seconds flat including the two thigh straps that held down his holsters. She raised an eyebrow, indicating he should strip off his trousers and boots while she did the same to herself. Then she pulled on the fastening that held her bodysuit together. She shrugged out of it and was left in just her underclothes and Ezra was standing in front of her in just his skin tight undershorts. Shorts that left nothing to the imagination. She blinked at the rather impressive tent in the front of his shorts he was already sporting and then smiled a satisfied little smile.

Ezra was practically drooling at the sight of Sabine in nothing but her underwear. She had the most amazing muscle tone from all the acrobatics and fighting that she did. Not that he'd mind at all if she had a softer form, but at the moment she was perfection in his mind.

She glanced up his toned body to his face again and found him doing his own ogling. She had to admit that it felt really nice to be admired. She'd probably kill anyone else who looked at her like that, but because it was Ezra, she welcomed it.

"Kriff, Sabine. You're going to give me a heart attack from how beautiful you are," he finally gushed out after swallowing all the saliva that had pooled in his mouth. "You are so hot." His new mission in life would be to lick and kiss every millimetre of her skin again as soon as he had time. He absently wondered how long it would be before he actually got to do that, because there certainly wasn't time today.

Sabine preened a little, standing just a little straighter. "Why, thank you, babe. You're pretty hot yourself." She put her hands on the bottom of her sports bra and tore it off over her head, deciding that show and tell time was over.

Ezra stepped closer and kissed each of her small and round breasts. "You're gorgeous, Sabine," he whispered as he kissed a path up her neck while kicking off his shorts and pushing down hers.

Sabine nodded and gasped as his large hand cupped her left breast, sending a tingle through her whole body. Ezra wasn't the only one ready to go. His other hand rose as well and both of her breasts were being cradled in his worshipping hands. He groaned a little and nibbled a kiss to the side of her neck, making Sabine gasp again at the jolt that went through her. "Do that again," she demanded.

Ezra was more than happy to comply as he lavished attention on her neck with his mouth and caressed her perfect breasts with his hands. He could feel the nipples growing and hardening at his touch, which he still thought was pretty awe inspiring even after having the privilege of touching them for the last three years.

Sabine nipped his neck where it met his shoulder in return and got a satisfying groan from him. That inspired her to start exploring with her own hands. His chest received attention first, fingers eventually giving a playful flick to his little nipples, making him shiver. Sabine grinned at making him react just as much as she was her. Her hands got more daring and trailed down his hard stomach and around to his firm ass and let her hands explore as they wished. She suddenly gasped as Ezra returned the gesture, his hands magically moving to her own round butt. Who would have thought it would feel so good to have her rear end caressed?

Ezra moved his kisses back down to her breasts while his hands cupped what had to be galaxy's most toned and perfect ass ever. How had he gotten so lucky? What had he done to deserve to touch such a perfect goddess? He didn't know, but he was thanking the Force with every other breath or so in his mind.
Both of them ran out of patience and kind threw themselves at the other, kissing frantically, hands trailing down soft skin and finding the occasional scar from years of fighting the Empire. They groaned into each other's mouths as their hands hit pay dirt at the same time. Sabine circled her fingers around his cock and stroked it gently, feeling the head to toe shudder that went through his body. While at the same time, her pussy clenched in need as his strong fingers explored her soft folds with practiced ease. She moaned again as he teased her clit. "There, babe. Right there."

Ezra played with her clit for a minute while Sabine kept her hands caressing his cock. It was amazingly soft and yet so hard at the same time. She couldn't wait to for it to be inside her. She quivered in need as he moved further down and found her soaked opening, slipping a finger inside.

She was so tight. And hot. And wet. Her passage clenched around his finger and it was all he could do not to go off at how he knew that would feel around his cock instead. Ezra leaned his forehead against hers. "So good," he groaned out. "You're so perfect, Sabine. I don't know how much longer I can wait."

Sabine looked him in the eyes, the blue depths almost completely obliterated by his dilated pupils. "Then don't."

He smiled in relief for half a second before kissing her hard and lifting her up in his arms. Sabine wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist, feeling his hard cock rubbing against her pussy deliciously. He walked a few steps and propped her against a nearby rock wall, sending shockwaves through her with each movement.

And then he was pushing his cock inside, having found her opening unerringly. Sabine sucked in air as the large intruder slowly forced its way past her tight walls. She shuddered and clamped down on him when he was all the way in.

Ezra groaned deep in his chest as he held onto his control out of sheer determination. This seemed even better now that she was officially his. His instincts were screaming at him to pound into her like an animal, but his mind and heart were saying, 'wait, wait, wait.' So he did.

Sabine could feel how tense every single one of his muscles were as he held himself still, waiting for her to adjust to his presence like a proper gentleman. They stared into each other's eyes for endless moments while Sabine breathed through it and finally relaxed around him.

"Now?" Ezra asked almost desperately.

Sabine nodded and tightened her arms around his neck. "Now."

That was all he needed to start moving in and out of her. Slowly at first, but building up speed as her soft cries encouraged him on. They were both already so close to the edge, it only took a minute of hard thrusting before Sabine felt herself tighten and tense almost unbearably before the dam broke and what felt like the best orgasm of her life wrung through her body despite the abbreviated foreplay.

Ezra kept pounding into her through her contractions, even though she'd actually gotten tighter and it was kind of hard to move. He didn't know what his face looked like, but he was pretty sure it was all scrunched up unattractively and there was sweat dripping down his forehead. It was probably a good thing her eyes were closed. As she finally stopped spasming around him he gritted his teeth and forced out words. "Force, I love you," he growled deep in his chest.

Sabine moaned as another thrust sent a mini orgasm through her. It took her a moment to register what he said and open her eyes to see what looked like agony on his face. "I love you, too," she
whispered as he thrust a couple more times hard and deep then pulled out and pressed their stomachs together, his hard throbbing length between them. He shuddered as Sabine felt a hot wetness spurt onto her stomach over and over and she petted his back and kissed him through it, so grateful for his care. Her contraceptive shot had expired a couple days ago and he knew it. There just hadn't been time to track down another with everything that had happened lately.

As he breathed raggedly onto her shoulder, his body shivered once more before stilling and slowly relaxing the tight grip his muscles had on his bones. Sabine could feel the imprint of his hands on her butt, certain she would have bruises from his fingers, but not caring in the least. She was pretty sure she left a few scratches on his back in return. She hugged him tight with her arms and legs, resting her head on his heaving chest, while her back was still smashed up against a rock. (At least it was a smooth rock.)

Ezra sighed happily and looked up, a dopey smile on his handsome face. "That was amazing." Ezra said as he scanned her flushed cheeks, kiss swollen lips, and bright eyes adoringly. He raised a hand from her butt and brushed a strand of soft chocolate and purple hair off her cheek, tucking it behind her ear.

Sabine unwrapped one arm and cupped his cheek, giving him an equally dopey smile in return. "You were amazing."


Sabine giggled. "Dork."

Ezra looked up and chuckled. "Your dork."

She rolled her eyes at him, still held snugly in his arms. "Always. You're perfect for me, even if I didn't want to admit it. None of the other guys interested me at all."

Ezra raised a brow in surprise. "Not even Wedge? Cause I've seen the way he looks at you."

Sabine shook her head, eyes lighting up with a teasing glint. "Well... he is cute. But no, not even Wedge. You're it for me, Ezra. You always will be."

Ezra looked at her adoringly, his hand moving to run caressing fingers over her jaw and rub a thumb over her lips. "I've only ever had eyes for you too, cyar'ika."

She smiled like a tooka. "And that's how it should always be, got it? You're officially mine now.

Ezra gave her a lopsided cocky grin. "And I couldn't be happier about it, even if it's just for today."

She sobbed a laugh. "Oh, Ezra. You have no idea how much that means to me." Sabine grabbed the back of his head and kissed him quickly one more time, just because.

Ezra managed a better smile this time, heart feeling full to bursting at all the emotions filling him right now. "I love you, cyar'ika. Never forget it."

Sabine hugged him harder. "I love you too, Ez'ika. I always will."

She held him for as long as she could, until he finally pulled back a little and gazed at her with an apology in his eyes.

Ezra sighed in mournful contentment as the Force sent a little nudge of warning to the back of his mind. He finally had his wife in his arms and he had to let her go now. There was no more time for
enjoying her curves pressed to his body. No more time for kisses and love. He'd just have to make do with what memories he'd just made. He pressed a kiss to the top of her head and reluctantly pulled back from the full body embrace. "We need to go back now, Sabine. Time is running out."

Sabine reluctantly unwound her legs from around his waist and slid to the ground, forcing her slightly shaky legs to hold her up. They both looked at the mess smeared on their stomachs ruefully. "That's inconvenient," she commented wryly.

Ezra barked a laugh to cover up the embarrassment. "Sorry about that." He searched around until he spotted his utility belt with a triumphant smile. Sabine admired his rear end and gleaming copper skin that shone in the early morning light as he bent down and pulled a couple of tissues from a small pouch. He gallantly cleaned her up first before tending to himself.

As they got dressed again, Ezra spent most of his concentration on watching Sabine as she covered up her amazingly gorgeous body, committing every curve and muscle to memory for future dreams.

She continued to ogle him as she pulled on her armour, sighing over the fine specimen he had grown into. And he wasn't done yet, she was pretty sure. Despite being eighteen, Ezra still looked like he had a ways to go before fully maturing into a male in his prime. She couldn't wait to see that.

She, on the other hand, was quite finished. Her body had stopped growing in height when she was twelve and she'd only lightly curved up since then. That was eight years ago. She was resigned to being small in the chest department, but at least her hips curved nicely. Not that Ezra seemed to complain about her small boobs. In fact, he seemed to adore them. Just one more thing to love about him.

When they were both dressed and armoured again, they kissed softly one last time, hugging each other tight.

They walked back to camp after that, not speaking really, but sharing a multitude of loving glances. For what might be the last time, Ezra held the hand of his girl in a tender grip, arms swinging between them, fingers intertwined. It was a perfect way to end a perfect moment that ended all too soon as base camp appeared in front of them. With much regret, he let go of her hand. It was time to get back to the business of removing the Empire from his planet, and romance had no place in that, nor was it the time or place for them to finally admit to their relationship.

But if things were just a little different, Ezra was sure he'd announce to the entire galaxy that he, a lothrat, had won the heart of Sabine, the warrior goddess.

But things weren't different. Things were pretty awful, all things considered. With some sheer determination, a lot of help from his family, and a little help from the Force, Ezra just might be able to change all that.
Ezra's Plan, Stage 1

A/N: Sorry, another short flashback that will turn into a proper chapter one day.

Ezra's Plan, Stage 1:

D26/1 BBY, Lothal

The battle to capture Governor Pryce more or less went according to plan. With a couple of exceptions.

The first was when he'd felt Jai's life force wink out. The friend he'd made years ago in the Imperial Academy was gone. And it hurt. Jai had been like him, a Force sensitive, but untrained. Kanan had noticed it, the day he'd first met Jai. Ezra had asked Kanan hopefully if he would teach Jai too, thinking that having a training buddy would make learning how to use the Force so much more fun, but Kanan shook his head regretfully, explaining that this was a bad time to be a Jedi and that Jai was better off not knowing what he was or could be. He had a home and mother to go back to so he would be okay as he was, unlike Ezra, who had been all alone before his path merged with that of the Ghost crew.

And now Jai was gone and never would reach his full potential. Ezra could only spend half a second mourning for him before pushing that aside and concentrating on the battle again. Sorrow would have to wait for later. He'd always had the hope that one day things would be better for Force users and he and Kanan could teach Jai about the Force. Now that day would never come.

The second exception had almost cost him his life as he was fighting that ugly, creepy, little assassin thing of Thrawn's. A flash of a vision of Sabine had momentarily distracted him and the Noghri took advantage, knocking his lightsabre out of his hand. He'd called it back just in time and stopped the assassin's electro staff from making contact. And again, that flash of a vision hit him, but he fought past the distraction and tossed the Noghri over the edge.

He didn't have a lot of time to dwell on what it meant at the time, but he knew the image of Sabine sobbing with his lightsabre clutched tightly to her chest would always haunt him.
With Governor Pryce sitting in a gunship like a ticking timebomb, guarded by Ryder and a hungry looking lothwolf, Ezra and Kallus jogged in two different directions to change into outfits a little more... Imperial.

But first, Ezra was taking a minute for a necessary private moment with his wife just one more time.

With time ticking past much too quickly, Ezra scrambled up the ladder of the Ghost and then down the hall to Sabine's cabin and knocked on the door. He knew she was in there, changing for their next mission into the scout trooper armour they'd stolen at the Jedi Temple mission. A moment later, her door opened and she appeared, wearing just the black bodysuit that went under the white armour.

Holy kriff was she ever hot like that. Once upon a time, back when he was still fourteen, Ezra had had to force himself to keep his eyes on her face, before he got a smack for blatantly ogling. Now, four years later, and feeling a lot more confident as the secret husband, he let his eyes trail down and up her body appreciatively, knowing exactly what was under that bodysuit but finding the tight material an incredible turn on. He'd seen her without her armour attached to her usual bodysuit more than a few times over the years, but it still gave him a shock of delight and desire that he now had to suppress. Nothing was as sexy as her bare skin, of course, but these bodysuits were a very close second. And to make it even harder, this all black getup was somehow even more formfitting than her black and grey outfit. This wasn't really the time for that line of thought, but that didn't mean he couldn't indulge in looking even as he reined in his libido with some determination.

Sabine raised a brow at his blatant once over, a little smirk forming as she crossed her arms over her chest. "Is it time already?" Sabine asked, but then shook her head as she saw he was still in his regular orange and brown outfit and didn't give him a chance to reply. "No. Then what?"

Ezra smiled. She might be his girl now, but she was still all no nonsense. He leaned against the doorframe, arms crossing over his chest as well, and tried to look nonchalant. "What, can't I just come by to see you?" he asked with a small playful wiggle of his eyebrows.

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Sabine rolled her eyes. "Normally, I'd say yes. But today is not normal. I know time is tight. What is it, Ezra?"

He sighed. She was too smart for him. He pushed himself off the doorframe and changed his expression to a serious one. "I know this is a strange request, but can I have a sheet of paper?"

Sabine looked at him with curious eyes for a moment, but then just shrugged, turned, and rummaged through her desk until she found one of her sketchbooks and tore a page out from the back of a half filled one. Ezra wasn't sure, but he thought he saw a page with a drawing of him and Kanan side by side, meditating in the grass of Lothal. That one glimpse was enough to tighten his throat in sadness which he tried to push aside. Not the time to be sad either.

Sabine came back and handed him the paper. "Dare I ask what you could possibly need paper for?"
Ezra shook his head, smiling ruefully. "Nope. Although I can say you'll find out one day."

Sabine rolled her eyes at him again. If he had a credit for every time she did that, he'd be a millionaire. She glanced out into the hallway and seeing no one, grabbed him by his shirt and pulled him closer. "You're frustrating sometimes, Ezra Bridger," she whispered, not wanting anyone else on the ship to hear her. "But you're mine, and ridiculously cute, and I love you, so you're forgiven." Still holding handfuls of his shirt, she stood on her toes and kissed him hard and quick, then pushed him away. "Now get. I know we're short on time and you haven't even changed yet."

Ezra grinned at her like an idiot, and stepped back into her personal space. He tugged off a glove with his teeth, then tucked it into his belt before raising his bare hand and brushing his fingers through her hair, letting the silky strands play over his skin. "You are so beautiful," he whispered with his usual awe, staring into her eyes and grinning wider as she blushed. He leaned down and gave her his own quick and hard kiss that morphed into something quite a bit longer and nearly had them both moaning.

Finally tearing his mouth from hers, he feathered his mouth over to her ear. "Love you," he breathed into it, then turned and went into his room across the hallway. As his door was closing, he looked back across the hall and found her still staring at him with wide, tear filled eyes, her hand over her mouth as if to hold his kiss in forever.

He nearly collapsed then and there. *Frag it all to hell and back.* Ezra's forehead thunked against his closed door and he closed his eyes, hands fistig, crumpling the precious paper, breathing deeply as he forced himself to calm down before he did something stupid like tear his room apart in a fit of rage.

After a minute, he was back in control enough to turn to his messy desk. He had another painful note to write. He now knew what the first note he'd written her about half a year ago meant and he'd thought about trying to covertly get it back, but decided against it. He knew it was stupid and not really accurate at all, but he felt like Sabine would need that first note and draw some comfort from it. Hopefully this one would be just as helpful. With some digging, Ezra found a pen and started to write.

Three furiously scribbling and agonizing minutes later, he looked at his finished note, hoping he was doing the right thing. He folded the wrinkled paper into a tiny square and tucked it into its hiding place, where it would stay for quite a while. He knew Sabine would find it when the time was right. Ezra sighed and glanced around his and Zeb's room. Despite the smell, he was going to miss this place. After a few seconds of mourning, Ezra kicked himself back into motion, pulling off his second glove while pushing a boot off his foot with the toe of the other. There was still way too much to do to sit still.

And Thrawn was getting closer by the second, if the sense of doom sitting like a deadweight in his chest was anything to go by.

The flight from their mountainside base on the other side of the planet to Capital City was relatively short, only fifteen minutes or so, but it felt like an eon to Sabine because the tension in their stolen gunship was thick enough to choke on.

Zeb was concentrating on flying and occasionally chatting at Kallus.

Kallus mumbled a reply or two, but for the most part seemed to be in his own little world; probably dealing with the demons of his past as he faced returning to the place where he hadn’t exactly been
the nicest of people.

Governor Pryce was all but sulking because they had outsmarted her.

Ryder was essentially gloating as he kept a watchful eye on his prisoner, but was too tactful to rub it in out loud.

And Ezra... Ezra seemed lost in his own world as well, and very much unwilling to look at her. There were no flirty smiles when no one was looking like there normally was in such a situation. No hidden touches that would have been explained away as simply maintaining one’s balance while standing up in a flying ship if anyone had cared to notice. No casual chatter or rehashing of the plan that everyone knew too well. Her husband of only hours was beside her, but felt lightyears away.

If Sabine had been worried about him this morning, she was nearly petrified now.

By the time they were flying in the correct hemisphere of Lothal, she couldn’t take his silence anymore. Wishing they were alone so that she could wrap her arms around him for some much needed comfort for herself and him, Sabine nudged her white armour clad shoulder into his. “Hey. You okay?”

His face looked paler than normal inside the white scout trooper helmet and his blue eyes looked bigger than normal as well, a fathomless apology in their depths as he turned his body and actually faced her.

She seriously considered exposing their relationship then and there just to give him that hug. She honestly wasn’t sure who needed it most.

Ezra felt like he was drowning in guilt as he looked at Sabine’s worried expression. His first thought to her answer was no. No he wasn’t okay. All he could think about was the dreams that had haunted him through the night and the matching images that had flashed through his mind while he was meditating this morning.

*Thrawn.*

*Purrgil tentacles.*

*Sabine’s voice begging him to save himself.*

*Hyperspace.*

*The Dome exploding in a sky free of Star Destroyers.*

*Hera, curled in on herself in her bunk.*

*Sabine sobbing in his tower.*

*An endless turquoise ocean.*

*Sabine, looking exhausted, as she sat in the cockpit of the Gauntlet that was surrounded by a sea of scorched grass.*

*What looked like a planet exploding into a billion pieces into the cold black of space.*

*Capital City, glowing white in the sun, and bigger than it was now.*
An unknown male voice saying, “Four years away from your mate. I’d have gone insane by now.”

Ezra almost despised the Force and his visions right now.

He was the galaxy’s worst husband for the burden he was about to place on her. But... He had no choice. What was about to happen was the will of the Force and there was no way around it. His visions had never been wrong. Only the way he interpreted them had. He doubted he had interpreted his visions incorrectly this time. His fate was essentially sealed with Thrawn's, and they were going far far away for a very long time.

Kriff, he felt like the worst kind of scum as he replied to Sabine's question, hesitantly saying, “I know... I can always count on you.”

Despite being taken aback by the statement, and even though it hadn’t been phrased as a question, she answered it as such. “Of course. Always.” Her gaze was piercing as she tried to figure out what was going on in his head. For what had to be the hundredth time, she wished she was sensitive enough to the Force so their bond worked both ways and she could read his thoughts the same way he read hers. Instead, she was stuck using words and hoping he actually answered her. Lowering her voice so that hopefully only he could hear her, she asked, “What’s wrong, Ezra? Is it what you told me this morning?”

He suppressed the urge to visibly cringe and look away again. Sabine deserved better than that from him. This was quite possibly some of his last minutes with her and he was wasting them by dwelling on the inevitable. “Yes. I’m sor...”

The chiming of the commlink on her belt interrupted him and Hera’s voice emerged from it when Sabine picked it up. “We’re coming up on the capital. Better get ready.”

Startled, Ezra glanced forward and saw the familiar skyline of Capital City for himself. Kriff, I’ve wasted even more time than I thought.

Sabine answered the comm. “Copy. Head for platform zero delta.”

That caught Pryce’s attention, tearing her eyes from the floor where she’d been studying it intently, avoiding Ryder’s gaze. “The Command Center? Why...?” Her eyes narrowed as possibilities zoomed through her unfortunately logical and always scheming mind. She smirked as she figured it out, giving Ezra and Sabine a haughty look. “You’re going to attempt to launch the Dome, aren’t you? Your plan is worse than I thought.”

Not one to let anyone insult his truly epic and grand plan if he could help it, Ezra corrected her. “Mmmm, bolder. You mean bolder than you thought.”

Sabine joined in. “More creative than you thought.” She smirked at the older woman who clearly wasn’t impressed.

Kallus came out of his contemplation of life at the conversation and turned around. He held out a comm unit to the kneeling woman whose teal blue eyes were spitting scorn at her former co-worker. “Now, about those landing codes.” The blond man's expression was unforgiving as he added, "And remember, I’ll know if they’re correct.”

Pryce all but rolled her eyes as she snatched the commlink out of Kallus’ black gloved hand. “Gladly. The sooner we land, the sooner you will be my prisoners.”

Ezra and Sabine shared a smirk at her wishful thinking. “Yeah. That’s not going to happen,” Ezra said confidently, prompting a sneer from the black haired viper disguised as a human female. For
what she had done to Hera and Kanan, he had every intention of making sure that Pryce didn't survive Stage Two of his grand plan. Zeb had orders to knock her out and tie her up if she made any attempt at escaping before the Dome was launched into the air. The lasat was quite happy to make sure Pryce went out with a spectacular bang, and was alive to feel it.

While Pryce contacted the Dome and gave the appropriate landing codes, Sabine pinned Ezra in her gaze again, bringing an abrupt end to his temporary smile. She put her head as close to his as she could get away with without their helmets bumping and murmured, “Is it really going to be that bad?” She could see the deep remorse in his eyes as he nodded slightly.

Ezra’s chest ached in the worst possible way. Force, he wished he could start this day over. Maybe live in the early morning hours in an endless time loop of momentary happiness. “I’m sorry. For whatever happens after this. I. Am. Sorry.” His emphatic words were like the barest hint of a breeze, meant for only her to hear.

She honestly felt like the gunship crashed out from under her feet, making her sway. With everyone else’s gaze on Pryce, Ezra settled the hand that wasn’t holding on to the ceiling on the small of her back between plates of plastoid armour. She took a second to close her eyes and find her core of strength again. Whatever happened, which he was being disgustingly vague on, she knew she was strong enough to see it through to the end. Because he was right; he could count on her.

Always.

Ezra deserved every ounce of dedication she had. He’d always believed in her. Stood by her, no matter what she wanted or needed to do. Even when it meant living apart for months. Now it was her turn to support him.

Pryce was sharing insults with Ryder and Kallus now on the final approach to the Imperial Dome. In the guise of looking for something in the packed bag of her normal clothes and armour, Sabine moved to the other side of Ezra and knelt down in front of her bag. He shifted around to keep her in his sight, which is what she expected him to do, prompting a hint of a sad smile to cross her mouth. (His eyes were almost always on her.) In case anyone was watching, she dug through a pocket for a second and then rose to her feet again, pretending to put the imaginary something in her utility belt.

She was now blocked from the sight of the others by Ezra’s bigger body, which was her plan.

Sabine raised a gloved hand and traced a finger down his scarred cheek, watching as his eyes softened from remorse to love. He turned his head and kissed her palm, making her heart stutter once. “It’s okay. I love you,” she mouthed.

Ezra felt like he was nearly drowning in the love and acceptance she was now flooding their bond with. But in the best possible way. He hadn’t realized how much he needed that until she gave it to him.

Eyes stinging with emotion, he did something he’d never tried with her before because of how intrusive it was. He and Kanan didn’t even communicate like this unless they really really had to, and Kanan could block him out if he chose. Sabine could not. But he felt like he needed to make his point as clear as humanly possible, so, staring deep into her shining amber eyes, he pushed a thought into her mind and his feelings into her soul.

“I love you too. Always.”
Sabine’s eyes widened and her lips parted on a gasp as his voice caressed her mind and her body was filled with the sensation of being caressed all over in the most sensual way, as if he was demonstrating how much he would love her all at once. She broke out in goosebumps from the neck down. “Ezra, did you just...?” she gasped out on a puff of air.

He smiled bashfully. “Yeah. I did,” he mumbled, rubbing the back of his neck as spots of colour darkened his cheeks. (At least he didn’t look like he was going to be sick anymore.)

Sabine blinked a couple times, taking in the implications of this new talent that he’d hidden from her. She’d told him a long time ago not to read her thoughts unless it was absolutely necessary, and he’d been pretty good about it, as far as she knew. It had never occurred to her that he could give her thoughts back. But she supposed it made sense; how else did Jedi mind control work?

The question was, did she want him giving her his thoughts? She supposed it would be useful in emergency situations, just like the mind reading. And she was pretty sure he would have done it to her sooner if he was going to flaunt the ability at her and take advantage. Obviously this was a very special occasion and he felt the need to do it. Sabine understood.

“Okay,” she breathed, smiling into his eyes.

He lit up. Just lit up like a kid on Life Day morning.

Sabine traced her finger over his upturned lower lip and he kissed it, their eyes locked together, amber lost in the most beautiful of royal blues.

And then the moment was broken as the ship jarred under their feet.

They had landed and it was back to the business of warfare.
Ezra's Sacrifice

Ezra's Sacrifice:

D26/1 BBY, Imperial Dome

Ezra glanced up at the vent high above his head that Chopper had opened for him, resigned that it had come to this. He hoped Hera would forgive him for slipping away, but she just wasn't ready to let him go. Not after losing Kanan already. Hera had been walking a very fine line of surviving or shattering into pieces. Ezra prayed that what he was about to do didn't push her over the edge. The rest of their family would take care of her though, and the new life she carried. She hadn't told anyone yet, but Ezra was pretty sure she knew. And he was almost positive that Kanan had known. If Ezra could sense the new Force signature, there was no way that Kanan hadn't. Kanan saw everything.

Ezra focused on Sabine, the woman who was his everything. The driving force of his life for the last four years. Everything he'd ever done in those years was to either impress her or protect her and Kanan and the rest of his family. Ezra's eyes met Sabine's and he felt his chest tighten with regret. For leaving her behind. For not getting to say a proper goodbye. For putting the care of his planet and his future in her hands. With everything he had, he sent her his love through the Force, hoping she would be able to feel it surround and embrace her. He felt her love and acceptance for what he was about to do in return, her beautiful amber eyes speaking all the words that they wished they could say. She turned away and drew the attention of the others to the far side of the room, leaving Ezra to make his escape unhindered. Ezra memorized her face one more time, then leapt up into the vent soundlessly.

As he forced his body through the air ducts, he thought this had better be the last time he ever had to do this. He was definitely getting too big to fit through these things easily. He dropped down into the hallway just outside the command centre door, glancing at it longingly, his whole being wanted so badly to go back in there and stay with his family. To wrap Sabine in his arms and kiss her for a year without stopping. But he couldn't. That path led to the end of his planet eventually. Thrawn would win, not today, because the purrgil would still come and take away Thrawn's entire fleet, but without Ezra there, Thrawn would escape the purrgil too quickly and come back and destroy the entire planet in retaliation. Ezra couldn't let that happen.

He jogged down the hallway towards the exit but came to a skidding halt at the junction of hallways. His head whipped towards the hallway that led further into Headquarters. Eyes widening in surprise, he followed the faint but heartbreakingly familiar song of the kyber crystal in Kanan's lightsabre. Knowing there wasn't time for this, he did it anyway. There was no way he was letting Kanan's lightsabre get destroyed when the Imperial Dome got blown to bits. Running as fast as he could, he dashed to Governor Pryce's office. Opening the door with the Force, he ran to her desk and pulled the lightsabre out of a drawer. Then he booted it back to the landing pad. Putting everything into it, he threw the lightsabre off the Dome as far as he could, giving it an extra shove with the Force. He was trusting in the Force to take care of it, and that it would end up in the hands of someone who needed it. He jumped into a gunship, one of the ones they had stolen from Pryce earlier in the day, and flew towards his fate.

Down in an alley of Capital City, a white lothcat watched the object fall from the sky. With a graceful leap, he caught it out of the air in his mouth. Proud of his accomplishment, the lothcat's tail flagged happily as he trotted through the city, careful of the random burning bits. A few minutes later, he reached the grasslands that surrounded the city. There he was met by a giant
white lothwolf with a symbol on its forehead, staring up at the sky longingly. The lothcat dropped the lightsabre at the feet of the one called Dume with a chirp in greeting. Dume dropped his nose down to the ground and the lothcat rubbed his body along his muzzle, purring loudly. With a wolfy smile, Dume picked up the lightsabre. The lothcat jumped up onto the top of Dume's head and grinned in delight at his new vantage point. Dume turned back towards the grass. Within a few steps, he had disappeared from sight.

As Ezra took his final trip off his planet and up into Thrawn's Star Destroyer, the Chimaera, Ezra's brain whirled with all the plans he had made for this moment, looking for anything that he had missed, but he couldn't think of anything. He had Ahsoka's promise to come find him. Chopper had his lightsabre to give to Sabine when she needed it, and had the message he'd recorded for his family to play for them after he was gone. Mart knew what he needed to do to signal the purrgils that it was time to make their move. The day he met them replayed in his mind. What he had thought was just another large animal had actually turned out to be an incredibly intelligent sentient species who talked through telepathy, a secret that Ezra had kept for them as per their wishes. The purrgil's words had haunted him for years. ONE DAY, YOUNG JEDI, YOU WILL NEED OUR HELP, AND WE WILL BE THERE. In repayment for saving one of their main sources of food, the purrgil had told Ezra how to call them. They would be waiting nearby when the time came. At the time, Ezra had no clue what they were talking about, but now he understood.

As he thought of Mart, he remembered the surge of panic he'd felt from the younger teenager, before he went blank. Ezra had frantically sent his thoughts to the lothwolf alpha and got a sense of reassurance in return from him. Ezra's heart had beat in time with the lothwolf's as he felt it protect Mart and chase away the threat. Ezra would forever be grateful to the lothwolves for helping him and their planet when they were needed the most. He would miss them until he got back. But he felt comforted by the knowledge that they would take care of the planet, and more importantly, keep an eye on his family and Sabine while he was gone.

Landing in the hangar of the Chimaera, Ezra was handcuffed, searched and removed of everything from his utility belt, and led to Thrawn's office. The blue Chiss Imperial taunted Ezra about the destruction of his home planet and his friends, especially mentioning Sabine. The man did know how to find the biggest weakness of his opponents, Ezra would give him that. Grand Admiral Thrawn didn't show much on his face, but Ezra could feel the satisfaction radiating off of him. Thrawn was in for the surprise of his life very soon. He might think he had finally won the war against the Rebels of Phoenix Squadron, but Ezra knew differently.

When Thrawn led him deep into the Star Destroyer, Ezra expected to be thrown into a holding cell, while they travelled to wherever the person of power Thrawn taunted him with was. He did not expect to be escorted to a giant room with a piece of the Jedi Temple in it. Or to see a holo image of Emperor Palpatine. This, he did not see coming. Thrawn left him in the company of the Emperor with a final shot of inner glee sent Ezra's way.

Thrawn was positive that Ezra was not going to survive this encounter. He'd already figured out long ago that the Emperor was actually a Force user of the Dark Side, his logical mind putting the pieces together easily. How else could he command Darth Vader and the Inquisitors? The Bridger boy didn't stand a chance against such a powerful adversary, even with the Emperor's physical body on the other side of the Galaxy.

Ezra met the eyes of the Emperor distrustfully, feeling the familiar cold that comes with the presence of the Dark Side. He didn't know how that was possible, since he was talking to a hologram, but he trusted his senses. The Emperor was not to be trusted. Despite his amiable appearance, The Emperor's voice sent shivers down Ezra's spine. He was sure he'd heard it before, from the Sith with the flames of ice, in the gateway in the world between worlds. The same
When the hologram gestured Ezra into the piece of the Jedi Temple, Ezra reluctantly went, playing along for now. Having his parents appear in the gateway was a shock he hadn't been prepared to deal with. His heart broke to see them again. To hear their voices call his name for dinner, just like they used to when he was little. Ezra was startled from his memories when his handcuffs fell off, feeling a brush of the Dark Force. He turned back to look at the Emperor in surprise. He had just done that from across the Galaxy. That was NOT a good thing. Palpatine gestured to the control for the gateway, trying to get Ezra to open the door. Ezra was tempted, really really tempted, for a moment, to just throw it all away and go back to the happy life he had with his parents, but a mental image of Sabine stopped him. He would never see her again if he did that. And that was something he just couldn't live with. He already knew his current path would take him far away from her for more years than he cared to think about, but he would see her again, eventually.

Ezra returned his attention to the image of his parents. As he stood in front of the gateway, it was like they could see him too. He reached for them, his whole being longing for this to be real. But he knew it couldn't be. To take this route, to walk into a trap, would doom everything he loved and fought for. With his heart in pieces once again, he let his parents go, the way he'd let Kanan go when faced with the same decision. He understood why Kanan had given up his life for his family. They were worth it. And now he was doing the same, in a smaller degree. He was giving up his own life, for now, to save a whole planet. His planet. Ezra closed his eyes for a moment and said goodbye to his parents one more time. As his eyes opened, he swore he saw their images smile at him proudly. Sucking in a breath for courage, he gathered the Force inside him and threw it out all around him in a shockwave, bringing what was left of the Temple crashing to the ground.

As Ezra ran for his life, Temple crumbling around him, he heard his parents say, "We love you, Ezra," giving him the strength to continue with his plan and the knowledge that he had done the right thing. He ran right through the holo image of the Emperor, diving clear of the falling rocks. An image that was flickering between the grandfatherly looking man, to the real evil of the Sith Lord he had encountered before, confirming Ezra's suspicions. The Galaxy was ruled by the most Evil man alive.

Ezra stood and faced the image of the Sith Lord, ready for whatever came next. With his mask of respectability gone, he radiated the Dark Side, making Ezra feel like he'd just been thrown out into the cold abyss of space. And this was just from across the Galaxy. What would it feel like to actually be in his presence? He hoped he never had to find out.

The door opened behind him and in ran three men dressed entirely in red. A uniform Ezra had never seen before. Bringing with them another wave of icy cold. The Sith Lord looked at his minions and said, "Destroy him," in a voice worthy of nightmares for years to come. Ezra faced the men in red and Force pushed them, but only one of them even moved. They were very strong in the Dark side. They pointed their staffs at him, lifting Ezra off the ground, sending currents of electricity through his body. Ezra fought through the pain. He wasn't going to let it end like this. With determination forged in steel, he called on his connection to the Force and grabbed one of the bigger pieces of the Temple and threw it at the men in red, and the troopers who had joined them, shooting with their usual thankfully appalling aim, taking out two of them. That caused just enough of a distraction for Ezra to fight free of the hold they had on him. Using every ounce of Force energy he could gather, he picked up half of the rocks from the temple and threw all of them at his opponents at once, burying them.

Ezra leapt over the pile of rocks to the sound of the Sith Lord screaming, "Noooo!" Ezra didn't have time to savour his victory. Everything was going to happen very quickly now. Spotting a
blaster that had been thrown free of the rocks, he grabbed it and ran. He had a long way to go to get
to the bridge of the Star Destroyer, and that's where he needed to be in just a few minutes time.
Ezra ruthlessly gunned down any trooper or officer that got in his way, a faint niggle of remorse
playing at the back of his mind, but he ignored it. This was war, and his planet and family were at
stake.

Just before he walked into the bridge, Ezra felt his connection to the Purrgil snap into place. "WE
ARE HERE. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE US TO DO?" The voice echoed through his head, making
him wince.

"Can you take all of the Imperial ships away? As far away from this Galaxy as possible?" Ezra
asked in his mind.

"THIS WE CAN DO. PREPARE YOURSELF, FOR THE JOURNEY WILL BE LONG."

"Thank you," Ezra replied as he entered the bridge of the Chimaera.

Ezra shot the guards on either side of the door. Pointing the blaster at Thrawn, he was surprised to
feel a hint of sadness along with reluctant admiration coming from the man. He wondered what
could have caused that. What Ezra did know is that he could also feel the waves of relief coming
from his planet. He knew he could count on his family to protect it. And getting the shield up,
de spite all the odds against it was exactly the kind of the thing they excelled at. "It looks like you
lose, Thrawn."

"A momentary setback," the Chiss said, gathering his determination back together, brain whirling
with how to change the tide of the battle back into his favour. He still had his entire fleet in orbit
after all, and there was just one boy and a small handful of rebels between him and victory. There
was no way he could lose this war.

When the boy said, "We'll see," with an air of knowing something that Thrawn did not, he
wondered at what else the rebels could possibly have in reserve. To his knowledge, absolutely
nothing they did could change their fate. Thrawn should have heeded his own words about the
Force being an enigma, for what came next, he never could have anticipated.

One of the officers informed Thrawn of the disappearance of his entire fleet. His planetary
blockade taken out in an instant. Thrawn watched in disbelief as hundreds of Purrgilis appeared in
the smoky atmosphere of Lothal, ramming through TIEs like they were nothing, taking huge
chunks out of his Star Destroyers like they were made of sand instead of the strongest metal
available. Thrawn stood in a faceoff with the Bridger padawan, blasters pointed at each other,
watching the Purrgilis with wary eyes. "Whatever happens next, happens to both of us," he told the
boy.

"That's the idea," Bridger said, not displaying even the tiniest hint of trepidation at their impending
doom. Thrawn couldn't help but feel a small degree of pride in the boy for how much he had
matured in the last couple of years. Thrawn wasn't one to begrudge a person their due. It just made
it all the sweeter when he defeated them.

"ARE YOU READY?" a Purrgil asked Ezra as it flew past the windows of the bridge.

"Yes," Ezra answered. "Take us away."

"AND THIS BLUE ONE? YOUR OPPONENT?"

"Hold him for me, would you? He is the one we need to watch out for."
"I WILL DO MY BEST."

Tentacles burst through the windows, grabbing officers and throwing them out before returning and wrapping around the framework. Tentacles reached for Thrawn, which he shot at uselessly. Ezra Force pushed Thrawn into the tentacles grasp.

Sabine's voice came from his wrist comm. "Ezra! Ezra! Can you hear me? The Purrgils. Is this you?"

Ezra pushed the button to answer her back, rejoicing in the sound of her voice, getting to hear it one more time. "Yah. Pretty good, hunh?"

"Well, you could have told the rest of us," she said back admonishingly.

Ezra felt a little disappointed that she didn't seem impressed. But what else was he really expecting? She was a genius Mandalorian. A few purrgils were not going to make her swoon. "I wanted it to be a surprise," he said.

A blaster shot from behind him made him whirl around. Troopers were coming through the door. He Forced pushed them and shot his blaster at them, before a screaming pain hit him in the back of his left shoulder. In his moment of inattention, Thrawn had escaped the purrgil's tentacles and shot him. Ezra whirled back and with his good arm threw the blaster out of Thrawn's hand and out one of the broken windows. Then he tossed him back into the Purrgil's grasp, thinking to it, "Please don't let him go again."

"I SAID I WOULD DO MY BEST, BUT HE SHOT ME. A LOT."

"I feel your pain. Thank you for trying," Ezra thought.

Ezra sensed the door behind him opening again. Whirling, he closed it with the Force and held it, stopping the next wave of troopers from entering. Ezra watched with resignation as more tentacles wrapped around the bridge, starting their glowing pattern that indicated a jump to hyperspace. This was really happening. It felt like a nightmare, but was all too real.

"Ezra! Ezra get out of there right now! That's an order!" Hera's voice said from his wrist.

With a grimace of pain, Ezra lifted his arm. "Hera, I have to see this through to the end." Raising his arm higher, despite the pain, Ezra opened his connection to the Force as wide as it would go. Gathering the Force into a shield, he surrounded the bridge with it. And held it there. He would hold it for as long as he had to, feeling the Force send him a helpful boost to dull the pain and bolster his strength.

"Ezra, please!" Sabine cried. "Get out of there!"

His heart broke into millions of tiny pieces as he felt Sabine's and Hera's anguish and in a much smaller degree Zeb's and the rest of his friends he was leaving behind. "I'm sorry. I can't do that," he replied. "It's up to all of you now." The bridge lit up with a blinding glow as the purrgils' lights prepared to throw them into hyperspace. "And remember. The Force will be with you. Always."

Down on the planet, Dume howled at the sky, his pack of lothwolves echoing his cry. At their feet were dozens of lothcats, all whimpering with sadness.

Thrawn stared at the Jedi boy in astonishment as the ship was surrounded by the blue and white glow of hyperspace. They should be dead right now, but instead he was wrapped in the arms of a beast, travelling through the cold of space with nothing between him and death but the willpower
of one boy. He laughed silently as he recalled the words of the strange creature on the planet Atollon. His defeat was exactly as predicted and he never saw it coming. How ironic.

Thrawn addressed the boy who had his eyes closed and a look of utter serenity on his face as he held his arms to the front and back, holding a Force shield around the room. "You won't be able to do that forever."

Without moving or opening his eyes, he replied "I can hold it for as long as I have to. The Force is with me."

Accepting that as truth for now, Thrawn said nothing else. He just watched the boy curiously as the hours ticked by, every once in a while trying to wiggle free of the tentacles holding him tight, to no avail. After what had to be at least six hours like that, Thrawn could see the boy beginning to tire. With their lives on the line, he decided perhaps he could help the situation by giving the boy something else to think about. "Why go this route, Bridger? Why not just have them kill me from afar and you could have stayed safe with your girl and your family?"

Ezra's brow furrowed as his grip on the Force shield slipped momentarily. With renewed determination he concentrated harder while answering Thrawn. "Because that is not the Jedi way. I saw many paths before me. Many of them led to your death. Many of them led to the death of my planet and everything I love. This was the only path that led to your defeat and kept my planet alive. The Empire will fall eventually without you there to mastermind the attacks on the Rebellion. You are too smart to be allowed to continue fighting for the Empire. But I do not want to kill you either. I know there were many times when you could have killed us, but you let us go repeatedly. I am simply returning the favour by removing you from the game. I remove myself as well, but the Rebellion will succeed without me, for I am not the only Jedi left. There are more who will see the Emperor fall."

Thrawn blinked in surprise at the speech. "Thank you, I suppose, for the compliment. But I will still defeat you in the end. You are tiring. I can see it. And when you have exhausted yourself, your control over these animals will falter and I shall get free and turn the shields on. I can survive the cold of space for a minute if I have to."

"WE CAN HELP YOU, IF YOU NEED IT. OUR STRENGTH SHALL BE YOURS. OH, AND FEEL FREE TO TELL THE BLUE ONE THAT WE ARE NOT ANIMALS. PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO GET THE RESPECT WE DESERVE."

"I would appreciate that very much." Ezra grinned as he felt a surge of strength through the Force. He opened his eyes and smirked into Thrawn's red ones. "Sorry Thrawn, but your ride isn't over yet. Oh, and by the way. The purrgil want me to tell you that I'm not controlling them at all. They're sapient beings, just like you and I." Ezra enjoyed watching Thrawn's eyes widen in shock and his jaw drop just a little. That was the biggest reaction he'd ever seen from the mostly emotionless man. It also shut him up, for Thrawn didn't say another word for the next six hours, allowing Ezra to go into a meditative state while the purrgil took him and Thrawn's entire fleet deep into the unknown regions of space.

"WE ARE APPROACHING A PLANET THAT I THINK WOULD SUIT YOU, UNTIL YOUR FAMILY FINDS YOU AGAIN. IT HAS MANY BEINGS ON IT LIKE YOU. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET OFF THE SHIP, YOU SHOULD DO IT NOW. WE WILL GO AS FAR AS WE CAN WITH THE BLUE ONE AND HIS FOLLOWERS."

Ezra smiled to himself as he thanked the purrgil. Opening his eyes, he looked at Thrawn, who also seemed to be asleep or meditating, still held tight in the grip of the purrgil's glowing tentacles. "I'd like to say it's been a blast knowing you, but that would be lying. So I won't. Instead, I wish you
luck with wherever you end up. Since you said you can survive the cold for a minute or two, the purrgil won't let you go until I have left the ship."

Thrawn opened his eyes, and watched the boy walk backwards towards the door, carefully stepping over the bodies of the ones he'd shot earlier, hands still outstretched. With a flick of his fingers, he opened the door behind him and dropped the Force shield with his hand. The boy gave him a haughty salute and dashed out through the door, slamming it closed behind him. Thrawn sucked in a deep breath as the icy cold of space immediately surrounded him, hate and admiration at war within him for the boy who actually managed to defeat him.

Ezra ran through the Star Destroyer to the nearest escape pod, grateful for the instinct that had made him memorize the floorplans of the ship. He passed by many Imperials who all just stared at him in shock. None of them tried to stop him. The word had spread through the ship that the Jedi boy was holding the bridge together with the Force. Every single one of them was afraid of his power. They knew what a powerful Force user could do; Darth Vader had made sure of that. A few brave souls thought about going into the bridge to try and help the Grand Admiral, but hesitated, not really wanting to die.

Jumping into an escape pod, Ezra told the purrgil he could let Thrawn go now, and thanked them one more time. Ezra launched the pod and prepared himself for the sickening ride that would follow. He'd done this once before, in the Phantom with Kanan. This time wasn't any better. After a minute of spinning through space helplessly, as he felt all of his organs rearrange themselves multiple times, the pod finally popped into real space. Taking a minute to let the nausea pass, Ezra sat with eyes closed and thanked the Force that was over. His mission was complete. His family and his planet was safe. Opening his eyes, Ezra looked at the mostly blue planet with a few small continents scattered on it. This was going to be his new home for a while.

With a mental picture of Sabine is his mind, he flew the pod towards the planet.
Joshua's Survival

Joshua's Survival:

D26/1 BBY, Lothal

Joshua Azadi, aka ST-7801, dove out of the Dome as it rose over the ocean, the self destruct alarm counting down from five behind him as he did so.

The fall might kill him, but exploding with the Dome WOULD definitely kill him, so he picked the option that gave him a fraction of a chance.

He wasn't the only one either. As he jumped, hundreds of others did as well; those that were smart enough to find an exit when they realized that the Dome wasn't leaving the planet voluntarily. There was also his entire squad of fifty men, whom he'd ordered out of the Dome ahead of him. They'd had to time it right, of course. Jump too soon, and they'd land in the shallow water and perish for sure. Jump too late... And... Well, blow up, to put it frankly.

He crashed into the ocean feet first, after falling for ten endless seconds with the sound of the first set of detonations booming above him, hoping to cut through the water as cleanly as possible. The impact sent pain up his legs, but he didn't think anything broke. The water sucked him under at first, but he let it, staying relaxed. Fighting it would just tire him out needlessly. As soon as his downward momentum stopped, Joshua started kicking for the surface, grateful his plastoid armour was more or less buoyant, because his bodysuit underneath most certainly was not. His helmet was also doing a great job of keeping him supplied with oxygen to breathe. This might be the first time he fully appreciated the armour he usually despised.

As Joshua popped above the surface, he tried to comm his squad. "Squad 78, report in," he called and then winced as a lot of static feedback screeched in his ears. The water must have damaged the comm system, but he did hear a few faint and garbled replies, so that was something.

A massive explosion above him caught his attention. He looked up as he tread water to see what had to be the second best explosion in the history of Lothal. (The first being when the fuel depot blew up last week.)

Then the reality of the situation struck him as pieces of the Dome started falling from the sky in fiery chunks. "That's not good," he muttered. Joshua looked around him to see hundreds of troopers just like him staring up at the explosion in fascination. "If you can hear me," he called over his comm system on the general frequency. "SWIM!"

And then he put action to words, swimming as quickly as he could towards shore in armour that was never intended for that motion; the shoulder armour pinching viciously with every overhead move of his arms, his white pauldron on his right shoulder making that side even more difficult, but he did it anyway.

He was happy to see that most of the others were following his lead as he turned his head from side to side. He had no idea which of them were men from his squad, as they all looked alike, but some of them had to be.

The ocean seemed to be helping as well, the gentle waves pushing them towards shore, but it wasn't fast enough. Large pieces of the Dome were now crashing into the water with massive splashes, taking out anyone who happened to be unfortunate enough to be in the path of the
shattered Imperial structure.

As he swam for his life, Joshua had one of those life flashing before your eyes things you hear about, but don't actually believe would happen. But it did.

Instead of the now churning and fiery water, he saw his parents smiling at him when he was five years old on his birthday and he opened up his presents. He saw his uncle Ryder with his head bowed at their funeral when he was thirteen. He saw the stormtroopers arrest Ryder when he was fifteen. He saw his first look of the cadet barracks in the Dome that he was dragged to and the young faces of his new bunkmates and the start of his squad. He saw the day he was promoted to Sergeant. He saw the late night, clandestine meetings between him and other troopers who'd been forced to join the Imperial army, as they plotted ways to rebel without seeming to do so.

Their little group of rebels within the Empire consisted of (or at least it did) about seventy troopers, thirty of which were all in his personal squad. They did what they could to help their native Lothalians whenever they could get away with it. Things like having deliberately bad aim when in pursuit of other rebel factions, or stepping in to arrest someone their commanding officers decided needed incarcerating and then 'losing' them on the way to the Dome. It wasn't a lot, but he liked to think it was worthwhile.

The real Rebels had done a lot in the last few months that had given him some real hope. He didn't know who was in charge of the Lothal rebels, but they seemed to be more organized lately and were driving his superiors into fits. It was great.

Then this last crazy week had happened, with things blowing up all over the place, Rebel fighters falling out of the sky, more things blowing up, Governor Pryce losing her mind while Grand Admiral Thrawn was away, and finally... The whole thing with the Dome.

While other, loyal, troopers had tried to stop the Rebels from taking the Dome, Joshua and his troopers had been doing a fantastic job of making themselves scarce. They couldn't flat out help like he wanted to, because everything they did was recorded by their armour, but he most certainly could make sure they didn't hinder the Rebels' efforts. He hadn't been expecting them to launch the Dome and then blow it up though. That was a surprise he wished he'd known about.

With how things had been playing out, Joshua and his rebels had seriously been thinking about going AWOL and ditching their armour in an alley somewhere then seeking out the Rebel camp and joining up. He wished they'd come to a decision sooner, because his arms were screaming from the effort of pulling himself through the water. He had half a mind to stop and start pulling off armour plates, but he was afraid if he stopped moving he'd never get started again or something would fall on him.

So he just kept on swimming and gritted his teeth through the pain.

After they beat a strategic retreat on the Ghost from the Dome that was launching itself from the ground, Ryder Azadi had Hera drop him off on a rooftop near the beach so he could watch the Dome explode with a front row seat. He'd been waiting for this moment for years; ever since the Empire had first set foot on his planet some fifteen years ago and systematically started to destroy it.

The Empire had taken everything from him.

His wife, daughter, brother, and sister-in-law had all been lost in the first Imperial onslaught when they claimed Capital City, leaving just his teenage nephew and himself as the last Azadis. Then
he'd been arrested for conspiracy against the Empire when they decided they wanted another Governor they could more easily control, giving the job to that Pryce witch that he despised. He was sent to a prison in another system entirely and left to rot there until the Bridgers managed to cause enough of a revolt to get a few of them out, giving their lives in the process.

Ryder had no idea what had happened to his nephew that he'd started to see as his own son after living together for two years, but he doubted it was anything good, so Ryder considered him lost to the Empire as well.

As the first explosion rang through the air, Ryder smiled in satisfaction, but it faded as he saw glints of white, falling through the sky, far in the distance. Well, kriff. He doubted anyone had thought about the stormtroopers trying to save themselves in such a drastic fashion, but he had to give them credit for trying, even if he didn't like them.

He watched for a minute as the tiny white dots popped back up to the ocean surface and then one at a time started moving towards the shore, somehow being more fascinating than the Dome that was exploding spectacularly at the moment.

And then blazing pieces of Dome started falling on the tiny white dots and Ryder actually started to feel some sympathy for them. He didn't realize his feet were moving until they already were and he was slamming through the roof door and running down the stairs and then booting it out onto the street, already aiming for the beach.

When he arrived at the edge of the water, there were only a handful of troopers still swimming for shore, fifty meters or so out now. He wasn't the only one who'd seen them, because a small crowd was gathering on the beach and he could sense the indecision from them about what to do about the troopers as they murmured to their neighbours.

It came down to shoot them now, or imprison them. Ryder made a quick decision and decided to imprison them. These brave men had swum through the deadliest of waters to get this far, they deserved a chance to live and maybe turn away from their Imperial roots.

Just as he'd come to the decision, a trooper who was now only twenty meters from the shore was hit by a very enthusiastic piece of debris and he went under the water and never came back up. Ryder found himself moving again before his brain had a chance to catch up and he was running through the water and then swimming as the sand disappeared from under his feet. Looking under the water, he found the trooper just under the level of the water, feebly trying to get back above the waves, but looking like he was running out of strength to do it.

Ryder swam over and grabbed him around the waist and pulled him with him as he swam back to shore. As they trudged the first few steps on ground again, the waves at their waist, Ryder was happy to see others had followed his example and were helping the last of the troopers out of the ocean. He could see about twenty troopers left out of what had to be hundreds that had jumped off the Dome, which actually made his heart hurt for them and all the other troopers who had been collateral damage in the Rebellion quest to free Lothal. They were just trained grunts after all. None of what had happened to the planet was really their doing.

The trooper he helped sagged in Ryder's arm, suddenly turning to dead weight. Ryder looked at him with surprise, then realized the poor Imp must have passed out. A couple of eager citizens who wanted to help took the trooper with a Sergeant's pauldron from him and he took a moment to catch his breath. Then he called, "Take them to the old prison. We'll deal with them later." He received nods of understanding and watched as the exhausted troopers where led or carried away, before Ryder turned to look back at the ocean.
The water was a flaming mess right now, but pieces of the Dome were slowly starting to sink beneath the waves. Soon enough, except for the floating debris, it almost looked normal to the casual eye. Almost.

And then a white armoured body pieced through with a piece of shrapnel floated in on a wave and hit Ryder's feet, and he understood that what they'd done was going to have a lot of grim consequences.

When Joshua was hit by something, it almost knocked him out, but he hung onto consciousness out of sheer determination and nothing else. His strength was failing him as the waves pulled him under and he couldn't quite get back above them. He was starting to panic when he felt an arm grab him around the waist and pull him along.

Joshua wanted to thank his saviour, but his speakers weren't working anymore on his helmet so no sound made it past the bucket that encompassed his head. As they made their way through the last dregs of water, Ryder mustered the strength to look up and peer through his visor at the man who'd saved him.

He blinked and decided he must be hallucinating, but the longer he looked, the more he was sure. "Uncle," he whispered.

And then he passed out.

When Joshua woke up again, his armour had been stripped off his bodysuit and he was behind bars, lying on a small cot. There was a canteen of water and the sealed ration bars from his belt had been left for him on a small table beside the cot.

Joshua was hungry and his bodysuit was dry, indicating it had been quite some time since he'd last been awake, but he ignored the rations for now, just taking a sip of water to ease his dry mouth, in case this was all he would be offered for the foreseeable future.

Rising to his somewhat unsteady feet, Joshua took three steps to reach the front of his little cell and looked out through the bars keeping him in. He saw an empty corridor lined with barred cells just like his on both sides and a few other troopers dressed like him looking out through their bars as well.

Joshua felt a huge wave of relief when he saw his best friend across the hall and two cells over, leaning his forehead against the bars with his eyes closed. Riken's distinctive flaming orange buzz cut was unmistakable. The officers had hated it when they were cadets together, but he came by it naturally and there was nothing they could do about the colour, since dying their hair was strictly forbidden. It was one of their favourite jokes as teenagers that not even the Empire could get around their own rules.

"Riken," Joshua hissed and grinned when his friend's head whipped up and his bright orange eyes widened in surprise, looking even more vibrant in contrast to his paler than normal very white skin sprinkled in freckles.

"Joshua," he breathed in relief. "You made it too. Thank the stars. I was starting to think I was the only one of us left." ('Us' being the original eight from their bunk room as cadets, all forced into the new Academy against their wishes.)

"Yah, I made it," Josh said solemnly. "I almost bought it more than once though."
Riken nodded in complete understanding. "Yah. It was almost as bad as some of our training exercises," he joked.

Joshua chuckled and then got serious again. Since no one had come to investigate the sound of their voices, he got a little bolder and raised his to a volume that every cell should be able to hear. "Is anyone else here from Squad 78?"

After a moment he heard three other familiar voices call out.

"I'm here, Serg," he heard from Ryce.

"Me too," Brant called out.

"And me," Torque added in a weak sounding voice from the far end of the line.

Josh and Riken exchanged grateful glances to hear Torque's voice. He was from their original eight too. "That's good, boys. I'm glad you made it," Joshua called.

"What are we going to do now?" Riken asked seriously.

"We wait, I suppose," Joshua replied. "What else is there?"

Riken mustered a half hearted grin. "Not much. Catch up on our beauty sleep?"

That garnered a chuckled from more than just the remnants of Joshua's squad, some of the other troopers that he didn't know getting in on the banter. Joshua rested his head against the bars as various suggestions flew up and down the hallway, getting cruder with every one. It was good to hear the troops in relatively good spirits after what they'd been through.

A door at the end of the corridor opened and a blue rodian walked in carrying a blaster. "What's going on in here?" he said suspiciously. "You Imps better keep it down. I don't want to hear any plots about trying to escape or anything like that." He walked up and down the hallway, trying to look intimidating by narrowing his big eyes at them, but it really didn't succeed. Joshua was sure he wasn't the only one suppressing the urge to chuckle and roll his eyes. Riken did roll his eyes at their guard when his back was turned away from him and Joshua almost lost it.

As he passed Joshua, he called out to the rodian. "Hey. Can you get a message to Ryder Azadi? He's my uncle."

The rodian stopped and stared at Joshua for a moment before bursting into laughter. "Yah, right. If you're the new governor's nephew, then I'm the son of the Emperor." He shook his head and walked out of the hallway, slamming the door closed behind him.

Riken stared at him with a raised eyebrow and Joshua shrugged. "It was worth a shot."

Someone he didn't recognize called out from the cell to his right. "Are you really the nephew of the new governor?"

Joshua smiled to himself. "Yes. I am. He was the old governor too, before the Empire moved to Lothal. I didn't know he was still alive till I saw him on the beach."

"This is a good thing, right, Josh?" Riken asked.

"It's a very good thing," Joshua answered.
It took two days, but someone finally came to the prison cells that actually listened to Joshua. He just never expected it to be the most badass looking female he'd ever seen.

She strolled into the cell block like she owned the place, looking like a tall goddess in tight fitting black and grey armour that showcased every curve. Her skin was caf coloured. (He loved caf.) Her eyes were a vibrant purple and shone with intelligence. (His mother's favourite flowers had been just that shade and she used to keep them all over the house.) And her hair was shorn clean off on the sides and buzz cut at the top. (He didn't like long hair anyway.) She smiled at the men as they all rushed to the bars and basically panted after her like mookas. Josh managed to be slightly less obvious in his fascination with seeing such an intriguing female, but it was only just.

Ketsu glanced at the men pressed up against the cell bars, assessing them, wondering if any of them would change sides if she asked nicely. She smiled at them, pretending they weren't Imperial scum, conning them into thinking she was nice. "Hello boys," she purred.

Joshua officially fell at the sound of her voice. She sounded like she'd just spent the night being pleasured and like she wouldn't mind a little bit more. But he wasn't fooled by her friendly act. He recognized a steel spine when he saw one and her armour wasn't just for show; there were scuff marks and dents in it that said she used it. This one would spit you out and stomp on you if you offended her.

Joshua thought she was perfect.

"Hello," Joshua replied for the men; as the only commanding officer in the prison, he'd easily fallen into the position of spokesman for the group. He also only just managed not to tack on 'beautiful' at the end of his hello, not wanting to be seen as just some idiot trying to pick up a chick.

Ketsu turned and looked at the one who had spoken. He was big and brawny, muscles easy to see under his bodysuit. His face was chiselled out of stone and had gorgeous sky blue eyes tipped with long blond lashes. His light blond hair was shaved close to his head, like all of the other troopers in a standard issue haircut. Ketsu raised a brow at the man, a frisson of interest sparking through her. It had been a while since she'd seen a man that interested her this much, maybe not ever, to be truthful.

He was gorgeous.

"And who are you?" Ketsu asked.
Hera and Sabine's Aftermath

Hera landed the Ghost beside Ezra's tower as the final remnants of the Imperial Dome fell from the sky in the distance. She turned off the ship and stood from her chair, trying to ignore the fine trembling in her limbs. Everyone looked at her expectantly, ready for her to explain what to do next, why she'd parked here, etc. Hera glanced frantically from one face to the next. Sabine, Zeb, Kallus, Rex, Mart, and just couldn't do it. She just shook her head and dashed for the door, leaving what was left of her family to figure themselves out on their own. Chopper beeped worriedly, but she ignored him too. Hera ran into her room and fell on her bed, as the shakes got worse. She grabbed Kanan's pillow and hugged it tight, burying her face in the soft fabric, breathing in the last remnants of his scent that clung to the material, as tears fell from her eyes yet again. Feeling something bump into her, Hera reached down and grabbed the meiloorun that Ezra had somehow found for her. She had no idea how he'd managed to pull that off, considering the wretched state of Lothal right now, but it just made her cry harder at the show of love from her honorary son. Her son who was also gone. Perhaps forever. "Why did you both leave me? I need you," she whispered into the pillow between quiet sobs.

Lying on her side, she put her head on Kanan's pillow and curled in a ball around the meiloorun, and the new life she carried. A much needed piece of Kanan for her to treasure. As her tears dried on her cheeks, Hera thought of how she'd come to end up in this state in the first place, taking comfort from the memories.

Technically, it all started the day she first met Kanan on Gorse. The day the Force decided she needed a little more excitement in her life, because she didn't have enough already, working for Fulcrum in their joint resolve to take down the Empire. It didn't take long for the handsome gunslinger to finagle his way into her life and onto her ship. Hera had fought her feelings for him for a year or so, before she caved and let him into her bed too. And there he'd stayed. Faithful, caring, loving, funny. Everything she'd always wanted in a mate. He followed her crazy vendetta against the Empire through thick and thin, despite his misgivings, just to be with her. And somehow, in all that time, it took her until the very end before she finally admitted to herself their relationship was worth more than a war. She regretted it now; not marrying him within days of taking him as her lover. Kanan had been a perfect mate for her and she'd taken advantage of it while she had it but she now knew her priorities were all wrong.

She wrapped her arms around the proof of his love and let memories of the past still her shaking limbs, wondering if she'd ever feel warm again.

As she thought about the hazy memories of the last few minutes she'd seen him and that conversation they'd had about the future just before she left, Hera's eyes opened in surprise and she sat up quickly. Looking back on it now, Hera wondered if he could possibly have sensed the new life they had created already. He did see everything through the Force, including life signatures. Perhaps he had known? Was that why he suddenly started talking about the future? Was that what he was trying to tell her as they were escaping from the Dome? He'd never ever pushed her like that in the past. Why else the sudden change? Hera's face transformed into a smile at the hopeful thought. He had known about their child. He had to of. The thought filled her with peace, knowing that at least Kanan had died knowing he was a father.
Putting the meiloorun off to the side, Hera tucked her feet under her and sat on her heels in Kanan's meditation pose, a position she'd adopted after watching Kanan do it for so long. Reaching for his pillow again, she held it in her arms and buried her nose in it once again, a small smile on her face as she buried herself in memories of Kanan's love.

Hera put Kanan's pillow aside with a fond stroke in parting. She didn't know how soon she'd be able to make herself wash the cover, but it wasn't happening anytime soon. With a lighter heart, she left her room, over her shock of losing Ezra as well. The message he left gave her a smidgeon of hope that one day he might return. She would have to live with that. And in the meantime, she still had the rest of her family to take care of.

General Syndulla was back.

Hera glanced in the bridge, but unsurprisingly found no one there. Walking back down the hallway, she found everyone crowded into the common room and the galley. The Ghost wasn't really meant to hold this many people, but they'd deal, for now. Seeing everyone's worried faces, Hera smiled reassuringly. "I'm okay. We're all going to be okay. We'll have a meeting after we all have something to eat. We need to plan what we're going to do next." Hera looked around the room, and glanced into the galley, realizing she was missing someone. "Where's Sabine?"

"She ran to the tower just after you left," Zeb said sadly. "Don't blame her though, she just lost her best friend. I know how that feels."

Kallus patted the stricken looking lasat on his shoulder comfortingly. "It's okay, Zeb. The rest of us are still here."

Zeb looked up at Kallus gratefully before heaving a huge sigh and literally shaking himself out of his gloomy mood.

Hera watched Zeb and his new friend with amusement, still amazed that the two bitter enemies had formed such a fast friendship. "I'll go get her. Why don't you guys start making us some dinner? If we're not back by the time it's ready, start without us. This might take awhile." When everyone nodded in agreement, Hera turned and left, climbing down to the cargo hold and out into the smoky, gloomy air of Lothal. Her heart hurt for the planet that had once been clean and beautiful. Hera thought the planet had a chance of healing now, though, with the Imperial presence eradicated.

Hera was just about to enter the tower door, when she heard a chirp in the grass near her feet. Looking down, she saw a white lothcat. Ezra's white lothcat. "What do you want?" she asked it curiously. The tooka turned and walked a little ways, looking back at her expectantly. "But I need to see Sabine," she said to it. The lothcat chirped again and Hera felt the ghost of a hand on her shoulder. Hera gasped, and touched her shoulder longingly, wishing the touch of Kanan's hand was real. The lothcat chirped again impatiently. Hera sighed and glanced up at the tower. "Sorry Sabine, you'll just have to wait a few more minutes." Shaking her head at what her world had come to, surrounded by animals that had a plan of their own, Hera followed the lothcat into the dry yellow grass.

After walking long enough that the Ghost was just a speck in the distance, the tooka stopped. Hera looked at it in confusion. "Now what? Why'd you bring me out here?" The lothcat grinned as a shadow fell over Hera. She whirled around and cried in surprise. "Oh! You are big!" Behind her was a giant lothwolf, at least three times larger than the one she'd ridden days ago. Hera took in its appearance, immediately noticing the symbol on its forehead. The same symbol that had been on Kanan's shoulder guard, back when he still wore armour. "Kanan?" she asked it, not really
expecting an answer.

The lothwolf lowered its nose to the ground and dropped something at her feet. He grinned at her and said "DUME," slowly and deeply, the word rumbling from its giant chest.

Hera tentatively reached a hand towards its nose, and the lothwolf lowered his head into her touch with a rumble of pleasure. Hera smiled joyfully, it wasn't exactly Kanan, but it was close enough. Somewhere in this giant beast, a part of Kanan still lived. Perhaps the padawan part of him that had died the same day his Master had. The lothwolf savoured her touch for a minute, eyes closed in pleasure at the gentle stroking of her fingers, before he remembered his purpose.

Hera jumped in surprise when the lothwolf touched his huge nose to her stomach, then lowered it to the ground and nudged what he dropped. Hera glanced down at the ground and actually looked at what was there. Hand flying to her mouth in disbelief, she bent and picked up Kanan's lightsabre. She was so sure it had been lost forever. Clutching it tightly to her heart, she didn't even question how the lothwolf had managed to acquire it. He touched his nose to her stomach again. "JEDI," he rumbled out.

Hera patted the lothwolf again. "I understand. Thank you, Dume." The lothwolf rumbled one more time as he grinned at her. She watched with misty eyes, one hand clutching the lightsabre and the other held gratefully over her stomach, as the giant lothwolf turned and walked away. "I love you, Kanan," she whispered into the wind that suddenly swirled around her. Hera blinked back the tears that tried to fall, the lothwolf disappearing between one blink to the next. Hera slowly started the walk back towards the tower, lost in thought, not even noticing that the lothcat had also disappeared.

Despite having several warnings that this was going to happen, seeing Hera lose it brought it into stark screaming reality for Sabine. Ezra was GONE. Really and truly GONE. She sat in the vacuum of stunned silence that the bridge had descended into after the door had closed behind Hera, not a single person knowing what to say. The two most important people in their family group were both gone in less than a week. Yes, Hera was the leader, but Kanan and Ezra had been the suns that everyone orbited around. The light of hope in the darkness that is the Empire. As long as there was Jedi on the side of the Rebellion, then they still stood a chance. Without them, how were they supposed to win the war when the opposition had the likes of Darth Vader? And to top it off, their fearless leader looked just about ready to call it quits. Not that anyone blamed her. She'd just lost both her significant other and the boy everyone knew she saw as her son.

The door opened again and everyone looked up at it, hoping that Hera had come back already, that they really hadn't just seen her leave them with wide tear filled eyes and limbs shaking bad enough that you could see the vibrations in her lekku. But it wasn't Hera. Instead, Ketsu leaned her shoulder on the door frame and looked at everyone's stunned faces curiously. "The rest of us are wondering what's going on. Why'd we stop here?" she said, taking in the view out the window. "I thought we'd be going straight back to Yavin 4?"

Kallus was the first one to be able to speak. "It seems we are taking a small break before leaving. General Syndulla needs some time to herself for a while."

Sabine strangled back a sob that had been trying to make its way out for the last few minutes. She refused to lose it like Hera. She was stronger than that, damn it. Or at least that's what she tried to tell herself. She calmly stood from her chair. "I'm going for a walk, I'll be back in a while," she told the group in as normal a voice as she could manage. What was left of her family looked at her with sympathetic eyes. Especially Zeb. He, more than anyone else left, knew just how much Ezra meant to her. It's not like they'd been hiding their friendship. What they didn't know, and she wasn't sure
if she was ever going to tell them, is that they'd just catapulted their relationship to the next stage just that morning. Her soulmate was gone, and it felt like he'd taken the vast majority of her heart with him. She climbed down the ladder, just wanting to be alone.

Ketsu looked askance at the group staring after Sabine. "What's up with her? I would've thought she'd be taking over the leadership roll right now, if Syndulla isn't."

Zeb said just two words. "The boy."

Ketsu's eyes widened in understanding, probably getting it even better than the pack of males in front of her did. She quickly followed Sabine down the ladder.

Sabine was still standing in the cargo hold, staring out at the dying grass that reminded her too much of the dead parts of Mandalore. With arms wrapped around herself, holding herself together, she was doing her best to tell herself that she would be okay. Ezra would come back soon. She could survive without him until then. She'd survived when she'd been on Krownest with her family last year for a few months, even if it had felt like a large chunk of her was missing. But this time was different. Back then, she'd known exactly where Ezra was. Now? Only the Force knew where he was headed and how far away he'd end up. Or if he'd even survive whatever mess he was in.

Hearing footsteps on the ladder, Sabine spun around, ready to ream out whichever idiotic male had dared invade her privacy, when she'd sort of made it clear that she wanted to be alone. Spotting Ketsu, she sighed and turned back around, once again looking out at the grass. "Not now, Ketsu."

Ketsu ignored her words and walked over anyway, putting a comforting hand on the shorter girl's shoulder. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"No," Sabine mumbled. Just the thought of speaking the words that were screaming to get out made her feel like crying.

"Are you sure? Because you'll feel better if you do," Ketsu tried again. She was having a hard time seeing Sabine looking like a frozen ice sculpture, one tiny tap away from falling to pieces. This was not the Sabine she knew. Her Sabine needed to express herself in some manner. Usually through art or explosions. But this wasn't the kind of situation that allowed for those things. Little did she know that Sabine was capable of exploding all on her own.

Sabine whirled back on her friend, throwing the hand off her shoulder. She didn't want to be comforted. "I said no! I said I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to talk about Ezra being gone! Probably forever! I don't want to talk about Kanan dying or Hera falling apart or anything!" Ketsu stepped back until her back was up against a wall as Sabine's voice got louder and louder, and she advanced on Ketsu with rage and tears in her eyes. "I don't want to talk about how much Ezra meant to me, and how there's this giant gaping hole in my heart right now! And I definitely don't want to talk about how I married him this morning, and now he's gone and I might never see him again! So please, just leave me alone," Sabine's voice broke on the last word as she whirled again and ran out of the ship.

Ketsu followed her down the ramp, concerned and a little shocked, but when she saw her run into an old communications tower nearby, she sighed in relief. At least she knew where to find her if somebody needed her. Ketsu sat on the ramp for a while, just soaking in the weak sunlight that filtered through the smoky clouds, trying to imagine what it would feel like if she'd lost her love like Sabine and Hera had. Coming to the conclusion that falling in love was a stupid idea, especially during a war, Ketsu stood, and headed back into the ship. She'd leave the true love stuff to the other girls and stick with her usual m.o. of love 'em and leave 'em.
Upstairs, in the bridge, the guys were all crowded around the ladder, blinking in surprise. Zeb looked at Kallus and Rex. "I really didn't see that coming. Who knew the lothrat would actually win the girl?"

Rex shrugged. "I wouldn't have bet on it."

Kallus looked at them with a raised brow. "That's funny. I always assumed they were already a thing, just being really quiet about it. As an observer of your little group for the last few years, I saw the bigger picture. And what I saw was a perfect partnership between the two teenagers that I thought meant they were more than just friends." Zeb grunted at that, and Rex laughed.

"Jai said Ezra was in love with Sabine back when Jai and Ezra were in the Academy together, four years ago," Mart piped up with, making the older men look at the teenager in surprise. "That he used to get this dopey look on his face whenever he'd start daydreaming about her. The guys in the room had to wrestle the truth out of him at first, but then he'd talk about her for hours. Of course, no one knew who he was talking about, but Jai said after meeting her, he totally understood."

"Now that, I knew," Zeb said. "I had to live with the boy through that stage. I thought he'd given up after a while. I guess he just learned how to bide his time." Zeb looked questioningly at Mart. "Where is Jai anyway? I haven't seen him since the fight back at base camp. Did he go with Ryder?" Mart shook his head, eyes filling with sorrow. "Oh!" said Zeb sadly. "In the confusion, I didn't realize. I'm sorry. I know you two had become friends." Zeb squeezed his shoulder comfortingly for a moment. "Let's go play some sabacc or something while we wait for the girls to get their acts back together."

Mart put on sad smile. "Sure. That would be good, I guess." He looked around at the older men that towered over him. "Does anyone else think it's funny that the leaders of our group are the two females?"

The older men chuckled as they walked down the hallway. "Give it a few more years, kid. You'll understand. When you have two women like that, you learn to listen to them if you know what's good for you," Rex said. "Oh, and you might want to keep everything you just heard Sabine say to yourself. She's not the kind of girl who appreciates being gossiped about, if you know what I mean. She'll tell us about her and Ezra when she's ready."

Mart's eyes widened in terror at the thought of getting on Sabine's bad side. He was pretty sure he wouldn't survive. "No problem. My lips are sealed. I won't say anything about the General either."

Rex clapped him on the back. "Good man."

Sabine ran up the stairs, tears streaming down her face unheeded, not even glancing at the broken lift that Ezra said had never worked as long as he'd lived there. Reaching the tower room, she went straight for Ezra's old nest of blankets and collapsed onto them. Hugging her knees, she buried her face in them and cried silent tears, refusing to let it go further than that. She would not sob like a baby. Ever. If her mother saw her now, she'd be very disappointed. Her father might understand, but mother? She always believed that females had to be twice as strong as the males just to prove that they belonged in the warrior culture of Mandalore.

Eventually Sabine got her emotions under control again and the tears dried up, leaving her face feeling strange. Sabine could count on one hand the times she'd actually cried in her life. She was determined to try and keep it that way. Scrubbing her face with her hands, to make it feel more normal, she sighed and changed her position so she was leaning back against the wall. She pulled Ezra's lightsabre off her belt and twirled it absentely as she tried to figure out what he'd meant by his
last message. He was counting on her. But for WHAT? The only two things she could come up with that she knew Ezra would actually value the most were protecting his planet and searching for him. She briefly thought that he wanted her to finish the war against the Empire, but that didn't feel right. There were many others who already had that goal. But none of them cared one iota about Ezra's little backwater planet in the Outer Rim.

Movement in the doorway drew her attention from her thoughts. She almost drew a blaster with her free hand, but stopped herself, knowing it had to be one of her friends. An instant later, she realized it wasn't one of her friends at all. It was one of Ezra's. The white lothcat strutted into the room and marched up to her with a mroww? Sabine couldn't help but smile at it. If Ezra's friends wanted to keep her company, she wouldn't complain. And they wouldn't care if she didn't talk about her feelings either. The tooka daintily stepped onto the pile of blankets with a few curious sniffs, then made its way to her side. Turning around in a circle once to inspect its newfound comfy place, it curled up in a ball against her hip, purring contentedly. Sabine tentatively reached down and petted it, and when it just purred louder, she sighed as the sound soothed her emotions even further. Leaning her head against the wall, she closed her eyes, petting the tooka with one hand and held Ezra's lightsabre to her heart with the other, turning her brain off for the time being.

About fifteen minutes later, Sabine sensed movement again in the doorway. She opened her eyes for a moment, then closed them again. She felt Hera step onto the blankets beside her and position herself exactly the same way Sabine was. They both sighed at the same time and in the same way, making them smile and look at each other. "Hey." Sabine said. "You doing okay?"

Hera smiled slightly. "Yah, I think I am." She pulled Kanan's lightsabre out of a pocket. "The giant lothwolf called Dume just gave this to me. I think he has a little piece of Kanan's spirit in him."

Sabine gawked at the lightsabre. "I thought that was lost with Kanan in the explosion."

Hera shrugged. "So did I, at least until I saw it again. I have a fuzzy memory of Kanan and that awful noghri fighting on top of Imperial Headquarters and Kanan losing his lightsabre over the side. I'm guessing one of these seriously abnormal animals found it and kept it until now."

"That's great," Sabine said with a grin. "Now we both have a little piece of our Jedi to keep."

Hera smiled wider and pressed a hand to her stomach. "I have more than one little piece of Kanan."

Sabine's eyes widened in disbelief. "No way!" Hera nodded. "That's fantastic, Hera! I can't believe it. When did you possibly have time to..." Sabine stopped as she quickly thought back through the days. "The day I stole the Defender, you and Kanan were here, alone, doing 'surveillance.' Probably in this very room and on this... Gack!" Sabine stood quickly, making the lothcat jump and run away.

Hera burst into laughter. "Oh, Sabine, you are too smart for your own good."

Sabine huffed, and found something else to sit on, giving Hera a questioning look and waiting for her to shake her head, before actually planting her rear on it. "Honestly, Hera, I'm very happy for you, but I don't need to sit in your used blankets."

Hera just chuckled some more, not bothering to move from where she was. She had some very fond memories of those particular blankets. She was even thinking about taking them with her back to the Ghost. She'd wash them, of course, but they deserved to be saved. Sobering after a minute, she looked at her 'daughter'. "So how are you doing? I know Ezra meant a lot to you."

Sabine sighed and crossed her arms, still hanging onto Ezra's lightsabre. "I'm afraid I blew up at
Ketsu, when she asked me almost the same thing. I'm better now though, now that I've had time to accept it. I actually knew, or at least had a very strong suspicion that he was going to leave or die or something. Ezra was acting the same way Kanan did the day he died. All resigned and yet at peace with what was going to happen. He even mentioned not knowing if he was going to survive today.”

Hera's eyes widened a little. "I think I noticed that too, but I didn't want to see it. I heard him talking to the holo of his parents. He said he knew what he had to do. And he left that recording with Chopper." Hera sighed and her shoulders dropped a little. "I wish I could have made him stay, but he obviously knew that he had to leave with Thrawn for his plan to work. I still can't believe he summoned those purrgils to take away Thrawn's fleet. I wish he'd told us that part at least. And you! You distracted me while he made his escape! How could you help him like that?"

Sabine returned Hera's accusing look with her own. "I did what he needed me to. He told me earlier today that he knew he could always count on me, and I wasn't going to let him down. I will never let Ezra down. How could you think that you could hold him back from sacrificing himself if it meant the end of his planet?"

Hera sighed and buried her face in her hands, not able to look at Sabine anymore. "I don't know. I just didn't want to lose anyone else. Losing Kanan almost destroyed me. I waited too long, thinking there was always more time. We've been together for years, close to ten years actually, and I just strung Kanan along the whole time because of this stupid war with the Empire. I wish I had a do-over. I would marry him right away, and we'd have a child or two that we could raise together, and maybe on the side, we'd do some interesting things to throw a wrench in the Empire's plans. Instead, I devoted our entire lives to this war, Kanan is gone, and I have to raise our child alone."

Sabine's chest hurt with sympathy for Hera. "Hera, you're not going to raise it alone. You have me, and Zeb, and Chopper, although I'm not sure if he counts, and a whole bunch more friends who will be happy to help, like Rex and Kallus and Ketsu. And you know what? We're going to get Ezra back too, and he'll help as well. Even train the little one in the way of the Force, assuming it's a Force sensitive."

Hera dropped her hands and looked at Sabine with misty eyes. "Thank you, Sabine. That means everything to me. And I think it is Force sensitive. At least Dume seemed to think so. He indicated that Kanan's lightsabre was for the child and called it a Jedi." She smiled ruefully and a little sadly. "Kanan gave me my very own little Jedi miracle."

Sabine smiled at Hera. "I'm glad. As a Mandalorian, I can't believe I'm saying this, but we need more Jedi in this Galaxy. On a side note, in regards to realizing things too late, that's what I did too."

Hera looked at her with confusion for a moment before she got it. "Ezra."

Sabine blushed, and stared at the floor. "Yes, Ezra. I ummm, kind of married him this morning, and now he's gone."

"I'm truly sorry about him being gone, but... Finally!" Hera said, making Sabine look up in surprise. "I've been hoping you two would get together for years. I always knew you were perfect for each other."

Sabine rolled her eyes at Hera, no longer embarrassed. "We've been together since he turned fifteen, believe it or not. I'm honestly surprised no one caught us in all that time."

"I did, once," a familiar voice said from the doorway. "I just never let on, since I know more than a little about secret relationships."
Hera stood quickly, eyes wide with shock, and Sabine jumped off her table and turned to see, unable to believe her ears. "Ahsoka! You're alive!" they both said at the exact same time.
Lothal's Leaders

Lothal's New Leaders:

D26/1 BBY, Lothal

The T-6 shuttle came out of hyperspace in front of the burning planet of Lothal. Ahsoka and Lux gasped in dismay. "Oh my Force," she whispered sadly. "No wonder Ezra was so desperate to liberate his planet. Look what they've done to it." She suddenly realized that there was something missing from the depressing picture. "Where is the Imperial fleet? Mothma said there was a blockade around this planet."

Lux shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine."

Ahsoka flew the shuttle down to the planet. "There's no way that Ezra and Hera managed to do this on their own, no matter how resourceful they are." She flew towards Capital City and blinked in shock at the smoking wreckage of the Imperial Dome that still floated in the ocean beside Capital City with a few lucky survivors swimming for shore. "I guess I underestimated them. I can't believe they managed to destroy a Dome."

As she guided the shuttle above Capital City, they saw thousands upon thousands of people celebrating in the ruins of the city. "I think we missed all the fun," Lux said dryly.

Ahsoka shot him a glance. "No kidding."

She eventually found the Ghost parked beside an old communications tower just past the city and landed her shuttle beside it. They left the shuttle and walked onto the Ghost, Ahsoka yelling "hello?"

When she got no response, she climbed the ladder, Lux following behind, and walked down the hallway to the common room. The door opened and she saw a whole lot of people crammed into the small space, balancing plates as they ate what smelled like reheated rations. They all looked up at her and basically gasped as one. Ahsoka looked from face to face. "Chopper, Zeb, Agent Kallus?, Wolfe, Ketsu, Hondo?, Visago?, Ugnaught I don't know, Mart Mattin? What are you doing here? And... REX!"

Rex put his plate on the dejark table and jumped up to meet Ahsoka halfway in a tight hug. "Ahsoka. You're supposed to be dead. But I'm very glad you're not." Rex pulled back and looked at the man Ahsoka had brought with her. "You look... sort of familiar."

Ahsoka grinned at Rex. "That's Lux. You remember him?"

"Of course. How could I forget the brat who followed you with puppy eyes? And I see things haven't changed much," he teased, making the man flush bright red.

Ahsoka looked around the group again. "Where's Ezra, and Sabine, and Hera?"

Rex sighed. "Sabine and Hera are in the tower. Ezra... Well, I'll let them explain. I'm not too sure myself."

A feeling of dread settled in Ahsoka's chest. She nodded and turned to leave. "Lux, stay here, okay? I have a feeling the girls and I are going to be having a very sad talk."
He nodded and she touched his arm in passing. His eyes stayed on her figure until the closing door hid it from view. Lux sighed and faced the room full of strangers except for Rex, whom he hadn't seen for too many years to count.

Rex laughed at the younger looking man who was actually older than him but it would never feel that way to either of them. "You have it bad, son."

Lux shook his head ruefully. "I always have."

"Ahsoka! You're alive!"

Ahsoka looked from Hera to Sabine and back. "You know... I've heard that an awful lot lately. I'm getting the impression that Ezra didn't tell anyone that he saved me. I wonder why not? And would someone please tell me where he is?"

"Ezra saved you? When?" Hera asked, eyes still wide with shock.

"Ezra's... gone." Sabine said softly at the same time, her eyes filling with tears again, that she wiped away quickly. She walked towards the balcony door, and fresh air, taking the time to get her act back together.

Hera and Ahsoka looked at each other knowingly and followed Sabine outside. They found her leaning against the wall just beside the door, staring off blankly towards Capital City.

Hera leaned against the wall beside Sabine, and Ahsoka propped herself on the railing facing them. Ahsoka studied the other women. They both looked like they'd been crying, a lot. And both of them clung to lightsabres almost as if they didn't even know they were. She didn't recognize the one Sabine was holding, but she assumed it was Ezra's replacement for the one destroyed on Malachor. The one Hera held was definitely Kanan's. The songs of the Kyber crystals in them were faint, but what she did sense was the very melancholic humming that was the sad song of a Kyber Crystal that has been parted from its Jedi. She touched her own lightsabres reflexively, just to reaffirm the connection with her crystals. They hummed happily back to her, bringing with it a sense of belonging.

Just out of curiosity, despite already knowing it would probably be futile, Ahsoka swept her senses out in a search for Ezra's Force signature. She didn't feel it anywhere, but there was a new Force signature right in front of her that was already very strong in the Force. Ahsoka's brow markings rose in surprise and she stared at Hera's stomach in shock for a moment before realizing that was a little rude. She blinked and looked at Hera's face, who'd caught her looking. Hera nodded, and smiled a little sheepishly. "It just sort of... happened?" she said by way of explanation.

Ahsoka chuckled. "I think there was more to it than that, but I'm happy for you. I am sorry that Kanan is gone, but I can tell you that he most definitely knew. Ezra said that Kanan saw everything through the Force after he was blinded. Without a doubt, he would have sensed the new life."

Hera went from somewhat embarrassed to grateful. "That is what I thought as well. It's nice to have it confirmed. He would have loved to raise our... child," her voice broke, and she choked back yet another sob that tried to escape. Hera wiped the tears from her eyes determinedly. She sucked in a breath and held up a hand to stop both Sabine and Ahsoka from speaking more condolences. Sabine sidled a little closer anyway and rested her shoulder against Hera's, lending her support. "I'm fine," Hera said firmly. "I just need more time to process everything that's happened." She glanced from Ahsoka to Sabine. "Obviously, we have a lot of catching up to do and many stories to tell. Why don't we all go back to the Ghost and say them only once? I know there are quite a few
people who'd like to hear your story Ahsoka. And we'll tell you what we know about what Ezra's done. Although that's not much, I'm afraid.” Hera sighed and shook her head at the insanity of Ezra's scheme. She still couldn't believe that he'd called the purrgil and not told anyone his plan. She was going to give him a severe talking to for that whenever he got back. After hugging the living daylights out of him first.

With thirteen people and a droid crowded around the edges of the common room, it was more than an intimate setting for storytelling. Hera quickly came to the conclusion that there were a few people in here that didn't need to know some of the things that were going to be said. Hera looked at the youngest person in the room. "Mart, why don't you take the Phantom 2 and drop off Visago, Hondo, and Melch at the Imperial holding yard? Visago's ship must be there somewhere.” Visago lit up at the thought of being reunited with his ship. Hera then looked at the pirate. "And Hondo, as a thank you for all your assistance, feel free to take whatever ship you want from the Imperial shipyard. There must be something there that will suit your needs.”

Hondo grinned and rubbed his hands together. "You hear that Melch? We're going ship hunting. Now this is what I call fun." Melch gave a piggy squeal in agreement.

As Mart was climbing the ladder up to the Phantom, Hera called to him again. "Oh, and get a hold of Ryder and pick him up from wherever he is. I'd like to thank him for everything he's done for us.”

"Got it, General." Mart gave a quick salute and kept climbing, followed by the others being gently kicked off the ship.

Hera looked at who was left assessingly and decided they could all keep a secret. The man she didn't recognize seemed to be with Ahsoka, since she'd stood literally right beside him, all but leaning against side. She went on the assumption that he was trustworthy based on that.

Ahsoka caught her looking at Lux assessingly and introduced them. "Lux, this is General Hera Syndulla. You may have heard her father, General Cham Syndulla.”

Lux smiled and nodded in greeting. "Nice to meet you, General. And yes, I've heard of your father. I think almost everyone has. He's quite famous for his deeds on Ryloth."

Hera rolled her eyes but chose not to comment.

Ahsoka continued the introductions. "And Hera, this is Senator Lux Bonteri of Onderon. He's my... friend.”

Hera wasn't the only one who caught the steamy glance between the two of them. If they weren't more than friends yet, she'd bet the Phantom that they would be sooner than later. "It's nice to meet you as well, Senator," Hera said with an equal nod.

Ahsoka introduced Sabine to Lux as well. He stopped her before she got into the rest of the people on the ship, saying that Rex had already done the honours.

Zeb disappeared for a minute and came back from the galley carrying plates of food for Hera and Sabine. He raised a brow at Ahsoka questioningly, but she shook her head. She and Lux had eaten on the way here.

Hera smiled at him gratefully. "Thanks, Zeb."

Zeb smiled back. "Someone's got to take care of you, now that Kanan isn't here anymore to make
Hera smiled mistily. "You're more right than you know, Zeb." She decided that now was as good a time as any to tell everyone her news. It's not like she'd be able to keep it a secret for long. "I'm eating for two now."

Zeb's lime green eyes almost popped out of his head, and then he broke out in the biggest grin Hera had ever seen on his face. He carefully gathered Hera up into his arms and laughed, while twirling them around in a circle. "That's the best news I've heard in a long time, Hera!" he boomed.

Hera held her plate carefully and tried to wiggle to get down. "Okay, Zeb. You can put me down now. Please. I'm getting dizzy."

Zeb put her down apologetically. "Sorry, Hera. It's just, I've been waiting years for you and Kanan to have a kit for me to love." He grinned again and looked at Kallus. "I'm going to be an uncle!"

Kallus grinned back and gave him a hearty pat on the back before congratulating Hera on the new addition. Her strange behaviour from yesterday made a whole lot more sense now.

Hera endured many rounds of congratulations for a few minutes. "Thank you everyone, but now we have some stories to share. Starting with Ahsoka's, I think. I'm sure I'm not the only one who wants to know how you survived Malachor and Darth Vader."

Everyone nodded and looked at Ahsoka eagerly. Ahsoka sighed. "As you probably know, I was fighting Darth Vader when the Temple closed us in." She thought about telling them that Darth Vader was actually her Master, Anakin Skywalker, but decided against it. The legend of Anakin didn't need to be tainted with what he'd become. "The Temple was about to explode..."

**Much gawking and exclamations of disbelief later...**

...And here I am. Finding Ezra as promised. Except he's not here. Something tells me he's not going to be as easy to find as I thought." Ahsoka finished her story and looked at the others for confirmation.

Sabine choked on a laugh. "You have no idea. Although that does clear up one thing for me. I know what Ezra was counting on me for now, and it isn't finding him." She smirked at Ahsoka. "Apparently that job falls to you."

"Yes, but what happened to him to that I have to find him?" Ahsoka asked, dying to know, after all the little hints she'd heard that explained absolutely nothing.

Sabine sighed and fidgeted with the lightsabre she'd absently unhooked from her belt yet again. She quickly explained everything that had happened that day. The fight at base camp. Capturing Pryce with the help of the lothwolves. Infiltrating the Dome. The bombardment on the city by Thrawn's star destroyer's. Ezra's sacrifice. And then the final shocker. "You remember that encounter we had with the purrgil when we went on a fuel run a couple years back?"

Ahsoka nodded. For her, that was only a couple months ago, but she didn't think they needed the reminder that she'd been nonexistent for awhile.

"Ezra must have talked to them more then he let on, because he summoned them back somehow and had them drag Thrawn's entire 7th Fleet and about twenty other star destroyers away. Apparently for it to work, he needed to go with them, because that's what he did. And now we don't know where he is. He did leave a message implying that he'd be back someday, so that's
something." Sabine's voice went a little hard and resentful. "He knew he was leaving, and he didn't tell anyone. Not really. He could have told us about the purrgil coming to save the day." Sabine's eyes met Ahsoka's. "When you find him, punch him for me, would you? I owe him one for not telling me his plans."

Ahsoka grinned. "I think I can manage that. I'm not kissing him for you though. You'll have to do that yourself."

Sabine went bright red and crossed her arms over her chest defensively, glaring daggers at anyone who dared to laugh. Which was everyone of course.

"Soooo, " Ahsoka said to take the attention off Sabine and back on her, feeling guilty for making her embarrassed. "Does anyone at least know where I should start looking?"

Hera nudged Chopper with a toe. "Did you manage to track their direction?"

Chopper beeped an affirmative. He projected a holo map of the known galaxy with Lothal lit up and a dotted line showing the trajectory of the hyperspace jump.

Everyone groaned in unison. "He's in uncharted space." Hera said. "That's not good. And who knows how long they'll stay in hyperspace for." She looked at Ahsoka sympathetically. "I'm afraid you have a long road ahead of you. You won't be able to use lightspeed to search for him. It's too dangerous."

Ahsoka's eyes were still on the star map. "No. I'm afraid I won't. Except for short jumps when the sensors can clearly see what's in front of us, this could take a very long time." She shook her head ruefully. "Ezra Bridger, you really did it this time," she muttered to herself.

Sabine heard her anyway. "Did he ever. He's in so much trouble when he gets back."

Ahsoka looked at her sympathetically. "Don't be too hard on him. He only did what the Force told him to and what he felt was best for everyone. Who knows? Perhaps it was the only path open to him that didn't endanger the rest of you. We did encounter Darth Sidious in the world between worlds and he knew who Ezra was. Wherever Ezra has gone will at least take him off of the Sith Lord's radar for now and the rest of you, know that he's not with you."

"That goes for you as well," Hera pointed out. "I'm sure the Sith would love to get their hands on you too. Searching for Ezra might be the right thing for you to be doing too. Maybe the Force does know what it's doing."

Sabine sighed to herself and joined the rest of the room in nodding in agreement. Ahsoka had made a very good point. She wouldn't begrudge Ezra for his actions. But she might still punch him for not telling her about the purrgil. She hated surprises and not knowing the plan. He should have known that by now.

Ahsoka looked at the man beside her sorrowfully. "I'm sorry Lux. It looks like we're parting ways again."

Lux shook his head vehemently. "No we're not. I said I was going to be you shadow, and I meant it. I'm not going to let you go on this journey all by yourself. You'd be bored to tears for one thing." He smiled hopefully, praying that she didn't reject him.

"But what about your job as the Senator of Onderon?" Ahsoka asked, not noticing how Kallus flinched at the name. But Zeb did. He put a comforting hand on Kallus' shoulder for a moment, having already heard the story about Kallus' soul shattering encounter with Gerrera's Lasat.
mercenary many years ago on Onderon.

"I'll step down. I'm sick of politics anyway. I've been a Senator since I was eighteen. I've more than done my duty to my planet." Lux's eyes pleaded with Ahsoka.

She sighed. "If this is really what you want?" He nodded eagerly. "Alright. You can keep me company." Ahsoka pressed a gentle kiss to his cheek while Lux looked like he'd just been handed the sun as a present. "Thank you, Lux." She smiled at him with her heart in her eyes for him alone to see. Lux beamed and returned the look.

Hera was reluctant to interrupt their moment, but... "You'll need supplies for a long trip. You better come to Yavin 4 with us before you start."

Ahsoka pulled herself away from Lux's bottomless storm cloud eyes and looked at Hera. "Yes, that would be best. Thank you, Hera."

At that moment, everyone heard the Phantom 2 docking above them. A minute later, feet were seen descending the ladder. Mart found a spot against a wall and Ryder looked around at the assembled. "I was just looking at that old communications tower you guys are parked beside. One of the first things we're going to have to do is get that up and running again. The Imperials wiped out our newer towers when they occupied the planet and you just took out their Dome, which I'm assuming is what they were using as their main long range communication centre, since they destroyed their own comm tower a few years ago."

Sabine and Hera glanced at each other. "Ezra's not going to like that. That tower's been his home since he was seven and his parents were taken away by the Empire," Sabine said solemnly.

"Oh," Ryder said, enthusiasm draining from his face. Then it lit up again. "What if we refurbished it in such a way that he could still have an apartment in it? Surely it's large enough for that? I owe that boy more than he knows. It was my idea for his parents to make those underground broadcasts. I cost him his parents and now he's saved our planet. Making him a new apartment seems like the least I could do for him."

"It sounds like it," Sabine said with narrowed eyes at the older man. "And I'll help you with the renovations and getting the tower back up and running. We'll also need to train a new military, get the government functioning again, clean up the mess, repurpose whatever Imperial items were left behind, and probably a million other small details that I don't even want to think about."

Ryder looked at Sabine in surprise. "We?"

Hera looked at Sabine as well. "Yes, what we?"

Sabine gave them back her best determined face. "I'm basing myself here on Lothal from now on. Ezra said he was counting on me and this is what I've decided is what he meant. Putting his planet back together and protecting it is going to be my main priority. Whenever I can, I'll still come help the rebellion, but I'm sure it won't be very often. At least not at first."

Hera looked shocked. "I can't believe you're leaving me too."

Sabine shook her head and hugged Hera. "I'm not, Hera. I'm just going to be a little further away. That's all. I'll come with you to Yavin 4 and pick up Ezra's Gauntlet. Then I'll just be a comm call and a hyperspace jump away."

Hera hugged Sabine back and rested her forehead on the girl's armoured shoulder for a moment. "Alright. I suppose that's acceptable. If this is what you feel you need to do, I can't stop you."
Sabine pulled back and smiled weakly at Hera. "Yes, I'm afraid it is. Thank you for understanding." She glanced pointedly at Hera's stomach. "And when that one shows up, you can recuperate here on Lothal with me. I've always wanted another little sibling; my brother grew up much too fast and he really doesn't count as being little anymore."

Hera laughed softly and hugged Sabine again.

Sabine got back to business and addressed Ryder. "I'm assuming you can take care of things for a couple of days until I get back?"

Ryder raised a brow at the young woman. "I think I'm more than capable of running a planet. Even one in chaos. I WAS the Governor here before the Empire showed up years ago." Sabine flushed at the gentle chiding. "Your help will be greatly appreciated though. Especially in military matters. I doubt there are many left on Lothal who actually know how to fight."

Sabine was reassured by his words. "Thank you for thinking of my fighting skills, but I can do so much more than train people to fight. I'm also an engineer and a slicer. If you need something built, I can do it. Like that old comm tower over there. Give me a decent crew and I'll have it running again in two days."

Ryder was surprised. He'd thought she was just another trigger happy Mandalorian.

Zeb noticed. "She's not exaggerating. She once built a shield generator out of a few spare parts for our base on Atallon. And it held up under a barrage by Star Destroyers."

Hera added a few things too. "She's also a linguist, an artist, and an excellent leader. You really couldn't ask for a better right hand to help you put this planet back on track."

Sabine blushed at all the praise. Ryder looked at her with new eyes. "I apologize for underestimating you. I will greatly appreciate anything you are willing to do for Lothal. The very first thing we need to do is get control of all the people of the city. Did you see them? They're going nuts right now. If we don't calm them down, they'll start looting or something, and we don't need that."

Sabine thought for a moment and then grinned. "I know how to get their attention. Then you can give them your first official speech as the new / old Governor of Lothal." She turned to Chopper. "Come on Chop. I need your help."

Ryder watched the girl run out of the room, followed by the droid. He looked at Hera with raised brows. She just shrugged in return.

Fifteen minutes later, Sabine called over the ship's comm for Hera and Ryder to come to the bridge. Of course everyone else followed, dying of curiosity, packing themselves into the small space, before Hera sighed and pointed to the ladder so some could go down to the nose gun area and watch from there.

"Hera, can you fly the Ghost to the outskirts of the city and high enough so everyone can see it?" Sabine asked Hera. Hera nodded. Sabine grabbed Ryder by the arm. "Come on. We're going on top of the Ghost." Ryder looked at Hera wide eyed, but she just smirked at him as he was dragged away.

Ryder looked at the slapped together equipment that was being held by Chopper, who was already on top of the Ghost. He braced his feet as the ship took off and flew towards the city. "So what are we doing?" he asked the grinning girl, who rode the top of the ship easily.
"Getting their attention." As the Ghost came to a hover at the edge of the city, Sabine lobbed a bomb out into the sky. Ryder didn't think that was such a good idea, but a second later, it exploded into fireworks. Ryder's face turned up into a grin. Sabine handed him the next one. "Your turn."

"Don't mind if I do." Ryder hucked the bomb with all his might and laughed when it exploded into more fireworks. "Those are really clever."

"Thank you, I invented them for another op we did here years ago during an Empire Day parade. They're one of my favourite inventions," Sabine said as she watched the fireworks. "Alright. I hope you have a good speech ready. If that didn't get their attention, nothing will," she nodded at the thousands of figures they could see now standing still and facing them.

"Right." Ryder took a deep breath and got his thoughts in order.

"You ready Chopper?" Sabine asked. Chopper beeped an affirmative. "Just start talking," she told Ryder. "Chopper's going to project your image into the sky and amplify your voice."

Ryder nodded and faced the droid. He saw an enormous hologram of himself face the city. "This is the former Governor of Lothal, Ryder Azadi, and Force willing, your new Governor again. I have been working with a small Rebel group to win our planet back from the Empire. As you can see, we have succeeded." He heard a massive cheer come from the city, and Ryder smiled. "We owe our success to the brave sacrifice of two Jedi who have fought for this planet for years. I know the Jedi are just a myth now, but they do in fact still exist. Or at least they did. Without the dedication of Kanan Jarrus and Ezra Bridger to the cause, we would not be free right now. You may not remember them, but Ezra Bridger was the son of two of our very first Rebels. He is also the one who made the very inspirational broadcast that started new Rebellions across the galaxy. And he was OUR very own Jedi. It was Ezra Bridger who called the Purrgil to take the 7th Fleet away. And it was Kanan Jarrus who got the Empire to blow up their own Fuel Depot and shut down their factories. I implore you to not let their sacrifice be in vain. Please let there be order and calm in the city. I will be reorganizing the government and will be looking for people who are interested in leadership roles. We also have the help of a very experienced military leader in putting together our own military and planetary defence systems. This planet WILL stay under our control. We won't let the Empire take over again!" The city cheered again. Ryder waited for the noise to die down. "If anyone has any questions or concerns, you can find me in the old City Council building, assuming it's still standing. Thank you for hearing me out, and in memory of my friends, may the Force be with you."
Ezra's Crash

Ezra's Crash:

*D27/1 BBY, Unknown Space*

As Ezra guided the escape pod towards the planet, he could feel himself starting to crash. The last twelve hours of constantly channeling the Force into a shield was hitting him hard. With the boost from the Purrgil gone, he had nothing left to call on. In a matter of minutes he went from feeling more or less fine, to shaking like a leaf in a hurricane and feeling every ache in his body, especially the blaster burn on his shoulder. His vision went dim and he fought to stay conscious with everything he had left, so he could at least land the pod before he passed out. Ezra prayed to the Force to give him the strength to make it to the planet's surface. An image of Sabine's exotic amber eyes swam before his vision. Eyes filled with love and trust and strength. Ezra concentrated on her eyes fiercely, if he could just focus on them for one more minute...

Ezra slumped forward, eyes closing against his will.

"Ezra!" his Master's voice reverberated though his skull, making Ezra jolt back into consciousness. Ezra glanced frantically around him. "Kanan?" he thought hopefully.

"Who else would it be?" came back the dry reply in his mind.

Just hearing Kanan in his mind gave Ezra enough of an adrenaline jolt to make him feel a little more aware. "Kanan," he breathed out loud. "I've missed you." Ezra felt a wave of comfort wash over him through his bond with Kanan.

"I know," Kanan replied. "And I'm sorry for leaving you, but you've done very well, Ezra. With the passing of this final Test, you have achieved the rank of Knight." Ezra felt a hint of humour from the ghost of his Master. "I can't dub you with a lightsabre like I was, but maybe that's a good thing. I thought the Temple Guard was going to kill me with his. Trust in the Force and know a part of me is always with you. I couldn't possibly be more proud of you, son."

"Thank you, Kanan," Ezra replied as he felt his Master's presence leave him. While he continued his flight down to the planet, he replayed Kanan's words over and over in his mind, drawing strength and courage from them. He was a Jedi Knight now. It was almost beyond belief. He'd be more ecstatic about that later when he had the energy for it. And he also realized Kanan had called him son. He'd never done that before, but it felt right. Kanan was like a father to him and Ezra didn't know how he was supposed to live with losing a second father. It was all he could do not to break down as he realized how much he'd lost and left behind with his sacrifice.

He wanted Kanan back desperately but he understood that Kanan had made an even greater sacrifice for the sake of everyone's lives on Lothal, but especially his family. Ezra would have done the same if he had to. At night, when he was unable to sleep after Kanan's death, Ezra had replayed the scene over and over in his mind and he'd realized there had been a way for everyone to survive that explosion if he'd just known about it in advance. If he'd just grabbed Kanan and Hera with the Force and dumped them on the gunship, he could have put up his own shield around the ship as Sabine flew them away. It was so simple. The fuel depot would have still been destroyed and Kanan would still be alive. It was hard for Ezra not to blame the Force for not showing him that awful moment in a vision beforehand. He'd had visions of so many other events in his life, including him and Thrawn on the Chimaera being taken away by the Purrgil, why not that one as
In the long week before Ezra made his own sacrifice, he'd finally understood that there had been a reason that Kanan had to die, but only the Force knew it. Now, after everything that had happened, Ezra thought that he just might know what that was. Kanan had loved exactly three people more than life itself: Hera, Ezra, and Sabine. His mate and his adopted kids. With the three of them now scattered all over the galaxy, being a presence in the Force was the only way he could watch over all of them. Ezra knew that Sabine was going to base herself out of Lothal for the foreseeable future. He'd seen it in a few visions over the last week before he left. He also knew that Hera would continue to fight for the Rebellion, at least as much as having a new baby in her life would let her. Although, he'd also seen her on Lothal with Sabine and Zeb and a small green haired boy, a white Lothwolf standing in the background, guarding his family. Ezra had cried happy tears when he first saw that image.

The heat in the pod finally made him pay attention to his surroundings again and look out the tiny window to see the white hot flames of atmospheric decent all around him. Of course the Imperial escape pod just had to be a cheaply made one. Ezra hoped it survived the landing. As the pod plummeted ever closer towards the ground, Ezra looked for a place to land and started guiding the pod towards something that might have been a small village beside the ocean, aiming for a location in the water that he should be able to swim from. Ezra figured a water landing was the safest thing he could try for at this point. Just as he thought he had the pod on a decent course, the fuel indicator started beeping frantically, saying the pod was out of fuel for the guidance thrusters. With his vision fading again, and the pod now out of fuel to slow the last of the descent, Ezra knew this was going to be a very rough landing. With nothing left for him to do but strap himself in and hope he survived, Ezra let his eyes close and called the image of Sabine's eyes back.

Her beautiful, haunting, fiery eyes were the last thing Ezra saw as his world once again faded out around him.

**D165/254 BBY, Unknown Space**

Padawan Tia Fisto was meditating in her quarters on the exploration ship, The Seeker, when the ship shuddered and she was tossed out of her kneeling position. She caught herself with a hand on the floor as alarms starting blaring, making her many tentacles cringe at the racket, while she felt the nauseating spinning of the ship as it fell out of hyperspace. She jumped to her feet when the ship came to a halt and ran out the door of her room, to see chaos in the hallways. She followed her bond with her Master to find him on the bridge of the large ship that held hundreds of beings.

"What happened, Master?" she asked of the pale skinned, middle aged human with the light blond hair that was getting lighter as grey crept in. His pale blue eyes met hers with a look of calm finality.

"We were hit by a pod of purrgil while in hyperspace," Jedi Master Zen Guji replied to his green skinned Nautolan padawan. "The ship has received serious damage and won't be able to jump back to hyperspace to take us home and we'll be lucky to land it one piece on the nearest planet. Fortunately, the planet we were jumping towards is only half an hour away at our current limping speed."

Tia nodded her understanding. Their risky mission to explore unknown space just became a mission to colonize a new world. She quickly mourned never seeing her friends at the Jedi temple again, but moved past it, like a good Jedi should. "What can I do to help, Master?" she asked.

Zen nodded back towards the hallway. "Go see what you can do to calm down the chaotic feelings
from the rest of the crew and scientists. I can sense their panic from here. It's going to require calm minds to survive this."

Tia nodded again before spinning on the ball of her foot and dashing back the way she came, calming her mind before projecting waves of calm to everyone she passed throughout the ship. She could see her efforts working as people started walking with purpose instead of running randomly around. The crew grew more efficient in patching up what systems they could before arriving at the planet and the scientists made themselves helpful instead of hindering efforts. She came to the far end of the ship, or at least, what used to be the far end of the ship. The blast doors were closed and she was informed that they'd lost a whole section along with anyone who had been in there.

Tia sighed at the loss of life. Someday, someone needed to learn how to communicate with those purrgil so disasters like this didn't happen anymore. She thought it was a shame that no one had ever made the effort. People just accepted that the purrgil were dangerous and despised them. Surely that was not the Jedi way?

Tia made her way back and forth through the ship, helping out where she could. There were a few lightly injured who'd been tossed around by the impact, but the med droid and Link, the ship's doctor, were taking care of them. She found herself helping one of the engineers trying to reroute power from the auxiliary systems to the life support as those were starting to fail. It was a good thing they didn't have far to go, because this ship was on its last gasping breath.

Time passed quickly and before she knew it, they were making their descent onto the mostly water planet with a few small continents scattered around. Someone managed to point the ship in the general direction of the nearest continent but it quickly became apparent that they were going to land in the ocean in a spectacular fashion. A call of the ship's comms to get in the escape pods sent everyone scurrying once again.

Tia made sure that everyone made it into the escape pods and were jettisoned to safety. She encountered her Master doing the same thing as they met in the middle of the ship by the last of the escape pods. They pushed the last person in and saw there was room for just one more person in the already crowded pod. Tia and her Master had a quick staring contest as they both tried to make the other take the last spot.

"Get in the pod, Tia," Zen growled.

She shook her head adamantly. "No, Master. You take it. Do you forget already what I am?"

Zen shook his head but climbed into the pod reluctantly. "You better meet us on the shore or I'm coming back out here and finding you and giving you the scolding of your life."

Tia grinned at her Master and closed the door in his face and then smacking the button to eject the pod. The ship was literally shaking in its tresses as they neared the water. She ran for the nearest access hatch to the hull of the ship and climbed onto the top just as the ship hit the water with a spectacular splash. She Force jumped as far as she could away from the drowning ship and then arrowed her body into a perfect dive into the water. She popped back up to the surface and watched the ship as it sank slowly and painfully, water bubbling everywhere all around it. As it disappeared from view on the surface, she sank under the waves of the ocean and watched as it continued to sink until it hit the ocean floor a minute later with a sad sounding thud.

Tia sighed again. What a waste of a good ship. She shook her head and then turned towards land and her Master's signature, swimming under the waves easily, exalting in the temporary sense of freedom she felt being all alone in a vast ocean. She hardly ever got to swim like this living in the Temple on Coruscant. There wasn't a whole lot of water to be found on the city planet.
Tia came to an abrupt halt as she felt several Force signatures approaching. And they were true Force signatures too. Not just life signatures that most beings had. Whoever was coming her way was strong in the Force. She waited patiently as they approached at an astonishing speed. Only a few seconds later, her large brown eyes made out the shape of figures in the water. Another blink later and they were in front of her, a dozen humanoid amphibians very similar looking to her, wearing only a minimal amount of clothing for the sake of decency. They didn't have the many long tentacles that she did, but spiky ones that covered the top of their heads. Their big black eyes were very similar to hers though. A big grey skinned male at the front of the pack was clearly the leader, but Tia's eyes were drawn to the younger looking male beside him. His skin was a bluish grey but had very similar handsome features to the man she assumed was his father.

Their eyes met, and she somehow knew it was the younger one who spoke in her mind. "You are a stranger here. Did you come in the thing that crashed in the ocean?" he asked curiously.

Tia nodded and smiled at the cute teenage boy. "Yes, and I am not alone. There are others, already on the shore. Not like me though. They need air to breath and land to live on," she thought back carefully in her mind.

"Yes, we feel their presence," a deeper voice said in her mind. The elder was speaking to her now. "We came to see what has crashed on our planet. Do you need assistance?"

Tia thought for a moment. It would be helpful if they could salvage whatever they could from the ship. She had barely completed the thought when the boy grinned at her and the rest nodded. She blinked in surprise as they swam quickly towards the ship. She quickly swam after them, curious to see what they had in mind. She was thinking they could make many trips back and forth carrying what they could. But that was not the case. They had something much different in mind.

Tia watched in awe as the amphibians spaced themselves around the ship and then seemed to concentrate as a group. The Seeker unburied its nose from the sand of the ocean floor and started moving through the depths towards land. They were using the Force to move the metal ship through the water. She swam up beside the boy and lent her concentration to the task as well, earning her another quick smile as they swam and moved the ship at the same time.

Ten minutes later, they neared the shore and the water became shallow. The ship slowly emerged from the waves and so did the amphibians, walking through the water as they moved the ship high onto the beach with their minds. It came to a gentle stop on the sand and Tia turned to find her Master and the surviving crew of The Seeker gawking at them. Her new friends came to stand at her side and behind her.

Tia grinned at her Master. "I made some new friends," she said with a nod to the teenage boy beside her.

Zen raised a sardonic brow at his padawan. "I see that," he said dryly. "I was starting to get worried when you hadn't show up yet, but I see all of my worries were for naught. This is a pleasant surprise."

Tia nodded. "Yes, I think so." She glanced at the boy beside her again. "Something tells me we are going to be very happy living here."

Zen sighed as he saw the no attachment rule sailing out the airlock. But really, who was there to care anymore? It's not like anyone else from the Order was going to show up and chastise them for breaking the rules. He glanced furtively at the gorgeous red haired female scientist who'd been making friendly advances towards him for the last year. Perhaps it was time to make a few friendly advances back.
Tia looked up at the sky as a niggle in the Force whispered through her. The Jedi Master blinked in surprise at the flaming object that came hurtling down through the sky. The group of younglings around her exclaimed and gasped as they spotted it as well.

"What is it, Master Tia?" one of her great great great nephews asked.

"Is it a meteor?" another youngling asked next. She was one of Master Guji's descendants. Master Guji himself had passed on into the Force close to two hundred years ago now, but his legacy lived on. And he still came to visit them every other day or so as a ghost, which entertained the younglings to no end.

Tia shook her head as the object crashed into the ocean about a kilometre from land. "No, my younglings. I don't think so. The Force has something to say about this one. Who else feels it?"

She watched them concentrate with an amused look while she sent a mental message to her husband, King Wayve, to send someone out to rescue the escape pod as quickly as possible.

"Already on it," came back the mental reply along with a gentle burst of love.

Tia's own padawan was the first to sense what Tia did. The red haired teenage girl opened her eyes with a huge smile. "There's another Force user out there. And he's hurt, I think."

Tia nodded to Krystal. "I believe you are correct, padawan. Why don't you go help the rescue effort?"

Krystal didn't even bother to nod before she took off like a shot down the beach and started swimming through the ocean. The girl might be a human, but living with amphibians her whole life had turned her into an excellent swimmer. Having the Force to call on to boost her natural abilities didn't hurt either.

Tia and the younglings as well as most of the village, who had all sensed that something interesting was happening, all waited on the beach as the escape pod floated towards them through the air and Krystal and her boyfriend, Raign, Tia's youngest grandson who was blue skinned and long tentacled like her, walked out of the ocean with expressions of fierce concentration on their faces. They set the pod down on the beach in front of Tia like an offering.

Tia waved a hand at the pod and the door sprang open. Those close enough peered inside to see the limp form of a black haired human male lying slumped in his restraint harness. Tia undid the harness with the Force and then floated his form out through the opening and down onto the pale sand of the beach.

A descendant of the original doctor pushed his way to the front of the crowd. The hybrid called Link in honour of his ancestor touched the young man's shoulder gently as he closed his eyes and sent his Force senses through him assessingly. He looked up after a minute. "He has a bad blaster burn on the back of his shoulder but other than that he appears to be unharmed. He's just incredibly tired. There is very little energy left in him. He'll be alright with a day or two of rest."

There was a general smile of relief as Link gathered the young man up into his strong arms and carried him towards his clinic, made from salvaged ship parts, with the majority of the crowd dispersing and going back to whatever they were doing before.

"I wonder where he came from," Krystal commented to no one in particular.
Raign shrugged and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "Your guess is as good as mine," he replied in her mind.

Tia stared at the escape pod for a while. "I don't know what's been happening in the galaxy since we left, but something tells me we've missed a lot."
Sabine's Goodbye

A/N: I've changed some of this chapter to fit the new plot.

Sabine's Goodbye:

_D27/1 BBY, Yavin 4_

As Sabine transferred all of her things from her cabin in the Ghost to a cabin in the Gauntlet, she tried not to think too much about the reality of what she was doing, but it hit her hard anyway. In some corner of her mind, she knew the Ghost would never be her home again. It felt like she was tearing off a piece of herself. The Ghost had been her home for the better part of four years and the crew was her family; in some ways, even more than Clan Wren. Hera had taught her that it was okay to feel things, to let people in, and was a better mother figure than her own. (Just don't tell the Countess that.) Zeb was the protective uncle that was always there for you. Chopper was the annoying pet that you couldn't kick out for barking too much, no matter how much you wanted to, because he was yours, and you loved him despite his quirks. She might be leaving the nest, but they would still be there for her and her for them, as she said before, just a comm call and a jump away.

But there were two family members that were missing.

She stopped in front of Kanan's cabin door with a box of paints in her arms, tears trying to form as she realized he would never be just a room away again. Never be there for her in the middle of the night when she had a nightmare and was trying to forget it in the galley with a mug of caf, and Kanan would show up and just keep her company until she was ready to try sleeping again. Never play dejarik with her again, the only one in their family who even came close to giving her a run for her credits. Never spar with her again when she was tense and needed to let off some steam. For a non Mando, he'd been more than half decent at hand to hand and kept her on her toes when they fought. And he'd done it with that hint of a smile that told her he was enjoying himself, despite the fact that she was kicking him into the dirt. He was the only one she could spar with on fairly equal terms. She'd tried sparring with Hera, but just couldn't make herself punch Hera with any sort of force behind it, making it a redundant exercise. Zeb just took her kicks and laughed at her. And Ezra? Well, he'd been improving, but she still wiped the floor with him, even after years of trying to teach him how to fight a proper hand to hand match. She'd finally figured out he just couldn't make himself hurt her, so she forgave him for his apparent ineptitude. (He actually could fight very well now, just not against her.)

Kanan had been the one who had taught her there was more to life than just killing and fighting. He'd shown her there were better ways to get her point across. She might not have been a Force sensitive, but Kanan had never once stopped her from watching and learning from the lessons he taught Ezra about the Force and life in general. Most of the time, she pretended she wasn't actually listening to Kanan's wise words, while absenty working on something else nearby, but she was. And he knew it. How she missed him. It still hurt just as much a week later. She didn't even know how Hera was functioning. If it hurt her this much, how was Hera not just a whimpering puddle of tears?

And then there was Ezra.

Sabine realized as she glanced at his door that she should pack up his things too and move them to the Gauntlet. There was no point in his stuff taking up space in Zeb's room anymore. She took her
box of paints to the Gauntlet and then came back, stopping in front of the door, almost afraid to go in. She closed her eyes, and told herself she was being silly. It was just stuff. Ezra's stuff. Okay. Not being silly. This was going to be harder than she thought. Zeb appeared in the hallway and looked at her sympathetically as she stood there, trying to make herself open the door. "You want me to pack up his things for you?"

Sabine looked at him with all the gratitude in her heart. "Could you? I don't think I can."

Zeb smiled sadly and squeezed her shoulder gently. "Sure, Sabine, I got it. You just finish with your room."

She turned and wrapped her arms around his waist, hiding her face in his chest, surprising him before his big arms hugged her back. (She'd never actually hugged Zeb before.) "Thank you, Zeb. You've always been there for me."

Zeb patted her back gently. "And I always will, Sabine. Don't worry. I promise I won't go joy riding on a purrgil and disappear on you."

Sabine snorted out a laugh and pulled back, punching him in the stomach just because. "You better not. Not that you'd have the courage to do it anyway," she teased and walked back into her room.

"Hey!"

"It's true. Don't deny it," she called through the door.

Zeb slumped and walked into his own room. "Yah."

She smiled to herself. At least some things were still the same. Sabine looked around her room. It was pretty much empty now. The colourful walls stood out more than ever with no clutter to distract from the paintings she layered on top each other over the years. Hopefully Hera would leave it the way it was. But it would be too much to ask, if she needed the room for someone else. She had so many memories in this room. At least there was one good thing about moving to a new room; she had fresh walls to work with. Whenever Ezra came home, he was going to find his ship completely overrun with her paintings, whether he liked it or not. Sabine knew he wouldn't mind though. He'd always liked her art. Even the pieces that made fun of him. Like that one she'd put in his cabin of him falling through the bunk onto Zeb. Zeb had admitted to her about a year later that he'd tried to paint over it, but Ezra had stopped him, practically threatening death if Zeb so much as erased one corner of her painting.

Of course, that had earned Ezra a very special make out session. And... now she wanted Ezra back, like yesterday, so she could indulge in all the fantasies running rampant through her mind from the fond memories.

She imagined herself with Ezra in a proper bed, going at it like lothbunnies for days and then cuddling together for just as long, basking in his warm strength and the comfort of his soothing presence. She'd never cuddled with anyone before him, it seeming like such an anti tough girl thing to do. But with Ezra, she had made an exception and never regretted it. The more she thought about him, the more she felt like she could almost feel him with her. (If only she knew that far far away, he was imagining her just as desperately before passing out in a pod about to crash in the sea.)

"Kriff," she said to herself. "Get it together." Sabine forced herself to stop thinking romantic things and focused back on her room. She reluctantly gathered up the last of her stuff, amazed at how much she'd accumulated over the years. She'd come to the Ghost with nothing but the clothes on her back, after being abandoned by Ketsu on a bounty hunt, left to fend for herself. And now she
had boxes of things: Paints, clothes, tools, more paints. Hera had definitely been generous when it came to dividing up the credits they made, giving Sabine lots to spend on her favourite hobby.

And then there were the presents from the other members of the family. One of the last things she packed was the most recent sketchbook Ezra had given her for her last birthday. The book of blank pages was actually harder to find than you would think, based on how rare paper was used anymore. He'd handed it to her with his usual dorky grin. "I know you get lots of these, but I also know you'll always need more," Sabine touched the cover of the sketchbook fondly. She'd never actually opened it yet. As he said, she had lots, and she'd left practically everything behind when she went to Krownest, fully expecting to come back way sooner than she had.

She fanned through the blank pages absently as she thought of how she'd responded to his present. The kiss on his cheek seemed inadequate now and she wished she'd been a little more appreciative since this might be the last present he ever gave her. It was thoughtful and useful, too. She fanned the pages again, chastising herself yet again. She had a feeling she was going to be doing that a lot, until Ezra came back. Her eyes caught on something that wasn't the same as the rest. She quickly flipped through the pages again until she found a single folded sheet of paper with her name on it tucked into the book. She pulled it out of the sketchbook and let the book fall to floor as she read the note Ezra had written her in a clumsy scrawl. (Penmanship wasn't exactly something people practiced much anymore.)

My Dearest Sabine,

When I purchased this book for you, I got a flash of the future. I'm not sure what happens between now and whenever you actually read this, my beautiful cyar'ika, but I see you with brown hair with purple ends (I really like it by the way) and your eyes are filled with sadness. I see you in your almost empty room, touching this book with affection, and I sense that it is empty, so I feel pretty safe leaving this note in here. I'm not sure why you are sad, or why you're packing your things, but somehow I feel like it has something to do with me. If I'm the one who has made you leave us, I'm so sorry for whatever I did. Please don't leave. You're my best friend, my love, and my life. I know I annoy you sometimes, though I've tried really hard not to. My life would be empty without your colourful presence in it. I take comfort in the fact that you still like my present at least. Hopefully you'll change your mind about leaving, or maybe you have to go for family reasons, or... kriff. I don't know what I'm trying to say. Maybe I'm jumping to conclusions and this is really no big deal and you're not leaving me. In which case, feel free to come find me and rub my face in how much of an idiot I am. But if I'm not, well, at least I tried to make whatever I did wrong better again.

Please just know that I'll miss you while you're away, and I'll ask the Force every single day to bring you back to me and the rest of our family.

Your devoted fiancé,

Ezra.

"Oh, Ezra," Sabine whispered as she sank to the floor and read the note over and over again. If only he knew that it wasn't her who had left, but him. He had left her. Obviously he had known right before he'd done it, but half a year ago? And he'd spent that whole half year thinking she was going to leave him at some point? And she had, sort of, when she went to Krownest for a few months. But she hadn't changed her hair yet, or packed her room, so he must have known she wasn't gone for real. Sabine wondered what he thought when he first saw her with her new hair colour. Did his heart break like hers had when she realized he was going to leave her in some fashion after she'd kissed him and he'd said 'I'm ready for whatever comes now'?

Sabine didn't know how long she sat there, staring at the letter, but Hera stuck her head in the door
and looked startled to see her sitting on the floor. "Are you okay?" she asked, walking into the room.

Sabine just shook her head and handed Hera the note, fighting with herself to not burst into tears. Hera read it and then read it again, her brows rising in surprise. Hera finished the note a second time and then gracefully lowered herself onto the floor beside Sabine. "I don't know what to say. He got it so wrong, and yet, so right," she said as she carefully wrapped the emotionally fragile girl in her arms.

Sabine pressed her forehead into Hera's shoulder and hugged her back. "He loved me so much, even when I didn't treat him as well as I should have. I don't deserve him, Hera. But I can't let him go either. I want him back."

Hera rubbed her back comfortingly. "I know exactly what you're talking about. How do you think I feel about how I treated Kanan? I knew he loved me. Almost from the first day we met, Kanan followed me because he just wanted to be with me even though he was never a fan of fighting another war. All he really wanted was to get married, live somewhere quiet, and start a family. I will always regret not doing just that. I didn't get it right until the very end when I finally asked him to marry me on top of that fuel pod. At least, I think I did. I was so drugged, I'm not even sure if that's a memory or just wishful thinking. I feel like dirt. The best man in the galaxy loved me with his whole being and I couldn't make myself fully commit to him because I let the Rebellion come first. I promise I'm never going to do that again. My family comes first from now on. And, Sabine, you're my family. I'll always be here for you."

Sabine looked up at Hera with watery eyes. "You and I are alike in so many ways, but when it comes to fully committing to our men, we're almost identical. Why does it take something terrible to happen for us to get what matters most?" Hera shook her head, unable to speak as tears filled her eyes. Sabine tightened her arms around her. "Don't tell my mother, but you've done a better job being my mom than she ever has."

Hera choked on a sob and hugged Sabine tighter. "Thank you, Sabine."

They sat like that for awhile, just taking comfort in each other. Chopper rolled in at some point and pressed himself to Hera's side, just being there for her, like he had since the very first day he realized that Hera was the only reason he was still a functioning unit after his crash on Ryloth. He might be an absolute nightmare to everyone else, but for Hera, Chopper was actually kind of nice.

And then Zeb stuck his head in. "Hey, Sabine. Where do you want me..." his voice trailed off as his eyes finally spotted them on the floor, his two girls, tears in their eyes, looking wrecked. "Ah, karabast." Zeb dropped the large box of Ezra's stuff and walked into the room. He knelt down on the floor and gathered them both up in his arms. "I'm sorry I can't make it better," he said gruffly.

Sabine and Hera just buried their faces in his shirt and tried not to cry even more, taking comfort in his steady presence. Eventually, Sabine pulled back and wiped her face dry. "I am so tired of crying. I've shed more tears in the last week than I have in my entire life. Having a family is hard."

Hera wiped her cheeks too and sort of laughed. "Tell me about it. I think the only one here who isn't a wreck is Chopper, and even he's not acting like himself."

Chopper bumped into her leg again and beeped. "Hey, I miss the Jedi organics too. Now I have only one fur covered organic left to torment." And just to prove his point, he zapped Zeb and made a run for it.

Zeb growled, but let the droid get away. For now. He'd get him back later. "I think Chopper just
proved you wrong, Hera. He seems fine to me."

Hera just shook her head and smiled. She turned her attention back to Sabine, who had finished packing her last box of things, the note from Ezra already tucked away again in the sketchbook. "So you're really leaving us now?"

Sabine nodded. "I really am. Ezra's counting on me to take care of his planet. So that's what I'm going to do. It's a disaster right now anyway. Someone needs to put it back together."

Hera nodded. "I understand. I'm proud of you, Sabine. I know this isn't easy for you."

Sabine picked up her box. "Thank you, Hera, but I'm just doing what I feel is right." She glanced at Zeb. "Come on, Zeb. I'll show you where to put Ezra's stuff." Sabine left her room with one last look of farewell. That chapter of her life was officially over.

Hera trailed behind Sabine and Zeb, not willing to let Sabine out of her sight just yet. Technically, she should be in meetings with Mon Mothma and the other Generals, but they could just wait. They weren't going anywhere and Sabine was.

Kallus, Rex, and Wolfe walked up to the Ghost as they were leaving it. Hera stopped to see what they wanted, eyes following Sabine's back for a moment before turning her attention to the men in front of her. She raised a brow in inquiry.

Kallus looked hesitant for a moment before he put his game face on. "General Syndulla. We've talked it over with Command and we'd like to officially join your crew, if that's alright with you?"

Hera looked from one hopeful face to the next. She really didn't want to just up and replace her missing family, but they were fighting a war. And it made sense for her to have a full crew again. Her brain knew this, now she just needed to get her heart to stop whimpering. She put on a brave smile. "Welcome to the Ghost. And you can call me Hera. My family doesn't call me General."

The men beamed at her and Kallus took a moment before he realized she'd just added him to her family. He hadn't been part of a family for a very very long time. Leaving the Empire was turning into the best decision he'd ever made. He had new purpose in life, a new best friend, and a family to call his own. Kallus wasn't sure if he deserved it, so he just lived every day one day at a time and thanked the Force when he went to sleep at night.

Hera smirked at Kallus as she realized something. "I hope you like purple and colourful paintings, because you'll get Sabine's room. And you don't have permission to repaint your walls."

Kallus' eyes widened in dismay while the clones clapped him on the back gleefully. "Umm. Couldn't I just bunk with Zeb?"

Hera looked over his shoulder. "I suppose. If Zeb is alright with it."

"Alright with what?" Zeb said from behind Kallus.

Kallus turned around and looked at him hopefully. "Can I bunk with you? We're joining your crew."

Zeb's face split into a grin. "Sure. That's great news. Now Chopper can torture someone other than me. I was getting worried for a minute there."

Hera shook her head at Zeb. Then she pinned Rex and Wolfe in a fiendish gaze. "I suppose you two could have Sabine's room. You'll have to fix the bottom bunk, but it should work." Just as they
were going to protest, she raised a hand to stop them. "Since there's room, I'm going to save
Kanan's cabin for this one," she said pressing her hand to her stomach for a moment. That killed
their protestations in an instant. Hera smiled at them. "Why don't you guys go settle in? I'm just
going to say goodbye to Sabine, then we'll get back to work. We still have a war to fight."

The men all gave her a brisk salute and marched up the ramp. Hera smiled to herself as she heard
Kallus and Zeb ribbing the clones about having to live in a girl's room and walked towards the
Gauntlet. She was going to be surrounded by testosterone, but she could handle it. It just gave her
even more of an incentive to make sure Sabine visited as often as possible.

Sabine watched Hera walk down the ramp, her eyes once again trying to rain tears. She wouldn't let
them. Enough was enough. She was a tough girl, damn it. Her stupid emotions were going to get
back with the program whether they liked it or not. She was just about to hit the button to close the
ramp when Ketsu came running up carrying a bag over her shoulder. "Wait!" she called. "I'm
coming with you."

Sabine raised a brow at Ketsu as she jogged up the ramp. "You are? What about your ship, the
Shadow Caster?"

Ketsu grinned at her. "Yep. I only joined the Rebellion because you were in it. If you're kicking it
to the curb, than so am I. And my ship is sitting on that dust ball where we picked up the clones. I
was hoping you'd give me a ride back there so I can get it."

Sabine shook her head and closed the ramp. "I'm not abandoning the Rebellion, just sort of putting
it on hold. And sure, I'll take you to Seelos and you can follow me back to Lothal from there. I
could definitely use the help training up a new military."

Ketsu dumped her bag on the floor as she sat in the co-pilot chair. "I can do that. I have pretty
much the same training that you do. We'll whip these wimpy Lothalians into shape in no time."

Sabine laughed and lifted the Gauntlet off the ground. "Thank you, then. It'll be nice to have a
friend with me."

Ketsu looked at her, her face turning serious. "I'm glad you consider me your friend again. I
abandoned you once. I'll never do that again."

Sabine glanced at Ketsu, before concentrating on the controls again. "Don't make any promises
you don't intend to keep."

Ketsu crossed her arms over her chest. "I'm not."

Sabine nodded, gave Ketsu a half smile and pushed the ship into hyperspace. "Alright. Welcome to
Clan Crazy, Ketsu Onyo."

Ketsu leaned back in her chair with a satisfied smile. "I'll take it. Clan Crazy sounds good to me.
I've been clanless for a long time."
A/N: This chapter has been changed slightly to reflect the new plot I have in mind for Luxsoka's teenage years.

Luxsoka Forever:

D27/1 BBY, Yavin 4

Ahsoka and Lux entered the stocked to the brim shuttle and she closed the door behind them. "Are you sure you want to do this with me, Lux?" Ahsoka asked. "This will probably take years," she warned again.

Lux turned to face Ahsoka fully, his grey eyes very sure. "Yes, Ahsoka. My answer is still yes. Just like the last hundred times you asked me. I'm not losing you again. I thought you were dead for the longest time. I couldn't bear to live with the thought of not knowing what was happening to you out here while I sat in an office safe and sound."

Ahsoka studied his stormy eyes and knew she was doing the right thing. Lux was perfect. So determined and strong and handsome. A hole in her life had been filled just with his presence. She stepped closer to him. "Thank you, Lux. That means everything to me," she said softly.

Lux moved as well, so they were only a few centimetres apart. He looked down into her amazing big blue eyes and smiled. "Anytime, anywhere. I will always be here for you."

"Lux," she whispered and raised her face a little, inviting him into her space.

Lux wrapped his arms around her and pulled her just a smidge closer and closed the gap between their mouths, kissing her softly and as skilfully as he could manage. Within moments, all the years apart fell away and the familiarity kicked back in. When he pulled back a little and saw her eyes closed and a dreamy expression on her exotic face, a little piece of him danced for joy on the inside. "Still good?" he asked hopefully, the memory of the first time he'd kissed her as a teenager still one of his most cringe worthy memories of all time, even though they'd gotten much better at kissing after that. (Despite the fact that the kiss was meant as a ruse to save their lives from Death Watch, it could have been so much better. Instead, Ahsoka had looked like she'd just made out with a fish.) He'll never forget that look.

Ahsoka opened her eyes and smiled widely, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Still fantastic, Luxi. You can kiss me as often as you want. More now would be good."

Lux grinned and did as requested. Many times. Ahsoka pulled back after five minutes of passionate kissing, tilting her head to the side in question. "Do you think anyone would notice if we didn't leave as quickly as we said we would?"

Lux chuckled and kissed her nose. "I do think they would, and then we'd get interrupted. But if you can wait five minutes, I bet we can have this ship in hyperspace in record time and then we'll have hours to kill."

Ahsoka's eyes lit up at the prospect and she magically disappeared from his arms. Lux laughed to himself again as he followed her to the bridge at a much more normal speed, anticipation racing through him at the hours and days and years to come.
By the time he reached the bridge, she already had their shuttle in the air. Lux didn't bother to sit down in one of the other three chairs. Instead, he walked up behind Ahsoka and rested his hands on her shoulders lightly and leaned over, pressing a soft kiss to the line of her jaw. She sucked in a breath as his kisses continued over to her lek and followed the blue and white stripes downwards until he couldn't reach anymore without the back of the chair cutting off his ability to breathe. Lux made his way back up instead, all the way to the tip of her montral and then kept going to the other side.

Ahsoka moaned at the stimulating kisses that were making her brain shut down. No one had ever kissed her lekku like that since she'd left him and wow she'd forgotten how good that felt. She called on some of her Jedi control to concentrate enough to set the coordinates for the hyperdrive and sighed in relief as the blue and white streaks finally took over the view of black space. She now had three whole hours available before they had to make a new hyperspace jump.

She surged up from the chair and grabbed Lux's hand, dragging his grinning form through the ship and into the cabin she'd claimed as hers. Like a gentleman, Lux had put his things in a different cabin, but it was almost certain that wouldn't last long. As in, not at all.

Ahsoka used her grip on his hand to swing him around and then pushed him backwards onto the bed, where had landed with a laugh. "Someone's eager."

Ahsoka started pulling off her armour pieces while explaining herself. "I swear I have never been so worked up in my life. Your mouth is magic, Luxi, and now you have to finish what you started." Her belt hit the floor with a thud as she paused for breath, eyeballing her chosen mate carefully as she considered her next words. "You should probably know I haven't done this since you."

Lux paused with his shirt halfway up, gaping at her. "I appreciate that to no end, but how is that even possible? Have you seen yourself? You're the most gorgeous woman in the galaxy. You can't tell me no one pursued you over all these years."

Ahsoka felt her face heat at the praise and shrugged, trying to play it cool. "There was a few, I suppose, but I just couldn't make myself get excited for them. You have always been it for me. Togrutas mate for life, whether I ever told you that or not, it makes no difference to how I felt. I've never met anyone else who made me feel as special as you do and I never will."

Lux blinked and then beamed, thrilled that this beautiful, amazing woman had chosen him above all others. He finished pulling off his shirt and then reached forward, grabbing her hands and pulling her down on top of him. They could finish undressing later. First, he needed to kiss her again so he knew he wasn't dreaming. He guided her hands behind his neck and then wrapped his arms around her back. One under the soft weight of her rear lek and the other just above her hips.

Ahsoka needed no further urging to start the kiss, lowering her head to his and exploring his lips with little nibbles at first. She felt Lux's mouth curl up in a smile before he took control and merged their mouths perfectly, tongues exploring and duelling. Ahsoka's fingers buried themselves into his silky brown hair while Lux's hands started exploring the whole back side of her. She shivered as the fingers caressed her rear lek like a whisper and then gasped into his mouth as his other hand found its way inside her skirt. She wasn't sure which hand she liked more and it was making it hard to concentrate on the kissing process. She pulled back to breathe in much needed air and pressed her face into the crook of his neck where it met his strong shoulder, breathing in his wonderful manly scent as he caressed her. She pressed a kiss to his neck in thankful appreciation for the sensations running through her.

Before she even knew it was happening, he suddenly had her upper body as bare as his and he rolled them over on the bed and propped himself beside her on an elbow so he could admire what
he'd uncovered. Lux gazed at her bountiful breasts in wonder, looking bigger than they actually were on her narrow but incredibly strong torso and definitely bigger than he remembered. Her arms were full of lean muscles too, a testament to her lifelong Jedi training.

Ahsoka admired him in return. For a politician who spent his life in meetings and behind a desk, Lux was still fit and muscular. He had a broad chest and shoulders that narrowed down to lean hips and thighs. He wasn't as muscle bound as she remembered her Master or the clones being, (having seen them more than a few times with their shirts off while training in the heat) but that was perfectly understandable considering their vastly different lifestyles. All that being said, Lux's form was more than hot enough for her.

Ahsoka decided that if he was going to gawk at her chest, he might as well get the whole picture, so she hooked her fingers under the waistband of her skirt, leggings, and underwear and shucked them all at once.

Lux stared at Ahsoka's nude, gleaming orange figure in reverent awe. Her lean warrior's body was the epitome of perfection in his eyes.

She let him stare for a minute or so before she grew impatient again. He'd started something on the bridge with his lekku kisses and she wanted him to continue it before she died of neglect. "Lux," she said quietly. And then repeated it again louder when he didn't respond. "Lux."

His eyes darted to hers before he flushed in embarrassment for just staring for who knows how long. "Yes, Soka?"

She raised a brow at the old nickname, but decided she still liked it. "Love me, Lux."

Lux blinked and then smiled wolfishly. "As my Lady commands." He tossed off the rest of his clothes in two seconds flat and then turned his attention back to the togruta waiting for him in the bed. He propped himself beside her again and she turned her head to face him somehow knowing he was going to kiss her. Lux started with a soft, sweet, and loving kiss, putting all of his emotions into it.

Ahsoka returned the kiss eagerly, feeling his emotions in the Force. The glimmers of their old bond shimmered back to life and she fed it eagerly, wanting the exchange of sensations they used to feel through it back.

His kisses moved from her mouth to her jaw and back to her lekku, since he knew how much she adored that. He wanted her as revved up as possible before joining with her so she could get the maximum amount of pleasure from the experience. That got her moaning again, just like he'd hoped, and her eyes closed at the ecstasy coursing through her. Lux raised his free hand and touched her breast gently, loving the pillowy softness of it. As he kissed his way down her lek, he journeyed over to her breasts as well, paying them the proper amount of respect, inspiring the nipples to rise into hard nubs as he sucked on them in turn. A corresponding tingle in his own nipples had him pulling back and looking at her in surprise. "Stars, Soka, the bond still works?"

She nodded, grinning, as she stroked his hard cock in one hand, feeling her pussy tingle at the same time. "Some things will never die, my sweet Luxi. Our bond and our love are definitely on that list."

"And how I love you," he breathed before kissing her briefly before returning to her breasts. His hand trailed down her defined abs to the bare pussy lips, just grazing her to get her used to the attention. He grew bolder as she squirmed on the bed, mouth taking turns now between sucking on her breasts and the ends of her lekku. His fingers stroked her core, finding her clit and massaging it
for a moment and then seeking out her opening and pressing a finger into her dripping slot.

"Lux!" Ahsoka cried as her eyes rolled up from all of the stimulation she was receiving.

He smiled in satisfaction and pressed a second finger into her, diving deep, while his thumb brushed her clit and he sucked hard on the end of a lek. That was enough to send her skyrocketing into a hard orgasm that clenched her pussy on his fingers and bowed her back off the bed. He drew it out for her as long as he could, determinedly ignoring the throbbing of his own desire, knowing his turn would come soon enough.

Ahsoka trembled in the aftermath of the best orgasm she'd had in years. She'd self pleasured of course, because who doesn't? But that didn't even come close to the sensations Lux had just given her. As she came down from the high, she opened her eyes and pulled Lux down on top of her, needing him inside her. Right now. Her insides felt empty as he removed his fingers and she knew his cock would feel so much better. His long, hard length had been throbbing against her leg for the past five minutes and she knew he was more than ready to go.

Lux got the hint as she tugged on his shoulders and settled between her spread thighs, lining himself up with her moist heat, anticipation tensing his muscles. He rested on his forearms on either side of her head and cupped her lovely face in his hands. "Ready?" he murmured.

Ahsoka nodded, not really capable of speech right now.

Lux kissed her, hard and deep, as he found her soaking core and pushed inside. They groaned into each other's mouths as he slid deeper and deeper until he finally hit the end and pressed up tight against her womb. Ahsoka shuddered in his arms and drew back to gasp in air. Lux pulled back slowly and then returned just as slowly, setting a rhythm that would drive them both insane in no time.

Ahsoka wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms around his back, digging her nails in as he rode her core with the patience of a Jedi Master. "Luuuuuxxx," she moaned out as the stimulation started the beginnings of another climax deep inside her.

Lux changed his angle just enough to rub against her clit with every stroke, wanting her to climax again. "Come, Soka," he whispered against her montral. And with the next stroke, she did, clenching hard on his length and making it difficult for him to move, but he thrust through her spasms anyway, using self control he didn't know he had to hold back his own climax at the tremendous stimulation.

When she relaxed around him, Lux changed his pace to something gradually faster and faster, grunting a little with the effort. Her cries and moans echoed his grunts with each fast and deep thrust. Feeling like he was about to explode, he kissed her again quick and hard and then buried himself to the hilt and let his control go. He groaned deep in his chest as the pleasure exploded through him and into her, sending his seed directly into her womb. He had a brief thought about accidentally getting her pregnant and then remembered that their species weren't exactly compatible. The odds were something like one in a million. Instead, he just enjoyed the moment to the fullest as he came over and over into her. It had been a long time since he'd shared pleasure with a partner and he had to think that Ahsoka was still the best. Even if he did all the work this time, it was the most enjoyable one sided lovemaking he'd ever experienced.

Ahsoka smiled sweetly up at him as he finished unloading, and then her smile turned a little wicked. Lux suddenly found himself on his back and Ahsoka over him, hands on his chest and hips grinding over his. "Please tell me you can still do it again?" she asked hopefully.
Lux looked up at her perfect body, her breasts practically in front of his face like an offering, her lekku dangling down and rubbing against his skin with a purpose that drove him nuts, and felt himself instantly harden to what felt like durasteel inside of her. He nodded and gulped, amazed at the recovery time he hadn't experienced since he was a teenager.

Ahsoka smiled like a satisfied toka as she felt his cock lengthen and widen again. "Perfect," she practically purred, leaning down and kissing him leisurely. She rocked her hips against his, grinding with every movement. "It's my turn to drive you insane," she whispered against his ear, nipping the lobe gently.

"Holy kriff," Lux gasped between her kisses. Her lekku just swirled over his nipples and it felt amazing. And her pussy was gripping him as she moved up and down, and it was so wet and hot. The sensations were blowing his mind. For a girl who hadn't done this in approximately eighteen years, she was still outstanding at it.

He didn't realize he said that out loud until she smirked at him. "I might have been alone, Luxi, but that doesn't mean I forgot how to drive you insane."

Lux nodded frantically as she increased her pace on his cock. "Oh, you're doing phenomenal, trust me," he said as she sat up again and braced her hands on his thighs behind her, giving him a jaw dropping view of her perky breasts bouncing with every motion of her hips.

Ahsoka grinned to herself and kept up the pace, happy she had strong thighs because this was an incredible amount of work. She rose and fell as high and hard as she could, almost ready to come again herself. Driving Lux out of his mind was just as fun as ever. She leaned forward again, needing the stimulation on her clit to finish it.

Lux could feel himself getting really close again and wanted them to come together. Knowing that caressing her lekku drove her nuts, he reached up with both hands and stroked them up and down in time with the movement of her hips. In just thirty seconds, that was enough to send her over. As she clenched tight around his shaft, Lux thrust up and let go as they groaned and cried again in unison.

Ahsoka collapsed on his chest, breathing hard, and his arms wrapped around her, hugging her tight with whatever strength he had left. Their eyes closed and they drifted off for a while, just savouring the moment.

Ahsoka's internal clock woke her from her nap on Lux's chest. Knowing she only had a few minutes before they dropped out of hyperspace and needed to set new coordinates for the next jump, she reluctantly sat up and rolled off after pressing a kiss to his chest.

Lux opened his eyes and propped his head on his interlocked fingers, watching Ahsoka slip into her shirt and skirt without bothering with the underwear. That got his heart beating faster than normal again. "You are kriffing sexy," he rumbled out as she turned to leave the room.

Ahsoka stopped just before she walked out the door and looked over her shoulder, winking at him with a smirk, and then walking away with an extra swing in her hips. "Only for you, Luxi," her extra sultry voice floated back from down the hallway.

Lux groaned a little and pulled a pillow over, covering his face with it. He didn't have to look down to know she'd gotten him all hot and bothered again. She'd always had a feisty side, but this was another level. If this was how the whole searching the unknown galaxy thing was going to go, he wasn't sure if he would end up dying from too much love or thriving and thinking this was the best
time of his life. Either way, he was going to enjoy every moment.

With a grunt, he heaved himself off the bed and pulled on just his undershorts. Two could play the teasing game. He headed for the refresher and met her on her way out of the small room. She gave him a blatant look of approval as she looked him up and down. Lux wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her close for a kiss that somehow ended up lasting longer than he intended.

Ahsoka hummed in contentment then pulled away. "Hold that thought, Lux. Duty comes first before pleasure," she said with a twinkle in her crystal blue eyes, again walking away from him with more swing in her hips than normal.

Lux sighed after her retreating form. He still had it bad. And he'd never been happier.

Approximately a day later the red and white T-6 shuttle dropped out of hyperspace at the edge of charted territory, theoretically on the path taken by the purrgil. Ahsoka and Lux looked out at the vast emptiness of space in front of them and both sighed in tandem, making them look at each other and smile at their matching reactions. "Are you ready to bravely go where no senator has gone before?" Ahsoka asked seriously with a straight face.

Lux barked a laugh at the saying from a popular holo show about space explorers that she'd changed to suit her needs and grinned, nodding. "Yes, my darling Soka. Send us onward into this new frontier."

Ahsoka laughed as he butchered more sayings from the show and got to work with the sensors, looking for obstacles in their path so they could make a tiny lightspeed jump in their search for some proof that the 7th fleet had come this way.

It took two days of flying systematically back and forth through an ever expanding grid pattern, but they finally found what they were looking for. From the accounts of the remaining Ghost crew, the purrgil had done quite a bit of damage to the star destroyers before dragging them away. They were hoping that a loose piece of anything would have fallen off while in flight.

And they were right.

The sensors finally picked up a metal object and they flew as fast as they could to its location as it slowly spun through space in an endless flight to nowhere with its momentum never changing with nothing to stop it. They gawked out the transparisteel window at the mostly intact ion cannon that floated in front of them.

"Does that look Imperial to you?" Lux eventually asked.

Ahsoka nodded slowly with a smile forming on her lips. "I've seen enough of their cannons firing at me over the years that I think I would recognize one when I see it."

Lux glanced at her from the co-pilot chair and did a double take. "What's so amusing?" he asked as he noticed her smirk.

Ahsoka smiled even wider. "I don't think it's a coincidence that we found a gun floating in space. Something tells me the purrgil are deliberately removing the guns from the Star Destroyers. Thrawn is not going to be happy about that when he finds out."

"Assuming he's still alive," Lux added.
Ahsoka looked at Lux with a raised brow then stared off into space for a minute, communing with the Force. "I think he is still alive," she said eventually. "The Force has a plan for him as well. No idea what it could be, but maybe we'll find out one day."

Lux hmmed noncommittally. He wasn't convinced that anyone could survive a hyperspace jump made in a broken ship, purrgil towing them along or not. But he supposed if anyone could, it would be a Jedi and the galaxy's most resilient Grand Admiral.
Thrawn's Defeat

Thrawn's Defeat:

D27/1 BBY, Unknown Space

"I see your defeat. Like many arms surrounding you in a cold embrace."

Mitth'raw'nuruodo endured the freezing vacuum of space, held snugly in the purrgil's tentacles, cursing the stupid prophesy of the strange creature on Atallon that kept repeating over and over in his mind. For the last twelve humiliating hours that saying had been replaying like a metronome. Repetitive and never ending.

But like he'd once said to the Emperor, he was a warrior, and warriors will experience victory or defeat, but they never cease to serve. And in this case, he had a duty to his fleet to survive this unexpected displacement and lead them back to safety. Although not the safety of Core space that they would be expecting. He fully intended to keep the 7th Fleet for the Chiss to use in protecting their own section of space against the deadly Far Outsiders and the Empire. Bridger had made one fatal mistake when he directed the purrgil to take his fleet away; Thrawn was quite familiar with the so called unknown regions of space, having memorized the star maps of the Chiss explorers long ago, before going undercover to infiltrate the Empire.

With this newest development Thrawn considered that mission to be completed now. A mission that had lasted for more years than he cared to think about. He had more than enough information to take back to the Chiss Ascendancy on the Empire. And he'd come to his final conclusion as well. The Emperor was not to be trusted and allying with the Empire would be detrimental to the well being of the Chiss. He'd done everything he could to slow down the construction of the Death Star, considering it to be a serious threat to his people, but it had all been for naught now that his Defender program was permanently on hold. Such a shame too, as those fighters were a thing of absolute beauty. At least he had two in the Chimaera's hangar to keep for himself and base future designs of fighters on.

After watching Bridger leave with a cocky smile and an equally cheeky salute, Thrawn counted the seconds, already calculating how long it would take the boy to reach an escape pod. He felt a small thrill of satisfaction when the tentacles loosened at the same time he assumed that the Jedi would be launching away from the Chimaera.

Only another second later, he was immediately wishing for the tentacles to hold him again as the vacuum of space sucked him towards the nearest broken window along with everything that had already left that was not bolted down in the bridge. He scrambled frantically for something to grab onto to save himself and was surprised when the end of a tentacle wrapped around his waist again. Thrawn struggled to his feet with the unwieldy weight around him and the vacuum still pulling at him but he made it happen out of sheer determination. He needed to make it to the nearest work station to activate the shield before he froze to death. Already he could feel that his limbs were resistant to his mind's orders. He'd been in the cold for one minute and fifty-seven seconds already. Too long.

As Thrawn forced his feet in the correct direction, the tentacle went with him, not helping exactly, but not hindering either and preventing him from getting sucked out into space, so he was more than grateful. He almost stopped moving when he heard a, "YOU'RE WELCOME," resound like thunder through his mind, but kept himself on task. With a final lunge, Thrawn finally smacked the emergency shield button and inhaled gratefully in relief as the barely visible blue force shield
covered all of the broken windows and the last of the tentacles withdrew from the bridge, including
the one that had been holding him up.

He gasped in much needed air as the life support systems slowly returned the atmosphere in the
bridge to normal, and shivered uncontrollably, wrapping his arms around himself. Despite this, he
had enough concentration to question the purrgil's actions. "Why did you save me?" he asked out
loud through chattering teeth, wondering if he'd get an answer.

"BECAUSE THE JEDI WANTED YOU GONE, NOT DEAD. AND HOW CAN YOU SAVOUR
YOUR DEFEAT IF YOU ARE NOT ALIVE TO DO SO?"

Thrawn raised a brow and laughed bitterly. "Well, thank you anyway. I suppose I can't talk you
into letting my ships go sooner than later?"

"NO," was the only answer.

He thought about trying to shoot the purrgils into letting his ships go, but that just wasn't
honourable after this one had saved his life.

"A WISE DECISION. BESIDES, WE TORE ALL OF YOUR GUNS OFF LONG AGO," came a
final sentence in his mind with something that sounded an awful lot like gleeful laughter.

And that was the end of the conversation. Resigned to the fact that there was nothing else he could
do at the moment, Thrawn decided that getting warmed up was only fair. And visiting a refresher.
Twelve hours was a serious test of his self control.

He forced his trembling legs to walk towards the exit, finally feeling the ice start to melt off his
skin. He opened the door to find a dozen officers standing and muttering to each other, apparently
trying to decide if they should enter the bridge and save him. They snapped to attention and lined
the hallway at his appearance. Despite the trembling in his limbs, Thrawn drew himself to his full
height and placed his hands at the small of his back in his customary command stance. He raised a
brow at the gawking officers. "I want a full report on damages and a personnel count as soon as
possible. See if you can contact the other ships in the fleet. I want to know their status as well.
Inform them that I will be in touch with each of the captains starting an hour from now."

The officers snapped off a brisk salute and scurried into the bridge to take care of his requests.
Thrawn nodded to himself, making a note of who they were and considering them for promotion.
Most of his usual bridge officers had been lost in the original attack, being tossed out the windows
by the purrgil. Two of these men had escaped the bridge while he and Bridger were otherwise
occupied with their confrontation, but the rest were all junior officers who were stepping up
voluntarily. Thrawn was pleased. He had done his best over the years to staff his personal ship with
the brightest and most trustworthy that he could find, but on a ship that was run by more than 9000
officers and over 27 000 enlisted personnel, not to mention almost 10,000 troopers, not all of the
personnel decisions were his. Thrawn briefly mourned the loss of his experienced senior bridge
staff, but he got past it quickly. The new officers could learn on the job.

His musings had finally brought him to his room, walking at a quick but dignified pace through the
halls, passing shocked looking personnel as he went. He occasionally nodded in acknowledgement
to someone who snapped to attention quick enough, but for the most part, Thrawn ignored them
all. As his door closed behind him, he dashed into his small refresher, never so happy to see a toilet
and a shower with hot running water in his life.

Precisely one hour after entering his cabin, Thrawn strode back into the bridge. His shower and
power nap had left him feeling ready to take on the galaxy once again. Or in this case, the purrgil and the damage they had caused to his fleet. "Status report," he said calmly and loud enough to get the attention of every officer, the number of which he was glad to see had quadrupled since he left.

An eager Lieutenant marched over quickly, datapad in hand which he handed to Thrawn. He scanned the contents as Yarce talked. "The Chimaera is relatively undamaged sir, considering..." he waved a vague hand at the three massive purrgil that could be seen towing their ship. "The ion cannons and turbolasers are all missing from the hull but the shields and engines are still working on an acceptable level. Whenever we get out of this..." again the vague wave of the hand. "We do have some replacement cannons and turbolasers in the hold that we can attach to the hull."

"That is something at least." Thrawn had to admire the purrgil for their foreplanning in removing his guns. Honour or no, he probably would have shot them off the hull sooner than later otherwise, and dealt with the consequences of spinning out of control through space as it occurred. Especially if he knew the purrgil were dragging his fleet further than he wanted to go and would have to use valuable resources to return to Chiss space. Fortunately they had completely restocked the ship at their stop at Coruscant just two days ago. His crew should have enough supplies to feed them for two years. "So the hull is still intact?" he asked. "We haven't lost any of our crew or supplies?"

Lieutenant Yarce made a confused looking head nod / shake thing, trying to answer both questions at once. Thrawn raised a brow and Yarce flushed in embarrassment. "Sorry, Sir." He cleared his throat and pulled himself together. "The hull is fine and aside from your bridge officers and a few troopers that the Jedi killed, all personnel are accounted for."

"And the other ships?"

Yarce sucked in a breath and then spit out his news. "We've established contact with eleven of the twenty ships in the 7th fleet, fifteen of the twenty extra ISD's that were brought in for the blockade, and believe it or not, two of the six construction spheres as well. According to reports, all of the ships in orbit were dragged away, which we hope means that the unresponsive ships have simply lost their communications array. The two ISD's that had entered the atmosphere with us over Capital city received heavy damage but they are also with the rest of us. Those ships lost a lot of personnel and are probably not worth repairing, but we could scavenge them for spare parts and divide those up amongst the rest of the ships."

Thrawn nodded once in agreement and was impressed with his efficiency. "Very good, Lieutenant Yarce. I seem to have lost my second in command. Are you interested in that position?"

The dark haired human male's eyes went wide and he blinked twice, before nodding eagerly, astonished that Thrawn even knew his name, not to mention offering him a significant promotion. "It would be my pleasure, Sir."

Thrawn almost smiled. "Excellent, Captain. I'll comm the other reachable ships from the communications room. Is Captain Pellaeon's ship one of the responsive ones?" Thrawn asked, since Pellaeon had been in charge of the blockade and was an experienced officer not likely to panic in strange situations.

"No, Sir. I'm afraid not."

Thrawn suppressed the urge to sigh. He was afraid of that, after losing communication with Pellaeon earlier. "Very well. Keep up the good work, Captain. When you get a chance, upgrade your bars so the others know your new status."

Yarce nodded again, doing an admirable job of keeping his enthusiasm under control for now.
"Yes, Sir. Thank you again, Sir," he said before saluting and spinning on his heel smartly, walking briskly back and forth on the deck, calling for reports from the stations in the pits below.

Thrawn watched for a minute, happy with his choice of Captain. Nothing like a crisis to bring out the best in people. Or highlight the worst. Fortunately for Yarce and the backup crew that had stepped into command positions without being asked, it was the former. Thrawn made a mental note to talk to each of them later and make sure they all had ranks that matched their new command positions. And with that, he turned on his heel as well and walked into the communications room. He still had a lot of planning to do and Captains to inform of their new status as Imperial deserters. Over the years, Thrawn had been handpicking Captains for his fleet. Men he knew were not one hundred percent in love with the Empire but were ambitious nonetheless. They usually came from worlds that had been overrun by the Empire and had joined the Imperial Navy with no other choice available to them. Or they were old enough to have been loyal to the Republic and weren't in love with the new government system but had wisely kept their mouths shut. In any case, Thrawn was confident in his new fleet for the Chiss. The lesser officers and personnel would go along with whatever their Captains told them to do, because that was how they'd been trained; to not think for themselves and obey orders without question.

There were half a dozen Captains in the extra blockade forces that Thrawn didn't know personally. Those, he would keep in the dark for now, leading them on with lies if necessary, until he found out what kind of people he was dealing with and where their true loyalties lay.

It was a further twenty hours before the purrgil finally dropped out of hyperspace near a green planet. A timeframe that Thrawn calculated would have taken them deep into Unknown space and relatively close to Chiss space. (Assuming that purrgil travel through hyperspace at the same speed that the average ship does.) Thrawn was happy to see the rest of his expanded 7th fleet already there as well, along with all six of the construction spheres. He wasn't sure what to do with those yet, but he had a few ideas percolating.

He watched from the bridge as the purrgils detached themselves from every ship but his, wondering what was up with that. Somehow, he wasn't surprised when he heard a thundering voice in his head again.

"YOUR JOURNEY HAS COME TO AN END, BUT YOUR DEFEAT HAS NOT. THIS IS MY REVENGE FOR YOU SHOOTING ME YESTERDAY."

"Oh, kriff," Thrawn muttered under his breath as the Chimaera was towed directly into the atmosphere of the planet and down to the surface in less than twenty seconds. Not even enough time for a call to abandon ship.

"Full power to the thrusters!" Thrawn yelled as a swamp that went on as far as the eye could see came into view.

Officers complied, but it wasn't enough fast enough, and Thrawn knew it wouldn't be. The purrgils dragged them forward directly above the swamp and dropped them. The engines whined alarmingly and the ship shuddered and then fell like a mountain from the sky into the swamp as gravity won the battle over a ship that weighed too much to hold itself up without full power.

Thrawn was flung off his feet and into one of the pits when the Chimaera crashed into the swamp. His head smacked into a consul and that was it. The former Grand Admiral of the Imperial Military was out like a light.
Rulla's Rescue:

D28/1 BBY, Unknown planet.

Thrawn groaned and raised a hand to feel the rapidly swelling lump on his head. His fingers came away wet with drops of blood. He cursed under his breath and ignored his swimming vision as he tried to stand up. All around him he heard the sound of moans and curses as his crew were all in a similar situation to him. A hand appeared in front of his eyes and Thrawn grabbed it thankfully as the walls spun alarmingly as he made it to his feet.

When things settled down again, Thrawn focused on the concerned face of Yarce. "Status?" he asked, trying to divert attention from his less than ideal state of health.

Yarce opened his mouth to say something and then changed his mind at Thrawn's steely eyed look. Instead, he shook his head sadly. "Frankly, Sir, we're up to our eyeballs in mud. Status is kriffed up beyond all recognition."

Thrawn stifled a sigh and climbed out of the pit so he could see for himself, grateful that his limbs were cooperating and the dizziness was passing. The pounding in his head, on the other hand, was as strong as ever. But that would have to wait. He glared at the pit as he pulled himself up onto the deck. "I think, Captain Yarce, that it is past time for railings to be employed. Or perhaps an entirely different design for the Bridge."

Yarce climbed up onto the deck beside him and grimaced sympathetically. "I agree, Sir. I too went sailing into a pit, but I landed on another officer, not a consul."

Thrawn hmmphed, but moved on to the next subject as he walked to one of the broken windows and looked out. The force shields had failed on impact and some mud and slime had made its way into the bridge from the splash. Thrawn grimaced and stepped in the mud anyway. It was the least of his problems. What he saw made him utter every curse word that he knew, which was quite a lot, but he thought the situation warranted the use. The Chimaera was indeed buried up to its eyeballs in mud and slime. Or to be more realistic; almost to the command bridge at the top of the massive ship. Except for a small amount of grey painted metal in front of him, all Thrawn could see was dark brown water.

"Does anyone know the status of the hull?" he called over his shoulder, concerned about hull breaches and drowning personnel. Anyone in the hangars would definitely be in trouble right now, if they survived at all, being at the bottom of the ship.

"It appears to be intact according to preliminary reports," someone called back. "We've lost them now, but shields were at full power on impact. They seem to have done their job."

Thrawn felt himself relax just a smidgeon in relief. There was still hope then. IF they could get the engines started again. "I want a shipwide status report asap," Thrawn said, turning away from the sight of the swamp and addressing his bridge crew. "If a station doesn't check in right away, send someone to investigate. I need to know the damage reports and if we need to mount any rescue missions. Please warm up the engines again and let's see if we can fly ourselves out of this mud hole. The sooner the better. The hangars will be the worst hit and we need to get them out of the water as soon as possible."
Thrawn turned his attention to Yarce. "Get on the comms and have two of the least damaged ISD's enter the atmosphere above us. If our engines won't get us out of this mess on their own, perhaps a couple of tractor beams will make the difference." Yarce nodded and ran for the communications room.

"Reports coming in now, Sir," a Lieutenant called. "As you expected, the hangars aren't answering comms. Emergency doors are closed due to flooding in the areas in question. Until we get out of the water, Sir, I don't know what we else we can do."

Thrawn tensed up again at the words. He hated that he was right in this circumstance. "I want us out of the water yesterday," he said to the room in general. "I don't care what it takes."

There was a chorus of "yes, Sir's," and an accompanying whine from the engines as someone pushed them into full power faster than they were meant to. Just in time, the two star destroyers he'd asked for appeared above them, casting shadows through the bridge as they blocked the sun.

The Chimaera shuddered and shivered as the thrusters were pushed into full power. Thrawn turned to watch out the window again, holding his breath as more of his ship slowly appeared from the muck. But it wasn't fast enough. The engines were whining horribly as the mud sucked back, holding onto the ship with a death grip. "Use the tractor beams," he called, knowing Yarce would be listening and communicating his wishes.

Ten seconds later, there was a drastic difference as the two ISDs locked onto the Chimaera. They rose out of the swamp faster and faster as the water and mud gave up its hold. The terrible whine and shudder from the engines slowly calmed down to a barely discernable rumble as the stress was removed from them. When Thrawn judged them to be about twenty meters above the swamp he called for them to hover there. He didn't want to attempt going up into space until he was one hundred percent sure that his entire ship was spaceworthy.

Just as he was about to turn away from the window and give Captain Yarce his next orders, Thrawn saw something rapidly approaching in the distance that made him suck in a breath in surprise and shock. "Captain Yarce, organize rescue and cleanup crews and have the hull inspected for any weaknesses or breaches," he said almost absently, eyes trained on the figure that had captured his attention. "I want us back up in space as soon as possible so we waste as little fuel as possible hovering here. And if the engines can take it, the other ISDs can let us go and return to orbit."

Yarce nodded and said "yes, Sirrrrr…?" voice climbing in surprise as Thrawn ducked through a window and actually jogged down the hull of the Chimaera. That was when he spotted what Thrawn had seen. He stared in shock for a moment before kicking himself into action and barking orders to his officers. Thrawn had entrusted him with his ship and he was going to do his very best to please the Grand Admiral.

Thrawn almost ran as he made his way carefully down the slanted hull of the ship to the nose where it was closest to the water. It was a journey that seemed to take forever because the hull was anything but flat and the ship was more than a kilometre and a half long. He jumped over protrusions and down ledges agilely, headache complete forgotten in the excitement of the moment. He came to a skidding stop when he reached the tip of the nose, eyes trained on the approaching sea serpent and its blue skinned rider.

When the massive space ship crashed into the swamp, the thunderous rumble was heard across a good portion of the continent. Rulla'aski'ordo was the only being on the swamp planet who cared though. She looked up, startled, from her seat outside her tiny hut on her equally tiny island. About
a minute later, a wave of repulsive water washed up over her booted feet. Being incredibly bored, she decided to investigate. Absolutely nothing happened on the hellhole of a planet. Nothing. Except for surviving from one day to the next.

Rulla's exploration ship had crashed here twenty something years ago, to the best of her knowledge, when she was just a teenager with her parents and a hundred other scientists and wanderers. Rulla was the only survivor of the crash, and only because she had been standing in the observation platform at the very top of the ship. Everyone else had drowned in the bone crushing mud and water that had swept through the ship on impact. Somehow, out of sheer determination, she'd managed to open a hull access hatch above her head and climbed out before the ship had sunk completely out of sight. She'd found out over the years that some pieces of the swamp were much deeper than others. Her ship had found a deep spot and was never seen again.

Rulla had swum and swum, tears streaming from her red eyes at the loss of her parents and friends, arms and legs screaming from forcing herself through the thick water, until she'd finally found a little island. And there she'd stayed, for a whole week, until desperate hunger had forced her to move on and find something to eat. That was when she found her sea dragon and her miserable existence became liveable. At first she thought that Dio'odo was going to eat her, but Dio was a vegetarian, and he'd shown her where to find edible plants. Dio was one of many sea dragons, but the only one who had ever seemed interested in her. He wasn't a sentient being per say, but an incredibly smart animal nonetheless.

Now Rulla whistled for Dio, a piercing sound that travelled for kilometres over the swamp. Dio's hundred metre long bronze body slithered through the muddy water easily as his form appeared in the distance, quickly closing the gap between them. His shuttle sized head, surrounded by a gold fringe, stopped in front of Rulla and he tilted his head to the side in query.

"Did you see what made the noise?" she asked him in Cheunh, the language of the Chiss, one of the two languages that she knew, Cheunh being the favoured of course, even if it was very complicated to speak. Dio turned his head towards the west and gazed that way for a moment before looking at her with his big gold eyes eagerly. "Shall we go see then?" Dio's large flat toothed mouth widened in his version of a smile. He lowered his head so she could climb on and sit just behind his head fringe. Rulla sprang on and they were off like a laser bolt.

It only took five minutes of rapid swimming for Dio to take them to the downed Star Destroyer, except it wasn't so downed. In fact, it was rising up. Rulla gazed in wonder at the massive ship as it emerged from the swamp, engines roaring. And the two nearly identical ships that hovered above it, rising as it rose. She couldn't see the tractor beams, but she assumed that was their purpose. She thought it was a very clever solution.

As they drew even closer, Rulla noticed a blue skinned figure dressed in white more or less running down the hull of the ship. The tall, athletic looking Chiss came to a halt at the edge only moments before Rulla and Dio reached a spot below where he stood. "Up, Dio," she said, hoping he'd get her meaning. The smart sea dragon did. He slithered forward and upward, his strong narrow body easily lifting them.

Thrawn watched in fascination as a Chiss woman who looked to be in her mid thirties jumped gracefully off her sea serpent and came to a halt in front of him. She was dressed in a curious array of what looked like very sturdy braided seaweed, from her halter top, to her skirt and even her boots. She had a breathtakingly beautiful face surrounded by a multitude of waist length dark blue braids. The contrast between beauty and savage enthralled him, making him want to study her further and in depth. They stared at each other curiously for minutes.
Rulla glanced up and down the male's trim form, instantly attracted to him. He was handsome and regal, hair shorn close to his head, red eyes piercing in their obvious intelligence. He had a lump on his temple and drying blood trickling down the side of his face, but somehow that just made him seem manlier. The white uniform he wore was unfamiliar but looked very impressive with his blue skin, and gave her the impression he was a man who wielded a lot of power. Her breath caught in her throat as she imagined what it would be like to be held and loved by such a man, for she didn't know, not being old enough yet to pick a mate when she was shipwrecked. "Hi," she finally managed to breathe out with a hopeful smile.

Thrawn felt himself smile in return like a lovesick boy. Ridiculous really, considering his age of forty-five, but it had been so long since he'd seen another of his kind. And she was beautiful, and obviously far from home, like him. "Hello," he said in return also speaking Chiss, something else he hadn't done for years. "My name is Mitth'raw'nuruodo, but you may call me Mitthra," he said, surprising even himself at the words that tumbled out of his mouth. Yes, the galaxy knew him as Thrawn, and he'd even grown to think of himself by that name, but that was not his true nickname. He'd allowed the butchering of his whole name for the sake of not having to explain himself over and over again, but he hadn't heard anyone call him his proper nickname for almost twenty years. He missed it as it was reserved for family members or loved ones; something he'd been sorely lacking in for much too long. His brother was gone, but his parents should still be alive. He looked forward to seeing them again when he returned home. But this woman, he would grant her the privilege of his nickname even if he didn't know her yet. He didn't care where she came from or what she was doing here, Thrawn wanted her like he'd never wanted another. Suddenly having his ship crash into the swamp was all worth it, for he had found his one true mate. A male Chiss always knew when they'd found the right one, a secret that was never shared with the females, preferring to let them think they were winning the male on their own terms. It made the relationships a lot smoother and challenging at the same time.

Rulla's eyes widened as she heard his name. He was one of the royal class, the Ascendancy, and technically above her reach. (The longer the last part of their name, the more important they were.) She bowed her head respectfully. "I am Rulla'aski'ordo, my Lord," she said to his boots. "If you wish, you may call me Rulla."

Thrawn placed a finger under her chin, rising her face so she met his eyes again. "It would be my pleasure, Rulla. And please, no formalities. You and I are the only Chiss in this section of the galaxy as far as I know. You are alone, correct?"

Rulla nodded, wide eyed. His finger had left her chin, but she could still feel the impression on her skin as it tingled. "Yes. Our ship crashed here about twenty years ago. I was the only survivor."

"The Duantless?" Thrawn asked with a raised brow.

"How did you know?" Rulla asked, blinking in astonishment.

Thrawn smiled a small satisfied smile at solving another puzzle. "Your ship never returned when it was supposed to and I was paying attention to exploration ships at the time. That was twenty-five years ago."

Rulla sucked in a shocked breath. "Oh my. That means I'm thirty-nine years old now. I had no idea. I've been here so long and so alone." A loud rumble from behind her made her amend her statement. "Except for Dio'odo of course."

Thrawn glanced at the serpent that had its chin resting on the edge of his ship, gold eyes staring at him disconcertingly. "Of course. This may be presumptuous of me, but would you like to join me in my journey home, Rulla?"
Rulla's mouth spread into a slow wide smile, showing straight white teeth. "I would love to, Mitthra. I've wanted off this swamp for a very long time."

Thrawn felt an answering smile cross his face. "Excellent." He nodded towards her serpent. "Now, my ship was submerged and I'm worried for my men. Would your creature be willing to carry us to the hangars of the ship?"

Rulla turned and looked at her sea dragon. "Dio?" He blinked his big gold eyes once. She turned back to Thrawn and grinned. "He says yes."

Thrawn raised a brow sceptically but assumed she knew the creature well enough to interpret its facial expressions. He gestured towards it. "Shall we?"

Rulla nodded and mounted her sea dragon, patting a spot behind her.

Thrawn gingerly swung a leg over the wide neck, settling himself close to the lusciously shaped woman and placing his hands lightly on her narrow waist for balance. He had to practice some serious self control to not get too excited by her proximity and enticing scent that seemed to surround him. As the serpent lowered itself back towards the water and swam under the ship, he looked up and concentrated on looking for damage. All he saw was mud encrusting his dripping ship, grimacing as drops of grimy water fell on them. He might have to throw out this uniform after today, he thought. He doubted the cleaning droids would be able to save it.

They soon came to the first hangar, visible as a large opening in the bottom of the ship and Rulla said "up," again. Dio did as asked and surged upwards into the hangar. The force shields had failed shipwide during the crash, letting the water and mud in. Much of it had drained as the ship rose, but too much remained, covering everything in the hangar in muck. Thrawn saw that this hangar, which held troop transports and shuttles were missing a few of the Lambda class shuttles and most of the transports, having been sucked down into the mud, never to be seen again. He also saw a depressing number of bodies floating in the remaining water, knowing that many more were probably lost to the swamp. There were a few survivors wading through the knee deep water though, checking the floaters for signs of life. Some were emerging from inside the transports where they'd managed to take refuge, so that was good as well. Seeing as there was nothing he could do here that wasn't already being done, he pulled his comm off his belt and updated Yarce on hangar one's status.

They moved on to the next hangar. The one with his fleet of TIEs and the two Defenders. These had all thankfully been strapped down and had all survived the dunking, much to Thrawn's relief. There was the same situation with the mud and the bodies though. It was very depressing. Being one of the large open spaces on the Star Destroyer, the hangars were also used as a training yard for the troopers. An unfortunate thing, right now. Thrawn commed Yarce with the update on that hangar as well.

They continued on to the last hangar. The Walker hangar. Here they found even more chaos as the Walkers that hadn't been sucked out of the ship were almost all on their sides or crumpled up and toppled onto each other. More mud and bodies. But also more survivors as the troopers had more to hang on to. With the troopers wearing their helmets, they had a decent chance of surviving a short submersion in water.

Thrawn's sensitive ears heard a banging from inside one of the Walkers that had another Walker on top of it, blocking the hatch. Rulla heard it too. She immediately pointed Dio at the four legged AT-AT and he obliging pushed the large metal vehicle off of the one below it with his nose. The hatch popped open and four troopers emerged, somehow managing to convey shock while wearing identical helmets at the sight of the sea dragon staring at them. Thrawn almost laughed. The
troopers were mostly useless at anything but intimidation tactics with sheer numbers, but he secretly found them amusing. In his opinion, the Empire should have kept the Clones, being far superior warriors to the conscripted troopers they now had. The troopers were just one of the Empire's many flaws, but Thrawn was willing to keep them in his fleet, since he already had them.

Rulla patted Dio at a job well done. "What next?" she asked Thrawn as they watched the four troopers scramble off the Walker and into the muddy pond at their feet.

Thrawn thought for a moment. "Back to the bridge I think. There's nothing else we can do here. All that is left is cleanup and I have thousands of personnel and troopers for that."

Rulla nodded and turned Dio back to the exit. Dio swam down the length of the ship and then rose again, more than half of his body rising out of the water so he could reach the command bridge with his head. Thrawn and Rulla stepped off onto the hull near a broken window. Rulla stroked Dio's nose affectionately. "I'm afraid this is goodbye, my friend. I wish you a long and satisfying life."

Dio stared at her sadly, nudged her once with his nose, and then turned and left, sinking down into the water and swimming away swiftly.

"I'm going to miss him," Rulla said, tears forming in her red eyes, making them glisten like rubies, as she watched her only friend of the last twenty-five years leave her for the last time.

Thrawn had never been one for affectionate gestures, but right now he felt compelled to intertwine his fingers with hers in support.

Rulla looked at him gratefully for a moment before staring off into the distance again, straining to catch the last glimpse of Dio's shiny bronze body. When he was definitely out of sight, she shuddered in a breath for courage and then turned to face the handsome Chiss male fully. "Thank you, Mitthra," she said softly, for being patient, and for taking her in.

Thrawn gazed at her understandingly. He raised his free hand and brushed a braid behind her ear. The navy blue hair was soft despite its braided state. He couldn't wait to see it unbound and flowing around her body. Preferably in his bed. He knew she would look stunning against his white sheets. But he was a patient man. He could wait for her to let him know when she was ready for a relationship. And he had no doubt they would be joined in every sense of the word. He'd met many aristocratic Chiss women before he'd left on his long term mission, and not a single one of them had affected and called to him like this one did. He didn't even care that she was beneath him in terms of status. Thrawn had been away from home long enough that the Ascendancy's rules no longer meant as much as they used to. He was going to make this woman his wife and the Ascendancy could go hang itself if they didn't like it. He'd dedicated most of his life to a mission for his people. Thrawn was finally going to do something for himself.
Sabine woke up instantly when her alarm went off at 0500, sitting up quickly and looking around the cabin on the Gauntlet in confusion, somehow expecting Ezra to be with her and wondering where the romantic candlelight and music had gone. She sighed as she realized she'd just had the most erotic dream starring her missing husband. It had involved a lot of very expensive melted chocolate and licking said chocolate off of each other for many bliss filled hours. Force, she missed Ezra. And, kriffing hell, she needed to get rich enough to afford all that chocolate and live out that fantasy as soon as she got him back.

Sabine sighed again and slipped off the bed. She had a planet to organize and today was day one. Yay.

Cerulia

Ezra was reluctantly dragged from his newest favourite fantasy dream by the sound of voices speaking in his vicinity, the sweet taste of chocolate and Sabine on his tongue. As he became more aware, he listened carefully, keeping his eyes closed and his breathing even, assessing the situation, since the last thing he remembered was passing out in the escape pod.

"It's been almost a whole day, Link. Is there any change in his condition?" a mature sounding female voice asked.

"Not yet, Master Tia," a male voice replied. "But he grows stronger by the hour. I've healed his blaster wound and given him as much energy as I could. The rest is up to him."

Blaster wound. Right. Now Ezra remembered that too, and he realized as he lay on a relatively soft bed that his shoulder didn't hurt anymore. In fact nothing hurt and he felt pretty fantastic, all things considering. Ezra wondered how he'd been healed so quickly. He'd had blaster wounds before, and they usually took days to heal, even with a bacta patch. From what the woman was saying, he'd only been here for less than a day. And did the man call her Master? Now there was a riddle. He could think of a few reasons for a man to call someone Master, but he was really hoping it was in the sense of a Jedi Master and not a slave Master. He also noticed he didn't seem to be wearing much in the way of clothing, for he could feel the light sheet that covered him and the sheet below him. That was somewhat disturbing.

The woman sighed. "You'd think by now I'd have learned the art of patience, but I'm not the only one dying to know where he came from. And he needs to be awake to tell us that."

As a pressing need to use the refresher became much too apparent, Ezra decided now was a good time to wake up. He opened his eyes and pushed himself upright, looking around curiously. He was in a medical facility of some sort, based on the equipment around him and the other empty beds, but it looked strangely put together. The walls were all made of durasteel, but had the appearance of being reformed to a new purpose based on the many welds in unusual places.

There were two people in the room with him; a middle aged, blue female nautolan and a male something that appeared to be in his prime. The male had a human face and eyes, but short tentacle
like spikes all over his head. He was also a very interesting luminous shade of grey. Ezra had never seen anything like him. A few similar species, but nothing exactly the same.

They both noticed his movement and smiled at him as they came over to his bed.

"Oh good, you're awake," Master Tia said.

Ezra smiled in return. "It would appear that way," he joked. "I know you're very curious about me and I am just as curious, but I have to ask. Where's the refresher?"

Both Tia and Link blinked than laughed. Link pointed to a nearby door that Ezra would swear came from a ship. "Through there. Are you alright to get up on your own?"

Ezra nodded and swung his legs off the bed, grateful that he was still wearing his undershorts at least. He put his feet on the floor and tested his legs. They held his weight without any problem so off he went, walking with as much dignity as he could muster to the refresher door.

Ezra looked in the room and then glanced back over his shoulder. "Is it okay if I take a shower too?" It had been days since he had a shower and he was feeling it.

"Be my guest," Link said. "There are clean towels in the cupboard in the corner. I'll be here when you get out."

"Thanks," Ezra said before disappearing into the room.

He remerged fifteen minutes later feeling a million times better, dressed in his freshly laundered clothes that had magically appeared in the room while he was in the shower. He didn't even care who had put them in there, he was just grateful to not be walking around in his undershorts anymore.

The person called Link was the only one in the clinic. Ezra assumed he was a doctor based on earlier conversation and the feeling that this was his place. Link looked up from making notes or whatever at a desk and smiled at Ezra. "You look better. Your energy signature is much stronger too. When we found you, your signature was pretty depleted. We all want to know what you've been doing to be that exhausted."

Ezra just stared at the doctor. Since when do medics talk about energy signatures? "Are you a Force user?" Ezra asked curiously, as that was the only conclusion he could come up with that made any sense.

Link raised a hairless brow. "Of course. Can you not feel it? Because I can sense the Force in you."

Ezra blinked and then opened himself up to the Force, assessing the other male, and yes, he did feel something from him. He resonated in the Force in roughly the same way that Kanan, Ahsoka, Master Yoda, and Master Kenobi did. "I guess I do," Ezra answered. "I only know four other Force Users and we don't exactly go around sensing other people just because."

Link gawked a bit. "Only four other Force Users? That can't be possible. Master Tia said that there are thousands of Jedi in the galaxy and since you don't feel like the Dark side, we assumed that you were one of them."

Ezra breathed deeply once at the hint of pain the Force shot through him at the reminder of the loss of the Jedi. He shook his head sadly. "You assumed correctly. I am a Jedi, but as of this moment, I'm one of only three left alive who more or less call themselves that." At Link's shocked look, Ezra kind of felt sorry for him. "There is a lot going on in the galaxy right now and it's going to take
some explaining. And we haven't even introduced ourselves."

Link stood from his seat at the desk. "You're right. Where are my manners? Then again, I've never had any call to use them. You're the first visitor to our planet in more than two hundred and fifty years." He walked forward and bowed slightly. "My name is Link and I am the only land doctor here on Cerulia and I am a Force Healer."

Ezra had heard of those, but of course had never met one. That explained how his shoulder was healed already. There was barely even a scar when he'd looked at himself backwards in the mirror. He bowed in return. He'd never seen this routine before, but went with it. And wait a minute? Did he say the only LAND doctor? "I'm Ezra Bridger, Jedi Knight, from Lothal. And we have a lot of mutual explaining to do."

Link laughed and indicated a door that led out of the clinic. "Come on, Ezrabridger. You should meet the others and we'll do all the explaining at once."

Ezra smiled. "Great. And it's just Ezra. You can call me Ezra. Bridger is my last name."

Link nodded in understanding and led him outside. Ezra blinked his eyes to adjust to the bright sunlight. All of the buildings around him looked like they were made from scrap metal but were well put together regardless. The small village of metal buildings was perched at the edge of a beach that overlooked a vast teal blue ocean. And behind the village there was a small green covered mountain range. Ezra thought it was very pretty here and said so.

Link looked pleased. "I'm glad you like our world. We love it as well. The life is simple up here on the land, but I prefer it to the chaos of the ocean cities. And I turned out a bit too human to do well down there anyway," he said pointing to his normal looking human blue eyes.

"Ah," Ezra said as he was starting to get an idea of what the story was with his new home. Most of the people they passed as they walked towards the biggest building in the village were human or human hybrids, with either the spiky tentacles or the long ones of a nautolan like Master Tia. Humans obviously weren't native to this planet but they'd been here for at least two hundred and fifty years. He was guessing all of the buildings were made from a crashed space ship. One that had at least one Jedi on it. And they still practiced the ways of the Jedi, if Master Tia was anything to go by.

Link led him to a large building that had been constructed in the shape of a circle and opened the door for him. Ezra and Link entered and were followed by what looked like the entire village, who'd trailed after them curiously. The large open space appeared to be used for many purposes. There were stacked tables and chairs against a wall, indicating they had communal meals often enough to need them. At the moment there appeared to be lessons going on in the space. Master Tia had a group of children around her and she was instructing them on floating small objects with control and precision. A red haired girl who looked close to Ezra's age was in charge of an older group of children and they were practicing Form II with some sort of glowing sword; none of which were the same colour.

Ezra soaked in the atmosphere of the big room with great pleasure. With his Force senses open, he could feel all of the Force Users in the room and it was almost overwhelming. And as he began to sort things out, he realized the humming in his mind was coming from the swords. Were they Kyber crystals? Was that even possible? The strength in the Force here was something he'd never felt before. The only thing that came close was the Jedi Temple on Lothal, and that was the Temple itself that felt strong, not a sheer number of Jedi.

"Wait 'til you feel it in the underwater cities; over ninety percent of the world's population are
Force users but not Jedi per se." Link said, surprising Ezra.

"What?" Ezra exclaimed.

Link flushed a little. "Sorry, that was rude. I forgot you're not used to us. We're highly telepathic, so if you don't want every Cerulian in your vicinity hearing your thoughts, you might want to learn to shield them. Oh and they don't talk out loud. You'll get used to it."

Ezra blinked. "Okay. That's going to take some getting used to. My Master and I had a strong bond that let us feel each other's emotions but we didn't exactly hear each other's thoughts all the time. I do know how to shield though. There are just some things you don't want your Master knowing."

Link laughed. "I totally get where you're coming from."

By now everyone had stopped what they were doing and were all looking curiously at Ezra. And the herd of people behind them were waiting patiently for them to move further forward into the room. Ezra and Link walked up to Master Tia's group at the far end of the room. The children made way for them, backing up a little but quickly surrounding Ezra and looking up at him curiously. Master Tia was sitting on a raised cushion in a cross-legged fashion, dressed in a simple short tunic and robe of a bright gold colour that complimented her blue skin tone. Her skin was lightly crinkled around her massive unblinking brown eyes and she held herself tall and straight, reminding Ezra of royalty. Ezra got the impression that she was very important on this planet. And this time, Ezra remembered to shield his thoughts. He wouldn't want to offend anyone if he was wrong.

Link smiled at Tia. "Master Tia, may I present Ezra Bridger, Jedi Knight, from Lothal. And Ezra, this is Master Tia Fisto, formerly of Coruscant, Queen of the Cerulians. We've come to appease your curiosity," he said teasingly to the Queen.

Tia smiled fondly at Link. He was related to her husband in some distant fashion and she considered him one of her family. She turned her attention to Ezra. "Welcome to Cerulia, young Jedi. I so look forward to hearing your stories."

Ezra bowed respectfully to the Queen. "And I yours, your Highness."

Tia waved a hand dismissively. "None of that Highness business. Call me Master Tia. Everyone does. My husband might be the King, but I have very little to do with running the planet. I train the younglings, as you can see."

At that moment, the doors opened again and a dozen full blooded Cerulians entered the room. People made way for them instantly as they walked to where Master Tia held the center of attention. At the front of the group was a large male who carried himself with a regal bearing that made Ezra instantly think he was the king of these people. His suspicions were confirmed when Master Tia rose gracefully to her feet and walked forward to meet him, exchanging a chaste but loving kiss. A teenage male split off from the group and stood beside the red haired girl, interlacing their fingers together and looking at her adoringly.

Tia led the king the last few steps towards Ezra by their interlocked hands. "Ezra, this is my husband, Wayve, King of Cerulia. We're actually celebrating our two hundred and fiftieth wedding anniversary tomorrow." Ezra's jaw almost dropped as she continued the introductions. "And, love, this is Ezra Bridger, a Jedi Knight from Lothal."

Ezra had enough presence of mind to bow to the King and answer appropriately upon being introduced, but he was still reeling over the fact that these people were more than two hundred and
fifty years old. Assuming they were around twenty when they got married, that made them ancient
in his eyes. But they really didn't look it. Now Master Yoda on the other hand, who Ezra had heard
was something like nine hundred years old, he'd looked it. Ezra almost wished he was an
amphibian so he could have that kind of lifespan with Sabine. But they were humans and were
lucky if they hit a hundred and twenty. Thinking about Sabine made him miss her something
awful, and it had only been a couple of days since he'd last seen her. And he'd been asleep for half
of that.

"I might be able to help you with that," Ezra heard a deep sounding voice say in his mind. He
realized he'd forgotten to shield his thoughts again. He was going to have to work on that.

"Help me with what?" Ezra asked curiously.

"Seeing your wife again," the King replied. "We're all assuming you have no current way to get off
this planet and will be a guest here for some time. I can teach you how to project your image to
her, if you are open to learning."

Ezra nodded eagerly. "I would love that very much. Thank you."

King Wayve smiled. "Glad to be of help. Tia says you have stories to tell and Link says that the
Jedi are almost extinct. If you would be so kind as to think clearly about everything you wish us to
know, I'll forward it to the rest of us. Much faster than talking."

Ezra nodded and concentrated on centering himself. He closed his eyes and almost went into a
meditative state. And then he started at the beginning of when the galaxy changed as far as he
knew it, assuming that Tia would want to know what she'd missed being here for most of her life.
Ezra thought about the war between the Republic and the Separatists. How the Republic fought
with Jedi and Clones, and the Separatists Dark siders and droids. He thought about how both sides
were meant to lose so that Emperor Palpatine could use the war as an excuse to take over the
galaxy. He thought about how the Clones had been used to exterminate their Jedi commanders and
brothers at arms against their will with implanted chips in their brains. How the Emperor was really
a Sith Lord who now commanded Darth Vader and an unknown amount of Inquisitors to do his
bidding, eliminating Force sensitives and surviving Jedi as they found them. He thought about how
the Empire had brought suffering and strife to the galaxy, turning a blind eye to slavery and ruining
worlds as they wished for the resources. Ezra gave a brief history of how he met Kanan and the
Ghost crew and his life with them and some of the battles they fought and the other Jedi he'd met.
(Ahsoka might not call herself a Jedi anymore, but Ezra considered her to be one.) He finished with
the final battle to free his planet and the trip he'd taken with the purrgil to remove Thrawn from a
position of power in the Empire. His last thought was that he was grateful to the purrgil for
delivering him to such a nice planet with people who understood him and that he was eager to learn
anything about the Force that they'd be willing to teach him.

Ezra opened his eyes to see everyone around him looking shocked and sympathetic. "That is quite
the story," Tia finally said, her big eyes shining with tears. "I do remember a time, about eighteen
years ago, when we all felt a great disturbance in the Force. It had felt like the Force was
mourning. Now I know why. The loss of so many Jedi at once was a great blow to the Force. I am
glad to hear that Master Yoda is still alive though. I remember him from when I was a youngling.
He was one of my teachers in the Temple. What surprises me the most is that Master Guji never
told me about a second Jedi Purge."

Ezra looked blank at the name. "Who?"

"My Master," Tia replied. "He is one with the Force now, but visits frequently. I'm sure you'll meet
him sooner than later. I can sense your curiosity. If you will allow, Wayve can show you my
Ezra nodded once and closed his eyes. Images immediately flooded his mind but quickly slowed down to something he could understand as Wayve sensed his discomfort. Ezra saw a teenage version of Tia and her Master on a ship, exploring space. He saw the crash and her first meeting with the Cerulians. He saw them move the massive star ship with the Force through the ocean. Ezra saw them build a village out of the ship. Saw both Tia and her Master fall in love and get married, rewriting the Jedi code to suit their new life. Saw them teaching scores of younglings how to be Jedi. Saw Master Guji’s death as he gave himself to the Force when his body was too old to function properly anymore. Saw the generations of descendants come and go, some Force sensitive, some not. But more and more so as they married the Cerulians and raised hybrids. The last thing he was shown was his escape pod crashing into the sea.

Ezra opened his eyes and smiled in wonder. Centuries of history had just been passed to him in minutes. What a wonderful way to learn new things. "Thank you," he said to both Tia and Wayve. "You have an amazing legacy here," he said to Tia.

She smiled widely. "Yes, I do. Not sure what the old Council would think of it, but the Force seems to approve. That's good enough for me."

Ezra smiled back. "Kanan and I disregarded the no attachments rule as well, so I perfectly understand."

Tia and Wayve grinned as they glanced at each other with love shining clear in their eyes to see. "Would you like to see my world now, Ezra?" Wayve asked.

Ezra nodded eagerly, closing his eyes and expecting to see more images. They popped open again when he heard an actual audible laugh from the King.

"Not that way. In real life," his voice said with clear amusement in Ezra's mind.

"But isn't that underwater?" Ezra stammered. "I can't breathe underwater."

"Don't worry, we solved that problem long ago," Wayve said with a smile. He turned and walked towards the exit, Tia's hand still held tightly in his and his retinue following in his wake.

Ezra glanced at Link and received an encouraging nod, so Ezra followed the Cerulians. This was bound to be interesting.

As Ezra followed the Cerulians towards the exit of the big round building he saw the teenage couple exchange a quick kiss before the girl joined her group of older younglings with Master Tia's younger ones. The tall luminous blue skinned boy jogged over from across the room and fell into step beside Ezra. "Hi," he said in Ezra's mind with a wide, tooth filled smile. "I'm Raign, and that's my girl, Krystal," with a nod of his head at the red haired girl. "Grandfather said I'm to be your shadow until you get used to how things work here."

Ezra smiled back at the boy who topped him by a head but looked about the same age as him. "Great," he replied out loud, already sensing that they were going to become easy friends. "Everything sure is different here."

Raign chuckled as they walked out the door and back into the sunshine. "I suppose you would think so. You're life is much different from mine. And you don't have to speak your words if you don't want to. Just think them at me and I'll get them."

Ezra raised a brow and then smirked a little. "Alright then," he said aloud again before adding a
very joking, "Testing, testing. This a test of the Raign frequency," as loudly as he could think in his
mind.

Raign winced and laughed as well as all of the Cerulians leading the way down to the beach,
clearly overhearing their conversation. "I think every Cerulian in a hundred kilometre radius just
heard your test of the Raign Frequency," the King said to Ezra, laughter in his mental tone. "Raign
Frequency. I like it."

"You know I'm never going to live that down, right?" Raign said with a sad shake of his head to
Ezra.

Ezra shrugged and smiled apologetically. "Could be worse." He looked at the ocean that the others
had disappeared into with a graceful dive. "Now what? Cause honestly, I'm not even all that great
of a swimmer. I think I've gone swimming maybe five times in the last four years."

Raign gawked at him in astonishment. "I can't even imagine a life without swimming in it."

Ezra showed him a mental picture of the endless sea of grass on Lothal. "Where I grew up, this was
my ocean. We actually did have oceans, but what little beaches we had were made off limits to the
public by the Empire. Sometimes us kids would sneak down to the beach in the dark and splash
around a bit, but that doesn't really count as swimming. It wasn't until I met my new family that I
learnt to swim for real on one of our rare holiday trips."

"You poor thing," Raign thought. "We'll have to work on your swimming then. But for now, I'll do
all the work. You just relax and enjoy your ride, courtesy of Raign Transportation."

Ezra laughed as the other boy expanded the new joke, wondering what he meant. His laughter died
as he felt himself being lifted off the ground with the invisible hand of the Force. Raign had his
eyes closed and a hand reaching toward Ezra. Then he pressed his hands together and spread them
apart creating a shield bubble around Ezra, trapping air inside the shield with him. Ezra couldn't see
the shield but he could feel its energy. "This is amazing," Ezra complimented.

Raign opened his huge black eyes with a triumphant smile. "This is how Krystal gets to my house.
She can swim, but like you, can't breathe under the water. Since you can use the Force too, you
should be able to do this for yourself sooner or later." While he'd been talking, Raign had pushed
his Force bubble into the ocean, Ezra still floating in the middle of it. Ezra was astonished at the
control Raign showed over his Force talent as the other boy swam and kept Ezra alive in a bubble
made entirely of the Force. And talking too. Ezra suddenly felt like his Force tricks were juvenile
in comparison and that he still had a lot to learn; more than he'd ever even knew that there was to
learn.

"From what I've seen of what you know, you're doing very well for only four years of training,"
Raign said as he swam and pushed Ezra's bubble at an astonishing speed Ezra thought was pretty
similar to what an A-Wing could do in atmosphere, making it almost impossible to see any details
of the ocean they were speeding through. "I've had almost twenty years of practicing the Force in
comparison. We grow up using the Force in everyday life. Those not born with a Force sensitivity
are considered handicapped and need a companion to help them with many things in our world."

"That's sad," Ezra thought.

"True," Raign replied, "But it's the way of things here."

"How is it that so many of you are connected to the Force? That is extremely unusual as far as I
know."
Ezra felt Raign's anticipation as he said, "You'll see soon enough. You should be able to feel it in the next few seconds."

"Feel wha... Oh!" Ezra thought when he suddenly heard the familiar but faint singing of a Kyber crystal again. And with every second the singing grew clearer until there was a whole symphony of Kyber crystals humming through his whole being to the point where he thought it might get too loud to bear but it never did.

Five minutes later they turned a corner around an underwater cliff and there in front of them was a glowing rainbow city made entirely of Kyber crystals that grew from the ocean floor. Each crystal looked like a normal massive crystal at the bottom but then as you looked up the length there were protrusions for doorways, balconies, and even entire rooms. Many of the crystals reached all the way to the surface of the ocean and above. Some of the crystals were narrow, about the width of the Ghost. Many of them were big enough to hold three or four Ghosts side by side. And then there was the focal point of the city. The gleaming blue crystal would easily hold a Star Destroyer.

Ezra's ability to breath was severely hampered by his brain shutting down at the jaw dropping sight. Raign let him gawk for several moments, uninterrupted, before saying, "Welcome to IncandesCity, capital city of Cerulia."

"It's beautiful," Ezra breathed out loud, temporarily forgetting about mind talking. It's a good thing he was in an air bubble, or he would have just swallowed a lot of water. "No wonder you're all Force sensitive with this as your home. There are more cities like this?"

Raign grinned at Ezra. "Yes there are. About a hundred of them scattered all over the globe. We live wherever the Kybers naturally grow. I'm glad you like ours. Wait until you see the Palace. It's the biggest Kyber crystal on the planet. That's where we're going first. Grandfather is waiting for us. Along with practically everyone else. As you can tell, we're a curious bunch and not a lot happens around here. You, my friend, are the most exciting thing since Grandmother's ship fell from the sky."

And with that, Raign pushed Ezra's bubble towards the city, a lot slower than before, so Ezra could appreciate the rainbow of colours as they approached. "Do the Kybers naturally grow like this? All colourful and with those shapes?" he asked.

"No," Raign replied. "All the newly forming crystals are actually clear. They take on the preferred colour of the person or family that lives there as they bond with their crystals. When making a new home, the person lives with a forming crystal for days, weeks, or years, depending on the size of the home, picturing how they want it to finish in their minds. So you better have a good idea of the layout of your home before you start or could end up with a very confused looking house. You can make small changes with a lot of concentration and cooperation from your crystal but we try not to do that to them."

"That's amazing. So you need to be Force sensitive to make a house," Ezra said, making a statement more than a question as he figured things out.

"Yeah. And to get in the doors and use the lifts. The nulls, as we call them, are usually paired with a Force sensitive of the same age when they're about two years old. More often than not, they end up married. We have a few people who are especially good at sensing possible bonded relationships and they're in charge of the nulls."

Ezra chuckled as they approached what appeared to be the Palace's main doorway as it was massive. "I'm married to a null, and I can guarantee you that she'd have an absolute fit at being dependant on me and being called that." He thought of some of Sabine's more explosive temper tantrums for Raign's benefit. The week she was learning to use the Darksabre was probably the
most notable. She'd stormed off in a huff at least a dozen times when Ezra was trying to teach her
the basic Forms, but always came back eventually for more.

Raign laughed. "That sounds like my Krystal. She's just as fiery, although now that she's officially
Master Tia's padawan, she's getting better at keeping her temper. She has to set a good example for
the younglings, you know."

"Of course," Ezra said with an answering grin.

Raign swept them through the main arched doorway and into a huge open chamber. Hundreds of
Cerulians were gathered in the space, floating easy in the water, their skin varying in colour from a
rich grey to the darkest of blues and everything in between. Most of them had spiky tentacles, but a
few had the long tentacles of a nautolan. He assumed they had to be related to Master Tia like
Raign.

"That's correct," Raign said. "Those are all part of my family, although just a small fraction of it.
You'll meet them all eventually. We're very long lived so we try to have just two children per
couple, but even that tends to accumulate over the years." Raign waved at the curious people
cheekily so Ezra did the same while Raign pushed them past the crowd to the back of the room
where an extra tube ran up from the floor and into the ceiling of the level above them.

Raign directed Ezra's bubble into the tube and then joined Ezra inside his bubble so he could fit in
the tube as well. He looked down at the floor under their feet and made a rising motion with his
hand. The floor rose quickly, shooting them up the tube past at least fifteen floors. When Raign
sensed they were close to the floor he wanted, they slowed down and came to perfect stop level
with the floor. This part of the tube had an extra layer of kyber wall around it forming a small
room. He made a gesture and the door of the tube opened. He walked out of Ezra's bubble, pulled
Ezra out of the tube and then sent the lift floor back down to ground level before closing the door.
Sensing Ezra's curiosity, he explained. "Most of us just swim up and down the tubes, but I wanted
to show you how they work in case you ever want to use one like a lift." The water that had come
out of the tube with them sat on the floor of the small room. Raign waved a hand and a small
opening appeared in the floor, the water draining away quickly.

Raign grinned at Ezra. "Thank you for choosing Raign Transportation. We look forward to being
of service again in the future." And with that, he snapped his fingers and Ezra's Force bubble
disappeared and Ezra's feet touched the floor again.

"That was officially awesome," Ezra thought to Raign.

Raign's grin widened. "You're welcome." He waved a hand at the door in front of them and it slid
into the wall, giving Ezra a view of a large luxurious throne room. All of the furniture was made of
Kyber crystals of different shades and shapes. The Throne that the King sat upon sideways with his
legs over one side was a deep shining gold. Master Tia was sitting on Wayve's lap and they looked
like they were having a very serious conversation as they stared into each other's eyes. Scattered
around the room were other chairs and couches, all in shades of yellow or orange so they
contrasted with the blue floors and walls but didn't steal the thunder of the brilliant gold throne.
There were Cerulians in most of the seating arrangements, talking in little groups. All without a
sound. It was quite disconcerting.

"You'll get used to it," Raign laughed.

He was about to close the door when Ezra stopped him with a hand. "Can I try?"

Raign made a sweeping gesture with his arm. "Be my guest."
Ezra stared at the Kyber wall that the door had disappeared into, then closed his eyes, feeling the Kyber crystal and how alive it was. This wasn't just closing a door like on a ship; this was moving a piece of something that was more or less alive. He smiled as he felt himself sync with the hum of the Palace's Kyber crystal and waved a hand. The door slid closed without a sound, sealing the air into the room. "Hey, where does the air come from?"

Raign looked up at a small hole in the wall near the ceiling. "If we want them to, the crystals will grow all the way to above the surface of the ocean higher than the waves reach and leave tubes open for air to cycle in and out. The walls are riddled with air vents and water drainage pipes. There's even a system that takes care of the refresher facilities, as you call them, which leads to an ocean current that sweeps past the city and further into the ocean. Not everyone wants air rooms so not all of the crystals go all the way to the surface. Those houses are much easier to imagine as they form."

"Well, you can consider me impressed," Ezra thought with wide eyes.

"Glad you like our homes," said the King, walking up to Ezra and Raign. "This Palace has been the home of my family for more than five thousand years. A lot of work was put into it as it formed over the course of a century. I've added more air rooms since the humans crashed here, but other than that it has stood unchanged in all that time." He nodded towards a bank of large windows that were covered in the thinnest layer of transparent crystal. "Come, young Ezra. I wish to show you something."

Ezra dutifully followed the King to a window where he looked out over the city of Kyber homes. King Wayve stopped at the window and knelt on a cushioned pedestal, resting his hands on his thighs lightly and closing his eyes. In that moment, he reminded Ezra of Kanan and he felt a moment of pain and longing for his Master, but was comforted by the knowledge that Kanan wasn't really gone, just in a new place. And still with him in a vague sense, their bond still there for him to feel if he looked for it.

Ezra's eyes focused out into the ocean again as an image of the King appeared in the water, ten times larger than life. In a minute or less, almost every citizen of the city was outside as well, swimming into orderly lines in front of the King's projection. His image looked down at them with a regal smile. "Citizens of IncandesCity," he projected into everyone's minds at once. "In case you haven't heard, which I doubt, as news travels faster than the speed of light here, we have a new addition to our planet." Ezra saw an image of himself in his mind before the King continued. "This is Ezra Bridger, a Jedi Knight like my beloved wife, come from her part of the galaxy. He was delivered by the purrgil in a similar fashion as Tia was and has no way home until someone comes to find him. I wish for every one of you make him feel welcome. He also comes with news of what is happening elsewhere in the galaxy. The galaxy is on the brink of war as the people are gathering to take back control of their planets from an evil Darksider who murdered most of the Jedi and Force sensitives through treacherous means. We have no way to help them at the moment, but we should prepare for war nonetheless, just in case we are found by this Empire. Ezra is certain that his friends will find him eventually. When that day comes, all those who are interested may join him in his part of the galaxy and help end the rule of the Darksiders. If this is your path in life, than you now have time to learn the Jedi ways and the use of the Kybersword. My Tia has been training a small number of you that were interested in the Jedi way of life, but I expect this number will increase drastically now that war may be imminent. Our planet has been peaceful for as long as anyone can remember and centuries before that as well. I would prefer for it to stay that way, but it's best to be prepared anyway. Please don't overwhelm my poor Tia though, by showing up at Seeker Island all at once. Please contact her mentally first and she'll organize training groups." The King sighed mentally and visibly through his projection. "My heart is saddened by the news from beyond our planet but I know we will rise to the challenge with honour and strength. My
beloved people, may the Kyber of your home forever warm you."

The King's image winked out and the people dispersed, returning to their homes or whatever they were doing before. King Wayve opened his eyes and focused on Ezra, eye level with him, despite his kneeling position. "That is how you can talk to your Sabine. It will take a lot of training and concentration but you seem like a determined young man. I'm sure you'll master the skill. I'll be glad to teach you how whenever I have an hour or two to spare."

Ezra nodded, already determined to do whatever it took so he could see Sabine. A Force projection was better than nothing. "Thank you, your Highness," he replied out loud with as much sincerity as he could put into his voice. "Seeing Sabine again means everything to me."

The King smiled warmly. "I understand. I can't imagine being parted from my Tia. She too is my everything." He glanced over his shoulder at Raign. "Now you can return to Raign's tender care. He'll give you a tour of the city and then take you back to the island. I believe Link has requested that you move in with him as he has a spare room in his home and you seemed to enjoy his company." Wayve breathed deeply once before closing his eyes again. "Now I have a ridiculous number of cities to visit and give that same speech to. I might have to start changing it up by the time I get to city number fifty. It gets mighty repetitive after a while," he thought dryly.

Ezra chuckled before leaving the King to his duties. He wouldn't want to be him right now. Ezra liked the role of protector. He could never see himself as a politician / ruler.

Raign met him halfway across the room and they walked together back towards the exit. "Come on, Ezra," he said with a smile. "I'll show you 'round. You can see my little house too. It's red like Krystal's hair. You should have seen her face when I showed it to her. Pleased would be an understatement."

"I bet," Ezra thought in return. He'd have a hard time matching a house to Sabine's hair, since she changed the colour every year or so, but it would be fun to try just to see her look of astonishment. Maybe he'd paint his tower as a surprise one day. Or the Gauntlet. It needed a new paint job anyway. Or maybe not the Gauntlet, as a flash image of the ship appeared in his mind, already repainted in silver, orange, and blue; Sabine was going to beat him to that one. Ezra smiled to himself as Raign did the whole air bubble routine again in the transition chamber. The tower it was then. Someday.
Lothal's Defence

Lothal's Defence:

*D38/1 BBY, Lothal*

Sabine fell into her bunk face first and groaned, too tired to move into a more comfortable position. At least half of her days were spent whipping together a half decent group of soldiers to protect Lothal if the Empire decided to come back in retaliation. So far, they hadn't seen so much as a probe droid to investigate the disappearance of an entire Imperial Fleet, but no one was counting on that lasting too much longer. Sabine knew that the Intelligence division of the Rebellion was doing their best to intercept and answer any comm messages sent towards Lothal, but someone was bound to figure it out sooner or later. There was only so many times you could tell them that Grand Admiral Thrawn or Governor Pryce was unavailable right now.

Believe it or not, quite a few of the surviving stormtroopers that had been captured had turned to their cause, supplying them with a few half decently trained soldiers to base their new army around. (The rest were still in prison.) One in particular, a Sergeant who had been rescued from the ocean after the destruction of the Dome, had been particularly adamant in his hate of the Empire. Apparently he'd been one of the first Lothal children forced into becoming a cadet and torn from his family. Turns out Joshua Azadi was Ryder's nephew and his last surviving family member. He also happened to be very handsome with the same sky blue eyes as Ryder and short light blond hair. Ketsu hadn't admitted it yet, but Sabine was positive she was already half in love with him. Ketsu usually just went after a guy, had her fun, and then never talked to them again. With Joshua, she was different. She actually spent time with him, just talking, and if she was to be believed, they hadn't actually jumped in the sack yet. Apparently, they were going on a real date tonight instead.

Sabine already missed her secret dates with Ezra and couldn't wait to go on a non-clandestine one with him as her husband. But she'd have to work up the courage to tell her mother about it, though, before the rumours reached her as they inevitably would. Sabine had sworn everyone that currently knew about her and Ezra to secrecy upon threat of dismemberment and death; no one seemed inclined to test her on it. With Sabine as the reinstated heir to the Countdom of Clan Wren, she was expected to marry another Mandalorian. Preferably one of the ranking members of an allied clan. Her mother was just going to have to be happy with her choice of a Jedi husband or Sabine was going to abdicate the role of heir and give it Tristan. In her opinion, he deserved it more anyway. One day... One day, Sabine tell her. Just... not yet. So far, she hadn't even told her she wasn't exactly with the Rebellion anymore. She wasn't looking forward to that either.

With Ketsu and Joshua doing a lot of the training of the new recruits, Sabine spent the rest of her day organizing what felt like a million other things. The cleanup efforts of the citizens of Capital City were valiant, but someone needed to oversee them. Ryder was doing a great job putting the government back together and helped wherever he could with delegating jobs to his underlings, but Sabine was determined to make sure any tech left behind by the Empire was put aside for future reuse. Retrieving all of the bits and pieces of the Imperial Dome and the machines in it from the ocean was a long and depressing job that needed to be done. For every piece of salvageable tech or metal they found, they also found a body.

The city was in a confused state of half mourning and half rejoicing, for many of the deceased Imperials had been Lothalians. A mass memorial was scheduled to be held in two weeks based on the estimated time it would take to finish the clean up and give time for all of the bodies that could be to be identified. Sabine had blown up a lot of Imperial things; ships, facilities, walkers, and
whatever else you could think of, but this was the first time it truly hit her what she had actually been doing. She'd never had to clean up the mess she made before. She'd never had to deal with the fallout of her own destruction. And now she was. And it felt awful. She'd been trained to kill without thinking about it too much from a very young age, and now she knew why. Seeing all those bodies piled up, waiting to be identified and then put through the incinerator to be made into ashes had pretty much killed her love of exploding things. Now all she could think about was how to make things right again. How to put everything back together and build things stronger and better than before. Her mind was full of new designs and improvements for buildings and armoured vehicles and ships to defend the planet.

One of the first things she'd done was go on a scouting mission around the planet and locate all of the secret Imperial testing grounds for the TIE Defender Elite Thrawn had been making on Lothal. So far, Sabine had found half a dozen complete Defenders and a further two hundred half finished ones in the factory. She'd made it a priority to get the rest of the Defenders finished and in the air, as well as training pilots to fly them. The first Imperial ship that tried to take over Lothal again was going to find itself bombarded by its own lethal little cousins. The Rebellion had tried to talk her into giving them some of the Defenders, but Sabine and Ryder were determined to keep them for the safety of Lothal. They had been made with resources from Lothal, so they felt like the TIE fighters belonged to the planet. Lothal didn't have the credits to purchase anything larger either, to defend the planet with, so a giant herd of Defenders was going to have to be good enough as a first line of defence.

For a second line of defence, Sabine was also working on shields for the cities, starting with Capital City. She'd managed to find a few good engineers who could follow her plans and do most of the work, but she still checked in on them at least once a day to make sure everything was going well.

All of this added up to about four hours of sleep per night, and dragging herself out of her bunk every morning at five a.m. to start it all again. She delegated as much as she could, but the first week of getting everything organized was hell. Hopefully things would get better soon, because she felt like she was about to expire from exhaustion and everything whirling through her head that she knew she still needed to get done. Sabine groaned again and mustered up the energy to roll over and start pulling off her armour plating and peel herself out of her body suit. She exhaled in relief to get out of the sweaty suit and walked in her underclothes to the refresher. There was one advantage to having a ship with just her and Ketsu living in it. She didn't have to worry about flashing any of the guys anymore.

Fifteen minutes later, she walked out of the refresher and back to her cabin in just a towel and feeling so much cleaner and even a little bit rejuvenated. Sabine pulled on a comfy set of sleepwear and trudged to the galley and made herself some caf while she inhaled a protein bar. While she was waiting for the caf to finish, Ketsu strolled in, looking radiant. Sabine raised a brow. "I take it your date went well?"

Ketsu sighed and sank into a chair by the small table, looking all dreamy eyed. "Almost too well. I'm starting to think Joshua is perfect and that kind of scares me. He's funny and sweet and strong and smart and gorgeous and..."

"Okay," Sabine laughed. "I get it. Joshua's the best thing to happen to you since we left the Academy. I'm happy for you, Kets. Just don't ruin it by over thinking it. Take my advice and give this a chance to become something real and lasting. I have a feeling you won't regret it."

Ketsu stood, pulling a mug out of the cupboard so she could have some caf too. "I think you're right, and that scares me even more," she admitted. "I don't know how to do a real relationship,
Sabine. I barely remember my mother and you know how bad my father was. I've never really been around people in a happy normal relationship. What do I do to make this work?"

Sabine kind of snorted. "You're asking the wrong person. Ezra and I only know how to do the sneaky version where we snatched some alone time when we could. I know Kanan and Hera were together, but they didn't show much of it when others where around, and I think that put a lot of stress on their relationship. My parents are a good example though. They've been together and happy for twenty-five years. I just don't know how they make it work. They're so different."

Ketsu sighed. "I guess I'll just wing it then."

Sabine smiled. "Sounds like a solid plan to me. Almost everything I've ever done is in the category of 'winging it,' and it's worked out almost half the time," she finished with a laughing huff and a roll of the eyes at herself.

Ketsu laughed as well. "That sounds about right. Can't say I've done much better."

Sabine just shook her head and sipped her caf, which was finally cool enough to drink. "Well, I hope this works out for you. You deserve some happiness in your life."

Ketsu raised a brow. "And you don't?"

Sabine shrugged. "I had my chance, and he'll come back eventually. I can wait until then. I still have my families and more than enough work to keep me occupied until Ezra gets his butt back here."

Ketsu looked sceptical. "How long do you plan to wait for him? What if he never comes back? Would you consider another guy then?"

Sabine sighed and leaned against the wall, cradling her mug. "I don't know, Ketsu. You know we Mandos only really love once and I know Ezra is my once. Any relationship I had with someone else would just feel shallow in comparison. I can't say what I would do if Ezra isn't back in my life, say ten years from now, but for now, I'm content to wait."

Ketsu looked incredulous. "Not even a fling? In all of those ten years, you would wait, going completely without any sort of 'fun'?"

Sabine smiled into her mug as she raised it to her mouth. "I wouldn't say I had no 'fun' whatsoever, but, yes, I'm waiting for Ezra to come back. I've spent the last three years of my life having 'fun' with Ezra; I can survive on the memories until he returns to me."

Ketsu shook her head. "We are totally different people."

Sabine smiled and walked towards the door. "Yes, we are. But how boring would it be if we were exactly the same?"

Ketsu laughed and followed Sabine. "Boring as hell."

Sabine opened the door to her cabin. "And that's why we're friends. Good night, Ketsu."

Ketsu opened her own door. "Night, Sabine."

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D40/1 BBY

Sabine was crawling around the inner workings of Ezra's old communications tower, trying to
figure out what it would take to get it running again, at least temporarily, until they built a second one and could put this one under proper reconstruction, when her comm chimed. She brushed a strand of sweaty hair out of her face in exasperation and smacked the button to answer. "Yes?"

"One of the proximity sensors you planted near the hyperspace lane just pinged," Ryder said, ignoring Sabine's brusque tone.

"Kriff," she muttered and started crawling back the way she came. The tower would have to wait. Again. "Comm the other pilots. Tell them to get in their TIEs but not to leave the ground until I get there. If this is the Empire, we need to attack as a unit."

"I already have someone comming the others," Ryder said.

"Good. Excellent," she said as she jumped on her speeder bike and booted it back to the city where all the finished TIEs had been parked. "I'll be there in two minutes."

She wasn't sure if it was a good thing or not that only twenty TIEs were in working order so far. She hadn't had a lot of time to train pilots on how to fly them. At least she'd found enough people who were half decent at flying, but only Ketsu and Joshua had any experience flying a fighter, and even them, not much. And it wasn't just being able to fly the TIEs. It was also flying as a unit that worked together to defeat the enemy. That took practice. Practice they barely had. Oh well. They were just going to have to learn 'on the fly' as it were. Sabine smirked at her own bad joke as she jumped off her bike and met Ketsu and Joshua in the landing yard, who were also jumping off their speeder bikes. "Do you think it's actually the Empire this time?" Ketsu asked as they jogged towards their TIEs.

Each pilot had claimed their own personal TIE and each one was already slightly different from any other. Ketsu had tagged her wings with her stylized signature in purple. Joshua's TIE featured a plush sky blue seat cover that he'd produced from who knows where. When the others teased him about it, Joshua had just shrugged and said he was tired of being uncomfortable. They hadn't teased him since. Everyone agreed that Storm Trooper armour was the most uncomfortable looking armour in the galaxy.

"I almost hope so," Sabine replied. "I'm getting tired of all the anticipation and then no one to shoot at. Although, it wouldn't have bothered me any if we'd shot Hondo down yesterday, when his new ship was the one to trigger the sensor." That got a laugh from Ketsu and a confused look from Joshua.

"I'll explain later," Ketsu told him as they climbed the ladders into their TIEs.

Sabine paused for half a second and admired her TIE. There hadn't been a whole lot of time, but she'd made some, and decorated each of the Defender's six wing panels with starbirds in orange, lothcats in white, and lothwolves in blue on two panels each. She wasn't done with it yet, but the outlines of the animals were enough to make her smile knowing that the Empire would hate what she'd done to their ship. As she dropped down into the TIE, her comm chimed again. "An Imperial Light Cruiser has just appeared over Lothal. Go do your thing," Ryder said.

"We're on it," Sabine replied as she started her TIE. She opened the comm channel between all the Defenders. "Alright, Loth Squadron. We have the real deal this time. Let's go kick some Empire butt." She got a series of cheers in response, making her grin as she pulled her helmet on. It wasn't very military but she didn't care. This was Lothal, not the Empire. Morale was way more important than rules.

Sabine led the way into the sky, her fighters forming into a V formation behind her. "Well, here
goes nothing," she said to herself and punched it into the atmosphere.

Captain Berkley of the Imperial ship, the Endurance, had thought he'd been sent on a ridiculous run to Lothal to see why the Seventh Fleet hadn't been responding properly to Imperial transmissions. But then he came out of hyperspace and found not a single Star Destroyer in orbit around the planet like there was supposed to be. Where had the Fleet gone? He was just about to report his findings when a squadron of colourful TIEs (at least, he thought they were TIEs) he'd never seen before approached them from the planet's surface.

"Sir. We're being hailed by the lead... TIE?" his comm officer said.

"Put it through."

"This is the Lothal Planetary Defence. You will get one warning only. This planet is no longer under Imperial control. Turn around and go back where you came from or you will be shot down," a female voice said.

The Captain scoffed. Like a squadron of TIEs could take out his ship. Let them try. "I don't think so," he replied. "We'll be taking that planet back." He signalled his officer to end the transmission. "Launch the TIEs to counterattack and fire all weapons on those... Whatever they are."

"Yes, sir!" came back the brisk reply from four different stations.

Sabine shrugged when her warning wasn't heeded. "It's your funeral, mir'osike." She addressed her squadron again. "Okay, Loth Squadron. We're going to attack that ship. Loth Two through Ten, you're with me, we're going after the shield generators. Loth Eleven through Twenty, you're job is take out the guns and defend the rest of us from any TIEs that come our way."

"Copy that, Loth Leader," came over the comm by many voices.

Sabine could barely believe she was doing this, but she pointed her Defender at the ship anyway. If someone had told her a month ago that she'd be the Leader of her own squadron of TIE Defenders, protecting Lothal, she would have laughed and thought they were crazy. "For Lothal," she said over the comm, getting another series of cheers in response. "And for Ezra and Kanan," she added silently.

As his ship got blown to pieces around him, Captain Berkley couldn't believe his eyes. The enemy ships were the fastest fighters he'd ever seen and the bloody things had shields! His TIEs had been wiped out easily and his ship was burning around him, the sound of explosions echoing as more and more systems gave up the fight and the ship floated dead in space. As his last act as Captain, he told whatever crew members that were still alive to evacuate the ship, and he made a frantic comm call to Coruscant. "This is Captain Berkley of the Endurance. The Seventh Fleet is missing and the planet of Lothal has a very competent defence system in place with fighters I've never seen before. They've destroyed my ship in two minutes flat. I recommend leaving this planet alone for now. Captain Berkley out."

With his duty to the Empire finished, Captain Berkley closed his eyes and waited for the end.

D41/1 BBY

The sound of her alarm clock buzzing annoyingly on the little table by her bed forced Sabine into
real wakefulness. She groaned as she pulled her hand away from her throbbing core and shut off the alarm. The dreams were amazing, but she wanted the real Ezra back. She had so many fantasies stored up already, she was sure by the time she did get Ezra back, she wasn't going to let him out of bed for a week. Maybe more.

Despite her annoyance at having to get up, Sabine still smiled as she lay bonelessly on the bed and let the memories of their quickie after the Skystrike extraction roll through her once more. Kriff, Ezra was good at going down on her. Her core throbbed again at the very thought and her hand slid down her body again, ready for round two.

The alarm rang again, and she snarled at it. Cursing silently, Sabine grudgingly rolled out of bed and aimed for the refresher, feeling sticky and sweaty. After a quick shower, she got dressed for the day. Ezra or no Ezra, she still had a life to live. At least she had her dreams to keep her going. Before leaving the room, her fingers brushed over Ezra's lightsabre that she kept on the desk. One day, she'd feel his mouth on her for real again. She refused to let herself think anything even remotely less positive than that.

The last message from Ahsoka had been hopeful. She'd followed the estimated trajectory into Wild Space and so far had found a few bits of debris that appeared to have come from Imperial ships including an ion cannon. That meant she was on the right path. It was just a matter of time before she caught up.

D42/1 BBY

Sabine grinned in satisfaction as the first transmission was sent through the old comm tower in more years than anyone could remember. It was just a simple test to Ketsu where she was sitting in the Shadow Caster near Garel, but it meant the world to Sabine. She'd slaved over this hunk of junk for a whole day with a small team to make it work again. She was filthy and more than tired, but they'd done it, and she couldn't help but be ecstatic to hear Ketsu's voice answer them back. Lothal now had a working long range communications tower again. Now THAT was a good day's work.

D43/1 BBY

The idiotic Empire tried again, this time with a Star Destroyer. It didn't make any difference. Sabine and her Squadron of Defenders took out the Imperial ship in just under five minutes of intense battle. They had more TIEs to deal with this time, but with one successful battle under their belt, her Squadron was confident enough to handle it without panicking. Sabine was so proud of them. It almost made up for her lack of enthusiasm at seeing the Star Destroyer explode into tiny pieces. She was never again going to be able to see something blow up without knowing there were thousands of people dying. Sabine blamed the Empire for taking her joy of explosions away, along with the loss of Ezra, Kanan, and her clan. Now all she could do was try and go back to the emotionless state she'd been trained to adopt when having to kill someone. And it hurt. A lot.

That was the last time the Empire came back to Lothal. She didn't know it, but the Emperor was biding his time, waiting for his Super Weapon to be finished to wipe out the entire planet in one fell swoop. He didn't see the point in wasting any more ships on a fruitless battle to take back a planet he was no longer interested in anyway. Total annihilation would be much more satisfying.

Fortunately for Lothal, that day never came, thanks to one hotshot pilot called Luke Skywalker and his backup team of Wedge Antilles and Han Solo.
Mando'a words:

mir'osike - dung for brains or moron.
Thrawn's Homecoming:

D45/1 BBY, Unknown Space

It had been fifteen days since Thrawn's fleet had left the swamp planet behind and he'd reluctantly come to the conclusion that they were lost in space. Despite having a vast section of the Unknown regions mapped in his mind, none of the systems near the swamp planet matched anything he knew. He had begun to worry when Rulla said that the Dauntless had been about four days away from the outer edges of Chiss space when it crashed and she didn't know exactly which direction that was, only just remembering her father saying it was a four day trip back from wherever they were, not long before something had gone wrong with the engines. Thrawn's assumptions on Purrgil hyperspace travel had been way off and he found that exceedingly annoying.

His only consolation was his ever growing friendship with Rulla. She was incredibly intelligent and sucked in new knowledge like a sponge. He spent every evening with her after his shift was over, enjoying their dinner and talking about everything she'd read that day. Thrawn had little doubt that Rulla would be a commanding officer within a year. And his wife much sooner than that. Last night she'd kissed his cheek as he was leaving her quarters for the night, cheeks darkening becomingly at her daring. Thrawn had smiled softly and kissed her warm cheek in return, fingers running down the length of her silken tresses as they cascaded around her shoulders and torso. And thus the official courtship had begun. Rulla had made the first move in the mating dance, as was traditional, and Thrawn had accepted her proposal. It was only a matter of time and patience now. Both of which he had plenty of.

At the moment, the fleet hung suspended in space as probe droids recorded the nearby systems. If Thrawn didn't recognize anything from their findings, then they would continue their slow journey back the way they'd come from, hopefully correctly retracing the path of the Purrgil. At their current speed of wait and jump a short distance then repeat, Thrawn estimated it would take at least two years to make it to Chiss space. If they were lucky. Hopefully they found a familiar system before that painful process went on too long.

During the waiting periods, he had every available bored person stripping the construction spheres down to the last rivet and storing the pieces in the holds of the ISDs. Wasting fuel on moving the construction spheres made no sense whatsoever, but their parts could definitely be useful. Thrawn got a strange sense of satisfaction from watching the Imperial made spheres get torn apart by unknowing ex Imperials.

And while the enlisted men and the troopers dealt with the grunt work, Thrawn would continue his study of the rocky debris of the Jedi Temple Palpatine had put in his ship. He was ever curious about other cultures, and studying the Jedi one had become a recent obsession of his, looking up everything to be found on the Jedi in his privately acquired stock of Republic history that no one knew he'd been accumulating. He told himself his recent defeat by a fledging Jedi had nothing to do with his increased need to know more about them, but he knew he was lying. Thrawn was determined to be better prepared if the Jedi, or the Sith, or any other type of Force User ever made their way to his part of space and tried to take over his people.

D50/1 BBY

Thrawn had to restrain himself to a sedate walk as he made his way to Rulla's quarters for the
evening meal. He had exciting news to share and all he wanted to do was run through the halls like a boy. Not that he'd ever let himself resort to such juvenile behaviour, but it didn't mean that he couldn't have the fleeting thought of giving in to the urge.

Finally reaching her door, he rang for permission to enter, lightly drumming his fingers on the wall before he realized his impatience was showing. Thrawn straightened up and stood at parade rest, disciplining himself.

Rulla opened the door with a smile of greeting. She tilted her head to the side curiously as he entered with an uncharacteristically wide smile on his face at the sight of her. "What is it, Mitthra?"

Thrawn grasped her shoulders gently and smiled into her glowing red eyes. "What if I said I know the way home and we should arrive within the next five days? We've already made the first jump into hyperspace in the correct direction."

Rulla gasped and then squealed his name, throwing her arms around his neck in an excited hug. "Home, Mitthra! We're finally going home."

Thrawn's arms fell naturally around her waist, careful not to pull her hair, holding her for the first time. He almost wished for the return of her seaweed outfit so he could feel the softness of her skin. Instead she was wearing a standard issue grey uniform. At least it did nothing to disguise her enticing curves. "Yes, Rulla. We're going home. We've both been away from Csilla for far too long. The cold will take some getting used to again, I'm afraid," he said, only half in jest.

Rulla laughed softly, fingers brushing the short strands of his hair. "I'll take the ice and snow over that swamp any day."

Thrawn smiled ruefully. "I'm afraid I've lived on a ship for the better part of the last two decades. Any sort of land sounds good to me right now."

Rulla leaned in a little closer to him and looked up at him invitingly. "I know how we can stay warm together."

Thrawn's arms tightened around her waist, drawing her even closer so her chest brushed his. "So do I." He lowered his head a little and she rose on her tip toes, tightening her arms around his neck to hold herself up. Their mouths brushed in the lightest of butterfly kisses before returning for more, a little more daring with every moment that passed. Thrawn groaned a little and she moaned in chorus. As their tongues met in the most intimate fashion Thrawn suddenly found himself holding her entire weight as she jumped up into his arms and wrapped her legs around his waist.

Just as he was thinking that this was sooo much better, not having to tilt so much to reach her mouth and feeling her whole body pressed to his, Rulla gasped out the same thing. "So good, Mitthra. You're arms are so strong."

Thrawn smiled against her mouth, feeling ridiculously proud of himself at the moment for all the training he did to keep himself in peak physical shape. "And you're so soft and sweet," he whispered before devouring her mouth again.

They most have stood in her cabin for another fifteen minutes, just making out like teenagers, before Rulla finally pulled her mouth away from his and rested her head against his shoulder, breathing hard. Her legs unwrapped from around his waist and she slid down his body, blushing at the contact with his obvious arousal. She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him softly one more time. "Our dinner is probably stone cold by now," she said with a hint of amusement in her
newly husky voice.

Thrawn admired the heavy lidded look and the kiss swollen lips of his mate. She looked properly loved and that was just a teaser for the whole act. He looked forward to that with every part of his being, but he sensed that wasn't going to be tonight. Rulla wasn't ready to go that far yet and he understood perfectly. "It can be warmed up again," he finally replied. "Whatever it is won't taste as good as you regardless."

Rulla beamed at him for the compliment before drawing away and heading for the tiny kitchen section of her VIP suite. Since they didn't have any VIP's with them when they left Lothal, Thrawn had pulled rank and given her the suite. The humans could like it or not, he truly didn't care. So far he hadn't heard any grumbling. Maybe they felt sorry for her, living in a swamp for twenty-five years.

Thrawn followed her like a lovesick mooka. If only his enemies could see him now; they would laugh until they fell over. The unbeatable Thrawn had been felled by a woman. And he couldn't be happier about it.

D52/1 BBY

Thrawn's fleet returned to real space only one more short hyperspace jump from the outside edge of the boundaries of Chiss protected space. What they weren't expecting to find was another small fleet already parked there. Unfortunately, it wasn't a section of the Chiss Defence Fleet. Thrawn recognized the coral shaped living ships immediately from stories. It was the Far Outsiders. And they were practically on the Chiss' front door.

"Full power to the shields!" Thrawn yelled. "Comm the other ships. I want everything we have firing at those ships. Now! Deploy the TIEs and the two Defenders. Take them out."

He heard officers scurrying to obey him. Thrawn watched in dismay as their turbolasers and ion canons just bounced off the shields of the seven enemy ships. The enemy returned fire with their plasma weapons, concentrating fire on the closest star destroyer. After a minute of bombardment by the plasma beams, the shields on the ISD failed and the plasma struck the hull of the ship. Thrawn could see the plasma visibly eating through the metal with a malicious red glow. He cursed under his breath. "Tell Captain Skalen to abandon ship while they still can."

As Captain Skalen's ISD was literally eaten away, Thrawn turned his attention to what the TIEs were doing. Perhaps the close quarters fighters would have better luck than their long range guns. Not that he was letting up on the barrage. The TIEs didn't seem to be having any luck either until one of the Defenders hit a lucky spot with a missile. The coral shaped enemy ship burst into flames before exploding into pieces. "Someone figure out what he hit and I want everyone concentrating fire on that spot on the rest of the enemy ships," Thrawn called.

Meanwhile, the enemy ships had turned their attention to the next ISD in the line. It too had lost its shields and the plasma beams were eating through its hull as well. Thrawn didn't have to tell that captain to abandon ship as he saw escape pods already being launched. Kriff. They'd lost two ISDs in less than five minutes. That should never have happened. Thrawn's fists clenched before he forced them to relax. At least they were winning now, as he saw enemy ship after enemy ship explode.

The officers cheered as the last enemy ship met its end, but Thrawn felt like he had nothing to cheer about. The enemy was too close, and undoubtedly had managed to send a transmission with their location at some point. More would come, he was positive about that. Thrawn almost
regretted turning has back on the Empire. A Death Star would be handy right about now, if he could locate the enemy's main base and destroy it with said Death Star. Thrawn didn't know much about this enemy except for what was told in the stories.

A scouting party of the enemy had shown up in Chiss space some thirty years ago. The vaguely human looking creatures had hated the Chiss on sight, loathing their use of machines. They'd instantly tried to annihilate everything they could, causing a massive amount of destruction before being defeated. It was rumoured that a Chiss scientist had opened up one of the enemy's bodies out of curiosity and found obvious signs of organ implants. Organs that didn't match the enemy's DNA. The enemy apparently harvested other species for parts. A disgusting practice that the Chiss found highly revolting. That original scouting party of Far Outsiders was the main incentive for Thrawn to infiltrate the Empire. Too bad that hadn't panned out as well as he'd hoped. But at least he wasn't coming home empty handed. He still had thirty-eight ISDs left to present to the Ascendancy. It would still be considered a good return for his time.

Too bad he had to deliver bad news as well. The Far Outsiders were back, and Thrawn sensed a full scale war brewing in the near future.

After yet another salvage expedition that took the better part of a day, filling the holds of the remaining ISDs with even more spare parts and the crew quarters to overflowing with the surviving members of the two dead star destroyers, Thrawn made a fleet wide holo call for everyone to see. It was time to break the news to his fleet that they weren't going home, but now he had a perfect excuse to give them. And he was going to do a bit of lying through his teeth without a modicum of remorse, since technically, by keeping the fleet in this part of space, he was also protecting the so called civilized part of the galaxy from the invaders from beyond the black void.

"This is Grand Admiral Thrawn. After today's battle, I have an important update on our status that all of you need to be made aware of. As you know, we lost two of our ISDs in only a matter of minutes. What you don't know is the enemy we were facing, but I do. What you saw this morning was only a small example of the enemy's fleet. It is believed that there are entire planet sized ships of them just waiting in the far reaches of Wild Space for their scouting parties to find them suitable planets to take over. This enemy comes from beyond the reaches of our galaxy after destroying their own with their warring ways. They are humanoid but not humane. They harvest organs and parts from their defeated enemies and use them in their own bodies. They hate all things mechanical and seem to strive to eradicate all machines from their vicinity. With this enemy encroaching on the Outer Rim, instead of returning to Lothal like originally planned, I feel it is best for everyone's sake if we stay here in the Wild regions and protect the Outer Rim from this vile foe's invasion. Teaching Lothal a lesson means nothing in comparison to the bigger picture. There are other fleets who can do that. We have a more important mission. Since my home world is not far from here, we shall use it as base in our war with the Far Outsiders and will eradicate the enemy from our galaxy. We will join my people in defending the entire galaxy and your families from those who would destroy us without a thought. Only then shall we return to Coruscant, triumphant and secure in the knowledge that we did our part to protect our homes."

Thrawn left the holo transmission room and walked into the bridge to the sound of loud cheers and applause. Captain Yarce approached him, smiling widely. "That was a brilliant speech, Sir. I think I speak for all of us when I say that we fully support the new mission. None of us want those disgusting creatures anywhere near our home planets and will do whatever it takes to make sure they never make it that far."

Thrawn smiled ever so slightly, pleased that the speech he'd worked on in his mind for the better part of the day had been a success. "Very good, Captain. Now, since everything is once again
organized, I've sent new coordinates to your datapad. Please transmit them to the other Captains and let's get this fleet back in motion, shall we?"

Yarce nodded with a happy smile and went off to do Thrawn's bidding. Thrawn walked up to the repaired transparisteel windows and stared out at the wreckage of the Far Outsider's ships. He hadn't dared send so much as a probe droid to investigate them, worried that some sort of unseen biological weapon might still be active. The enemy was crafty and he didn't know enough about their ways yet. Nor did he particularly want to, but sometimes sacrifices must be made for the good of everyone else. Thrawn was resigned to learning as much about the enemy's culture as he could, whenever a safe opportunity presented itself. He didn't consider this to be one of those opportunities.

_D55/1 BBY_

Thrawn's fleet jumped into hyperspace for the final time. Csilla was only three hours away now. He sent a comm message ahead so as not to alarm his people when a new fleet appeared above their planet. Thrawn was amused by the lackey who answered his comm that spent a great deal of time sputtering in shock at hearing the name Mitth'raw'nuruodo. That lackey was replaced with another and another until someone in charge finally answered the comm.

Thrawn was pleased to hear Eli Vanto's voice. "Eli, my friend. I have returned."

"So I hear. And bearing presents," Eli said with amusement in his voice. "It's been a while, Mitthra."

"Yes, it has," Thrawn replied seriously. "I have much to report, but that can wait until everyone is gathered in one place. I take it you've found your place within the inner workings of the Chiss easily enough?"

"With only one or two hiccups," Eli said. "You're name goes a long way, Mitthra, even if they were all starting to believe you were never coming back."

"And did you share their beliefs, Eli?" Thrawn asked curiously.

"Never, Mitthra," Eli said adamantly. "I knew you wouldn't send me here if you didn't plan to return as well."

Thrawn smiled to himself. Eli had ever been a loyal friend. His only one, to be truthful, in the entire Imperial Military. "Thank you for your faith, Eli. Now, I have a request for you."

"Anything," Eli answered.

Thrawn lowered his voice conspiratorially. "I've found my mate, Rulla'aski'ordo, on a desolate swamp planet of all places."

"That's wonderful! You have to tell me how that came to pass," Eli exclaimed.

"I promise I'll tell you the story as soon as I have a minute once I return. But back to my point; I would like to marry her right away, but as can be expected, she has nothing appropriate to wear to a wedding. If I send you her measurements, can you purchase an appropriate gown for me to give her? Also, see if you can locate her surviving family. Her parents are deceased but she has an older brother that had just enlisted in the Military when they left twenty-five years ago. There's also supposed to be an aunt that Rulla remembers fondly."

"That would be appreciated, thank you. If you have time, you could perhaps look for my parents? I'm sure they would like to be at the wedding as well."

Eli laughed. "I don't have to track them down. Somehow I found myself living in their mansion as soon as they found out I was your friend. I'll give them the good news right away."

Thrawn found himself smiling wider. "Thank you again, Eli. I have so missed your efficiency and companionship. I'll see you soon."

"Looking forward to it, Mitthra." Eli disconnected the comm call and Thrawn soon left the communications room to spend a couple of hours with Rulla before arriving at Csilla. It was time to ask the lady in question the most important of questions before he actually sprung their surprise wedding on her. He wanted them married before too many people noticed or questioned his choice of a lower class bride, because once it was done, it couldn't be undone. And once they were married, her name expanded to reflect her new status and then there would no longer be any questions from anyone who didn't already know what she was. The ironic thing was that if they'd just been normal Chiss, they most likely never would have met. Bridger and the Purrgil had actually done him a favour. Who was laughing now?

Thrawn arrived at Rulla's room in a fantastic mood. The door opened and his mood quickly evaporated as he saw Rulla's tear stained face as she glanced over her shoulder at him where she was standing by the window, the lights of hyperspace highlighting the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"What's wrong, dearling?" he asked in their native language of Cheunh. They'd been working on her Basic so she could talk to the humans but it was never going to be their primary language. He went to put an arm around her and draw her close in a hug but she stepped away, keeping her face averted.

"I realized that we won't be able to be together once we get home. You'll be ridiculed for being seen with a lower class female and I could never live with myself for doing that to you," she said in a barely audible tone full of sorrow.

"Oh, Rulla." Thrawn grasped her shoulders gently and turned her around to face him, then putting a finger under her chin and forced her swimming eyes to meet his. "Rulla, I don't care about that. I love you, dearling, and you would do me the greatest honour by agreeing to be my wife."

Rulla froze as she heard the words she never expected to hear. "But... I thought I would be just your mistress at best. You could lose your status by marrying me."

Thrawn smirked slightly, thumb caressing the line of her jaw. "They would never dare try. I can guarantee you there's not another Chiss on the planet who is equipped to deal with the pack of humans I brought back with me. Trust me, Rulla, this will all work out."

"If you're sure?" Thrawn nodded his head and Rulla sighed, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Then yes, Mitthra. I will marry you. I love you too."

Thrawn smiled as his good mood was restored. He lowered his head and kissed the tears off her cheeks before moving to her mouth and kissing her sweetly.

Rulla hummed into his mouth and pressed the kiss into deeper territory, all of her fears forgotten. Eventually she pulled away and pulled Thrawn by the hand towards the bedroom. She'd waited
long enough to experience passion at its fullest, and now with his declaration of love, Rulla couldn't think of a good reason to wait any longer.

Thrawn went along happily, content in the knowledge that his patience had paid off and the beautiful girl from the swamp was finally going to be his; by deed in a few minutes and by word in a few hours. He loved when his plans worked out the way he expected them to.

Rulla stopped beside the bed and then didn't know where to go from there. Fortunately, Thrawn did. He kissed her again with all the passion he'd kept pent up for most of his life. His self control didn't let him show it to others very often, but Thrawn was almost always humming with suppressed energy. As his kisses trailed down the line of her jaw and onto her elegant neck, Thrawn was also undoing her uniform, having already memorized long ago exactly what he needed to do to remove her from it.

When he was finished, Rulla stood in nothing but her cascades of hip length dark blue hair, blushing furiously. Thrawn raised his hands. "May I?" he asked gesturing to her hair. She bit her lip, thinking, then nodded. Thrawn gently brushed her hair behind her shoulders and gazed at his perfectly shaped mate in awe. "You're the most beautiful work of art I've ever seen," he breathed, making her smile and meet his eyes more confidently.

She stepped closer to him again and started undoing the buttons on his uniform jacket with slightly trembling fingers. "Fair's fair, dearheart. I get to see you too."

Thrawn stood still and let her undress him as slowly and carefully as she wanted, calling on his self control again, as all he really wanted to do was set a record for stripping and toss her on the bed and have his way with her until she screamed in ecstasy. Her fingers traced the muscles in his arms admiringly, causing a little thrill to go through Thrawn. Her touch was electric and he craved more of it. When she pulled off his belt and her fingers came oh so close to his aching arousal, Thrawn had to close his eyes for a moment and recite a calming chant to keep himself in check. And that was nothing compared to when she actually undid his trousers. That oh so close turned into a reality as she brushed his throbbing hardon accidentally. He'd sucked in a breath and she'd actually stopped breathing before blushing harder but continuing anyway and tugging his trousers down so he could step out of them.

When Rulla had him down to just his undershirt and shorts, she lost her courage and stopped again, looking up at him with wide eyes. Thrawn reassured her with a gentle kiss to the forehead and pulled off his own undershirt. Her fingers grew courageous again and she placed her hands on his pecs, eyes running up and down his torso with raised brows. "If anyone is perfection, it is you, Mitthra."

That was it. Thrawn's control snapped momentarily at her compliment. He shucked his undershorts and picked her up before she really had time to more than glimpse the hard length that stood at attention for her. Thrawn walked the two steps to the bed and gently placed her on it. He lay down beside her, kissing her like his life depended on it. One hand lost itself in her wonderfully soft hair while the other travelled from her chest down to her warm center. She gasped into his mouth as his finger found her clit and tweaked it a little. He quickly moved further down and found her moist opening, feeling way too small to fit his girth.

Thrawn groaned and kissed her some more before working his way down to her breasts and lavishing attention on them. Meanwhile, his fingers were busy with her clit and her opening. He worked a finger into her slowly, relishing how tight she was but knowing she needed to relax if he was ever going to join with her without hurting her.

Rulla whimpered and cried as Thrawn made her feel things she'd never felt before. Being so young
when she was shipwrecked, she only had a basic understanding of how this worked. She'd experimented enough to know that if she played with her clit enough, she would climax pleasurably, but this was already way beyond those meagre sensations. Thrawn had her body humming and jolting as he worked it. She could feel herself getting wetter and wetter and she heard his little grunt of satisfaction when he managed to insert a second finger in her.

While his fingers stroked in and out of her, gradually widening, Thrawn kissed his way back to her mouth. He withdrew his fingers and rolled on top of her, perching just above so as not to crush her delicate frame with his weight that almost doubled hers. He kissed her deep and placed the head of his cock at her opening, now ready for him. Thrawn shuddered as he slid into her tight heat all the way to the very depths of her. He was in heaven and he never wanted to leave. He slowly withdrew until only the head remained in her claspering tunnel and then surged back in.

Rulla cried into his mouth at the sensation and grabbed onto his back tighter, digging her nails in. As his thrusts gradually increased in speed, Rulla tossed her head back and just felt the pleasure being driven into her.

Thrawn kissed the line of her neck and sucked the side gently, but not long enough to leave a mark. He would never embarrass her on her wedding day, since a marriage gown would leave her neck and shoulders bare for everyone to see. "Is this good, dearling?" he asked as he kept up his pace of fast and deep. When all he got was an ecstatic sounding cry in reply, Thrawn smiled and thrust a little harder, quickly working towards what felt like a soul shattering climax.

Rulla was starting to tense and tremble as her orgasm built and built. She wrapped her legs around his waist and clawed his back out of sheer desperation. "Mitthraaaaaa," she cried.

Thrawn got the hint and took his thrusts up to the final level of hard and deep, really pounding into her hot tunnel. She tensed even further and her back bowed off the bed as she spasmed around his thrusting length. Thrawn let go of the durasteel hold he had on his control and released into her, sending his seed deep inside her womb in blast after blast of pleasure that wracked his body.

They clung to each other as the tension slowly drained from their sweat covered bodies. Thrawn rolled over onto his back, keeping them joined as she draped over his chest, feeling boneless. He could feel the caress of her hair as it fell over both of them and he knew he would never get tired of her glorious hair. He'd never seen such a length of hair before and he loved it. The elite of the humans might grow it that long, but they tended to keep it up in fancy braids or headdresses. The Ladies of the Chiss weren't much different, but as far as he knew, they never let it grow past the middle of their backs, as more hair than that was a pain to take care of. Rulla had mentioned cutting her hair once and only once. Thrawn had begged her to leave it, and she'd agreed with a knowing smile. He thought afterwards that she had just been testing him to see if he really did like her, for if he didn't, he wouldn't care what she did with her hair.

After many wonderful minutes just being held by his strong arms, Rulla worked up the energy to sit up enough so she could see his handsome face. "Mitthra?"

"Hmmm?" he rumbled.

"I hope you want children, because you just came in me and I'm not on anything," she said as she nibbled on her lip worriedly.

Thrawn smiled beatifically and ran a hand through her tresses. "I would love some children with you, dearling. The sooner the better. We're not getting any younger, you know," he said teasingly.

Rulla rolled her eyes and snuggled back down into his chest, drawing an absent pattern on the
muscle beside her eyes. "Don't remind me."

She wriggled around a little more, looking for an even better spot, but froze as she felt his length harden again inside her. She sat up again. "We can do it again?" she said with a hint of excitement in her voice.

Thrawn chuckled and thrust up slightly, demonstrating. "Yes, Rulla, if you want, we can do it again."

Rulla smiled in anticipation, but not knowing what to do next. Thrawn showed her by grasping her hips and raising her with his strong arms and letting her fall back down. "Ohhh," she cried. Getting the idea, Rulla took over, raising herself up and dropping back down.

Thrawn smiled up at her and watched the show as she learned how to pleasure herself with his body. And what a show it was. Her eyes closed and her lips parted as she panted. Her breasts bounced enticingly with every movement of her body and her blue skin glistened. She really was the most perfect piece of art ever made.

After giving Captain Yarce some last minute instructions regarding rotating shore leave for the crews of the ISDs, Thrawn and Rulla took a shuttle down to the capital city of Csilla, Csaplar. They both stared at the ice bound planet as they descended, eyes looking for it to be different somehow, but the planet looked exactly as they both remembered. White and frigid.

"Home," Rulla breathed.

"Home," Thrawn agreed. The trip from orbit to city couldn't go fast enough for either of them.

They landed on the private pad of Thrawn's ancestral home, on the outskirts of the city. For now, Thrawn was avoiding giving his report to the Ascendency. They were impatient, but he'd said he needed an hour of personal time, so they reluctantly granted it. Not like they had a choice. Thrawn wasn't going to show up until he was good and ready, and that wasn't until he'd married his mate.

As the ramp of the shuttle lowered, Rulla got her first look at the people who came rushing out of the mansion to meet them. She didn't recognize some of them, but two stood out and her eyes were immediately drawn to them. "Byrni," she cried as she rushed into her older brother's waiting arms, hugging him tight. He wasn't the young man she remembered but was instantly recognizable as her brother. Next she moved into the arms of her mother's sister. "Delpha."

Thrawn was enjoying his own reunion with his parents that he hadn't seen for almost half his life. His tiny mother hugged him tight and his father had a look of fierce pride on his face as he they gazed at each other over his softly crying mother's head. Thrawn's parents' hair was greying now, but they looked much the same as he remembered.

Eli stood patiently off to the side, waiting his turn to greet his best friend. He admired the woman Thrawn had found, thinking his friend had done very well for himself, but she didn't quite compare to the girl he had found. He'd tell Thrawn about her when things settled down.

Soon enough, Thrawn turned his attention to Eli. They exchanged smiles and back claps. "Did you find a gown?" Thrawn whispered.

Eli grinned and whispered back. "Did I ever. It turns out that Rulla's aunt has had her mother's wedding gown in storage all these years. It's the traditional gown of their family and is in perfect condition and happens to be the correct size. Your girl should be very happy with it."
"And an officiator?" Thrawn asked, pleased for Rulla that she would get to be married in her family gown.

"Inside, waiting."

Thrawn squeezed Eli's shoulder thankfully. "Eli, I don't know what I would do without you sometimes. I owe you a great debt."

Eli smiled with a lot of teeth showing. "You could take me back as your second in command. Living planetside is boring. I want to go on adventures again and fight the Far Outsiders with you."

"Done," Thrawn said before getting distracted by Rulla, who came over, happy tears in her eyes.

"Thank you, Mitthra, for the gift of finding my family," she said, hugging one of his arms and looking up at him adoringly.

Thrawn smiled down at her and kissed her temple. "That's not the only surprise I have for you, dearling."

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A/N: And that's it for Thrawn's storyline (or is it?). Writing space battles really isn't my thing, so you'll just have to imagine a long drawn out war that lasts years. But at the same time, Thrawn and Rulla live happily ever after on the Chimaera with the twin boys that she had a prompt nine months after their wedding day. Eli Vanto also marries his girl and they join Thrawn on the Chimaera and have a couple of kids as well.

I hope you all enjoyed my sappy version of Thrawn's story. I sincerely doubt this is what really happened to him, but hey, even the villains deserve a happy ending sometimes, right?
Sabine's Consequences

The day Sabine had been dreading had finally come.

Her mother had finally put the pieces together and figured out that Sabine wasn't actually fighting for the Rebellion anymore. She'd done her best to delay this moment for as long as possible by not giving her mother the comm frequency for the Gauntlet or her new personal comm that Ryder had assigned her. Thus, her mother still had to contact her via the Ghost and Hera. Hera was of course in on it, and had done a fabulous job of keeping her mother diverted by telling her that Sabine was away on a mission every time the Countess called and then promptly commed Sabine so she could call her mother back with a scrambled frequency.

First, she got a call from a very apologetic Hera.

"I'm sorry, Sabine, but your mother is one scary person. She threatened to send her entire Clan after me if I didn't tell her where you are. She told me to tell you that if you didn't show up on Krownest within the next two days, she is going to come and get you herself and you won't like the consequences." Hera visibly shuddered and put a protective hand over the small bump in her stomach. "I am so glad that she's not my mother. It's amazing you have any softness in you at all, being raised by that woman."

Sabine smiled a little. "I have you to thank for that, Hera." Hera's holo image smiled warmly at the compliment. "You know I was basically just a block of closed off ice when I first joined your crew. My father is more affectionate and understanding, but Mother was determined that her children were going to be warriors, not artists. She shipped me off to the Academy as soon as I was old enough so Father would get less time to influence me towards the lighter side of life." Sabine scoffed a little. "That didn't stop me from being an artist anyway."

Hera laughed. "No, it didn't. You actually turned into the perfect blend of both your parents. They should be proud of you. I know I am."

"Aww, Hera. You're going to get me all sappy and sentimental again. I thought we were over that stage," Sabine complained, only half in jest.

Hera smiled cheekily. "I'm a pregnant twi'lek. I'm allowed to be all sappy and moody. It's kind of fun actually. The guys tip toe around me, worried that the least little thing will set me off in either a crying fit or turn me into a raging monster. It's almost worth the not so enjoyable side effects of my current condition. Even Chopper is being unusually well behaved with the guys. At least when I'm around anyway.

Sabine laughed. "I might have to stop at Yavin on my way back from Krownest and see this for myself. It's been too long since I saw you in person and things are finally starting to settle down here. I'm even getting six whole hours of sleep every night."

"Wow, Sabine. That is an improvement," Hera said enthusiastically. "I was worried about you for a while. You were looking awfully worn out."

Sabine rolled her eyes. "Look who's talking, Miss I-don't-need-sleep-because-working-helps-me-
forget-what-I'm-missing-and-reading-reports-is-just-so-much-fun."

Hera sighed. "Yes, I know I need to start taking better care of myself, for the baby's sake at the very least, but it's hard, Sabine. Every time I go to bed, I keep expecting Kanan to join me. And then I remember that he never will again. And then there's the nightmares, which you know all about. I keep seeing flames in my dreams and I start crying all over again. I still don't know if it's a good thing that my memories of that night aren't clear. It makes it harder to believe that the nightmares are based on reality. My heart so desperately wants the nightmares to be just that; nightmares."

"Hera," Sabine said softly, eyes filling with sympathy. "I'm definitely coming to see you after mother is done with me. I'm sorry I haven't made time to get there sooner."

"No, it's okay, Sabine," Hera said reassuringly. "I know you're really busy. So am I, frankly. We've been running a lot of missions and the Rebellion just keeps growing. You should see Yavin now. It's a zoo compared to when you were here last. Word is spreading that Lothal beat the Empire off the planet and it's inspiring more and more people to join. I lose Kallus more often than not because they keep asking him to help out with the Intelligence division. I hear him grumbling to Zeb sometimes, but he always helps out readily enough. I think he'll be a permanent member sooner than later, and knowing Kallus as I do now, he'll end up running the whole gong show in no time. Ahsoka's position of Director never really did get filled to anyone's satisfaction. The original Fulcrums still miss her."

"How's she doing, anyway?" Sabine asked curiously. "Isn't she due back soon to re-supply?"

Hera nodded. "In a week or two I think, depending on how much fuel they use. She sent a report a few weeks ago, just before leaving the extreme edge of the comm's range. They'd found some interesting planets that would make good locations for new colonies. She also encountered a planet that felt really strong in the Force and got all excited, so she and Lux checked it out. Turns out it was full of Force sensitive giant mammal eating plants. She and Lux had to fight their way off the planet. The plants seemed to the think that Ahsoka was particularly tasty. She said if she didn't have her lightsabres, she would have been dinner about fifty times over and that it felt like the Clone Wars all over again. Needless to say that she'll never being going back to that planet again."

Sabine shook her head, laughing. "I'm not sure who Ezra gave the worse job to; Ahsoka or me. He better be kriffin' appreciative when she finds him."

"Language, Sabine," Hera said chidingly, but still with agreeing with her. "You need to start practicing so you don't mess up in front of the baby."

"Yes, Hera. Sorry, Hera," Sabine said apologetically. "Are you going to make the whole base go swear free as well? Because I'd like to see their response to that. And what about Chopper? He swears about every other sentence."

Hera rolled her eyes and sighed. "I don't know what I'm going to do about the personnel on the base, but Chopper is going to get a very stern lecture before the baby comes about his language problem. He's a bad enough influence as is. And I'm also going to have a talk with the guys. I don't need my baby blurring out karabast this or shabla that. There are way too many swears in way too many languages flying around here lately. Without Kanan here as a calming influence, the guys seem to think it's a matter of pride to outswear each other." Hera crossed her arms and muttered, 'stupid testosterone' under her breath, making Sabine laugh again. That focused Hera's attention back on Sabine. "Speaking of... I always wondered why you swear in Basic most of the time and not Mando'a like the Clones."
That made Sabine blink as she thought about that one. "You're right, Hera. I do swear in Basic a lot. Probably because I think in Basic now. Also, when I was at the Academy, speaking Mando'a was prohibited. Ridiculous really, considering we were ON Mandalore, but that's the Empire for you. It's funny that I never noticed that until you mentioned it. I might have to start throwing in some more Mando'a words just for the fun of it." Hera opened her mouth, but Sabine beat her to the punch. "But... not when I'm anywhere near your kid. I promise."

"I suppose that's acceptable," Hera said resignedly. She turned her head as Rex called her name in the background and listened to him. She sighed again, looking back at Sabine. "I have to go. Some crisis or other with the new batch of X-Wings that were just delivered. I'll go see what's wrong. I'll see you in a few days then?"

Sabine nodded. "Yes, I promise."


Sabine turned off the holo unit as Hera's image disappeared and smiled to herself. The Rebellion sounded like business as usual. Now she had to make sure everything was organized enough for her to take off for four or five days. The Countess called, and like a good dutiful daughter, she was going to come running. She wasn't looking forward to it though.

**D122/1 BBY, Krownest**

Sabine landed the Gauntlet close to her family's stronghold on her snow covered home planet. The glass and steel reflected the colours of the sunset in a spectacular fashion that she was just itching to paint. She memorized the moment to put down on canvas later. Perhaps as a gift for her father, knowing he at least would appreciate her efforts.

Tristan jogged out to meet her halfway between the Gauntlet and the steps leading into their home. "Mother is extremely pissed at you," he warned in their native language as they walked towards the steps. (They didn't bother speaking Basic with no outsiders to impress.)

Sabine rolled her eyes in an extra exaggerated fashion as her brain clicked over into Mandalorian mode. "I was expecting that."

Tristan stopped and glared at her. "Yah, well, your little secret has had her ranting at everyone over nothing for the last day and a half. Most of the Clan have gone into hiding to escape her bad mood. Unfortunately, Father and I don't have that luxury. What the hell possessed you to lie to us for so long?"

"It's complicated," Sabine said with a wince at his tone. She continued her forward progress towards her doom. "I'll explain to everyone at once."

Tristan fell back into step beside her. "This better be good or Mother might just disinherit you again. She really is mad."

Sabine stopped this time, at the top of the stairs. She turned and looked at Tristan seriously. "Brother, would you consider being the heir?"

He stared at her, speechless for a moment. "What?" he finally sputtered out. "Why?"

"Just answer the question, Tristan," Sabine said, looking at him with durasteel resolve, crossing her arms over her chest.
"Well, yah, I guess," he said. "I already was the heir once when you were outcast. I've already had a lot of the training for the position. And that's something else Mother is mad about. You don't seem to be inclined towards learning your duties as the future Countess."

"That's because I'm not." Sabine sighed as Tristan gawked at her, and uncrossed her arms. "C'mon. Let's get this over with. I promise it will all make sense in a minute."

Ursa watched the garishly painted red and black Kom’rk fighter land on the snow in front of her stronghold with a deft touch that spoke volumes for the skill of the pilot.

Despite her ingrained pride in her daughter’s accomplishments, the frown on Ursa’s mouth deepened and her eyes narrowed further. Her expression had been more or less stuck this way ever since she found out yesterday that Sabine wasn’t fighting for the Rebellion anymore and hadn’t bothered to tell her about it.

Her back was ramrod straight and her fists were clenched on either side of her thighs as she sat in the throne on the raised dais, now watching her son greet her daughter through the transparisteel windows that enclosed the great hall.

Alrich glanced at her and then did a double take, as his eyes had been on the scene outside as well. Sitting beside her in their throne, he placed a calming hand on her thigh. “Easy, Urs’ika,” he murmured. “I’m sure she has a good explanation,” he reassured for probably the hundredth time since yesterday.

Ursa glanced up at him, blinked once, and then took a deep breath, allowing her hands to uncurl. She took the hand on her thigh and laced her fingers through his, giving him a thankful squeeze for always being the one to see things in a positive light. “I have no doubt that her explanation is going to be good, Alrich. What I doubt is whether or not I’m going to like it.”

Alrich’s mouth quirked up and he squeezed her gloved hand in return, nudging her shoulder with his. “Just try not to lose your temper this time, my feisty Countess,” he teased.

Ursa raised a sculpted brow at her husband. “Me? Lose my temper? Never.” Her voice was drier than the frigid air outside.

Alrich snorted lightly and leaned over to nuzzle his nose against her cheek. “I love that you still deny it,” he whispered laughingly.

Ursa’s mouth quirked up in amusement before she pushed him away lightly and put on her stern face again. “Go on with you. How am I supposed to be mad at Sabine if you’re making me smile?”

Alrich smirked at her before he primly placed his folded hands in his lap and moved to a dignified distance on his side of the throne. “That was the idea, my dear,” he whispered as the door to the great hall all but crashed open and Sabine marched in, followed by Tristan, who gave his parents a, ‘You are not going to believe this,’ look before taking his place a step down on the dais from the throne on Ursa’s side.

Sabine parked herself in front of her parents, looking like she was ready for battle with her shoulders back, her chin up, and a familiar stubborn look in her eyes. She raised a brow just like Ursa did and glanced around the empty great hall pointedly. “I see Tristan wasn’t joking when he said you’d scared the rest of the clan into hiding, Mother.”

Alrich shared a small smile with his daughter as Ursa’s glare intensified. He’d also noticed that the clan had been giving their Countess a wide berth since the news had spread that she was in a mood,
but he hadn’t wanted to say anything; not wanting to risk having to sleep on the couch.

“At least my clan follows my orders, Daughter,” Ursa said bitingly, leaning forward slightly in her seat, anger radiating from her.

Alrich looked at his daughter with sympathetic eyes. He knew what it was like to have Ursa mad at you firsthand. Not for many years though, as he’d gotten much better at anticipating her desires and moods the longer they were together. His Countess was not one to mess with when she was in this mood but he found her warrior persona just as hot as ever. Sometimes, he felt like he might be the only person who knew there was a loving mother and wife under the hard exterior she presented to the world.

Sabine crossed her arms over her armoured chest. "I didn’t realize I was one of your minions to control."

Ursa huffed in exasperation. "You’re not a minion, Sabine. None of my clan are. But you are my daughter and you still answer to me. Why is it that I had to forcefully extract your location from General Syndulla? Why are you camping out on Lothal instead of fighting with the Rebellion like I gave you permission to do? And why have you kept your location from my knowledge for the past three months?"

Sabine kept her expression neutral despite the bombardment of questions. "I didn't tell you where I was because I didn't want you to try and stop me from doing what my honour and heart tells me I should be doing."

"And what is that?" the Countess of Clan Wren said with a narrow eyed glare.

"Protecting Lothal and rebuilding the city and people so they can be great again," Sabine said firmly, proudly.

"And what of your own people? Your Clan?" Ursa said through gritted teeth. "You have a duty to your own family as well, do you not?"

"They have you and Tristan," Sabine said, her calm expression slipping towards impassioned. "And I did my duty to my people. I found Mandalore a new leader. I destroyed the weapon I designed for the second time. I rescued Father. I have atoned for the wrongs I did when I built the Duchess in the first place. I feel like I've done everything I've had to do. Yes, you are my Clan and heritage. But you turned your backs on me when I needed you the most. You disinherited me. You made me DAR'MANDA!"

Alrich and Ursa both winced at the truth of her statements. And Sabine wasn’t done yet.

“That is not something I'm ever going to get over,” she said, her voice quieting slightly, the pain much too obvious in it. “I found myself a new family. One who always believed in me and TRUSTED me. Now my new family needs me elsewhere. I'm building a permanent home for us on Lothal; a planet that I helped remove the Empire from. And I'm keeping the Empire from returning, no matter what it takes." Sabine sucked in another deep breath and continued, meeting Ursa’s eyes steadily.

What she said next made Ursa’s chest hurt with regret. "When I was little, all I ever wanted was your approval and love. I tried so hard to do what I thought you wanted. But it was never good enough for you, so I tried to impress you in a different way. I want to that wretched Imperial Academy and was the best student there. And look what that got me. I'm done trying to please you, Mother. I don't want to be the Countess of a Clan that never stood by me. I don't want to live in a
world where I'd be expected to marry for convenience because of my station. I know your marriage worked out with Father, but you were lucky. I've already found my cyar'ika and married him. I will not betray him." Sabine ended her speech on a determined look, clearly daring Ursa to retaliate.

Alrich glanced between his daughter and his wife, exchanged a look of alarm with Tristan, and waited for the inevitable explosion.

He wasn't disappointed.

Ursa gaped at Sabine for a good half a minute, her original stern expression lost in her shock that Sabine was already married. Her face slowly turned red as her anger rose to the surface. She surged from her throne and glared blaster bolts at Sabine. "It's that Jedi boy, isn't it? I never should have let you return with him to the Rebellion. I wish I could have married you off while I had the chance, but no one wanted you. You bring with you a stain of dishonour that has only recently been removed. And now you do this! Betraying your Clan yet again with a JEDI! How could you, Sabine?!"

Her daughter, of course, glared stubbornly back. "How couldn't I?! I love Ezra with all of my being. He entrusted me with the safekeeping of his planet and I will not let him down. Unlike SOME people, Ezra believes in me!"

"He left you!" Ursa nearly shouted.

"To save his planet and the WHOLE GALAXY from THRAWN!" Sabine shouted back. She sucked in a breath and spoke somewhat more quietly. "Thrawn was the best Admiral the Imperial Army had by far. His record of wins is unmatched. If Ezra hadn't ensured that Thrawn was removed from the picture, then the Rebellion would never stand a chance of winning. He had to do it and I applaud him for it even if I miss him something awful."

Ursa had to reluctantly agree with Sabine's assessment of the Grand Admiral, but that didn't change the fact that she'd been lying by omission to Ursa for months about her whereabouts. "I'm sorry, Sabine." She paused, her heart breaking at what she now felt honour bound to say. "But I'm afraid you've left me no choice but to disinherit you yet again. It was bad enough when you brought Jedi into our home and we had to be friendly to them. I would never live it down if I approved of your marriage to one, no matter how much he's done for our people or the galaxy. Our Clan would be disgraced yet again because of you. I'm sorry, Daughter, but I hereby banish you, AGAIN, from our home. You may not step foot on this planet until you give up on your foolish notion of guarding a planet for a boy who's probably never even coming back. He's gone, Sabine, and I hope you realize that sooner than later. When you come to your senses and apologize for your idiocy, I may forgive you. Until then, get out of my house."

Ursa sank back down onto her seat slowly, feeling painfully old right now, already wishing she could take back everything she just said as she stared into her daughter's heartbroken eyes that looked so much like Alrich’s.

Sabine's hands were clenched in fists, but otherwise, she kept herself relatively emotionless. She didn't seem overly surprised at her banishing. And probably rightly so, because Ursa had reacted almost exactly the same way when she found out about the Duchess.

She inclined her head once to her mother. "As you wish, Countess Wren. But I must correct you on two things. Ezra is not a boy. He's a man. And he has more honour and love in his little finger than you do in your entire being." Ursa nearly reeled back from the hurt those words caused, but she held herself still out of sheer stubborn pride to not let anyway see her pain. And with every word Sabine spoke, her pain increased tenfold. "And I won't be crawling back to you ever again. It's you
who will beg me to let you back into my life. There will come a day when you long to see your grandchildren and you'll realize that YOU are the only thing stopping yourself from doing so. When that day comes, I'll accept your apology for tearing my heart out twice."

Ursa longed to ask what about her own heart? Why was her daughter the only one who was allowed to be demonstrative? But Ursa was a product of her upbringing and those words would never cross her lips. She tightened her mouth to keep all her emotions in and stiffened her posture even further, refusing to say another word.

Sabine glanced at Alrich and Tristan, both staring at her with identical wide, pain filled amber eyes. "You're both welcome to come visit me on Lothal anytime. I hope you do, because you're still my family and I love you."

And with that, Sabine turned on her heel and walked out of the room, her boots nearly soundless.

She walked down the hall and out the door into the cold air, breathing slow and steady, sucking in the fresh winter air for possibly the last time. As she paused on the top of the steps, eyes drinking in the sight of the snow and the frozen lake and the trees of her childhood home, Sabine said a final goodbye to her old life. One she hadn't really lived since leaving the Academy. This wasn't where she belonged, and it obviously never had been. Is this how Hera had felt when she left Ryloth against her father's wishes? This sense of relief and gut wrenching pain? If so, she had even more in common with Hera than she thought. Hera really was the mother her own had never been.

Sabine walked down the stairs and back towards the red and black Gauntlet class Mandalorian ship. Just like her, she thought it was time to give the ship a new lease on life with a proper name and a new paint job. She silently promised the ship that she'd make time to paint it as soon as possible and start thinking up possible names.

“...That... went even worse than I expected,” Tristan said forlornly, looking at his parents with sympathetic eyes.

Ursa slumped back against the hard back of the silver marble throne, fighting back the urge to cry. “By the Mando, Alrich. What have I done?” she all but whimpered.

Alrich ran a slightly shaking hand through his hair even as he stood. “You did what you felt you had to, Ursa.” He touched her cheek briefly with the back of his fingers before he quickly ran down the steps of the dais. “But I’m going to say goodbye to our daughter,” he called over his shoulder. “Who knows when I’ll get to see her again?”

Alrich hurried after Sabine, determined to tell her his thoughts before she left.

He called her name just before she could step onto the ramp of her ship. "Sabine!"

Sabine turned around and ran back to him, meeting him halfway as he opened his arms for her to rush into. They hugged each other tight for a minute, and she felt a soft kiss press into her hair. Sabine finally let herself feel some emotion, but with love also came the grief. Tears welled in her eyes that she was forced to blink away even as she felt a few drops of water land in her hair.

Eventually Alrich pulled back, resting his hands on her shoulders, not quite ready to let her go. "I'm proud of you, Daughter. Keep following your heart and you'll be fine. And I'll work on your mother. You two are just so much alike that you repel each other like identical magnets. She already regrets her rash words. But you know how prideful she is. It will be a long time before she takes them back. And for the record, I approve of your choice of husband. I knew you two were
destined the first day I met him and saw how well you worked together. He is a true friend and that
is the best foundation for a marriage. I hope he comes home to you soon."

Sabine gave her father a watery smile. "Thank you, Father. Please come visit when you can.
Mother's kept us apart more than enough."

Alrich kissed her forehead, smoothing the dark chocolate and purple strands of her hair. "I will. I
promise. We'll do some painting together like we used to when you were little."

"I look forward to that," Sabine said happily. She gave her father one more quick hug, feeling him
shudder in a sigh under her cheek, and then she turned and walked up the ramp. They waved
goodbye when she reached the top and she closed the ramp with a sigh of mixed emotions, their
eyes glued to each other until the closing ramp obscured their view. Sabine walked to the bridge
and started up the ship. "Let's go see Hera," she told the ship as she lifted off the ground. The
engines rumbled in reply as she flew away from the durasteel fortress of Clan Wren. Spotting a
grey and brown speckled hawk soaring over the trees, Sabine smiled. She felt free like the hawk,
fly back to where she belonged.

"Hawk," she murmured to herself. "That's a good name. What do you think of the Lothhawk?" she
asked the ship. The sound of the engines was her only reply again, but it was answer enough.
Sabine smiled wider. "The Lothhawk it is." Because of course the ship had to have Loth in the title.
It wouldn't be Ezra's ship if it didn't.

As the engines of the ship roared to life, Alrich backed up a few dozen steps, but other than that,
didn't move until the ship had disappeared into the evening sky.

Sighing again, he turned and made his way back into the stronghold to console his wife. He knew
she’d be beating herself up about her temper once again, but at the same time, he couldn’t see how
she could have handled Sabine’s ultimatum much differently.

Sabine had clearly made her choice in life, and it wasn’t going to be as the next Countess of Clan
Wren.

Ursa stared after her husband’s slender but athletic form with rapidly blinking eyes, mentally
tracing his steps through the hallway and then watching him run through the snow and hug Sabine
tightly, wishing with everything she had that she was out there as well.

She didn’t realize that she’d choked on a sob until Tristan stepped up and put a hand on her
shoulder guard. “Is there anything I can do, Mother?” he asked softly.

She raised her arm and covered his hand with hers, shaking her head even as she pulled her
emotions back together. She smiled at him wanly. “No, Tristan. But thank you.”

Ursa closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them, a steady resolve had settled in
them. “Actually, Tristan, if you could round up our wayward clan and bring them here, I need to
tell them the latest news.”

Tristan nodded once, before backing down the steps. “Consider it done.”

Ursa kept her eyes on her son’s tall and broad form until he went through the door to the rest of the
building. She sighed softly, thanking the Manda that at least one of her children was proud of his
Wren heritage and was eager to learn everything there was to know about governing their people.
Not that she didn’t love Sabine, she did. More than anything. Possibly even a little more than Tristan because of how strong willed she was. But she was just so frustratingly independent and too similar to Ursa in temperament for them to ever truly get along. Perhaps all of this was for the best. Sabine was too much of a leader and had too many of her own ideas for them to ever live peacefully in the same household.

But, stars, how it hurt to have to banish her daughter again. How was it possible that the second time felt worse than the first?

As she watched that cursed red and black ship that used to belong to Maul fly away, it felt like a large piece of her heart was flying away with it.

She was still staring at the dark twilight sky where the last hint of light from the ship had disappeared when Alrich came back into the great hall. He settled beside her on the throne and drew her unresisting form into his arms and kissed the top her head gently.

Ursa hid her face in the soft fabric of his blue tunic and wrapped her arms around his narrow waist. “I’m sorry, Alrich,” she mumbled into his chest. “So very sorry.”

He rubbed a soothing hand up and down her back and pressed his cheek to her hair, closing his eyes to hold back the tears he was tempted to shed in sympathy for his wife’s pain, knowing she wouldn’t appreciate them in the slightest. “It’s okay, Urs’ika. I have faith that this will all work out one day.”

Ursa pulled back as she heard the door open and footsteps enter the room. She sat up into a regal pose once again. “I hope you’re right, Alrich, because I don’t honestly know if I can bear to never see our daughter again,” she said quietly, her tone laced with remorse.

He gave her fingers a quick squeeze as their clan continued to filter into the room, taking positions in front of the dais and looking up at them questioningly. “You’ll see her again. I promise,” he whispered just loud enough for her to hear him as Tristan walked up the steps and stood beside them again.

Ursa shot him a grateful look before standing and giving her clan her best Countess look. “My people, I’m afraid I have some unfortunate news…”
Hera's Close Call

Hera's Close Call:

_D121/1 BBY, Yavin 4_

Hera left the Ghost at a brisk but not rushed looking walk. Whatever the problems were, they would still be there even if she didn't run. Her running days were over for a while. She was on flying only missions from now on.

She aimed for the crowd of people gathered around one of the new X-Wings. "What's the problem?" she asked as people made way for her.

Wedge peered down at her from inside the cockpit. "It's the ignition system, we think. We can't get it to start."

Hera raised a brow. "Did you let one of the astromechs look at it? You know that's what they're designed for."

Wedge shook his head, looking embarrassed, as well as the crowd of pilots and mechanics all assembled around doing nothing useful, shuffling their feet and clearing their throats.

Hera restrained the urge to roll her eyes at them and called Chopper on her wrist comm. "Chop, we have a glitchy X-Wing. Can you come talk to it?"


"Thanks, Chopper." Hera cleared her throat pointedly and the crowd quickly dispersed, going back to their jobs. "You might as well come down from there, Wedge. Just wait here until Chopper arrives so he knows which one to fix."

"Sure, General," he said, already climbing down the ladder.

Hera continued on her way to the Command Center. She found Mothma and Generals Dodonna and Willard in a heated discussion. "You called for me, Senator?" Hera said as she walked into the room.

Mon looked up, a faint smile of greeting interrupting her worried look. "Good, you're here, General. We just received a distress call from one of our supply ships. They accidentally crossed paths with a Star Destroyer as they were both stopping to calculate a hyperspace jump. They're stalling as long as they can but the Imperial Captain is being very stubborn and wants to do an inspection of the cargo hold. That would be alright if they weren't carrying spare parts for our very distinctive A-Wings. Our conundrum is that they're only a ten minute jump away. If we send fighters to help them, the Empire will have a good idea about how close our base is to the location of the freighter. If we don't send help, we'll lose our men and our supplies. What is your opinion, General Syndulla?"

Hera didn't even have to think about it. "We send help. I'll take a couple squadrons of X-Wings and take out the star destroyer. If we target the communications array first, we should be able to prevent them from transmitting their location."

Mothma relaxed slightly as Hera came up with a plan that she could live with. She glanced at the other two Generals and saw them nodding in agreement as well. "Do it," she said to Hera.
Hera nodded once. "Call Phoenix and Gold squadron for me," she called over her shoulder as she left the room at a jog. Apparently there were circumstances that gave her enough incentive to go faster than a walk. Her expanding stomach made it a bit more awkward, but still doable.

An alarm sounded through the base as she jogged down the hallways. "Phoenix and Gold squadrons, to your X-Wings," she heard over the loudspeaker. "General Syndulla will brief you in the air."

Hera smiled a little to herself, adrenaline already coursing through her. She would never get tired of flying the new fighter and testing her skills against the enemy. "Chop, you still in that X-Wing?" she called over her comm.

"Yes," he beeped.

"You find a problem with it?"

"Not yet. The fraging computer on this one is being stupid," he beeped back with a very annoyed tone.

"Can you bypass it and jumpstart the thing?" she huffed as she was running up to the ladder of said X-Wing. All around her, pilots were jumping into their X-Wings and astromechs were flying into place with the pleasant rumble of starting engines sounding in her ears.

The X-Wing starting was her answer as well as a triumphant beep from Chopper. Hera climbed the ladder and grabbed the helmet out of the air that some nice mechanic threw her.

As she was about to climb into the cockpit, Hera felt an instant sense of foreboding. She was going to ignore it but then she also felt the distinctive press of Kanan's hand on her shoulder, pulling her backwards and away from the X-Wing. She stumbled a little as she had one foot already in the air, but caught herself. Hera looked up at Chopper wide eyed. "Chopper, turn it off and move into a different one. There's something seriously wrong with this one."

"But I just..."

Hera cut him off sharply. "Not now, Chop. Just do as I say. I'll explain later." Hera gave him a steely eyed look that he instantly obeyed with only a little bit of a sulk showing in his attitude.

Hera climbed back down the ladder and grabbed the arm of the nearest mechanic. "I want that X-Wing taken apart and thoroughly investigated before anyone flies it again."

The mechanic gave her a quick salute. "Yes, General."

Hera booted it over to the X-Wing that Chopper had already placed himself in. He started it for her while she climbed the ladder. Hera strapped herself into the pilot's chair and she was off the ground in a moment, Phoenix squadron falling into formation behind her and Gold squadron behind them. The astromechs jumped them into hyperspace and they were off.

While the star fighters travelled at lightspeed, Hera explained the mission to her squadrons. Then she closed the channel so only Chopper could hear her. "I'm sorry for getting cross with you earlier, Chop. There was something... I got this feeling of dread and then I could swear I felt Kanan pulling me away from the X-Wing."

"Kanan?" Chopper beeped mournfully.

"Yes, Kanan," Hera replied just as sadly. "It doesn't really make any sense but I've always trusted
Kanan before and I'm not going to stop now."

She didn't have any more time to reflect on the strange occurrence because Chopper beeped that they would arrive in five seconds. The X-Wings dropped out of hyperspace and Hera instantly assessed the situation.

"Wedge and Mart you're on the communications array. Gold squadron; shield generators. Everyone else, make them miserable and take care of the TIEs that are bound to show up." She said all of that while she zipped towards the freighter that was being towed towards one of the hangars at the bottom of the star destroyer. She aimed a proton torpedoe at the tractor beam generator and smiled in satisfaction as it scored a direct hit and the freighter was released. Their supply ship quickly moved away from the battle and jumped to hyperspace.

Five minutes later, it was over. The star destroyer blew up spectacularly from all the proton torpedoes that bombarded it. Despite the cringeworthy nature of the job, they picked off all the escape pods and TIE fighters until there were no survivors left to tell the Empire about how quickly Rebel fighters showed up on the scene. Hera considered the mission a sad success. All of her fighters had survived with only a few having to withdraw from the battle with minor damages to their fighters, and they saved the transport. She couldn't really ask for more than that.

Hera slumped in her seat as they flew back through hyperspace, the adrenaline rush leaving her feeling drained in the aftermath. She put a hand on her rounded stomach. "I hope you never have to fight the battles I have, my little miracle," she whispered to her baby. "Flying is the best, but right now it comes with a price I wish I didn't have to pay."

Hera's squadrons landed on Yavin 4 to many rounds of congratulations and cheers. She smiled and endured the praise from her fellow pilots and rebels, but her eyes were trained on the X-Wing that she could see in the distance. While she was gone, the mechanics had been inspired to literally take it apart as she could see pieces of the inner workings lying neatly on a tarp off to the side. Hera excused herself from Zeb, Kallus, Rex, and Wolffe's stifling presence as they surrounded her and Chopper, congratulating them on another successful mission.

She heard Rex ask "what's up with her?" behind her and she could just imagine Zeb's shrug of confusion, but Hera left them anyway, absently noticing that they followed her.

Hera stopped by the faulty X-Wing and stared up at the mechanic who was buried deep in the engines of the machine. "Have you found anything yet?" she called.

He stuck his head out with a serious look on his grease covered face. "Yah, I have. And it's not good. Whoever or whatever assembled this one mixed up two of the wires connected to the hyperdrive. The way it is right now, it would have exploded when you jumped into hyperspace. I'm not sure if it's really possible, but it seems like the onboard computer was trying to save the pilots by not letting the X-Wing start.

Hera stared at the mechanic, stunned. Kanan had saved her life. Again.

"Wait, isn't that the X-Wing that I saw you almost take off in?" Zeb asked.

"Yes," Chopper beeped for Hera as she still seemed to be unable to speak.

"Karabast," Zeb muttered under his breath.

"That was too close, Hera," Rex commented with a worried look on his sun weathered face.

"What made you take a different X-Wing?" Kallus asked curiously, for he'd also seen her change
her mind only a step away from getting into the cockpit.

"Kanan," Hera breathed. "Kanan stopped me," she said with a slowly widening smile and tears building in her eyes. "He is still with me, in some fashion." She turned and wandered slowly towards the temple to give her report to Command, feeling happier than she had in months.

The guys stared at each other wide eyed for a minute. "Karabast," Zeb finally said again. "I knew the whole Force thing was real, but this is more than I ever thought I would believe, but somehow I do."

Kallus and the clones nodded in agreement. They'd all seen Jedi do some amazing things, but Kanan kind of not being entirely dead topped the list.

The mechanic looked from Hera's retreating form to the guys standing around by the X-Wing in confusion. "I'm clearly missing something here."

Kallus glanced up at the man. "Don't worry about it. I'm assuming you can fix the fighter?"

The mechanic nodded. "I already did, but I'm finecombing the entire thing just to make sure."

Kallus nodded. "That's good to hear. Keep up the great work."

The mechanic beamed. "Thank you, Sir." He looked down at Chopper. "You want to help me double check everything?"

Chopper beeped an eager affirmative. He had some words to exchange with the persnickity computer. He was going to find out why it couldn't just have told him what the problem was in the first place. Stupid, kriffing computers. They annoyed him to no end sometimes. Especially the nav computer on the Ghost. They'd been having a battle of wills for years. Not that he'd ever tell Hera. He would hate for her to think that her precious ship was less than perfect.
A/N: This chapter has been heavily edited after I watched Rogue One again. I'm also feeling inspired to write a Jyn/Cassian chapter someday soon.

Jacen Syndulla the 7th inherited different things from different people.

From his mother, he got the emerald green colour of his hair, his attitude about life and saving it, and his love of flying.

From his father, he received his features, skin tone, build, and connection to the Force.

From his grandfather, he got the second external hint of his twi'lek blood; the somewhat larger than normal ears that almost came to a point at the tip and were tinged green, just because.

From his great great great grandfather, Jacen inherited the dark blue eyes of the only Syndulla in memory to be blue skinned. Every Syndulla after that born with the blue eyes was of course called Jacen, and Jacen the 7th was no exception. (There was one female once; they called her Jaen.) All of the Jacens had one other thing in common that came with the dark blue eyes; they all had eidetic memories.

Jacen Syndulla, son of General Hera Syndulla and the Jedi Knight, Kanan Jarrus / Caleb Dume, remembered everything that ever happened to him or was said around him. Even events that occurred within the last month before his birth. Some of them didn't make sense until he was older. Some of them just made him happy as they occurred. Some, he wished he could forget.

His very first memories were of his parents, and they were some of his favourites.

D341/1 BBY, The Ghost

Jacen was in a very comforting place within his mama. There was a sense of movement as she slowly paced the hallways of the Ghost. Her melodic voice was singing him a soft lullaby, soothing him to sleep so he'd stop doing cartwheels within her. He sensed her hand resting on her stomach above him and he reached out to touch her hand through the layers of skin and tissue that separated them.

Jacen knew what it meant to feel love and he fell asleep in the warmth.

Later that night, his sense of his mother was still. She was sleeping soundly, arms wrapped around her middle, holding him as best as she could. He remained motionless so as not to disturb her and just absorbed the good feelings in the vast space that he could feel surround everything.

Not long after, Jacen was joined by tiny flickering lights. He reached for one and it settled in his hand. "Hello?" he thought at the light happily, enchanted with it.

"Hello, my beautiful son," the lights replied in his mind.

Jacen blinked at the lights and something his mama said about wishing his daddy was here suddenly made sense. "Daddy."
"Yes," the lights thought back, radiating pleasure that Jacen had made the connection.

His daddy came back every night while his mama slept, surrounding him with his strong presence and telling him how much he was loved.

Jacen never wanted to leave his happy place.

D363/1 BBY, Yavin 4

Being born sucked.

His day had started off normal enough. His mama moved around a lot. People talked a lot with the usual drone of voices that he generally ignored, unless they were talking to his mama. He dozed most of the time. Practiced his cartwheels and kicks when he was awake.

His mama was sitting still and dozing as well when he felt her startle, bringing him to full alertness.

"General Syndulla, please report to the briefing room. General Syndulla, please report to the briefing room."

She got up, saying, "I'm coming," and started moving, slower than she used to, and feeling displeased.

He felt her feelings change to something much happier a few minutes later and he felt the presence of three people near her. One was very familiar and she was called Mothma, Mon, Mon Mothma, or Senator Mothma. Why so many names? (He didn't understand until later.) She was someone his mama respected and followed the orders of. Usually. Another was Senator Organa, or Bail. The last, Jacen didn't know.

"Leia. It's a pleasure to see you here. How was Coruscant?" his mama said with real enthusiasm.

Jacen didn't know this name. Nor did he recognize the pretty voice as she answered his mama. But his mama seemed to really like her, so Jacen paid attention.

"Hera," a female said. "Coruscant was something to be endured, as always, but the Emperor seemed satisfied with Alderaan's loyalty when I left." Her presence came closer and hugged his mama. "You look... Ummm,"

"Immense," his mama finished helpfully. Jacen wondered what 'immense' meant.

"Not exactly what I was looking for, but I suppose that is accurate," Leia admitted. "I was expecting to have a little Syndulla to cuddle by now. Weren't you due three weeks ago?"

His mama heaved a sigh, making him swish a little in his warm place. "Yes, I was. But this one is stubborn and seems content to stay where he is. And he is a hybrid, which makes things a little more unpredictable. The medics say we're fine though, so I'm not worried. Just beyond ready to hold him in my arms instead of... well. You get the idea." Jacen wondered why his mama felt frustrated and why the others felt amused.

But she'd got him thinking. Was he not supposed to stay in the warm place forever? Why not? He did have to admit that the warm place was feeling rather tight lately, but he hadn't been complaining.

The male presence he knew as Senator Organa was talking now. "You ladies will have to excuse
me. I was leaving when Leia arrived and my crew has my ship running. Leia, I left Artoo and Threepio waiting in the hangar for you. They can help you with your new mission."

"Thank you, Father. I won't let you down."

Jacen sensed Leia and Organa hugging for a moment while he said, "You never do, my Princess. You never do." They pulled apart as the man started to move away from Leia and his mama. "I'll see you soon, Leia. Good luck with your mission. Mon, General, I hope you don't have too much trouble talking sense into the Council. Now I really must go and tell my people the bad news. Annnnnnd I promised my Queen that I would actually spend some time with her sooner than later and I'm rapidly approaching later. We both lead very busy lives, as you know, but Breha still likes for us to share the same space every once in a while."

"Father!" Leia said loudly. "Too much information!"

The man was amused. "You'll survive, Leia. You're almost nineteen now, I think you can handle a little grownup humour."

Leia huffed. "Go see Mother. Us women will take care of the galactic disaster that is upon us while you're off having a holiday."

"I doubt very much I've ever actually had a holiday and you know it. As for the Death Star, please keep me informed of what progress is made in regards to making a decision about it. The reports from Cassian and the Erso girl are quite disturbing." That was the last the male said before he left his mama's vicinity.

His mama focused on Mothma. "Did you need something? I heard the loudspeaker summoning me."

"Yes, Hera. I missed you earlier and got sidetracked by General Dodonna and some of the other Council members who disagree with giving up. I wanted your opinion on whether or not we should run a mission to Scarif and attempt to retrieve the Death Star plans. Jyn Erso seems to think we should and could. I think it's a suicide run and I don't like the idea of sending any of our people into a death trap that may not result in anything useful, but I also can't see us giving up now."

As Mothma talked, Jacen felt one of his uncles approaching. He did a little flip of excitement. "You don't have to worry about that debate anymore," uncle Kal said from nearby. "Cassian, Erso and a bunch of my spies just left in the Imperial cargo shuttle which they dubbed 'Rogue One'. I think they're going on their own, permission or not."

His mama and Mothma sucked in identical gasps of dismay.

"Thank you, Director Kallus, for informing us," Mothma said radiating displeasure. "I suppose now all we can do is wait and see if they're successful."

His mama shook her head, feeling worried. "No, Mon. I think we need to prepare for battle."

Uncle Kal moved closer to his mama. "I agree. I've done a little research on Scarif. Assuming they get into the planetary shield in their stolen ship, I doubt very much they're going to get back out again on their own. If they do retrieve the Death Star plans, then a battle is worth the risk in my opinion."

Mothma sighed loudly. "I suppose, if the other Generals agree as well, I have no choice but to go along with it." She became very focused on his mama and Leia. "But you two are not going. Hera, you could go into labour at any moment, and Leia, we can't risk losing you."
Jacen wondered what 'labour' was and why his mama would go into it.

Mama and Leia were both very unhappy with this but he felt Mama nod slowly. "Understood, Senator. If there's nothing else?"

"No. You can go. You too, Leia. You have another mission to run anyway. Admiral Raddus has agreed to escort you to Tatooine. Kallus, if you could stay, I'd like to hear more about what you've learned," Mothma said in her commanding voice.

His mama started moving again, her emotions fuming. Leia's presence caught up to her quickly.

"Are you actually going to stay behind if they scramble the fleet?" Leia asked in a whisper.

His mama shook her head, suddenly feeling furtive and gleeful. "Not a chance. There's no way I'm missing this."

Leia felt gleeful too. "I'm going too. I'm sure I can convince Admiral Raddus to make a little detour. He's always up for a good fight. I'm tired of always being left behind whenever something exciting happens. At least then I can watch from the sidelines. I've never seen a real space battle before. We can go on to Tatooine from there."

Jacen's mama laughed lightly. "Good luck with that. Can I ask what you're doing on Tatooine?" his mama said curiously.

"I think it's safe enough to tell you, of all people. Father's tasked me with retrieving Master Kenobi. He says the situation is too important to not have a Jedi involved and I agree. And right now, Master Kenobi is the only Jedi we have left that's close enough to help. I wish Ahsoka was due back for resupplying right now. She could bring Ezra back anytime, too. That would be great. We could really use them right now."

His mama felt really sad all of a sudden at the name Ezra. Who was that? "We could use a whole lot of things," his mama replied quietly. "But having Ezra and Ahsoka back would definitely top my list." She shook her head slowly. "But we don't, so there's no point wishing for it. You just get Master Kenobi back here as fast as you can whether he likes it or not. Whatever his purpose for staying out of the Rebellion until now has been, it can't be more important than taking out that Death Star."

"I one hundred percent agree," Leia said with feeling. "Ever since Father first told me about him, I've been trying to get him to tell me what a Jedi Master could possibly be guarding on Tatooine for so many years, but he refuses to tell me. Just says 'it's important, and that's all you need to know.' It's so frustrating." Jacen heard her heave a sigh. "Whatever. I guess I should get going. Oooo. Maybe I can get Artoo to tell me. I never thought of asking him."

Jacen's mama laughed at that. "Good luck with that, too. Astromech droids can be ridiculously silent when they want to be. Mine, on the other hand, is the complete opposite, much to my dismay."

Leia snorted. "I know, I've met him. I'll still take your foulmouthed Chopper over Father's wimpy Threepio, though," she said in an exasperated tone. "Oh, well. Try not to have Syndulla junior, there, before I get back. I don't want to miss the excitement," she said as her presence and voice moved further and further away. His mama just laughed and started walking again, increasing the distance between her and Leia.

His mama didn't talk to anyone for a while and eventually came to a stop again in the place that
Jacen equated with 'home.' Jacen decided now was a good time for a nap.

When he woke up, everything was different.

There was the sensation of intense movement that he'd figured out meant his mama was sitting still but 'home' was moving rapidly. Jacen loved these times. It was thrilling.

The rest of his uncles joined his mama, concern in their emotions.

"Hera. What are you doing?" That was the sound of his uncle Zeb. His large presence talked to Jacen a lot and his mama even more.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" his mama answered.

"It looks like you're joining the fleet to attack Scarif," uncle Rex said.

"Then that's what I'm doing." His mama seemed very pleased with herself.

"But Kal said that Mothma said that you were to stay grounded." Uncle Zeb again.

"What Mothma doesn't know won't hurt her," his mama argued.

"I'm sure she knows by now," uncle Wolffe said dryly. "I can guarantee someone noticed the most distinctive ship in the fleet leaving the landing pad."

There was a chime and Mothma's voice with no presence. "General Syndulla, get your ship back on the ground now!"

He felt his mama reach a bit. "I'm sorry, Mothma, I didn't catch that, there must be something wrong with the comm. You can debrief me later."

His uncles were snorting with suppressed laughter and resignation.

"Punch it, Chopper," his mama said commandingly.

"Sure thing," the tiny presence with a short and round shape beeped back. Jacen wasn't sure what was up with the one called Chopper, but he existed and his mama felt deep affection for him, so that was good enough for Jacen.

The feel around him changed again as 'home' moved into a new dimension of speed. Jacen loved this best. It felt like he was flying and floating at the same time. He wondered if his mama also felt the same way, because she always seemed happiest when 'home' was moving.

Just then, there was a clenching inside his mother that squeezed him and made her gasp, and she put a hand over him.

"Kit kicking you again?" uncle Zeb asked.

His mama was in pain but she simply said, "Yes." Why would she say that? He was being good and not kicking at all. Why would his mama lie?

Jacen eventually found out.

His mama quietly suffered through the clenching pains that came regularly after that and increased in frequency. Jacen wished he could help her, but he was being squeezed more and more and soon
enough he could barely think from the pressure he was under.

This lasted for a long time. She talked to him once or twice, but her concentration was usually elsewhere. He remembered her saying, "You've picked a terrible time to come into the world, my little miracle. But should I really have expected anything less from a Spectre?" (Years later, he would understand that line and laugh about it.)

Eventually the sense of stoic determination from his mama changed to just the pain that had taken her over. During that time, there had been many voices with no presences talking about 'being hit' and 'we've lost another one.' It was always accompanied by a feeling of loss in the space that was the thing that surrounded everything.

Near the end he remembered hearing panicked conversations overlapping each other.

"Did anyone else see that?"

"You mean the giant sphere that just blew up part of Scarif?"

"Yah. I saw it."

"The data file!? Did anyone get it?"

"We think the Profundity got it, but we're not sure."

"But the Profundity isn't with us."

"I know."

"The Princess. The data file. We've lost everything."

"We're doomed."

Once the sense of zipping randomly back and forth changed to the steady forward motion of the fastest flying, that was when his mama gave up fighting back the pain.

She screamed. Jacen had never heard her scream before, and it scared him.

His uncle Zeb's presence moved from below mama to beside her, muttering, "Karabast!" (A curse word that mama chided him constantly for and Jacen eagerly remembered. Along with any other words that mama chided the other uncles for.)

Zeb's voice continued, speaking to the others that were further away from them but still inside 'home.' "Does anyone know how to deliver a baby? Because the kit's coming, ummm, right now by the looks of it."

All Zeb received in reply was some very loud sounding shabla's from Rex and Wolffe. (More forbidden curse words!)

His mama spoke to Zeb with pain taking over her entire body. "Just get me to the med bay, you idiot."

He felt Zeb pick them up in his arms and his mama groaned as another contraction ripped through her. Zeb rushed them through 'home' and soon she was lying down. He felt it as she was injected with something and the pain eased considerably, allowing her frame to relax a little and the terrible pressure to ease up on him.
That was the last thing he remembered for a while. (Jacen assumed the drugs had knocked him out.)

He woke up again as the sensation of being squeezed became pretty much unbearable and suddenly he was in the cold. Cold metal things held him and cleaned him and Jacen didn't like it. He took a page from his mama's book and screamed his displeasure, using his voice for the first time.

He didn't stop screaming until the cold hands wrapped him in a blanket and handed him to his mama. She held him gently in her arms and Jacen looked at her outsides for the very first time. He thought his mama was amazing. She had eyes that looked at him like he was her entire world. And he understood, because she was his too. Everything he knew about her; her caring, her love, her fighting spirit; it could all be seen on her face. Jacen loved her with everything he had. He didn't know what 'green' was yet, but that was the colour she was covered in and he liked it very much. It was a soft, cheerful colour that made him happy. As she held him to her chest, her heart beat comfortingly in his ear, just like it had done when he was in the warm place.

Jacen decided this wasn't so bad.

"Hello, Jacen," she said softly, calling him by the name he'd always known was his for the first time. She usually called him 'Miracle', but he'd known that wasn't his name. Her voice was clearer now than before and even more beautiful. "I wish your daddy could see how perfect you are."

Jacen turned his eyes to where his daddy's warm glow was floating beside the bed and wondered why his mama didn't know he was here.

Then the glow touched her shoulder and his mama smiled. "Never mind, sweetie. Your daddy's here. And he loves you too."

Of course he did. He told him every day. And he was telling him now too.

His mama inhaled in surprise when the glow that was Daddy touched her temple. "I love you, Kanan," she whispered to the air. "And I take back all the awful things I thought or screamed about you over the last six or seven hours. I'm pretty sure I would never unman you," she said in a teasing tone. "Jacen was worth it. Thank you, love." (Twenty five years later, his own wife would also curse him in a similar fashion and they would have a similar conversation after the birth of their first child. Jacen was VERY happy he was a male.)

Jacen stared in fascination as liquid fell from her eyes. What was that for? His daddy seemed to know, because his glow touched the liquid on her cheeks and absorbed it. He decided it must be some kind of love ritual, because he could sense the love the two of them were sending to each other.

It was wonderful to bask in.

Then there was all of his uncles to meet in person as his mama presented him to them.

Jacen met his uncle Zeb first. The sheer size of the purple striped male terrified him at first. But only until he heard his voice. Jacen recognized that voice and remembered that this voice was a comforting presence for his mother. Jacen also really liked the soft fur of his arms when he was held by uncle Zeb. Zeb quickly became one of his favourite people.

The next person Jacen met was uncle Kal. He was reluctant to hold him at first, but Zeb talked him into it. Jacen quickly learned that uncle Kal was very dependable and a source of sanity in the
chaos that occasionally descended on their home. Jacen and Kal got on famously, as they were both logical thinking people. (Once Jacen grew up a little.)

After that, Jacen met uncles Rex and Wolffe. They were the ones with the similar voices and feels. He wasn't surprised when they also had similar faces. Jacen thought they were awesome and always looked forward to being in their care. (They liked to play soldiers and Jedi vs battle droids with him.)

He also met Chopper, who just had to come see the 'tiny organic'. Jacen was surprised the thing his mother talked to the most wasn't a person, but the beepy voice was more than familiar and Jacen accepted the droid as part of his family instantly.

The first time he saw his big sister, Sabine, was in a hologram. The tiny image was fascinating but the voice was instantly recognizable as one that his mother talked to frequently. She quickly became 'Sabie' in his mind and he couldn't wait to meet her in person.

Jacen had only been in the outside world for a day when he felt the very air around him cry in terror and then a great void appear in that place he could feel but not see as the terror was suddenly silenced. His daddy was there shortly afterwards, and he told him that he wouldn't let anything happen to him or his mother. It only helped a little, for Jacen felt like the outside world was suddenly a very dangerous place.

He was in his mother's arms a day later when the words 'Death Star' were flying around him endlessly from dozens of different people. There was fear and a sense of doom in the air that enforced his opinion that he wanted to be back inside his mother where everything was warm and safe.

That was the first time he saw his home, the Ghost. His family piled into the ship, along with a bunch of other people that his mother insisted get on the ship, and Jacen had a front row seat as uncle Zeb held him in his arms while mama flew them away from Yavin 4 and he saw space for the first time. Ten minutes later, the Death Star exploded spectacularly in the distance.

He would never forget the sight.

Or the sound of cheering coming from the ship all around him and over the comms.

Or the feel of more death as thousands more expired in an instant. It was terrible. (This was when he wished he could forget pieces of his past.)

Over the course of the next day or two, Jacen met many people who would become honorary aunts and uncles. There was Luke, Leia, Wedge, Hobbie, a dozen more pilots and lower level commanders that all loved and respected his mother, and of course, Chewie. The giant wookiee was another being that Jacen thought terrifying to look at at first. But then he registered how the extra hairy male felt and he realized he was just a giant walking stuffed toy and just as friendly. Jacen especially loved the days that he got to spend with Chewie fixing the Falcon and they laughed together over how much Han loved the wreck of a ship. (Jacen would have liked to say that Han Solo was also an honorary uncle, but he never volunteered for babysitting duty. So Han remained a person who existed and was to be respected, but they didn't become friends until Jacen was in his teens and Ben Solo moved to Lothal to train in the Jedi school run by Ezra, Ahsoka and Luke.)

Sabie came to see him and his mama too. She loved him instantly and she became his favourite
person who wasn't his parents. Sabie was full of life and colour and had the most loving arms who hugged him just right.

There was that one heartbreaking moment, though, when she said to his mama, "I wish Ezra was here to see him."


Jacen didn't understand why they felt so sad all of a sudden. Why everyone in the room felt sad.

Who was this Ezra everyone kept talking about?
“Do you think… anyone is listening?”

Jyn clutched Cassian tighter to her side as they limped awkwardly towards the turbolift, the gasp of pain in his voice concerning her greatly. She mustered up a determined, if small, smile for him. “I do.” Her smile widened as Cassian gave her a fleeting flash of teeth at her optimistic tone. “Someone’s out there.”

Cassian hoped she was right. He doubted it, but there was always that faint glimmer of hope that had driven him onwards over the years. He glanced towards the sky even though the shield ring wasn’t visible from this side of the tower, wondering if there actually was a battle going on up there, and if so, would the Rebellion ships be enough to take down the planetary shield so the Death Star plans wouldn’t just bounce right back.

As expected, he didn’t see Star Destroyers or Rebel Star Cruisers. But he did see a giant sphere looming over the planet.

The same giant sphere that had wiped out Jedha City.

The Death Star was here.

Cassian stopped his excruciating forward momentum and nodded to the sky.

“What?” Jyn asked, just before she turned her head. Somehow, she managed to stifle the gasp at the sight that greeted her. She set her jaw and double timed their steps towards the lift’s door. “Right. Time to go. I’m not dying inside an Imperial base.”

Cassian knew there was no way they could possibly get off the planet before the Death Star obliterated the area. He also knew she was more than smart enough to have come to the same conclusion. He raised a brow at her even as he relished the way her hand squeezed the arm he had draped over her shoulders for support. “And where do you intend to die, then?”

Jyn smacked the button to open the turbolift door and helped him inside before she answered. “Outside,” she said as he propped himself against a wall and she hit the button to take them down to ground level. “Anywhere outside. I’ve spent way too much of my life trapped behind walls. I don’t want to die within them, too. And especially not Imperial walls.”

“Then you won’t,” Cassian said with promise in his husky voice as he wrapped his more functional arm around her waist and pulled her close to him. “We won’t.”

Jyn wrapped an arm around his shoulders in return and met those intense dark eyes that had captivated her from the first moment she’d seen them. “I’m glad I get to die with you, Cassian Andor.”

Cassian’s mouth twitched into a smile, ignoring the nauseous feeling caused by his wounds and the speed of the lift as it descended. He used his free hand to grasp hers and raised it to his mouth, pressing a kiss to the leather gloved knuckles. “It is an honour for me, as well, Jyn Erso. There’s no one else I’d rather die with than you.”
Jyn’s heart melted even as it whimpered at the injustice of it all. She’d finally met a man that she could see herself spending the rest of her life with and they’d only gotten three days together.

Three days.

The Force, if there was such a thing, was a cruel bastard.

She laced their fingers together for the last few seconds of the lift ride and just looked at him. She couldn’t bring herself to say anything else in words, but her eyes did a whole lot of talking as she stared into his. She wanted to say that she loved him, even though she’d only just met him. She wanted to say that she would fight by his side until the war was won. She wanted to ask if he’d like to settle down with her somewhere pretty and have little Andors with her. She wanted to tell him that he was cute as hell when he was in combat mode and handsome as sin when he was looking at her like he was right now.

His dark hair clung to the sweat on his forehead and teased the bare skin of her arm that was behind his neck with a silky texture that made her want to peel off her gloves and bury her fingers in it as she kissed him for the first time. He had the most adorable bump on his nose from where it had been broken, maybe more than once. The stubble on his jaw looked like it would rasp in the most delightful fashion. And his eyes looked like fathomless pools of everything they could have had together.

Oh, how she wanted.

But she kept it all inside, because it hurt enough to think it. Saying any of it would just bring the tears to the surface that she was very determinedly keeping at bay.

Cassian returned her look with interest.

He knew what she wanted to say because he wanted to say it too. And he was just as incapable of saying anything out loud. She was gorgeous, blaster burn on her cheek and all. He wanted to hold her tight to him and never let her go. He wanted kiss those faintly trembling lips until she gasped out his name. He wanted to lose himself within her for days and discover every sensitive spot on her shapely little body.

He wanted to protect her from everything that had hurt her and everything that possibly could. He wanted to give her all the hope in the galaxy on a silver platter and make everything perfect. He wanted to spend the rest of his life making her happy, because Force knows, just being with her the last few days had sure made his world a brighter place than it had ever been.

Stars, how he loved her.

The words wanted out.

“Jyn, I...”

The turbolift settling to a stop interrupted him. Maybe it was for the best.

They were about to die, anyway.

Her eyes widened fractionally and her fingers tightened on his shoulder as her lips parted on a caught breath. Even though he’d stopped what he was saying, somehow, she knew what he was trying to say. “Me, too,” she whispered before she kicked herself back into action; the looming Death Star once again present in her mind. Jyn tugged his arm back around her shoulders and wrapped her arm around his narrow waist as the doors opened into a stereotypical grey Imperial
Cassian looked at her with stunned wonder as she all but dragged his wounded carcass down the hallway. Did she just admit that she loved him back?

Somehow, that made everything so much better and so much worse. He was elated and devastated all at once. He desperately wanted to pull her to a stop and ask her if she meant what he thought she meant. And if so, spend the next hour or so kissing her in gratitude. But the reality of his screaming leg and the spreading numbness in his core from Krennic’s blaster shot helped to jolt his understanding of how incredibly unrealistic that was.

Instead, he did his best to be as light a burden as possible as she ran them down endless hallways.

Jyn panted, thinking that despite Cassian’s leanly muscled but too skinny form that clearly didn’t get enough food, he was ridiculously heavy. She was extremely grateful when they finally reached the exit at the back of the facility. She was even more grateful that she’d more or less memorized the way out when they were wandering around not so long ago in search of a droid for Kaytoo to steal info from.

She opened the last door and they stumbled out into the light of day just in time to see a flash of green land in the ocean in front of them. It was almost enough to distract them from the bodies of their fellow Rebels lying on the sandy ground only metres from the door.

“Kriff,” Cassian muttered.

And then rubble from the tower above them started to fall all around them. Jyn looked up just in time to see a huge chunk of durasteel heading straight for them. She pushed Cassian off to the side and then dove after him, hitting the sand hard.

The boulder sized piece of building impacted right where they’d been standing.

Jyn pushed up onto her hands and knees and crawled over to Cassian, grateful that she’d managed to push him out of the danger zone. “Are you okay?”

Cassian groaned and pushed himself up onto one arm. “I’ve been better,” he said dryly. “Thanks for the save.”

Jyn grabbed his arm and pulled him up onto his good foot. “I think we’re even a few dozen times over by now.”

Cassian grinned at her as they resumed their hobbled path towards her destination of the far edge of the beach, as far from the Imperial facility as she could get. “I like that. Calling it even. Cause we are. You would’ve made a great addition to our team.”

Jyn snorted lightly. “Thanks.”

Cassian shook his head. “No, I’m serious. You’re a force to be reckoned with.”

Jyn gave him a genuine smile this time. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

At this point, they couldn’t really ignore the growing cloud of light over the ocean and their expressions turned grim once again. She took the last few steps to the edge of the water and they both fell to their knees in the sand, exhausted.
Cassian stifled a groan as pain shot through his leg and shifted more onto his hip and good leg. His eyes turned to Jyn, thinking that she was the most amazing woman ever. Most would be weeping buckets and wailing right now in the face of certain death, but she was dry-eyed and calm as can be.

Jyn caught his look and gave him a ‘what?’ look back.

A corner of his mouth lifted in amusement; she was so easy to read. Playing sabacc with her would have been fun. “Your father would have been proud of you, Jyn.”

Jyn didn’t know what to say to that, so instead, she reached for his hand and held it tight in a thankful grasp. He smiled at her, love shining in his dark chocolate eyes. She smiled back.

It was a perfect moment.

If only the blinding light of the encroaching blast zone wasn’t there to distract them. Inevitably, their eyes were drawn to the cloud of doom, watching as it grew closer and closer.

For a minute, the wave of inescapable death seemed to move in slow motion, like it would never reach them. And in the next moment, it was suddenly almost upon them.

Jyn swallowed a whimper. “I don’t want to die.” The words were torn from her throat. And suddenly she was in Cassian’s arms, clinging to him and refusing to look at the blast cloud anymore.

He clutched her trembling body tight and breathed her in. His pain was forgotten as he spent his last few seconds alive holding this wonderful woman that could have been his everything. He closed his eyes and prayed to the Force or the stars or anyone who cared to listen. ‘Please. I don’t want this to be the end. Please.’

And then there was a flash of blistering pain along every single one of their nerve endings that lasted for but a moment before their bodies were swept to particles of dust.

Jyn opened her eyes and found herself still holding Cassian as hard as she could. Over his shoulder, she saw white sand beaches and turquoise water, just like before.

She pulled back with a gasp and grabbed his shoulders. “We’re alive, Cassian. We’re alive!”

Cassian opened his eyes and stared at Jyn in shock. She looked cleaner, healthy, and practically glowed somehow, but otherwise was still the same, hair escaping her bun and all.

Too stunned to even want to question it, he cupped her face in his hands and kissed her like he’d wanted to do for what felt like forever.

Jyn’s eyes opened wider in surprise for a moment before they fluttered closed and she returned his kiss. Their mouths pressed together hungrily as she wrapped her arms around his neck and finally buried her fingers in his hair like she wanted to do. She wished she wasn’t wearing gloves so she could feel it better and they magically disappeared from her hands. She hummed in pleased satisfaction into his now gentle and exploring kiss as her fingers combed through silky dark strands.

They pulled apart slightly and rested their foreheads together as they panted in wonder. “I can’t believe we’re alive,” Cassian said. “There’s no way we should have survived that blast cloud.”
A loudly cleared throat had them turning their heads quickly to the side and pulling apart in embarrassment.

Jyn’s eyebrows climbed up to the top of her forehead as she gawked at the tiny green... creature that was smiling at them with amusement. He couldn’t be much taller than her knees and had long pointy ears and carried a short staff that he leaned on despite not looking even remotely decrepit. He wore a tidy looking beige robe that was belted on.

She had no idea what kind of being he was.

It also took her a moment to notice, but she when she did, her eyes went even wider: The Imperial facility was gone. The only thing behind the tiny green creature was more sand.

“Who are you?” Cassian asked suspiciously. He’d also noticed the lack of a durasteel tower behind them. There wasn’t even a hint of debris to indicate there ever had been one.

The little creature grinned widely, showing sharp teeth. “Yoda, I am. And alive, in the most basic of terms, you are in fact not.”

“What?” Jyn and Cassian said at the exact same time.

“But I feel alive,” Jyn said.

“I feel better than alive,” Cassian added.

“Hmmm,” Yoda said, nodding. “Injured, are you still?”

Cassian looked down at his shirt where there should have been a burnt blaster hole and found it to be in perfect condition. He pressed a hand to his side and felt no pain. He stood up and his leg held him perfectly. Jyn quickly stood up too, ready to catch him if he needed help. “Holy poodoo! I’m healed!”

Yoda laughed. “Healed, no. Transformed, yes. Part of the Force you are now. In the Afterlife you are.”

“What?!” they said together again, gawking at the little green... whatever.

Yoda chuckled and waved a hand and the landscape around them transformed to a grassy meadow filled with flowers and butterflies, and there was a gleaming white city in the distance. “Come. Show you I will.”

A/N: If you're wondering how Yoda is wandering around in the Afterlife even though he's not dead yet? Well, that's his secret to tell. :P
Rebellion's Lost Hope

Rebellion's Lost Hope:

D363/1 BBY, Yavin 4

"I'm coming," Hera grumbled to no one in particular as they called her name over the loudspeakers again. Why Rebel Command couldn't have said whatever they needed to her while she was already in their vicinity was a mystery to her. Didn't they realize she was the size of a nerf and that it took forever to waddle everywhere? It wasn't even half an hour ago when she'd left with the rest of the crowd after the disheartening meeting about the Death Star plans that Jyn Erso was so passionate about. And now here she was again, making her way through the busy landing area just outside the temple, going back the way she came from.

Less than half an hour later, she was grumbling again as she made her way back to her ship. Why did everyone think she was useless just because she was carrying another life? It's not like her brain and reflexes were any slower. There was no reason she couldn't fly her ship. No reason at all.

So she did. Against orders.

A few hours later, Hera was wishing she'd obeyed the Senator. She gritted her teeth as the pain came again, ignoring it as best as possible as she chased down a TIE for someone on the guns to hopefully shoot. When that TIE exploded, Hera pointed the Ghost towards the next one. Again, the pain tore through her, as she held the scream back behind her clenched teeth. When it eased, she glared at her massive stomach. "You've picked a terrible time to come into the world, my little miracle. But should I really have expected anything less from a Spectre?"

Hera toughed it out through the entire battle over Scarif, determined to not let her Rebellion down, but the instant the Ghost was back in hyperspace on the way back to Yavin 4, she let all of the pain out in an agonized scream while mentally cursing Kanan's hide for doing this to her.

Hearing Hera's scream, Zeb climbed up the ladder from the nose gun and stared at Hera in astonishment. Seeing her sweating, pale face, and the grimace of pain, he uttered, "Karabast!" and quickly commed the rest of the ship. "Does anyone know how to deliver a baby? Because the kit's coming, ummm, right now by the looks of it."

All Zeb received was some very uncomfortable sounding shabla's from Rex and Wolffe.

Hera glared at Zeb. "Just get me to the med bay, you idiot," she ground out through clenched teeth.

Zeb jumped and rushed over to her, gently picking her up in his arms. Hera groaned into his chest as another contraction ripped through her. She had no idea this was going to be this painful. If Kanan were here right now, she might just be inclined to rip off a certain appendage that he was rather fond of. Maybe then he'd have a small appreciation of her agony.

Four excruciating hours later, Hera held her new son in her arms, eyes drinking in his incredible features. He had Kanan's skin colour, except for the tips of his pointy male Twi'lek ears, which were tinged green. And he had hair! Beautiful, soft, dark green hair, that Hera just knew Kanan would have loved. (Green was his favourite colour after all.) The baby opened his eyes and Hera gasped in astonishment. She'd been expecting his eyes to be either emerald green like hers or teal.
green like Kanan's, but they weren't. The eyes that looked back her made her heart break just a little, for they were her little brother's dark blue eyes. The same colour as her grandmother's.

Hera had been flirting with the idea of calling her son Caleb, but now she knew that he was meant to have a different name.

"Hello, Jacen," she murmured to her tiny son. "I wish your daddy could see how perfect you are." Hera smiled wider as the faint brush of Kanan's fingers rested on her shoulder. "Never mind, sweetie. Your daddy's here. And he loves you too."

Hera inhaled in surprise when she felt a ghostly kiss press against her temple. That was new. And amazing. "I love you, Kanan," she whispered to the air as she was suddenly reminded of his promise to love her even after the end of his days. It looked like that promise would remain unbroken."And I take back all the awful things I thought or screamed about you over the last six or seven hours. I'm pretty sure I would never unman you," she teased the presence she knew was there. "Jacen was worth it. Thank you, Kanan." A happy tear rolled down her cheek, quickly joined by another and another.

She felt the ghost kiss again, this time on her cheek, kissing the tear tracks. Hera smiled as she stared down at her son, his blue eyes looking back at her, but sometimes shifting off to the side, like he was looking at someone else too. She wondered if he could see Kanan, and suddenly she wished she was Force sensitive as well. She'd give almost anything to see Kanan again.

Sabine returned to the Lothhawk which was parked in the field near Ezra's tower, finally finished her jobs for the day. Training, repairs and new construction was still in full swing on Lothal, but no longer at the frantic pace it was at the beginning. Sabine was actually keeping an almost normal schedule of a ten hour work day; a huge improvement in her opinion.

She almost called to Ketsu that she was home, but remembered at the last millisecond that Ketsu had officially moved in with Joshua yesterday. Sabine knew it was coming, with Ketsu coming back to the ship less and less over the months, but it still felt like a bit of a shock. The Lothhawk seemed so empty now. Although, as she looked around her, she had to smile. The hallways were covered in her paintings and everything was about as bright as it could get. For some reason that she didn't really want to think about, lothcats and wolves seemed to be everywhere in her paintings, sneaking their way in when she wasn't paying attention to what she was doing. She just knew that Ezra would love it. She'd even made sure that the colour orange was fairly dominant, knowing how much he loved that colour. And for her own pleasure, there just so happened to be a lot of royal blue as well, reflecting Ezra's eyes wherever she walked in the ship.

Her next major project was going to be the outside of the ship. Despite wanting to paint it for what felt like forever, she'd never really had the time. She was tired of the ghastly red and black paint scheme that reminded her of Maul every time she looked at it. Ketsu and Joshua had promised to come over on their next free day and they would help her with the Lothhawk's new paint job. Sabine was thinking the ship would look perfect in shades of silver, orange and blue.

The construction on Ezra's communications tower was just starting and could take awhile, since it wasn't a priority. They now had a brand new tower on the other side of the city for long range communications and Ezra's old tower had been retired for the moment. Although, with the rate that the population of Lothal was growing, a second tower would be needed sooner than later. Somehow, word had flown through the galaxy that Lothal was a haven from the Empire, and refugees from other planets had started to flood the once burnt and smouldering planet. After a long winter and rainy spring season, the grass had grown back in greener than Sabine had ever seen it. The sky was blue again, with only normal fluffy white clouds to block the sun. Lothal was
beautiful and full of hope.

After a quick trip to the galley, Sabine dropped into the pilot's chair and propped her tired feet on the consul while she absently chewed her way through a tasteless ready to eat meal. She liked it here, because she could look out over the grasslands and see the slowly expanding Capital City and the waving green grass stretching out for kilometres around it. And if she was lucky, sometimes the lothwolves would be hanging around and playing like puppies in the grass, usually with a lothcat or two trying to ride their backs at the same time. Sabine hadn't been much of an animal person until she met Ezra and moved to Lothal. But somehow, these animals had endeared themselves to her, and she looked forward to watching them play. Every once in a while, when she was feeling particularly lonely, she'd even let a lothcat in the ship and let its purring send her to sleep with a smile on her face as the warm body curled into her side.

A blinking light on the consul eventually caught her attention, making her sit up and put the last half of her meal to the side. Excitement coursed through her. It was the comm, signalling she had a message from Yavin, since only the Rebellion used this comm channel for her now. She hit a button and listened with wide eyes to Zeb's somewhat flustered sounding voice.

"Hey, Sabine. So I know this probably isn't a surprise, since we've been waiting for her to pop for weeks, but Hera just had the kit. It's a boy. And the cutest kit you've ever seen. We were fighting a battle over Scarif when the kit decided to show up. Hera, of course, just kept flying until the battle was over." Sabine heard the sound of a huge huffed sigh and she could practically hear his eyes rolling around in his head. "You should have heard her scream at Kanan when she didn't have something else to focus on anymore. I think his ghost, if there really is such a thing, probably ran across the galaxy and hid." Sabine laughed at that image while Zeb's voice continued. "Anyway, just thought you'd want to know so you could come visit the new addition to the family. Comm us back when you get this."

Sabine immediately commed them back, noting the time stamp on the message from five hours ago. She was only a little disappointed when Rex was the one to answer, his image appearing in the holo. She liked Rex, but she'd been hoping for Zeb again.

"Sabine," he said in greeting with a strained smile, making her wonder what could possibly be wrong. Had something gone wrong with the baby? "Glad you got back to us."

"What's going on?" Sabine demanded. "What's wrong?"

Rex tried to visibly put on a sabacc face, but Sabine wasn't falling for it. "Nothing is... wrong," he said hesitantly. "Hera and the boy are doing fine. In fact, she wants to talk to you. Just give me a second to transfer you to a portable device."

Rex's image shimmered for a moment and then she saw him clearly again, and she could see that he was walking briskly. "I'm taking you to the med facilities in the base," he explained. Of course. Hera and the baby wouldn't be on the Ghost right now. Sabine was surprised she didn't realize that sooner. That explained why Rex had answered and not Zeb. Zeb would be with Hera in the base. Rex said nothing else, not even small talk, worrying Sabine even further. He was usually a pretty happy and talkative guy, and they always found something to chat about, usually battle or weapons related. He wasn't even trying today, so Sabine just kept quiet as well. There was obviously something going on with the Rebellion that only Hera could tell her.

Rex made it to the medical area of the base in only a couple of minutes, people apparently scurrying out of his way when he scowled at them. That brought a small smile to Sabine's lips. He might be a bit older and more relaxed now, but he was still a Captain at heart and there was no changing the respect he demanded from others just by how he carried himself. He would always
have that military training in him, whether he liked it or not.

Rex strode into Hera's private room and handed the holo device to her, leaving Sabine with a dizzying view of random things for a second. Then Hera's face and upper torso appeared. She looked tired, radiant, and worried all at the same time. That was a hard one to pull off, but Hera was doing it.

"Hey, Hera." Sabine said softly. "How are you?"

Hera's eyes softened and she glanced down at the top of something that Sabine could just see in the image. "I'm fine," she said. "And so is Jacen. You want to see him?"

Sabine nodded eagerly. "Yes, please."

Hera handed the device to someone and she got a bigger picture of Hera and the baby in her arms. Hera turned him so his little face was towards the device and Sabine examined the tiny hybrid closely. "He's adorable, Hera. The green hair is... unexpected, but perfect in my opinion."

Hera beamed down at her son. "Yes, it is. Kanan's hair and my colour, more or less." She sighed sappily. "Perfect." Hera made a gesture, and the holo device was returned to her hand and only Hera was visible again. "I know you were probably thinking about jumping into space and flying over to see us right away," Hera continued, her face returning to serious, "But there's been a... development."

"What is it, Hera?" Sabine asked, because she'd been thinking that exact thing.

Hera shook her head. Sabine could see she was deciding what she could say. "I shouldn't be telling you this, because most of it is classified for just Command right now, and you're not technically a Rebel anymore, but I'm going to tell you anyway." Hera took a deep breath for courage. "The Empire has a super weapon called the Death Star. It's the size of a small moon and it obliterated both Jedha City and the Imperial Base on Scarif along with kilometres of surrounding countryside. I think this is why the Empire never bothered with Lothal again after sending only two ships to investigate. They've been working on something much bigger and deadlier than a fleet of Star Destroyers." Hera's eyes pleaded with Sabine. "You have to be prepared for them to show up sooner or later. We're assuming the Empire is close to finding Yavin 4 and that we're their next target but you could be next just as easily. I advise evacuating Lothal. Not even your Defenders are going to be able to slow this thing down."

Sabine could barely breathe as she listened to Hera. This was TERRIBLE. All of her hard work might be wasted. "There has to be a way to take it out," Sabine said. "Everything has a weakness somewhere."

Hera's eyes filled with tears. "That's what we were trying to do on Scarif. Get the plans so we could find the weakness. But they've been lost, along with half the fleet and a lot of good Rebels like Cassian. And the Princess. She's missing as well. It was a disaster, Sabine. None of us have much hope right now. This Rebellion might be over. We're already evacuating non essential personnel off of Yavin. I'm staying for the time being, but you can believe I'll be up in the Ghost the instant we have confirmation that the Death Star is approaching." Hera stopped, seeming at loss for further words.

"Oh, Hera," Sabine said sadly. "Is this the end then?"

Hera looked back at her with determination shining in her misty eyes. "For the Rebellion, maybe. For us? Never. The Spectres never give up." She glanced down at her new son again, her face
setting into lines of a ferociousness that would send most running in terror. "And we have a new Spectre to protect. I will do whatever it takes to make sure that Kanan's son will always be safe and happy."

Sabine returned Hera's look of determination. "So will I, Hera. So will I. We've lost enough Spectres already."

After ending the call sometime later with Hera, Sabine immediately commed Ryder. They discussed emergency plans for moving the citizens of Capital City into the mountains of Lothal where they would be hidden and protected. It would be nice to just pack everyone onto a ship and fly off to a quiet corner of space somewhere, but the planet just didn't have enough large transports to even come close to being able to move everyone. They thought it was better to just get everyone out of the cities, since those would be the first targets of the Death Star.

The next morning, mandatory evacuations began, planet wide.

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**Cerulia**

Ezra was training a new group of adult Cerulians the sabre forms (the volunteers far exceeding Master Tia's time to teach them all), when the wave of fear, pain, and grief washed over him. Ezra whimpered and fell to his knees in the sand, distantly hearing cries from many others as he tried to deal with the overwhelming agony the Force was feeling. It was all he could do to stay conscious as his vision darkened and nausea struck him. He breathed through it, calling on some of his meditation techniques until the worst of it passed.

Finally feeling like he might survive, Ezra looked up and down the beach, seeing dozens of people in the exact same state as him; on their knees in the sand, or even worse, lying down and looking like they collapsed like that, apparently not conscious.

The first person he looked for was Master Guji, who had been teaching another group of teenagers just down the beach. If anyone knew what had just happened, it would be the Force Ghost. But Master Guji was gone, so Ezra looked for Master Tia. He immediately ran to where she lay as she was one of the unconscious ones.

Tia was surrounded by her concerned younglings, who apparently hadn't been affected anywhere near as bad as the adults. They looked pale but not in pain like some of the others. Krystal came staggering over as well and the younglings made room for them by Tia's head. Krystal tugged Tia's head into her lap, looking very worried. "Master?" she whispered.

Link came jogging down the beach from his clinic, looking just as sick as everyone else, but rushing to help anyway. He spotted their little group and made for them first. Link sank to his knees as well, holding his hands over Tia's head and closing his eyes as he concentrated. A few moments later, he huffed a relieved sigh. "She's okay. Just knocked out. She should come around in a minute." Link looked up and down the beach at all of the ill looking Cerulians and humans.

"What was that? I've never felt anything like it. It was terrible, like someone just stabbed the Force and ripped out its heart."

"Close enough," Master Guji said as he reappeared, his image looking drawn and much fainter than normal. "The Empire that Ezra told you about just destroyed the planet Alderaan."

Everyone in hearing distance, both audible or mental, paled further. "A whole planet? At once?" Krystal whispered, shocked.
"How?" Ezra asked at the same time.

Master Guji nodded sadly. "Yes, the whole planet at once. Every single life was extinguished. They did it with some sort of super weapon that focuses the power of Kyber crystals."

Ezra bowed his head in sorrow. It all made sense now. The two massive Kyber crystals that they stopped the Empire from getting, and the construction spheres over Geonosis and then the extermination of the race to hide what they'd been building. His thoughts went to the Princess and Senator Organa, wondering if they'd been on the planet when it happened. "I should be there, helping the Rebellion," Ezra said, eyes filling with misery and guilt.

Master Guji shook his head. "No, Ezra, I don't think so. Your place is here for the time being. The Force has a plan for you and you are fulfilling it by helping to teach these people. They will have their own fight to win one day. Besides, the galaxy needs Jedi again and this is the fastest way to do it."

Ezra sighed and nodded once. There was no way for him to get home anyway. Not until Ahsoka found him.

Master Tia moaned a little and opened her eyes wider than he'd ever seen them as she sat up quickly, looking around her for a threat to defend herself against.

"Easy, Tia," her old Master said. "Everything is alright."

Tia visibly relaxed. She looked at Link, and Ezra knew he was giving her a quick mental summary of what had happened. Only a minute later, she looked towards the ocean, relaxing further.

The King emerged from the sea at that moment, his own concerned expression smoothing out as he saw for himself that his Queen was alright. Wayve's eyes settled on Ezra. "This Emperor of yours does not deserve to rule if he sanctions the extermination of an entire planet. He must be brought down. I will do it myself if he still rules when your starship arrives."

Ezra nodded respectfully to the very powerful King. "I hope that doesn't become necessary, Wayve," Ezra thought back.

Lothal

They were only about a quarter of the way through the evacuations when Sabine received another harried call from Kallus, since Hera was locked in a meeting, despite being a new mother. After hearing the devastating news about Alderaan, she cancelled the evacuations and sent everyone back home. There was no point hiding in the caves if the Death Star could wipe out a planet in one shot. Sabine despaired, knowing there was no hope for anyone with a weapon like that stalking known Rebel worlds. It was just a matter of time now for Lothal and Yavin 4.

The Empire had won.

For the first time, Sabine was happy that Ezra wasn't here. Wherever he was in Wild Space, at least he was safe from the wrath of the Emperor.
Ahsoka's Rock

Charting unknown space was a tedious and mostly agonizingly boring process.

At least, it would be, if Lux wasn't with her to keep her entertained. Ahsoka was beyond grateful to the Force for bringing them back together. Lux made her laugh when her sighs of exasperation at their slow progress got too frequent. Lux made her giggle when he whispered naughty things to her and then demonstrated said naughty things in the best possible ways. Lux made her smile with his steadfast optimism that their journey wouldn't last forever and they could always call it the galaxy's longest honeymoon, even if they weren't officially married yet. (They had said the Torgrutan mating vows, but Lux wanted that all important piece of paper that humans valued so much, too.) Next time they went back to known space for supplies and fuel, Ahsoka intended to rectify that.

After close to a year of travel with Lux in a confined space, they knew everything there was to know about each other, and if they hadn't killed each other yet, they weren't going to. Ahsoka had had long ago come to the conclusion that Lux was officially the perfect man for her. But this time, she wasn't letting him go. The Jedi Council would be appalled and she didn't care. Those old stiffs didn't know what they were missing. She regretted all the years she could have had with Lux that they had missed when she had pushed his existence to the back of her mind out of sheer determination, suppossedly for his own good. What a mistake that had been.

Speaking of making her smile, Lux was doing that right now as he and the computers had a conversation about charting the next miniscule hyperspace jump to a planet the sensors had found. They were checking out every planet that could support life in their ever broadening sweep back and forth across space, just in case Ezra or some of Thrawn's fleet had ended up there. Lux was doing a lot of muttered cursing at the nav computer for disagreeing with him, and the nav computer was doing a lot of beeping that equalled 'invalid entry, please try again.'

Ahsoka walked up behind Lux and wrapped her arms around his shoulders and chest, leaning down and kissing the strong line of his jaw. "Navi computer being persnickity again, Luxi?" she murmured in his ear.

Lux growled a little in his chest. "We could really use a droid to talk to this thing for us. I don't understand why it agrees that there is a planet there, and there is nothing between here and there, but it doesn't want to jump there. It's not that hard a concept."

Ahsoka chuckled into his neck, before swinging around the chair and sliding into his lap. "Shall I try, Lux?"

Lux's face turned up in a smile and his grey eyes gleamed in gratitude. "Would you please? I've just about had it with that thing for the moment. I've been trying to get it jump to lightspeed for the last twenty minutes."

Ahsoka laughed again and pressed a kiss to his cheek. "You should have woken me up, Lux. The navi computer and I have an understanding. It does what I want or I take my lightsabres to it and reduce it scrap. The threat has worked every time."

Lux barked out a laugh and wrapped his arms around her waist. "So that's how you've done it.
Wish I'd known. I have a perfectly good blaster I could have been threatening it with all this time."

Ahsoka grinned at him and swivelled in his arms so she faced the ornery nav computer. After
double checking the readings from the sensors and re-imputing the same data that Lux had entered,
the nav computer chimed a happy tone, acknowledging the new coordinates. "Just gotta sweet talk
it a little." She leaned over and pushed the lever to jump their shuttle into hyperspace and purred as
the engines complied eagerly. Turning back to face her mate, she swung even further onto his lap
so she straddled him. Ahsoka smiled in triumph. "We have ten minutes to kill," she said with a
twinkle in her eyes. "You got any good ideas?"

Lux grinned back and tightened his arms around her, pulling her closer. "I might." He grazed his
fingers up and down her back lek with one hand while the other wrapped around a hip and snugged
her pelvis even closer to his, pressing his already hard cock against her core, her lack of underwear
under her skirt making it so there was only his slacks between them.

Ahsoka hummed in approval and pressed her mouth to his, starting a duel of the tongues. Their
kisses started languid and sultry, but as the minutes ticked past, they mutually agreed they needed
more. She rose just enough to undo his trousers and release his eager member, never losing her
contact with his mouth as their kisses became more frantic.

Lux groaned as her warm and wet channel sank down around him. He grabbed her perfect round
butt with both hands and held her still while he thrust up into her, mouth finally leaving the
delicious sweetness of hers as the need to gasp in real air became apparent. Lux moved his mouth
to her lek instead, licking and kissing the stripes.

When the ship chimed and dropped itself out of hyperspace, neither of them were inclined to
abandon what they were doing to look at the planet in front of them. Ahsoka moaned in Lux's ear,
inspiring him to increase his efforts at satisfying his beautiful Togrutan.

Ahsoka's eyes closed in ecstasy as Lux changed the angle just enough to hit her most sensitive
spots and thrust even faster and deeper. She only lasted a minute before her insides coiled
unbearably and the orgasm burst through her. "LUUUUUXXXXX!" she cried, happy there was no
one around to hear her.

Lux smiled momentarily in pride at himself for satisfying her before he concentrated on driving
himself to his own climax in her clasping depths. Just staring at the blissed out look on her
exotically marked face was almost enough to send him over the edge. He rammed himself home
one more time and groaned, his own eyes closing as he emptied himself deep in her. Their heads
rested on each other's shoulders as they gasped and shuddered from the aftershocks.

After a few minutes, Ahsoka looked up and cupped Lux's face in her hands, kissing him sweet and
deep. "That was fantastic, Luxi. You always know how to make me shatter."

Lux smiled back, rubbing his nose against hers playfully. "I can shatter you again if you want. You
wanna sixty-nine?"

Ahsoka's eyes lit up at the prospect. She thought that particular game was a great test of self control
and an even bigger battle of the wills as they tried to outperform the other. She slid off his lap and
stood, pulling him to his feet just so she could push him down on the floor with a burst of the
Force, making sure he landed on his back with the softest of landings.

Lux laughed and sat up, tossing off his clothes before gesturing for her to come kneel over his
head. Ahsoka smirked and tossed her own clothes off. She sank down over his waiting mouth,
facing his already hardening again cock. She moaned a little as she felt the first lick of his tongue
up her slit and bent further forward, grasping his straining member in her hands. He was so big her two hands couldn't quite cover all of his length at once.

She licked the head, tasting the remnants of his cum, finding the taste pleasant on her tongue. His hips thrust up involuntarily as she sucked the whole head into her mouth, tongue teasing him. Ahsoka pushed him back down with her hands on his thighs and moaned again as he nipped her clit in teasing retaliation.

They spent a good half hour driving the other as close to insanity as they could. Having already sated their passion once, both were capable of enduring a much longer pleasure session. Ahsoka smiled around Lux's cock as he thrust deep into her throat and shot his seed for her to drink. She'd won the game again. Except for the first time Lux had introduced her to the position, she was unbeaten. Not that either of them really cared; the contest was all in fun.

After cleaning the last drops from him, Ahsoka released him and concentrated on the sensations his thrusting tongue were sending through her. With nothing to distract her, the pleasure quickly sent her primed body over the edge, shudders rippling through her as her juices escaped into Lux's waiting mouth. She collapsed with her head on his hip for a minute until her body regained enough strength to stand.

Ahsoka reluctantly removed herself from Lux's upside down embrace and found her clothes to pull back on, leaving her exhausted man to recover on the floor where they had ended up. She glanced down at the satisfied smirk on his face and couldn't help wearing one of her own. She knelt back down and pressed a loving and lingering kiss to his half smile, tasting herself on his lips. "Love you, Luxi," she whispered.

His smirk transformed into a contented grin and he opened his eyes and reached a hand up to caress a lek. "Love you too, Soka," he whispered back before his arm fell back to the floor and his eyes closed again.

Ahsoka smiled and pressed one more kiss to his cute nose before rising to her feet and sitting in the pilot's chair. The sensors had already scanned the planet and found no signs of intelligent life on the mostly rocky world. It had very little in the way of vegetation and water and she wouldn't want to be stranded there. It would not be a fun time to survive in such a barren place. As she always did, just in case the sensors missed something, Ahsoka closed her eyes and increased her connection to the Force, sweeping her senses out, searching for life.

She found nothing on the planet, but she did receive a vision. One that made her cry in horror.

*Leia was being tortured by her ex Master, Darth Vader, Leia's face a study in pain. "Your skin is afire," he convinced the whimpering Leia. "You're burning. Your nerve endings are in flames. Your flesh is being torn apart."

"Make it stop!" Please make it stop!" Leia cried.

"I will when you've told me where the plans are!" Darth Vader replied forcefully, cold black mask only centimetres from the writhing Leia. "You're dying in torment. Where are the Death Star plans!? Where is the Rebel fortress!?"

"Leia!" Ahsoka cried, her heart screaming in sympathetic agony.

Lux jumped up off the floor and knelt beside Ahsoka. "What is it? What's wrong?" he asked.

Ahsoka could only shake her head as her body trembled and she was assaulted by more visions.
Leia again, held in the grasp of Darth Vader as she was being taunted by Grand Moff Tarkin. "Where is the Rebel base?"

Leia looks out the viewport at a planet Ahsoka instantly recognizes as Alderaan. Leia's head bows in defeat. "Dantooine. They're on Dantooine."

Tarkin smirks in triumph. "There. You see, Lord Vader? She can be reasonable." He turns and addresses one of his lackeys. "Continue with the operation. You may fire when ready."

"What?!" Leia cries and tries to escape, but Vader holds her shoulders and prevents her from moving.

Tarkin turns back to Leia, smug smirk still in place. "You're far too trusting. Dantooine is too remote to make an effective demonstration. But don't worry. We will deal with your rebel friends soon enough."

"Noooo!" Leia once again tries to escape, but it is fruitless. She has to watch as a green laser beam shoots towards her homeworld and Alderaan is destroyed in mere moments; only fragments of rock left to float through space.

Ahsoka cried out again, and fell out of her chair, collapsing in Lux's arms as her body shook in grief. But the misery was far from over, because she was suddenly hit with a wave of despair as the billions of lives on Alderaan were suddenly silenced, and the pain felt by the Force rippled down through all of the beings sensitive to it. Tears streamed from her eyes, but the images in her mind still weren't over.

Yavin 4 was almost in range of the massive metal moon that approaches with deadly intent around the red giant of the planet Yavin. X-Wings valiantly try to defeat the Death Star that spells the doom of the Rebel Alliance. Fighter after fighter is lost. With only a few left, Darth Vader had made it his personal mission to see that none of them succeed. He has the final threat in his sights. The X-Wing is only a second from being in range and then out of nowhere, reinforcements arrive and Darth Vader's TIE Advanced is shot. He roars in rage as he loses control and has to watch in stunned disbelief as the Death Star explodes into tiny pieces. Vader's fists clench in anger while his TIE spins helplessly through space and the Rebels escape annihilation.

"Soka? Ahsoka? Are you okay?" Lux asks worriedly as he holds her shaking body in his arms. He sighed quietly in relief when her blue eyes open and she looked up at him, nodding slightly. Holding her tighter, he rose to his feet and carried her to their little cabin at the back of the shuttle. Placing her carefully on the bed, Lux crawled in beside her and held her tight and rubbed her back soothingly while the last of the tears leave Ahsoka feeling limp and drained.

Ahsoka snuggled deeper into Lux's strong embrace, speaking softly into his neck. "Darth Vader. I saw him. And Leia. He was torturing her. And there was a Super Weapon that destroyed Alderaan. I felt them die, Lux. All of them. Two billion people. Just... gone. And then I saw the future. The Rebels will destroy the Death Star, but at great cost. And Vader will survive. As long as he and the man he serves live, the Rebellion has not yet won."

Lux closed his eyes in sorrow for the Organas, and the people of Alderaan, and those who fought against the Empire. "Do you want to go back?" he whispered.

Ahsoka sucked in a deep breath and pulled back far enough so she could see Lux's concerned face. "I want to. So badly. But I made a promise. And I intend to keep it. The Rebellion is doing alright without me for now. They will continue to do so, I'm sure."
Lux nodded his acceptance and pressed a kiss to the center of her forehead. "Then we'll just have to chart the stars a little bit faster. Maybe take less breaks for personal time," he teased lightly, hoping to make her smile.

Ahsoka leaned back in mock horror. "No! Not less personal time! I so enjoy our sessions of 'fun.' I might expire of boredom if we give those up."

Lux laughed and grinned. "Perhaps we could get more creative with our scheduling. I think you said you were pretty good at multitasking. You think you could fly the ship while sharing the pilot's seat with me?"

Ahsoka giggled in return as she tried to picture the scenario. "Perhaps. But I doubt we would fly in a very straight line. I don't think that would make up any time."

Lux shrugged his shoulders, still grinning. "It was a thought."

Ahsoka rolled her eyes. "A very unpractical one. But thank you anyway, Luxi, for making me feel better."

Lux's eyes turned more serious and soft. "Anything for you, my beautiful Soka."
A/N: This is currently written as a flashback of Han remembering, but I'll be expanding it eventually and making it present tense.

Han's Reluctant Adventure:

D364/1 BBY, Tatooine

He'd picked up a couple of passengers and their droids in his favourite watering hole on Tatooine, wanting a ride to Alderaan. They'd paid a lot of credits and promised more, so off he and Chewie went with the old man, the naive farmboy, the annoying gold protocol droid, and the cute astromech that actually seemed worth something. Han had figured if they didn't pay up at the end of the ride, he could probably get some credits for the droids.

While on the way to their destination, he'd found out the old man fancied himself to be a Jedi and he was teaching the kid how to be one too. Han hadn't believed in the mythical Jedi, not until he'd seen the old man in action against the big scary dude in a cyborg suit and they'd been battling it out with lightsabres, which he'd also thought were only a myth. Turns out the weapons were worth a king's ransom if you could get your hands on one, they were so rare. (He'd done some digging in the black market, just for the sake of curiosity, of course.) When the dude in black (who he now knew was called Darth Vader) swung at the old man in a decapitating blow, the old man had just vanished. If that wasn't Jedi voodoo, he didn't know what was.

But he was getting ahead of himself.

When they did arrive at Alderaan, they hadn't found a planet, but an asteroid field where Alderaan used to be. The old man's (maybe he should call him Ben, but he'd just never known him well enough to think of him as anything but the old man) weird weak spell during the trip made sense then, when he said something about it feeling like millions of voices had cried out in fear and then were suddenly silenced. That was the first time Han had started to believe there might be something to the Force nonsense he'd been spouting to the kid. Alderaan had been blown up by the giant moon sized ship that had sucked them in before Han could fly the Falcon out of there.

They'd hidden in the shielded compartments under the decking and then taken out the two stormtroopers that had come to investigate the ship they'd caught. After putting on the incredibly uncomfortable bodysuit and armour, he and Luke and Chewie had gone a wandering for reasons that he couldn't remember anymore, and the old man had gone to turn off the tractor beam generator. He did remember that the astromech had connected to the computer system and discovered that a princess they were apparently looking for was being held captive here. Han hadn't liked the idea of rescuing her, thinking they were in way over their heads already, just being stuck on this Imperial death trap.

But Luke had convinced him with the promise of a huge reward, enough to pay off all of Han's debts to Jabba the Hutt. He couldn't resist. So off they went, hatching up some hare brained scheme of passing Chewie off as a prisoner.

It actually worked, and they got into the cell block where the princess was located. A short firefight ensued and soon enough they had control of the guard station. At that point, Han had actually been having fun, but you'd never get him to admit it.
Two minutes later, he wasn't having fun anymore.

The first time he'd seen Leia, they'd been under fire from the Imps who'd figured out much too quickly that something was going on in Detention Block AA. Somewhere between firing shots, ducking shots, and huddling against the wall trying not to get shot, he'd caught enough glimpses of her face to see that she was absolutely gorgeous, although the hair all twirled up in buns over her ears was a rather strange look in his opinion.

Aside from insulting their rescue attempt and calling him a flyboy, she seemed rather smart as she took control of the situation and shot a hole in the garbage chute door so they could escape certain death in their pinned down positions. Han had spared half a second to blink in amazement that she'd found a way out and kept shooting at the troopers trying to kill them. He distinctly remembered saying to Luke, "Either I'm going to kill her or I'm beginning to like her."

Han laughed to think how accurate that statement was in regards to her. Princess Leia Organa was a spitfire. She shot blasters like a soldier, cursed, quipped, yelled, ran, fought, and did it all in a kriiffing dress. Han had been very reluctantly impressed, since he'd never wanted to actually like another girl again. (Not after the last time he put his heart on his sleeve for one years ago and been abandoned by her.)

Anywho, back to the garbage chute. That... had been something else entirely. The smell alone almost did him in. And then there was the resident dianoga who actually did almost kill Luke. The cephalopod was quite determined that Luke was going to be dinner until someone out to get them activated the compactor and the walls started to move in on them. Luke was freed but they had bigger problems as they were about to be crushed. By some miracle, Luke's commlink still worked, despite being dunked in garbage water repeatedly, and he was able to call his droids to stop the compactor from crushing them with only a few seconds to spare.

Out of sheer relief, Han and Leia hugged in celebration, before parting with embarrassed glances for hugging a virtual stranger. That was actually one of the very few times he'd ever hugged the princess between then and now. He remembered wishing he wasn't wearing the stupid armour so he could actually have felt her body against his. She was a tiny thing, the top of her head barely reaching his shoulder, but he would have had to be blind to miss the curves under her fancy belted, not quite as white as it used to be, dress. (Han was most definitely not blind.)

After getting out of the garbage compactor, he and Luke had stripped off the armour and bodysuits, only keeping the utility belts since those looked really useful, and tossed them back into the garbage where they belonged. They'd both still been wearing their usual clothes under the suits, thankfully (but it had been rather uncomfortable), so they didn't have to smell like garbage anymore. Leia and Chewie weren't so lucky. (Despite making Chewie stand in the shower for something like an hour once they were safe, he'd still smelled like garbage for a week. All that hair, you know?)

They'd done a quick round of introductions at the same time, since Leia didn't actually know anyone's name, having only made her acquaintance for the first time some ten minutes ago, and off they went.

Han remembered the trip back to the hangar that held the Millennium Falcon as being one long blur of shoot, run, shoot some more, get separated from Leia and Luke, chase some troopers like a crazed lunatic, and shoot some more, but they had all eventually made it to the hangar in one piece by some miracle.

Then he'd seen the old man sacrifice (Is that what you call it when you vanish into the Force?) himself so they could get away and his respect for the old codger had grown by leaps and bounds.
But that didn't mean he was stupid enough to let that go to waste. He'd had to yell at Luke to get his ass on the ship, since the kid seemed to be quite attached to the old dude and wasn't moving from his spot, firing at the troopers between them and the scary cyborg guy who was coming their way.

They did get away in the end, after a small battle with TIEs that he, at the time, thought was a big thing. (Now, it would just be like, enh, what's four more TIEs?) The old man had thankfully done his job of turning off the tractor beam and made it possible for them to fly away from the Death Star without being pulled right back in. Han had yelled at Chewie to jump them to lightspeed from his position in a gun turret and he'd kind of sagged in his chair in relief when the streaks of hyperspace had appeared. He had no clue where they were going, but he figured it didn't matter right now. He assumed the princess had told Chewie where to aim for.

After taking a moment to come to the realization that they'd all survived, his ship was still in one piece, and he had a big payday coming, Han was in a pretty good mood again.

He was grinning when he returned to the cockpit and found the princess sitting beside Chewie. He gave his long time friend a pointed look and the Wookie rolled his eyes but vacated the chair so Han could have some alone time with the girl. (Chewie was the best.)

His alone time didn't go quite as he'd hoped.

First, she said the Imps had let them get away (which he now agreed with), then she said they were tracking them (she was right), then she said the astromech had the blueprints of the moon sized battle station and that their mission wasn't over yet. Han had been stupid and said he was only in it for the credits and he didn't care about her or her revolution. (Why? Why didn't he think before he spoke? That's not how you pick up a girl. What a terrible first impression that was.) Her eyes had gone hard and she'd practically spat at him, "You needn't worry about your reward. If money is all you love, then that's what you'll receive." It had actually hurt when she said to Luke, who was coming in as she left in a huff, "Your friend is quite a mercenary. I wonder if he really cares about anything or anybody."

That had been a real eye opener. She'd actually managed to make him feel like scum, and he thought he'd been immune to insults by now, wearing his devil-may-care persona like a shield and believing in it whole heartedly. He didn't just love credits, did he? Nope. Definitely not. Han loved his ship. Han loved Chewie, in a non squeamy kind of way of course. Han loved being free to do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted; it was such a step up from his life as scumrat slave when he was growing up. Han cared about people, too. Honest. He just cared about his own hide just a little bit more. And right now, his hide had a price on it until he paid Jabba back. So, yah. Priorities, you know?

Luke had settled into the princess' vacated chair and looked at him. "So, what do you think of her, Han?"

Han had fiddled with switches and knobs, pretending he wasn't all hurt from her words. "Tryin' not to, kid."

Luke had been much too happy when he said, "Good," in a relieved fashion. That had got Han thinking again. If the kid thought the princess was worth fighting for, maybe he should give him a run for his money.

Han started to wonder what it would take to get back into the princess' good graces, smiling a little as he imagined her wrapping her arms around his neck and looking at him all dreamy eyed, while she whispered things about how strong and brave and manly he was, before she thanked him for saving her life in the best possible way with a long, lingering kiss.
Getting all excited by the daydream, Han turned to Luke, and said, "Still. She's got a lot of spirit..." Han had almost laughed when Luke started to look concerned, so he laid it on thicker. "I don't know. What do you think? Do you think a princess and a guy like me..."

Luke had quickly cut him off with an emphatic, "No," and it was all he could do not to burst into laughter. Poor kid actually thought he had a chance. The girl was clearly older than him and so far above his little farmboy reach. He didn't really have a chance either, but his odds had to be better than Luke's.

Han had stood and clapped Luke on the shoulder. "Keep prayin', kid. You might get lucky. I'm going to rest my eyes for a bit. All that running and shooting has worn me out. Keep an eye on my baby for me, would yah?"

Luke had snorted, but seemed happy enough to be left in charge of flying the ship. Not that there was much to do while they were in hyperspace, but Han was happy to let him think he was being useful.

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Han passed Chewie in the common area and paused. "You seen the girl anywhere?"

Chewie had rolled his eyes at him again but then growled out, "Female is in the refresher." Han had given him a half smile and then turned to walk on when Chewie added, "Crying." (Han didn't hear it, but Chewie had much better hearing than him.)

Han had froze and then his shoulders slumped a little as he turned back to his friend, a terrible thought forming in his mind. "Alderaan," Chewie growled out simply.

"Ah, kriff," Han said as remorse filled him. Here he'd been all worried about credits and the girl had probably just lost everything and everyone she cared about, and she'd probably known the old man too. Now he felt like a dirtier level of pond scum than before.

This really sucked.

Chewie patted him on the shoulder in understanding, then went back to the cockpit to hang out with Luke, leaving the crying girl in Han's care.

Han had felt lost for a minute, as he didn't know how he could fix this for her. It wasn't in his power, or anyone's for that matter, to put her planet back together and resurrect all the people. Eventually deciding on a course of action, he went to the galley, made some caf, added a little of the really expensive chocolate powder he'd won in a card game to her mug, and carried the hot treat to the refresher door which was being guarded by the two droids that seemed to belong to her.

"Princess? Your Highness?" he'd called through the door, pushing his way through the metal guardians. "Are you okay?"

Nothing happened for a minute, but the door finally opened and he'd pretended not to notice that her eyes were rimmed in red and her cheeks were a little blotchy. She still looked beautiful anyway.

Leia had stared at him, trying to give him a good glower, but he could see her heart wasn't in it. "What do you want?"

Han held the plain black mug out as a peace offering. "I made this for you. It's chococaf. To help
you feel better."

He remembered how she had blinked at the steaming mug for a few seconds before a shaky, but genuine smile had formed on her cherry red lips. "Thank you," she'd said, as she took the mug and cradled it in her hands, closing her eyes for a moment as she savoured the smell of the steam wafting up. "That's very sweet of you."

Han had beamed from the inside out as he felt the full force of her smile fill him with something he hadn't felt in a long long time:

Hope.

"Are you hungry?" he'd asked eagerly, suddenly wanting to do even more for her. "I haven't got much, just some ready to eat rations and some protein bars, but it'll fill you up."

Leia had smiled a little wider, humour filling her chocolate eyes. "Sure, Han. That would be nice."

Han had quickly turned back in the direction of the galley, glad to have another purpose. For some reason that he didn't care to think about too much, he was filled with a desire to make the Princess happy, no matter what he had to do to make it happen.
Luke's New Teacher

D1/0 ABY

Hera and her crew watched from the safety of the Ghost, far removed from the battle, as the Death Star exploded into a billion little pieces. They’d listened, barely breathing, to the comms as the battle was fought and pilot after pilot was lost in a desperate attempt to hit a tiny target. One minute, Hera was wishing she were out there fighting with them, making that run through impossible odds herself. The next she was glad she was far removed, not wanting Jacen to grow up without a mother. Losing his father was bad enough. She also sort of wished that Kanan and Ezra were here; knowing either of them could have made that shot using the Force, yet would never have wanted to see them take the risk.

There was a massive cheer from her crew of males, and Hera finally relaxed, allowing herself to enjoy the sight of Imperial fireworks. Aside from her Jedi, the only thing missing right now from this moment was Sabine. The biggest explosion ever caused by Rebel forces was taking place and she wasn’t here to see it.

Speaking of, Hera set the comm to call Sabine. A moment later, she answered sounding rather stressed. "Yes, Hera? Please tell me you have good news this time."

Hera smiled. "Do I ever. The Death Star was just destroyed, only seconds away from being in range of Yavin 4."

"Yes!" Sabine cheered. "Thank the Force. You have no idea what it's been like, sitting here, not knowing what was going on. I'm comming Ryder with the good news and then I'm on my way there. I have a new little brother to meet."

Hera laughed and so did all the guys around her, who'd stopped their cheering and back slapping to listen to the conversation. "That's great, Sabine. We'll see you on Yavin soon."

Everyone could hear the smile and relief in Sabine's voice as she replied with a firm, "Yes you will."

Hera ended the call and turned to her crew of Zeb, Rex, and Wolff, and the along for the ride Kallus, because Zeb refused to let him stay on Yavin with the Death Star approaching. (He'd practically carried Kallus to the Ghost to make it happen.) "Alright boys, break time's over. Back to the base we go, as I'm sure there is going to be a lot of work for us to do." As they groaned behind her, Hera smiled to herself and steered the Ghost back towards Yavin 4, just a speck in the distance.

D2/0 ABY, Hyperspace, en route to Yavin IV

Sabine tossed restlessly on her bed in the Lothhawk. She was supposed to be catching up on sleep while the ship took her to meet her new baby brother, but she just couldn’t settle down. She should be ecstatic right now.

The Rebellion had defeated an Imperial super weapon.

Hera had safely delivered her son, even as a war was going on.
Lothal was safe again and starting to thrive.

All things that should have Sabine resting easily for once. But she couldn’t sleep because something was missing. SOMEONE was missing.

_Ezra should be here too._

_I NEED Ezra to be here too._

_Shabla, Ez’ika. I miss you._

Sabine hugged a pillow to her chest tightly, wishing it was him, slow tears winding down her cheeks and falling into her hair.

_Happy fourth anniversary, Ez, wherever you are._

___________________________

**At the same time on Cerulia,**

Ezra gazed up at the stars in the brilliant night sky as he lay on his back with his fingers interlocked behind his head on the beach by the gently swooshing ocean. He’d long ago lost track of what day it was exactly, but he still had a general idea, and somehow, it felt right as he thought, _Happy fourth anniversary, Sabine. I hope you’re okay._

___________________________

_Yavin IV_

Luke Skywalker picked up the medal hanging on his chest and couldn't decide if he was amused by it or thrilled to get it. He'd only done what was needed, and didn't feel like a medal was really necessary. On the other hand, the absolutely amazing and beautiful Princess Leia had given it to him, so he was pretty sure he was going to treasure it forever. He wished he could maybe work up the courage to ask her on a date or something, but he'd seen the way she and Han looked at each other. They might fight like tookas and deny it until the nerfs came home, but the attraction between them was undeniable.


"Yo, Luke. Her 'Highness' wants you."

Luke finally realized that he was being addressed. By the two people in question no less. He looked up and pulled the medal over his head, stuffing it into a pocket as if that had been his intention all along, trying not to blush in embarrassment for getting caught ogling it. 'What? Sorry," he mumbled. "What's up?" he asked again.

Leia laughed at him and grabbed his arm, tugging him along the hallways and towards the exit to the base. "Come on, Luke. I have someone you should meet. General Syndulla is our best pilot and I'm sure you two will have lots to talk about."

Luke glanced back at a somewhat glowering Han, who was following them and they exchanged a confused shrug. He looked at Leia again, willingly letting himself be pulled along. "If this General Syndulla is your best pilot, how come he wasn't in the battle yesterday?" Luke asked curiously.

"Yah," Han added. "Even I pitched in, and I'm not part of your Rebellion."

Leia came to a dead stop and dropped Luke's arm, whirling around and smiling oh so sweetly up
into Han's face. "Actually, Han Solo, I do believe you are part of this Rebellion now. You came back. That counts for a lot in my books. And if you stay, I'm sure we can make it worth your while." The innuendos were dripping from her overly sweet voice, and Luke had to swallow the laugh that tried to escape. She pressed a hand to the smuggler's chest, and Han visibly stopped breathing. "We need talented pilots like you, Han. Please say you'll stay." Luke couldn't see her eyes, but he just bet their chocolate depths were doing a first class job of begging and smouldering right now, based on how Han gulped.

"Um, sure. I guess Chewie and I could stay for a little while," Han admitted.

The Princess must have smiled at Han like the sun, because his face lit up in return. "Excellent," she purred, patting his cheek, before turning back to Luke and grabbing his arm again, like he couldn't be trusted to walk in the same direction as her. "And to answer your question, Luke, the General didn't fight in the battle yesterday because SHE just had a baby. I haven't seen him yet, but the rumours flying around the base are that he's the cutest baby ever born."

Luke gaped at Leia. This general, best pilot, whatever, was a female? And had a baby? That didn't sound very military. But hey, who was he to judge? He had no formal training and yet he'd been welcomed into the Rebellion with open arms. He glanced back at Han, who wasn't glowering any more but appeared to be staring at the back of Leia with a dreamy expression, and they exchanged shrugs again.

It didn't take very long for them to reach daylight, which Luke had to blink a few times to see in, after the darker hallways of the ancient base. Leia led them past what was left of their fleet of fighters and the Falcon, towards a Correllian freighter that had been fitted with some very impressive guns. Parked beside it was a gorgeous red and black Gauntlet class Mandalorian ship that Luke was drooling over in an instant. He'd never seen a Mandalorian ship in person before, but he'd seen images on the holonet and thought they were the best looking ships in the Galaxy. He nodded at the Gauntlet. "Who's ship is that?" he asked. "It wasn't here a few hours ago."

Leia looked at the Gauntlet as well and sighed. "That's Ez... umm, Sabine Wren's ship. She's part of the General's crew. At least, she was. Then the whole thing with Lothal happened and everything changed." She sighed again. "It's a long story, but it can wait for another time."

Luke and Han both looked at her curiously but held it in. There had been rumours about a planet called Lothal. Rumours that Lothal had made their Imperial fleet disappear. Most people thought the rumours were a bunch of bantha poodoo. Maybe there was some truth to them.

Leia walked up to the open ramp of the freighter, and Luke glanced at Han again, seeing the older man looking at the ship assessingly. "Well, it's no Falcon," he mumbled to himself, "but not bad." Luke and Leia grinned at each other.

"I'll have to tell Hera you said so," Leia teased. "The Ghost is our most successful ship in the entire Rebellion with more wins against the Empire than any other three ships combined. And it's only because of Hera of course. She really is the best pilot we have." Catching the hurt looks from the guys, she quickly tacked on, "Until now, of course," which mollified Luke and Han.

Leia walked up the ramp, the guys following behind her, and then climbed a ladder into the bridge area, which was empty right now. Luke glanced around curiously, impressed with what he'd seen so far. They walked through a door, down a hallway, through two more doors and they were suddenly in a common room that was already crowded with people. Luke saw a bunch of humans, including his new friend Wedge, a purple striped lasat that was in an assessing glare off with Chewie, a female Mandalorian (judging by her armour), and holding centre stage, a pretty light green twi'lek with a human hybrid baby in her arms. Luke was guessing the twi'lek was the
infamous General Syndulla.

Hera looked up and spotted the newcomers, a big smile crossing her face. "Leia! You're back!" She patted a spot beside her on the bench. "Come. Sit. Jacen's awake this time, and somehow, everyone heard about it and we seem to be gathering a crowd." Her eyes rolled at the multiple people milling in the common room. "I'm going to have to start charging admission," she teased lightly, raising her voice just enough that everyone could hear her, getting a chuckle from the assembled.

Leia sat beside Hera and gave the baby an appropriate amount of admiration and cooing, before introducing the guys that had followed her. "Hera, these are our heroes of the day, Luke Skywalker and Han Solo. Luke is the one who made the shot that saved us all."

Luke felt his face heat in embarrassment and ducked his head, staring at his boots. "It was nothing. Really. I had the help of the Force."

Sabine spun around from where she'd been talking to Rex and Wolffe when she heard someone mention the Force.

Hera's eyes widened and she looked at the young man closer, spotting the lightsabre hanging off his belt. "You're a Jedi?"

Luke looked up again, surprised she even knew the term. Jedi had basically disappeared from the Galaxy and the Empire had done their best to make people forget. He shrugged. "Sort of? My father was a Jedi. And I had just started training with Master Kenobi when he was killed by Darth Vader. I actually know very little about being a Jedi, but I do have the Force I guess."

Hera and Sabine paled at hearing that Master Kenobi was dead. Ezra had gone looking for him once, believing Kenobi to be the answer to everything. He'd be devastated to hear the sad news. If he ever came back to hear it, that is. "I'm sorry, Luke. I wish things had turned out differently for you," Hera said as she looked down at the baby in her arms, her face now filled with sadness. "I had two Jedi in my family once. This little one's father was one. He could have helped train you. But he's gone now, lost in the war."

Her voice was breaking at the end, and her eyes misting, making Luke feel awful for ever mentioning the Force in the first place. As Leia wrapped a comforting arm around Hera's shoulders, Luke looked away and was caught in the gaze of the Mandalorian female.

He sucked in a breath, stunned by how exquisite she was. He'd thought the Princess was beautiful. Now he knew he'd underestimated what true beauty really was. This female had massive amber eyes that were lit with an inner fire and shoulder length chocolate hair that transitioned into purple near the ends. He glanced up and down her lean body, noting the curves, while admiring the colourful artwork on her armour plating. He'd never seen anything like it. She had two blasters strapped to her upper thighs and he had a feeling she knew how to use them. Mandalorians had a reputation for being deadly. This must be the Sabine Wren that Leia had mentioned. The one that owned that beautiful ship. When she raised an eyebrow in question, Luke realized he'd been staring for a rather rude length of time. "H... Hi," he finally managed to say. He cleared his throat and stuck out a hand. "I'm Luke."

Sabine's mouth curled up into a half smile, amused by the boy's gawking. He reminded her of Ezra the first time he'd seen her without her helmet. This boy was about Ezra's age as well, although blond and blue eyed, with a cute face that was so much more innocent and naive compared to Ezra's accumulated years of war and heartbreak that lived in his eyes. He couldn't compare to Ezra's absolute gorgeousness either, but he was cute enough. He shouldn't have any problems finding a girl here on the base if that's what he wanted, being the hero of the battle and everything.
She grasped his wrist in the Mandalorian way of greeting a fellow warrior and squeezed, pleased when he yelped and pulled his hand back. "I'm Sabine," she said, suppressing a laugh. "I couldn't help but overhear. I've encountered Darth Vader once. He is one scary Darksider. As long as he's alive, no one in this galaxy is safe. And since you seem to be the only 'Jedi' left who could possibly defeat him anytime soon, I think we should do something about your lack of training."

Hera looked up at this. "Sabine! You're not thinking what I think you're thinking? Are you?"

Sabine nodded at Hera, eyes serious. "I think I am, actually. What's the point in having a Force User on our side if he doesn't know how to fight?"

Luke looked back and forth between the two women, completely confused. "Ummm. What are you talking about?"

Sabine grinned at him, making him catch his breath again. Force, she was gorgeous. "I'm going to train you. At least as much as I know, and you'd be amazed at how much I know. Not just about lightsabre fighting either. I had to listen to Kanan teach Ezra for years about the Force and I remember every word. The least I can do is repeat it for you. It'll be up to you to figure it out from there."

Luke gawked at Sabine, along with almost every other person in the room. "You can't be serious? You know how to fight with a lightsabre?"

Sabine nodded, one hundred percent confident in herself. "Yes. I do. Not like a real Force User of course. I can't do all of those fancy gravity defying moves you guys like to do, but I can show you everything that involves keeping your feet on the ground. I know all of the Forms and have watched our Jedi practice many many times."

Luke gawked again, wondering what gravity defying moves she could possibly be talking about. Obi-Wan had never done anything like that that he could remember. He swallowed heavily, suddenly overwhelmed. "Okay. I suppose it wouldn't hurt to learn what you know."

Sabine beamed at him and headed for the door, calling back over her shoulder. "Meet me outside in two minutes. Let's see just how much you do know."

Luke stared at her retreating back, and gulped again. "Not much," he mumbled to himself. Now he was worried about looking like an idiot in front of everyone present and the young woman who had suddenly decided to train him.

He startled when Han clapped him on the back. "Looks like you just found yourself a girl, kid. Congratulations."

Luke blinked up at the taller man. Is that what had just happened?

Hera cleared her throat, and Luke looked back at her. She was shaking her head at him, along with almost everyone in the room. "What?"

Hera sighed. "Sabine is... how do I put this?" She couldn't say married, could she? That still wasn't common knowledge. "Committed, I think is the right word. Ezra is away right now, and will be for awhile yet, but she's quite dedicated to him. Don't get your hopes up."

Luke nodded in understanding and heaved an inner sigh. Of course she was taken. A girl who looked like that would be. He reluctantly walked towards the door, to face his doom at the hands of said girl, followed by every person in the room. Even Hera, who gave the green haired baby to an old C1 droid and told it to take good care of Jacen while she was gone for a few minutes.
droid beeped back an affirmative and held the baby gently in its manipulators, making soft cooing beeping noises to it.

Luke emerged out into the sun where he met Sabine, and his followers quickly formed a loose circle around them. Sensing something interesting happening, all the Rebels in the area quickly joined the circle. Luke suddenly felt like a bug under a magnifier. Of course, Sabine was as cool you could get and smiling like this was going to be fun. Luke was thinking his two days of training with Obi-Wan were going to be woefully inadequate.

And he was right.

Sabine ignited a green lightsabre and Luke followed suit with his blue one. They exchanged two exploratory parries and then she launched into the offensive and ten seconds later, Luke's lightsabre went flying through the air and landed on the ground with a thud. Sabine pointed her lightsabre at him and shook her head. "Alright. That was kind of sad. Shall we try again?" Luke nodded and sighed, wishing this wasn't happening in public. She glanced at his lightsabre pointedly. "Aren't you going to get that?"

Luke started walking towards it and stopped suddenly when the green sabre was instantly in his path. "What now?"

She rolled her eyes at him. "Not that way, di'kut. Use the Force and call it back."

Luke didn't know what di'kut meant, but he was sure it wasn't good. "I don't know how to do that," he very reluctantly admitted.

Sabine sighed and turned off her lightsabre. "We have a LOT of work to do. I think I better find some sticks before you get hurt."

Zeb laughed from the sidelines and glanced at the thick forest that surrounded them. "At least there are a lot of sticks here to choose from."

Sabine and the rest of the crowd laughed as well. "You're right, Zeb, unlike a few other places we've been."

Okay. Let's try this. If you really are a Force Sensitive, you should be able to call back your lightsabre. From what I understand, there is a crystal inside of it that sings to you, yes?"

Luke nodded. "Yes. It's very nice. I can hear yours too, if I concentrate on it."

Sabine smiled. "Good. That's good. I'm quoting Kanan here when he said that your lightsabre is your life. You need to be able to keep it all times. Close your eyes and feel the crystal inside of it."

Luke did as told and connected to his crystal, smiling as the song filled him with peace and happiness. Sabine's voice continued softly in the background. "Now imagine that crystal in your hand. Bring it to you."

Luke wasn't the only one who gasped as he suddenly felt the lightsabre in his hand. He opened his eyes and stared at it in wonder, then looked at Sabine with equal wonder. "Thank you, Sabine. You can teach me anything you want to," he gushed.

The crowd laughed again and Luke flushed red, again, as he realized that might be taken the wrong way. But Sabine just laughed along with the others. "Sure, Luke. I don't mind. But you'll have to come back to Lothal with me, I think. I have a job to do there and training you is going to take longer than my allotted time off. I think I'll teach you how to fight properly while I'm at it. Not just with a lightsabre. It never hurts to know how to punch someone out and I'm getting the impression
you've had absolutely no training in anything combat related."

Luke glanced at the ground, embarrassed, but then he looked up and smiled. "Just some street fighting with the other boys on Tatooine. I might not be able to fight with my hands like you, but I bet I could outfly you."

Sabine glanced towards the X-Wing that Luke had used to attack the Death Star with, parked further down the line of ships, and grinned good naturedly, thinking about her Defender and how it was pretty much the fastest fighter ever made. Even Luke wouldn't stand a chance if she was flying her Defender. And honestly, she was no slouch of a pilot either. She had been taught by the best, she thought as she glanced at Hera and saw her smiling indulgently as well. "Possibly," Sabine told Luke. "But I think we'll continue this once we get back to Lothal. Something tells me we need to start at the beginning, and that we should do it where it's a little more quiet," she said to the crowd with a pointed look.

That got more laughter from the crowd as they slowly dispersed, realizing that the training session was over for the moment. A lot of the people on the base had never met the famous Kanan, Ezra, or Ahsoka, but they'd definitely heard about them. They'd also heard a lot about the equally famous Sabine Wren. The common thread of conversation was that everyone was in agreement that the Rebellion's new Jedi was in good hands with Sabine.

Mon Mothma walked up to the crowd of people, regal eyebrow raised in question at everyone not doing their jobs, and whatever stragglers were left instantly vanished, leaving just Hera's crew, Sabine, Luke, Han, Leia and Chewie. Mothma seemed to be headed for Hera, so the rest made way for her. "Hera, can I speak to you in private for a minute?"

Hera nodded. "Of course." She turned and walked back up the ramp of the Ghost, the Senator beside her. Their heads were already bent towards each other as they talked quietly.

Luke joined Han, Leia, and Chewie. "Does anyone know what di'kut means?" he whispered. He sighed when they all shook their heads. Maybe Sabine would explain it one day, or he could try looking it up when he got a chance. Luke was always curious about new things and not knowing something was driving him nuts.

"It means 'idiot' with a hint of friendly affection in Mando'a," a voice said behind him. Luke turned and saw an older man with a grey beard and friendly golden brown eyes behind him. The man stuck out his hand and Luke quickly returned the gesture, this time not surprised when his wrist was grabbed. "The name's Rex. Formerly Captain of the Five Oh First Clone Legion under the command of your father, General Anakin Skywalker. You have no idea how good it is to meet you, Luke Skywalker."

Luke sucked in a breath in surprise. This man was a clone? And he knew his father? "You have to tell me all about him. Please?" he begged. "I know so little."

Rex smiled, happy to tell stories about his time with the often exuberant Jedi Knight. "Sure, Luke. You remind me a lot of him, you know. You look a lot like him and he was the best pilot in the Republic. Except when we were crashing of course. We seemed to do an awful lot of crashing," he said with laughter in his voice along with a healthy dose of nostalgia. Rex glanced up as the women returned from inside the Ghost's cargo bay, spotting the heavy frown on Hera's face. "Uh oh. That look is never a good thing." He focused back on Luke again. "Meet me in the mess hall tonight for dinner and I'll fill your head with stories of your father and the other Jedi. His padawan, Ahsoka Tano is still around somewhere, and whenever she gets back from 'finding Ezra' I'm sure she'll be happy to tell you even more stories."
Luke smiled, overwhelmed again. All this time, he'd been stuck on Tatooine and these people had been out here, fighting a war against the Empire, and they all seemed to know so much more about himself than he did. He finally felt like he was in the right place with the right people.

Hera stopped beside Sabine while Mothma continued back to the base. "It looks like Jacen and I are coming with you back to Lothal, Sabine."

Sabine's head whipped to the side, eyes wide with amazement. "To stay? And why?"

Hera sighed, feeling both lighter and heavier at the same time. Her precious baby would be away from the war but that also meant that she would be as well. "For a year or two. Now that the crisis is over, I'm being put on maternity leave for the next six months whether I like it or not. And Mothma just told me the location of the new base that the Rebellion will be evacuating to shortly."

Sabine studied the frown of displeasure and the shiver that Hera tried to hide and smiled. "It's an ice or winter planet isn't it?" She knew how much Hera hated ice and snow.

Hera raised a brow. "It's Hoth. How did you guess?"

"You shivered," Sabine grinned. "Only the thought of ice and snow makes you shiver when it's perfectly hot out. I take it you don't want to raise Jacen in the snow?"

Hera smiled ruefully. "You take it correctly."

"What about us?" Zeb asked, joining the conversation.

Hera looked at each of her crew in turn, assessing their expressions. "Rex, and Wolffe, you will stay with the Rebellion of course, being much too valuable to the cause for you to leave now. Zeb, Mothma has left it up to you if you want to stay with me or your new friends. I'm fine either way. If you want to stay with the Rebellion, I'll leave you the Phantom 2 and you can come see us on Lothal whenever you have some free time." Her eyes turned to Luke. "And you have been granted permission for a month of training with Sabine. You can stay on my ship in Rex and Wolffe's room for the duration of your stay with us, then Mothma wants you back. We need every pilot we can scrounge up right now. The Empire might have lost their big toy, but they still have thousands of other toys to call back into action. This war isn't over yet."

Zeb looked towards the Temple where he knew Kallus was hard at work sorting through reports, and was torn between wanting to stay with the best friend he'd ever had, or keeping an eye on the new kit and Hera. Hera could see the indecision on his face. "It's okay, Zeb," she said, placing a comforting hand on his arm. "I really am okay with either decision. And you can sleep on it too. Sabine and I aren't leaving until tomorrow."

Zeb still didn't know what to do. "Thanks, Hera. I'll let you know in the morning what I decide," he said, but something in him was already leaning towards staying with Kallus. Hera and the kit would be alright on Lothal, away from the war. Kallus needed him more. He was just starting to get Kallus to relax from his Imperial shell. If Zeb left him now, Kallus would bury himself in a datapad and forget how to have fun again.

Hera's wrist comm chirped and Chopper beeped out a frantic sounding message that the tiny organic was starting to cry and nothing he did was helping.

"I'll be right there Chopper. He's probably hungry," Hera replied, already most of the way up the ramp.

Luke watched as Sabine and Hera's crew all made their way into the ship, wondering what he'd
signed himself up for.

Han clapped him on the back again. "Well, kid. I don't think I envy you over the next month. I have a feeling you're going to regret training with that Mando girl."

Luke shook his head slowly. "I certainly have my work cut out for me, that's for sure. I wish Ben was still here. I liked training with him."

Sabine's Breakdown

A/N: This chapter has been edited to fit the new storyline.

Sabine's Breakdown:

D31/0 ABY, Lothal

Sabine smiled at Luke as he won another round with the lightsabres. For the last two days, his natural grace and connection with the Force had finally kicked in and all the lessons she taught him had clicked and suddenly it was all Sabine could do keep up with him and defend herself against his attacks. "I think you're as good as you're going to get with these with what I know," Sabine said as she turned off Ezra's lightsabre and clipped it to her belt. Luke beamed and did the same, wiping the sweat from his brow with a sleeve.

"You really think so?" he asked eagerly.

"Sure. But you could still use a little work on your hand to hand, so let's switch to that. We only have the rest of today and tomorrow before you go back to Hoth with Zeb tomorrow night. We should make the most of it," Sabine said, already thinking she was going to miss their training sessions. Luke had turned into a good friend and reminded her a lot of Ezra.

It almost felt like her family was sort of whole again, with Hera and Jacen, her and Luke, and sometimes Zeb, all gathered in one place. But no matter how much she tried to tell herself that she was doing okay without Ezra and Kanan, she knew she really wasn't. She missed them like crazy, and she knew Hera was the same. They spent hours just watching the lothwolves that always seemed to be hanging around and wondering if Kanan really had turned into a wolf in some fashion. But not entirely, because Hera had confessed once about how she felt Kanan's touch whenever she really needed him, giving her comfort. And the way she flushed darker, Sabine thought that Kanan's ghost might just be 'comforting' Hera in more intimate ways as well.

Sabine and Luke practiced in a small circle of mountains they'd had to retreat to after word had got out that there was a Jedi on Lothal and they'd been swamped by onlookers. Not even training by Ezra's tower was far enough away from the city, so they drove their speeder bikes all the way out here every evening for training. As they faced off, the sun just starting to set in the distance, Sabine waited patiently for Luke to make the first move, hands up in the ready position.

Luke attacked with proper aggression for once, apparently finally feeling confident in himself. Sabine quickly retaliated with a punch towards his jaw, not expecting it to connect, since his reflexes were very good and getting better every day. Something caught Luke's eye though, and he didn't duck, so her punch whipped his head to the side and his eyes kind of rolled up before he hit the ground with a solid crash. Sabine stared down at his body in disbelief. She hadn't hit him that hard. Had she?

She was just about to kneel to see if he was still alive when he suddenly swept her feet out from under her and toppled her to the ground beside him. Sabine groaned at falling for the oldest trick in the book and pushed herself into a sitting position. Luke, of course, was laughing his head off and sitting up as well. She shook her head and gave in to the urge to giggle a little. "Very funny," she begrudged. "I thought I actually took you out."

"I finally knocked you down," Luke wheezed through his laughter. "I'm calling that a win." His...
eyes locked with her amber ones and he was happy to see amusement and even a little bit of pride in her eyes. He was starting to think he'd never see that on her face. As the moment drew out, Luke did something really stupid that he'd wanted to do forever. He reached over the small space between them and ran his fingers through the soft strands of hair that had escaped from her messy bun and framed her face. "So beautiful," he whispered.

Sabine froze as memories of the last day she saw Ezra barrelled into the forefront of her mind. He'd said the exact same thing to her while doing the same thing. She suddenly missed him with a passion and wanted Ezra back RIGHT NOW.

Luke saw her expression turn all soft and fill with longing and thought the look was for him. He pulled an even bigger stupid and pressed his mouth to hers in a soft kiss.

That snapped Sabine out of her memories in a hurry. She pushed him back in disgust and punched him in the nose, making it bleed, just to emphasize her point, before swiftly rising to her feet and glaring down at him. "I think we're done here," she spat at him with narrowed eyes. "Get your sleemo hide out of my sight before I kill you."

Luke scrambled to his feet, hand holding his nose, backing away from the furious Mandalorian. "I'm sorry. I just thought..."

"I don't care what you thought," she interrupted, fingers caressing the blasters strapped to her legs. "I never invited you to touch me like that and you're lucky you speaking in a normal voice right now."

Luke's eyes widened in fear and he quickly turned and made a run for his speeder bike, making a note to self: Girls are officially crazy, and Mandalorian ones even more so.

Sabine watched the bike drive away as fast as it could go for all of ten seconds while her fury at everything built and built. She was mad at Luke for taking liberties. She was mad at Ezra for leaving her behind. She was mad at herself for getting into the situation. She was even madder at Ezra for not being HERE where he belonged. With a strangled scream, she pulled Ezra's lightsabre off her belt and hucked it at the nearest rocky mountain thing as hard as she could, watching it smash into the rockface and fall to the ground with a satisfying thud.

Then she pulled her folding knife out of her boot and proceeded to hack off every strand of the offending hair that she'd let grow out longer than she ever had just because Ezra thought it was beautiful. And so did other guys apparently. Well, there wasn't going to be any more of that. Her hair was staying military short until her husband came back.

As the last chunk of hair fell to the ground, Sabine sunk with it, tears streaming from her eyes, already regretting her rash actions. Through her blurred vision, she spotted the lightsabre lying on the ground, looking forlorn, and crawled over to it, clutching it close to her chest. It took her a minute to realize that it felt different. She opened her eyes and sobbed as she saw the large crack in the bottom part that screwed onto the whole, allowing access to the inner workings of the lightsabre. She'd broken it! Ezra left it in her care and she'd broken it! Sabine finally reached the end of her rope. Curling into a ball on the ground, broken lightsabre held tight in her clenched hands, Sabine cried her heart out.

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*Cerulia*

After living with the Cerulians for just over a year, Ezra's life had settled into a consistent pattern. He started his day with an hour of meditation, loving his connection with the Force. Ezra found it
hard to believe that he used to think meditating was a waste of time when Kanan first started training him. Now it was his favourite part of the day because the Force liked to show him images of his family; past, present and future. It was also the time when he felt his bond with Kanan the strongest. And sometimes, if he was lucky, they'd even have a short conversation, usually when something super interesting had happened in Ezra's life or the galaxy as whole. The only time they'd talked about Kanan's new life was the day Jacen was born. Kanan hadn't even waited for Ezra to be meditating. Instead, Ezra had been besieged by a joy that wasn't his while he was having some funtime swimming with Raign, Krystal, and a bunch of other young adults at the end of a long, hot day. "I'm a father!" had repeated through his head a few times, making Ezra laugh out loud at Kanan's enthusiasm. He'd send back thoughts of congratulations before Kanan's presence had left again, undoubtedly to go be with Hera again.

After meditation, Ezra spent the morning hours helping Master Tia train the native Cerulians to be lightsabre wielding Jedi. But not exactly the way he had been trained. They picked up the forms incredibly quickly because they just plucked them from Ezra's mind. It was more a matter of training muscle memory than actually teaching them. When a group was considered advanced enough with the training sabres, they'd all go Kyber crystal hunting. This is where things took an interesting turn. Because there wasn't much in the way mechanical technology on the planet (except for the remains of The Seeker), the Cerulians had come up with a new lightsabre concept that Ezra thought was completely awesome and badass. They would find a forming crystal that suited them and instruct it to grow into the shape of a real sword and take on whatever colour they liked the best. (Ezra did warn them that red was considered the colour of the Dark siders, so very few chose that one.) The swords were strapped across their backs and leapt into their hands at will, practically another living entity. They hummed with life and joy and were basically indestructible. A few working blasters were still lying around and they'd tested the crystal swords extensively. They reflected blaster bolts just like a lightsabre if you wanted them to, or they could absorb the energy and contain it until you wanted it released. Most would fling the built up energy at a target with a swing of their sword and grin gleefully as the target exploded. The edges of the swords were wickedly sharp and never dulled, no matter what you hacked through, old durasteel walls included. The crystal swords were also effective against the one remaining working lightsabre on the planet; Master Tia's. The small Kyber crystal in her lightsabre was no match for the amount of Force presence in the swords and usually turned itself off when used in prolonged duels unless Tia focused a great deal of Force into it to keep it energized. Needless to say, Ezra got himself his own sword as soon as he found a baby crystal that sang to him just right. (Unsurprisingly, it was the colour of Sabine's mesmerizing amber eyes.)

Ezra's afternoons were usually spent helping Link in his clinic, or with the villagers, harvesting food or helping with the docile herd animals that the humans had tamed long ago to raise as a source of clothing and meat.

His evenings were usually his own to do with as a he pleased, which often consisted of hanging out with Raign and Krystal, but not too much, so he didn't feel like a third wheel in their relationship. At least once a week, Wayve would make time to come to the island and work with Ezra on his Force projection and a few other tricks that Ezra had never come close to mastering before, like using the Force to increase his speed, both running and swimming. He didn't think he was as fast as a native yet, but Ezra thought he could race your average speeder bike and maybe win now. At least for a short distance.

As usual, on this morning, Ezra was doing his meditation routine when the Force showed him a vision of Sabine; the same one he'd received before while fighting a noghri. But this time he just knew that this was happening at this very moment on Lothal. Eyes snapping open and heart breaking for his cyar'ika, Ezra wished he could be with her right now and comforting her, holding her in his arms until her crying stopped and he could kiss all her tears away.
He was fighting the urge to jump to his feet and pace, since that wouldn't help anything. This was the strongest he'd ever felt their bond, considering how far apart they were. With the vision had come a flood of her emotions, and wow, did they ever hurt his already aching chest. Ezra closed his eyes again and concentrated. First he thought specifically towards Link, who was making breakfast by the sounds of things, and let him know what he was about to try. Link would make sure his body was alright until Ezra got back. Assuming this worked.

Ezra had been practicing Force projection with a dedicated determination for the past year, but he'd never quite worked up the courage to go further than the far side of the planet. Today, he was figuratively jumping on the wild nexu and going all the way to Lothal because Sabine needed him and he wasn't about to let her down again.

Knowing it was now or never, while the bond with Sabine was still strong, Ezra concentrated on separating his spirit from his body. He gave a small smile at his success as he looked down on his body, still kneeling in a meditation pose by his bed. Alright. First step done. Now to get to Sabine.

As Ezra turned his focus towards the clouds, he suddenly felt an encouraging push from Wayve and a hopeful, "Good luck," from Link. Ezra sent them back a burst of gratitude and then pulled hard on his bond with Sabine to use as a guide. Suddenly he was zipping through space, and in what felt like just a minute or two, he was on Lothal and Sabine was in front of him.

Sabine's tears finally ran out and she was left feeling empty and exhausted. Sitting up, she wiped her cheeks, eyes, and dripping nose. Crying sucked. She hated crying. And she was going to have to apologize to Luke later for completely freaking out on him. That sucked too. It wasn't his fault he'd read her signals all wrong and no one had told him she was married. She knew he had a crush on her and she also knew she could have avoided that situation entirely if she wasn't such a lovesick idiot pining for her man. Sabine shook her head at her own stupidity and emotions that had gotten out of control. All that Jedi knowledge and Mandalorian training and she still managed to lose it. Mother would be disgusted, she was sure. Good thing they weren't talking to each other right now.

Unclamping her hands from around the lightsabre, she examined it closer, hoping she'd been wrong about breaking the bottom.

Nope. Not wrong. Still broken. Sabine huffed a sigh and unscrewed the broken piece, wanting to examine it and thinking it should be easy enough to replace, even if she had to forge it herself. Hopefully Ezra would never know. She blinked in surprise as a piece of paper fell into her hand. Suddenly she knew where the paper had come from and that it was meant for her to find. After the last note Ezra left her, she wasn't surprised at anything he did anymore.

Hands trembling, she carefully unfolded the paper and smoothed it out, torn between smiling and crying again as she read note number two in what was left of the evening twilight.

To my Cyar'ika,

Once again, I find myself writing to you on your own paper. And again, I'm sure your upset is my fault. Will there ever come a day when I don't upset you on a regular basis? I sure hope so. I just wish I got more than glimpses of you so I knew what to apologize for in advance. This time, I can guess it also has something to do with my leaving, but that was unavoidable I'm afraid. Trust me. I really really didn't want to.

Again, I like the new hair style since it makes your beautiful eyes look even bigger. But then again, I like everything about you, so it doesn't really matter what you do to your hair. I'll still love you. If
you really like it that short, I'm okay with it, but I wouldn't mind if you grew it back again too. (I loved running my fingers through it.)

I know you're missing me and blaming me for leaving. I can guarantee I'll miss you more, every moment of every day. And I blame myself even more for having to leave you alone. But no matter how I tried, I couldn't find a path that kept us together and still won the war for Lothal. I'm so sorry. And I will always be sorry for causing you sorrow. I hate seeing you cry when it is my fault. It breaks my heart.

I know this is kind of silly, but if you close your eyes and just let yourself feel, I'd like to think the Force would connect our bond again and you'd be able to feel my arms wrap around you in comfort. I know I'll spend most of my time imagining you in them. And just like our vows said; we are one when together, we are one when parted, we will share all, and yes, one day, we will raise some little Mandalorian Jedi warriors. (The galaxy won't know what hit them.)

I love you, Sabine. Always.

Ezra.

P.S. Don't worry about the lightsabre. I know you'll fix it better than it was before.

Sabine hiccupped a little giggle as she read the part about their future kids. She wasn't ready to have kids yet, but she could easily picture them raising a couple of blue haired hellions. Sighing as her love for Ezra strengthened her from the inside out, she traced her finger over the marriage vows. She smiled at how hopelessly romantic he was and how much she fell for it every time. She closed her eyes as he suggested and thought of Ezra with every atom of her being as she whispered, "Ni kar'tayli gar darasuum, Ezra Bridger."

"Ni kar'tayli gar darasuum, Sabine Wren," repeated Ezra's voice from behind her, making Sabine whirl around, eyes widening in shock as she took in his transparent and glowing appearance. "Ezra!" she screamed and promptly fainted for the first time in her life.

Ezra rushed the few steps between them and sank to his knees trying to gather her up in his arms, but his spirit projection couldn't pick her up. Ezra sighed and contented himself with stroking his fingers down her cheek, almost convincing himself that he could feel the satin softness of her skin. Even with red rimmed and puffy eyes, she was even more beautiful than he remembered.

While he waited for her to wake up, Ezra scanned the area and saw the pile of hair on the ground and winced. Apparently this was a VERY recent new hairstyle then. That would explain why it looked a little uneven in places. Not that he cared. He cut his own hair for years when he lived on the streets which guaranteed it was never completely even. He ghosted a hand through her short hair, wishing he could feel the spiky tresses. It reminded him of the haircut he had when he left. They'd sort of traded hairstyles, because his hair was long again, much like it had been when they first met. He hoped Sabine liked it this way.

Her eyes finally fluttered open and she eeped a scream that she quickly swallowed. "Ezra! You better not be dead or I'm coming after your body and killing you again," she growled as she sat up.

Ezra grinned. "Nope. Sorry, Sabine. You don't get the pleasure of killing me right now. I learnt a new trick and I felt your pain and I just had to come see you. Don't know how long I can stay, but I had to try."

Sabine breathed a sigh of relief and studied Ezra's 'ghost.' He looked a little older. A little bigger.
More muscular and filled out. It looked good on him. Really really good. And his hair was longer again. She was just itching to run her hands through it again. It was such an amazing shade of dark blue when left to grow and the softest hair in the galaxy, she was sure. But what in the world was he wearing? He appeared to be dressed in some sort of woven animal hair tunic and slacks in a bland shade of grey that looked ghastly on him. It actually made her prefer the orange outfits that never seemed to go away, no matter how much she hinted that he'd look better in something else. Like royal blue to match his eyes.

Ezra looked down at his clothes, sensing that she was displeased with his outfit. He shrugged ruefully. "Sorry, Sabine. This is what the native humans wear. It's made from the fur of one of the few land animals that actually live on the planet. I outgrew my orange outfit half a year ago, which sucked. It's softer than it looks though."

"Poor Ezra," Sabine tried to hug him in consolation, knowing how much he loved his orange clothes, but her arms just went right through, making her growl a little in her throat. "If I could hold you, it would be even better, husband," she said pointedly.

He ran a hand through his hair in frustration, wishing he could touch her just as much. "Sorry, cyar'ika. We'll have to wait for that part." His face transformed back into a smile. "But I'm here! Mostly. And talking to you. That has to count for something."

Sabine smiled back. "Yes, it definitely does. I missed you, Ezra. A lot has happened while you were away."

Ezra settled into a more comfortable seated position beside Sabine. "You'll have to tell me."

They took turns shocking each other with everything they'd done and that had happened over the past year. Sabine finished her turn with the story of the Death Star and Luke Skywalker and who his father was and that she was training him. She left out Luke's attempt at kissing for now, not wanting to ruin her good mood with Ezra.

Now it was Ezra's turn to gape like a fish for a minute. "I think you just won that round," he admitted.

Sabine grinned, always happy to have won something.

Ezra smiled back. "I'm excited to see Jacen. I always wanted a sibling and now I have one. I can't wait to meet him. And see Hera and Zeb again."

Sabine tried to bump her shoulder into his, like she used to do all the time, and almost fell over and right through him, before catching herself with a hand in the middle of his ghostly leg. Now that was kind of creepy. She shook it off. Better ghost Ezra than no Ezra. "I'm sure we could go see them now if you wanted. They're all by your tower in the Ghost."

Ezra lit up at the idea and jumped to his feet but then swayed alarmingly. "Uh oh. I think my time is up. That will have to wait for our next visit I guess."

Sabine rose to her feet as well. "So you'll try and come back?"

Ezra nodded, feeling his energy depleting by the second. "Yes, I promise. I'll come back as often as I can. Is this a good time for you?"

Sabine nodded, not wanting to see him go. She felt like she just got him back. She reached a hand up and he joined their fingers together carefully, so it looked like they were intertwining their fingers for real. She was just registering that she could feel a tingling in her hand when he said, "I
love you," and started to fade away.

Sabine's eyes met his one last time. "I can feel you! And I love you too. Forever."

Ezra grinned a huge smile and then he was gone.

Sabine stared up at the stars that were just starting to appear and smiled an equally big grin, hugging her arms in happiness. She quickly gathered up Ezra's lightsabre, the note, and her hair before jumping on her bike. Did she ever have a story to tell Hera!

Ezra's spirit zoomed back into his body and he inhaled on a gasp as the world seemed to spin sickeningly around him even though his eyes were still closed. He took a few deep and measured breaths until everything settled back to normal and opened his eyes to see himself surrounded by the curious faces of Link, Master Tia, and a group of younglings.

"Did it work?"

"Did you see her?"

"Did you really fly through space?"

"What was it like?"

Ezra blinked as everyone seemed to ask a different question at once as soon as they saw he was back in the here and now. As memories of the last twenty minutes went though his mind, Ezra smiled what felt like the biggest grin that had ever crossed his face. "It was amazing, and she was more beautiful than ever," he said with the last of his energy, and then promptly passed out to the sound of gasps and the vague feel of strong arms catching him just before his head hit the floor.

Mando'a words:

Ni kar'tayli gar darasuum - I know you in my heart forever.
Spectres Reunited:

D31/0 ABY, Lothal

Sabine stopped her bike in front of the repainted Lothhawk with as much of a screech as she could pull off with an air bike. Practically vibrating with energy, she jumped off the bike and ran over to the Ghost and up the ramp. "Hera!" she called as she climbed the ladder. "Hera!" she called again when she got no answer. Sabine dashed through the bridge and into the hallway of cabins. She skidded to a stop when she saw Hera come out of Jacen's room with a frown on her face, which Sabine blithely ignored. "Hera! You would not believe what just happened!"

Hera glared at her and dragged her down the hallway away from Jacen's room and towards the centre of the ship. "Shhhh," she hissed. "I just got him to sleep. You know better than to yell in this ship now that Jacen's here."

Sabine winced, but couldn't stop the grin from coming back. "Sorry, Hera. But I saw..."

Hera interrupted her again. "And another thing. What in the galaxy did you do to poor Luke? He came running in here like the fyrnocks were after him, blood all over his face, and was mumbling something about scary Mandalorians."

Sabine winced again. That wasn't her finest moment. She definitely could have handled that better. "Ummm."

Hera crossed her arms over her chest and looked at her expectantly as they stood in the hallway outside the common room. "Well?"

Sabine sighed and blurted it out. "Luke tried to kiss me and I punched him and kind of threatened to kill him and unman him."

Hera's eyes widened and then she burst into laughter, relaxing her stiff stance and falling against the wall for support. When she got herself back together a little, she smiled at Sabine. "Now I wish I'd seen that. Maybe a little over the top, but I warned him you were committed to Ezra. He took his own life in his hands by making a move on you. The boy will just have to live with the consequences of his own actions."

"You don't think I should apologize then?" Sabine asked. "Because I was going to."

Hera shook her head, still smiling. "Nah. Let him learn his lesson the hard way." She looked at Sabine curiously. "What had you so excited when you came rushing in here, and WHAT did you do to your hair?" her eyes widening as she finally noticed the spiky new look.

Sabine's eyes rolled up, as if she could see the top of her head. She'd actually forgotten about that for a moment. She made a quick turn and dashed into the refresher, so she could see herself in a mirror, with Hera following on her heels. "Ughhh," she groaned at her new appearance. "That is going to take some getting used to. And I need to fix it. And some colour would definitely help."

"Yes, to all of that," Hera agreed. "Now explain."

Sabine sighed and turned around, leaning against the sink, so she didn't have to see herself anymore, and told Hera everything. From her breakdown, to the second super romantic note, to
thinking Ezra was dead and fainting at the thought, and finally the tingly feeling in her hand when he touched her long enough.

Hera listened without saying a word, eyes wide and barely blinking. When Sabine finally stopped speaking, Hera took a moment to process. "So Ezra is somewhere in the galaxy on a planet of amphibious sort of Jedi Force Users and they've taught him how to throw his image or spirit or whatever across space?"

Sabine laughed. "That about sums it up. Sounds insane, doesn't it?"

Hera snorted. "Just a little." She shook her head in disbelief at what their lives had come to. Sabine's man was alive, but she could only see him as a ghost, and her man was dead but came to see her all the time in either the form of a giant talking wolf or as a presence she could feel but not see or hear. The Force really did work in mysterious and sometimes very frustrating ways. "It could be worse, I suppose, but I'd still rather have our men in a normal fashion back where they belong. I miss having our Jedi underfoot all the time. It's just not the same without them here."

Sabine saw the wistful look on Hera's face and walked the step to give her a hug, resting her head on Hera's shoulder as Hera's arms wrapped around her in return. "I miss them too, Hera. So much. But at least we still have each other, and Zeb sometimes. And there's Jacen now too. He looks more like Kanan every day, despite the eyes and hair. We'll never be truly without them. We just have to keep telling ourselves that."

Hera sniffed and pulled back, eyes misting as she ran a fond hand through Sabine's short hair. "I know, Sabine. And we really are lucky to have what we do of them. It's just hard, you know?"

Sabine nodded sadly. "I know." She put on a brave smile. "Come on, Hera. Why don't we go have dinner with the guys and then you can help me fix my hair? What do you think of green to match Jacen's?" she said with a mischievous glint in her eyes. "It's about the same length and everything."

Hera laughed as they walked out of the refresher. "Don't you dare. I was thinking you'd look good in varying shades of dark red and burgundy. You haven't tried those colours yet."

Sabine's eyes lit up at the idea. "I like it. And you're right. I've never tried those colours before. Let's do it."

They walked through the common room and into the galley where Zeb and Luke were just finishing up making dinner of nerf stakes and vegetables. Hera smiled at the sight of the set table and the wonderful smell in the small room. "You guys are the best," she praised. "It's so nice to not be eating ration packs for weeks on end anymore."

Zeb grinned at her as he put the last plate down on the table. "I know, right? I missed real food. And you should see what it's like on Hoth. Even the ration packs are considered fine dining right now. You two don't know how good you have it here on nice warm Lothal. You can't step foot outside the temporary base without freezing your ears off in about ten seconds flat. Even Chewie near froze to death our first day there, before we got the heat working, and he has a much thicker fur coat than I..." his voice trailed off as he did a double take at Sabine's new look but wisely kept his mouth shut.

Sabine gave Zeb a big smile in appreciation then turned her eyes to Luke as she sat at the table. Luke was hovering on the edge of his seat in the opposite corner from her and staring at her wide eyed. Sabine pinned him to his chair with her glare and he settled back down, prepared for whatever further scolding she was going to dish out.
Luke gulped visibly and glanced at her hair quickly then focused on his plate of food. "I'm sorry," he mumbled. "Did you really cut off all your hair just because I touched it?"

Sabine flushed red at her rash overreaction. "Unfortunately, yes," she admitted. "I was overdue for a new look anyway, so you're off the hook. I might even thank you later when I get used to it."

Luke relaxed a little and even tried a smile. "That's good, I guess. Are we okay then? You won't try to kill me in my sleep?" he asked only half joking.

Sabine snorted, Zeb snickered, and Hera rolled her eyes. "You can stop worrying, Luke," Sabine reassured him. "This scary Mandalorian is all out of revengeful thoughts. My husband, on the other hand, doesn't know what you did yet. If you're lucky, maybe I won't tell him," she teased.

"Thanks," Luke muttered into his dinner before his head whipped up and he stared in shock. "Your what?"

Zeb stopped with his fork halfway to his mouth. "You're finally gonna fess up to that, are ya?"

Sabine and Hera laughed at Luke's dumbfounded look for a minute before Sabine finally said, "Ezra's my husband, AWOL or not. I probably should have told you, but it's not common knowledge for reasons that I guess don't matter that much anymore. You'll finally get to meet him tomorrow." Sabine beamed at the residual joy of seeing him again for the first time in a year. "He's figured out how to do Force Projection, which I didn't even know was a thing."

Luke stared at her with his jaw dropped for another few seconds before he managed to snap it closed and wheeze out a, "Wow." He was essentially silent after that as he picked at his food while Zeb pounded Sabine on the back in congratulations at getting Ezra back, sort of.

Sabine was quite all right with that. And though she liked Luke, she wasn't going to miss him much, either, when he left tomorrow.

Twenty-four hours later, Sabine was finally released from her suspense as she waited to see if Ezra would come back or not. The day had dragged by. Work had never seemed so annoying, and Luke's final two hours of training were over and done with. Everyone was now back on the Ghost, anxiously waiting, picking at their supper, too revved up to eat.

A gasp from Hera was the first indication Sabine had that Ezra was behind her again. What was up with that? Couldn't he appear in front of her? She whirled around and tried not to squeal like a girl but failed miserably. "Ezra!" She jumped out of her chair and they closed the distance between them quickly, both desperately wishing they could hug the other. With a synchronized sigh, they contented themselves with the same imaginary twining of the fingers that he'd left her with twenty-four hours ago.

"I like your hair," Ezra said as he admired the new colour and how it accented her skin tone and eyes. He got lost in said eyes for an endless moment before a loudly cleared throat brought his attention to the other people in the common room. "Hera! Zeb!" He walked over to them as they met him halfway and waited patiently for them to examine his new appearance. "It's so good to see you!" he gushed. "I've missed you a lot."

Hera just cried and Ezra did his best to give her a ghostly hug without passing through her body, which just made her cry harder.

"It's good to see you, kid," Zeb said as he tried to clap him on the back like he used to and ended up almost smacking Hera as his hand passed right through. Zeb pulled up at the last moment and
tucked his hand under his other arm. "Alright. That's freaky. Not doin' that again."

Ezra rolled his eyes at Zeb and indicated the lasat should take over the comforting of Hera, since his arms were solid. "Thanks, Zeb."

"Actually, Zeb, I've got this one," a familiar voice said.

The whole room gasped as one when a perfect, unscarred, and goateed version of Kanan appeared beside Ezra, pulling a shocked Hera into his more or less solid arms. Solid enough she could actually feel him.

"Kanan!" Hera cried before she sighed in contentment and rested her head on his shoulder. "I don't even care how you're here, love. I'm just happy you are."

Ezra gaped at Kanan and managed to stutter out a confused, "How?"

Kanan grinned at his family who crowded around him. "You're not the only one taking lessons, Ezra. I have dozens of passed on Masters who are all trying to teach me something or other. It's definitely been interesting. And then there's Master Yoda, who is still very much alive, but spends most of his time wandering through the Force out of sheer boredom. I hear his extra helpful voice at least once a day. With my family now in the same spot more often than not, I've learnt how to concentrate my form into only one thing and I chose this form over the lothwolf for obvious reasons. Oh, and Ezra, Master Yoda said that he's quite impressed with your new ability to project your image. He said it took him two hundred years to do the same thing and that to tell you that the more you work on it, the more solid your image will be."

Ezra and Sabine exchanged meaningful looks at that little piece of good news. "I'm just happy to see you again, Kanan," Ezra said. "Although hearing your voice in my head every once in awhile was great too. I think I speak for everyone when I say that we missed you something awful and it's good to have you back."

Kanan smiled contentedly as he looked down at the teary woman in his arms. "It's good to be back."

Luke sat in the corner of the room, forgotten by the others. He felt terribly left out, but he didn't begrudge them their reunion. He'd heard the whole story of the two missing Jedi and knew they deserved this moment. He just wished he had a family like that for himself. Luke sighed pathetically, then winced, hoping none of the others heard that.

"I did," a voice chuckled in his mind. "And you will have your own family like that, Luke. They wait for you on Hoth."

Luke smiled, comforted. "Thanks, Ben," he murmured under his breath. "And you're still the better teacher." A quick bark of laughter was the only response before he felt Obi-Wan's presence leave, but it was enough to make Luke grin, happy with his life now, and anxious to get back where he belonged.

Even if it was beyond freezing there.

As the shock of seeing Kanan wore off, Ezra finally noticed that there was an extra person in the common room. He glanced at Sabine with a raised brow in curiosity.

Luke rose to his feet and walked up to the ghost image of Ezra somewhat reluctantly, but put on a smile of greeting regardless. The two young men looked each other over curiously. Luke saw a fit guy who looked about the same age as him and was almost the same height. Despite the similarity in ages, Ezra radiated an inner strength and calm that made him seem older. And he wasn't bad looking either. No wonder he'd won the heart of the fierce and beautiful Sabine. Luke thought Ezra was one lucky guy.

Ezra's electric blue eyes were steady and thoughtful as he looked back at Luke. This was the guy who'd saved the galaxy? He didn't look like the type, to be honest. The dark blond and light blue eyed man looked like your average boy next door. He wasn't even very tall. The holo images Ezra had seen of the infamous Anakin Skywalker had given the impression of height with a commanding presence. His son had none of that. But there was something. He seemed to embody hope. The Force swirled around Luke with a purpose, like it was particularly interested in the fate of the young Skywalker.

They nodded to each other in greeting.

"Luke."

"Ezra."

Luke went to hold out a hand to shake but then remembered Ezra was only an image. He winced a little and put his hands behind his back. "Yah, so it's nice to finally meet you. I've heard all about you and Kanan from your family. They sure like to talk about you guys and your adventures. My life has been downright boring in comparison."

Ezra scoffed a little. "Says the guy who blew up the biggest Imperial weapon ever made. I think your life will be more than exciting enough from now on. It's up to you to protect the Rebellion and fight off the Darksiders. You're the only Jedi left who can, as far as I know."

Luke tried not pale at the enormity of his situation that he'd never really thought of in those terms before. He breathed deep and steady, telling his legs to keep holding him up whether they liked it or not. He glanced over at the older Jedi ghost and saw Kanan watching him with knowing, supportive eyes, silently telling him he could do this. Luke nodded slightly in thanks, taking comfort from the encouragement.

Meanwhile, Chopper had rolled into the room, carrying a cooing Jacen. He'd watched the conversation and decided to put his two credits in, looking forward to the chaos that was about to erupt. "He's also the blurrg dropping that tried to make a move on Sabine."

Ezra's head swivelled from Chopper to Sabine to Luke, eyes widening as his jaw dropped.

Luke immediately flushed red and stared at the ground, embarrassed.

Sabine glared at the droid. "Chopper! I was going to tell him in my own time, you rusty piece of osik."

Zeb burst into laughter.

Hera glared at both Chopper and Sabine.

And Kanan chuckled quietly, not wanting to get on Hera's bad side, but enjoying the situation.

Ezra focused on Sabine again. "He did what? And what's osik? I don't remember you saying that one before."
Sabine rolled her eyes in Luke's direction. "We had a small misunderstanding. Luke got the wrong impression and tried to kiss me. But don't worry, I handled it. Made him bleed and everything. It was kind of my fault too, cause I didn't tell him I was married. And osik means 'poop' to put it as politely as possible. I'm using more Mando'a insults lately, since Hera pointed out that I almost always swore in Basic. And she's glaring at me because we're not supposed to swear in front of Jacen but I keep forgetting. And he's only a month old. How much can he really be learning anyway?"

"I don't care," muttered Hera, arms crossed over her chest. "My baby's smart and you're teaching him bad words. I've never mentioned this before, but if he's got the rare blue Syndulla eyes, he's probably also got the eidetic memory that comes with them. So if the first words out of his mouth are swears, you can bet your tushies..." she pinned Sabine and Zeb in her glare, "that I'll know who to blame."

Sabine and Zeb snorted but made an attempt at looking apologetic.

Ezra shook his head at his family but pinned Luke in a rather intense stare, making himself as big and tall as possible. "On my current home planet, I would be honour bound to challenge you to a duel for making moves on my wife. But since I can't, and I'd probably trounce your rear end..." Hera shot him a grateful smile for not saying 'ass' like he normally would have. "anyway, I'll leave you with a promise. The moment we meet again in real life, you can consider yourself challenged to a fight to the death."

Luke nodded stiltedly, wide eyed, not really sure how else to respond to that.

Sabine stared at Ezra, wondering where this new warrior type Ezra had come from. It made her want to throw herself at him and drag him to a cabin.

Ezra let his face relax into a grin. "Just kidding. Man, you should have seen your face. That was great. But seriously. Hands off Sabine. Not that she can't take care of herself, as I'm sure you know, but you've been warned."

Luke held his hands up, backing up a step. "No worries, man. I learned my lesson. Never make assumptions when it comes to girls."

Ezra, Kanan and Zeb all laughed at that.

Kanan winked at Ezra before glancing at Hera. "That is so true. No matter how long you know them."

Hera looked over her shoulder at Kanan and smirked as she was picking Jacen up from Chopper's manipulators. "You better believe it, love."

"Yep," Zeb said. "From what I've experienced, you female types tend to be moody, unpredictable, and very hard to understand sometimes."

"But worth it," Ezra said, longing in his eyes as he gazed at Sabine.

Sabine sighed quietly as she looked back at him. He was so good at this romance stuff now. She never would have guessed when they first met. And she liked it, which surprised her even more. (Don't tell the tough girl police.)

"Well, you males aren't exactly a treat either," Hera said as she snuggled close to Kanan again, Jacen held gently in her arms. "You're grumpy, smelly, messy, and a few brain cells short more often than not, I swear."
"Hey!" Zeb said in mock outrage.

Kanan shook his head at the lasat. "You started it." He looked down at Hera and his son, eyes going all soft and mushy. "Hera can think whatever she wants about us guys. She's probably right."

"Thank you, dear," Hera said with a loving smile at Kanan.

"Especially about you, fuzzy oversized purple meatbag," Chopper chirped at the same time.

Zeb gasped in real outrage and the chase was on.

Ezra laughed as Chopper and Zeb disappeared out the door. "I see nothing's changed."

Sabine laughed and shook her head. "No, nothing's changed. And yet, everything has."

Ezra nodded in understanding, happily taking in the sight of his wife with Kanan and Hera and Jacen all standing together looking like a perfect happy family. And then there was Luke off to the side, looking kind of left out. Ezra felt sorry for him, knowing what it feels like to not be a part of a family. His new friends on Cerulia were great but they would never be his family. He was so happy to be with them again, it was beyond his ability to express.

He tried anyway as he got as close to Sabine as he could manage without putting his image inside her and stared at them all with the dopiest joyful smile on his face.
Ahsoka's Shock

Ahsoka's Shock:

*D45/0 ABY, Lothal*

Every hundred days or so, Ahsoka and Lux had to return to civilized space for fuel and supplies since their shuttle didn't hold much. Fortunately, the return trip was a million times faster than getting there had been, since the space was now charted in their nav computer. Last time, they'd gone back to the Rebel base on Yavin 4 and seen a very pregnant Hera and spent some time with Rex. Today, Ahsoka decided it was time to check up on Sabine as a surprise, and she had a feeling she'd find Hera here as well, hopefully carrying the child in her arms instead of her midsection.

As they emerged from hyperspace in front of the planet, they were met by a green and purple painted TIE design that Ahsoka had never seen before. They were instantly hailed by the TIE. "This is Loth Two of the Lothal Planetary Defence. Please state your intentions or you will be shot down," a familiar female voice said.

Ahsoka raised a brow and smiled a little. "Loth Two, this is Ahsoka Tano. I see that things are going well for you, Ketsu Onyo. I like your fighter. What is it?"

Ketsu's voice warmed up considerably as she answered. "Ahsoka! You're back. I knew that ship looked familiar. It's been awhile. And this is my TIE Defender, courtesy of the Empire. We have two whole fleets of them now."

Ahsoka laughed lightly at the obvious pride in the other woman's voice. "Good for you. I'm here to get more supplies and see Sabine. I'm assuming I'll find her in her usual spot by the tower?"

"She's actually at work right now, still busy building something or other, but you'll find Hera in the Ghost in the same spot," Ketsu replied.

"Thank you, Ketsu. Come visit with us later when your shift is over," Ahsoka invited, correctly assuming that Loth Squadron rotated guard duty on the planet.

"Will do, Ahsoka. It's nice to have you back."

"It's good to be back," Ahsoka replied, before flying down to the planet.

Ahsoka and Lux admired the new paint job on Ezra's Gauntlet before parking beside the Ghost. The Mandalorian ship had been repainted in a base coat of silver with alternating orange and blue streaks on the wings and body, giving the impression of feathers. Sabine had made another beautiful piece of art. As they walked up to the Ghost, Hera was already standing on the ramp to meet them, a big smile on her face and they exchanged hugs in greeting.

"Hera, you're looking well," Ahsoka complimented. "I'm guessing I have a new little nephew to meet."

Hera beamed. "Yes. Come on inside and I'll introduce you to Jacen. And just wait until twilight. You're in for the surprise of your life."

Ahsoka raised a brow in question, but Hera refused to elaborate, so Ahsoka just gave a mental shrug and followed her friend up the ladder with Lux following behind.
Jacen was officially the cutest baby Ahsoka had ever seen and holding him in her arms made her realize that she just might want a child of her own; one with Lux's gorgeous thunderstorm grey eyes. She gave a little wistful sigh at the image of the tiny pale skinned girl with her lekku and Lux's eyes that popped into her mind, knowing it would never happen. Togrutans and humans were simply too different. The odds against them conceiving were astronomically high. So high, she wasn't even bothering to take contraceptive shots.

Sabine came home from work and joined Hera, Ahsoka, and Lux in the common room with a tired sigh, flopping into the chair in the corner and putting her legs over the arm. She gave Ahsoka and Lux a smile and a wave before her eyes closed and she fell asleep in only a few seconds. Ahsoka studied the girl curiously, because despite being exhausted, she seemed incredibly content. Ahsoka had never sensed such a level of peace coming from her before.

Hera seemed to be very happy as well, which Ahsoka had thought was due to her new child, but now she was starting to get a feeling that there was something else going on here. There had been too many hints that Ahsoka was going to be very surprised about something. She was actually starting to get impatient for twilight to arrive so the mystery would be revealed.

"What has Sabine so tired?" Ahsoka whispered to Hera as she somewhat reluctantly gave the twi'lek her baby back. "I thought the majority of the clean up and reconstruction was finished?"

"She's been working on Ezra's tower apartment lately, after everything else she does," Hera whispered back as she shook her head ruefully. "She's determined to finish it as quickly as possible, despite having a perfectly good ship to live in." Hera cuddled a cooing Jacen to her chest and smiled down at him as he reached for her lek and gently grasped the end in his tiny hands. This was obviously a gesture they did a lot because Ahsoka had never seen Hera put a lek in front of her shoulder before, as she was usually content to just let them hang down her back. Now she tossed it over her shoulder with a twitch of her head as soon as Jacen reached up. It was adorable and Ahsoka suddenly wanted the same interaction with her own child. She chalked it up to her biological clock trying to get her with the program. Well, her clock was just going to have to shut up, because Ahsoka had chosen Lux and she wasn't going to change her mind. Maybe they could adopt a child or two whenever they finally got to settle down for real. One day, Ezra would be back where he belonged and the war would be over. Maybe they could find a Force sensitive orphan to raise. The thought made a hopeful smile cross her face.

"Why? What's the rush?" Lux asked, joining the conversation just as quietly.

This brought on yet another one of Hera's mysterious smiles. "You'll see soon enough," was all she said.

Ahsoka almost rolled her eyes but managed to restrain herself. Just.

Ketsu walked in at this point, and she wasn't alone. Aside from carrying in sacks of delicious smelling dinner, she was accompanied by a man who appeared to be in his late twenties or early thirties. (Ahsoka was never completely sure when it came to humans ages, since they didn't have lekku that were easy to read.) Lux immediately popped out of his chair, obviously excited to see another male to talk to. Introductions were quickly made and everyone moved into the galley to eat, including Sabine, who woke up from her nap the instant the door to the common room opened. Jacen was placed in Chopper's manipulators while Hera was otherwise occupied, making Ahsoka wonder if the boy had every been set down at any point that didn't include sleeping in his crib.

At some point during dinner, Sabine looked up at Ketsu and grinned. "Hey, I almost forgot. Ryder and I had a little meeting today and we've decided that since you two are basically already doing the job, the Lothal Defence Military is yours to run as you see fit. That would mean official
promotions to the rank of Admiral for both of you. With Joshua running the ground forces and Ketsu in charge of the air forces, your partnership has made one of the best run armies this galaxy has ever seen, I'm sure. I hope this is alright with you two?"

Ketsu and Joshua stared at Sabine, wide eyed and they both nodded slowly as the news sunk in. Ketsu eventually broke into a big grin. "If only my clan could see me now. They thought I was worthless and threw me out when we left the Academy. Now I'm an Admiral." She turned to Joshua and grinned up at him. "We're Admiral's, Josh'ika! Now there's just one thing left for us to do on my new bucket list."

Joshua grinned back, flushing a little. He bent down and murmured in her ear, making Ketsu gasp and her skin darkened considerably.

Ketsu abruptly stood and pulled Joshua up with her, eyes sparkling. "Uhh, sorry for the abrupt departure, but Joshua and I have to... ummm."

Sabine and Hera laughed, waving them off, and the couple left quickly, holding hands and giggling like children.

"One hundred credits says she's expecting by the end of the year," Sabine said once the door closed.

"You're on, but I say next year, in the spring," Ahsoka replied.

Hera shook her head. "I'm calling two months from now. She's a Mandalorian, and we all know how determined they are once they set their mind to something," she said with teasing smile at Sabine.

Everyone laughed, and the bets were on.

Lux sidled a little closer to Ahsoka and wondered if she ever thought about having kids. They'd never talked about it since they both knew that their species were pretty much incompatible. Maybe he'd bring up the subject one day, just to see where her mind was at on the subject. They did have a ridiculous amount of time to kill on their quest for Ezra.

The conversation had turned back to Jacen as Hera and Sabine described all of the adorable things he'd done since he was born a whole forty-seven days ago when the somewhat transparent figure of a young man Lux had never seen before appeared in the room beside Sabine, making the conversation come to a dead stop as she turned to him and said, "Ezra!" with an adoring look in her eyes. Lux almost fell out of his chair in shock and Ahsoka was no better, as her big eyes got bigger than he'd ever seen them and her vibrant orange skin turned a much paler shade so her white markings were much less visible.

"Ezra!" Ahsoka cried as well, but not in a good way. "Please tell me you're not dead! Because you look like a Force Ghost and I've been searching for you and..."

Hera put a comforting hand on Ahsoka's shoulder to stop her rapid fire words. "It's okay, Ahsoka."

Ezra took in the new people at the table and grinned at them. "Ahsoka! You're here! You made it back from Malachor all right? I know Sabine said you had, but you know, gotta ask. And you must be Lux! And yes, I look like a Force Ghost, but this is really just a spirit projection. My body is safe and sound somewhere on another planet far away."

Ahsoka blinked, as the shocks just kept piling up. Ezra wasn't dead but he was doing a Force trick that she'd only heard whispers about? It was said that Master Yoda could do the same thing but
Master Yoda was ancient and had something like nine hundred years to perfect his tricks. Ezra was... nineteen, she was pretty sure. How in the galaxy had he managed to learn that? She was just about to ask him to explain further when Ahsoka was hit with another shock.

"He may not be a Force Ghost, but I am," Kanan said as he appeared with a smirk on his face and a twinkle in his teal eyes, sitting right beside Hera in a space apparently left for him. Hera leaned into his side with a look of utter happiness in her eyes and he wrapped an arm around her.

Ahsoka gasped, swaying as her brain shut down for a moment and she stopped breathing. Lux wrapped a steadying arm around her waist and Ahsoka remembered to inhale. "Okay," she finally said after gawking at Kanan, then Ezra, and then back to Kanan. "Somebody please explain."

Ezra went first, telling her all about his new planet with the amazing Force Users and their crashed Jedi Masters; both the still living Tia Fisto, and the Ghost, Zen Guji. "I promise I'll show you everything I learn when we're together again," he finished with.

Ahsoka nodded eagerly. This was great! After leaving the Order, her training in the Force had come to a halt and that had always bugged her since she knew there was so much more to learn than what Anakin had had time to teach her in between fighting a never-ending war. She turned her attention back to Kanan. "Alright, your turn."

Kanan nodded with a half smile. "I guess I'll start with the day Hera was captured, since that was the first day I knew I wasn't going to make it. That I had a purpose that I had to fulfill."

Everyone was looking at Kanan now with rapt expressions since he hadn't told anyone this story yet. Ezra and Sabine's were a little on the hurt side. "You knew you were going to die and you didn't tell us?" Sabine asked, trying not to sound too accusing.

Kanan sighed. "Yes. I'm sorry. It was the only way."

"I understand," Ezra said. "I had my own choice that I had to make and I never told anyone either."

Sabine glared at him. "Remind me to punch you for that when I see you again. I'd do it now, but..."

Ezra rolled his eyes at her, but grinned nonetheless. "You can punch me as much as you want, cyar'ika. I deserve it. Just so long as you kiss me too."

That got a chuckle from everyone and the good mood was restored.

Kanan got back on subject, knowing he and Ezra didn't have a lot of time left before they were too exhausted to stay in their current forms. They both still had a lot of practicing to do. "As I was saying, it started the day Hera was shot down over Capital City. I was on my way back to the city to rescue her when a lothwolf appeared in front of my speeder bike. I crashed, avoiding it and then..."

"...Suddenly I was in this empty place and my Master was there. She and a veritable plethora of Masters began my admittedly hurried training in how to use the Force to be a Lothwolf and a Ghost and other things," Kanan finished with. "I've had more than a year now to get pretty good at it."

Hera smiled up at him and kissed his semi solid cheek. "It's good enough for me."

Kanan and Hera exchanged looks of love and adoration. Their life together wasn't ideal, but it was more than either of them thought they would get. Kanan got to watch over his family and actually interact with Hera and his son for a short time every day. And whenever he could manage, Kanan..."
would take on a solid form again once Hera was in bed and watch her sleep while holding her in his arms. And if she woke up? Well, let's just say they expressed their love with more than words.

Ahsoka was basically just flabbergasted. So much had happened while she didn't exist and then was flying around in space endlessly. She was feeling awfully left out of the loop right now. Hopefully once all of this searching stuff was over, she could finally go back to a normal life where she was involved with her friends' lives and not just hearing about it months or years later.

Ahsoka and Lux returned to searching for Ezra with a new zeal, now that they knew he was definitely alive and had travelled approximately twelve hours in hyperspace before leaving the Chimaera. They were so focused on finding Ezra again that Ahsoka forgot about finding someone to marry her and Lux. She also forgot to ask about the Death Star and who had managed to destroy it.

Was she ever in for a surprise when they next came back to known space and rendezvoused with the Rebels on Hoth.
Ezrabine's Surprise:  

D98/0 ABY, Lothal

Ezra's tower was finally finished.

Okay. Not exactly. The restoration of the outside wasn't done yet, but the apartment was. And Sabine couldn't wait any longer to show him. She'd been deliberately keeping their visits to locations where the tower was never in sight so he didn't know what she'd been doing, since the stacks of construction materials all over the ground outside the tower where glaringly obvious.

So today, as twilight approached, Sabine was waiting on the balcony of their new apartment, drumming her fingers on the railing impatiently. The minutes slowly ticked passed until FINALLY, Ezra was standing beside her.

"Hello, Sabine," Ezra said as her head swivelled in his direction. He drank in the sight of her, looking more beautiful than ever. And for once, she wasn't wearing her armour. Instead, she was dressed in a loose fitting white blouse and form fitting black trousers that made him want to drool. It was probably a good thing he was in spirit form right now or else he'd probably be embarrassing himself. The other good thing was his body was safely locked in his room and he'd developed very good shields. He did not need to hear all the teasing he'd get from Link and Raign if they got even a glimmer of his thoughts on how much he panted after his wife.

Sabine smiled at Ezra. "Hi, babe," she replied, eyes travelling up and down his form eagerly. It was hard to tell for sure when he was transparent, but she could swear he got more muscular every time she saw him. All that swimming and sword training sure wasn't hurting anything. Not like she would ever complain; Ezra could pack on as much muscles as he wanted. It just made him hotter.

Ezra smirked a little and suddenly his tunic was gone, leaving him bare chested.

Sabine gawked at his displayed muscles for a minute before the reality of what had just happened hit her. Sabine gave him a squinty eyed looked. "Were you reading my mind again, Ezra Bridger?"

Ezra winced and looked at the floor, hiding from her glare, imagining his tunic back on. "Umm. Sort of? I wasn't trying to. Honest! It's just, you were broadcasting again and I'm super connected to you right now to be here, and, well, yah."

Sabine hummphed, but decided to let him off the hook. "I suppose that's acceptable then, but you'll be in big trouble if you do that all the time. I've already told you that you do not need to know everything I'm thinking."

"I swear I don't do it on purpose or without your permission," Ezra promised, blue eyes sincere and meeting hers steadily.

She let a smile return to her face. "Good. And kriff, Ezra, give a girl a little warning before you make your clothes disappear. I think my insides melted and you got me all hot and bothered. That really isn't fair."

Ezra tilted his head to the side a little, caught on the first part of her speech. "Hot and bothered?" he asked with a gleam in his eyes.
Sabine flushed a little and nodding reluctantly. "Yah. And it's your fault. And you can't even do anything about it," she grumbled with a mock glare before getting a little more serious. "You are much too good at doing that to me."

Ezra adopted a seductive look and crowded into her space until she was trapped between him and the wall. "Yah?"

Sabine leaned right back, her eyes glinting as she traced a finger over the line of his collarbone without actually touching his image. "Yah. Did I ever tell you that you turned me into a puddle of want when I saw you in that cadet uniform the first time?"

Ezra shook his head, eyes widening.

"It was such a great colour on you and made your skin tone and blue eyes and hair really stand out. Fortunately, what the uniform represented was enough of a turn off that I almost even talked myself into believing that you were just a kid and not desirable boyfriend material."

Ezra choose to take all of that as a compliment whether it was or not and beamed proudly, making a mental note to self to buy some white shirts whenever he was back on Lothal. "Wow. You just made my day. And made that wait for you to see me as something other than a kid worth it. And just so you know, as far as I'm concerned, you could wear a plain beige sack and I'd still think you were gorgeous. You look good in everything you wear or not wear. I'm not picky when it comes to colours on you. They all look good. I think you're the most beautiful woman in the galaxy."

Sabine melted. Just melted. Like, puddle on the ground melted. She stepped even closer to Ezra's form, wishing she could kiss him properly right now. She raised her hands anyway and cupped the outline of his face, her fingers starting to tingle from the contact. "I didn't make you wait THAT long. Half a year isn't that bad. Hera once told me made Kanan wait much longer than that. But I think it's a good thing we were friends first. I think it made our relationship stronger."

Ezra wrapped his arms around her carefully, so as not to pass into her, and nodded in agreement. "I know having you as my best friend is one of the best things that ever happened to me. Yes, it would have been nice to kiss you way sooner, but look at the life we have now. Our bond isn't based on kisses. It's based on trust and friendship. And without that bond, I wouldn't be talking to you or sort of holding you right now. I think things worked out the way they were meant to."

Sabine felt her eyes get misty and blinked the moisture away. Ezra just kept surprising her with how perfect and mature he was. "Thank you for that, Ezra. I just wish you were really here right now so I could show you how much I love you."

Ezra sighed and pressed a ghostly kiss to her forehead. "I wish I was too, cyar'ika. I love you so much. But I have a surprise for you that I've been working really hard on."

Sabine raised a brow. "What is it?"

"I'll just show you." Ezra grinned and closed his eyes while he concentrated.

Sabine gasped as his face became vaguely solid in her hands. She could almost feel the texture of his skin under her fingers. And then he lowered his head to hers and kissed her gently for a few seconds, which she actually felt. (Kind of like the way you feel a strong wind even though air isn't solid.) Sabine hummed contentedly into his mouth and returned the kiss that she wanted to go on forever but was over way too soon, as his form returned to just a visible state. They sighed in unison and stared dreamily into each other's eyes for who knows how long while her mouth tingled from the contact deliciously.
Eventually Sabine sidled out from between him and the wall with a smile. "I have a surprise for you too, babe." She gestured towards the sliding glass doors that led into the apartment and Ezra blinked as he looked around, just noticing for the first time where they were.

"Those are new," he finally said, after taking in the refurbished balcony and the view of an already expanding Capital City in the distance.

Sabine led the way into the apartment, a smile of anticipation on her face. "That's not all that's new. I've made us our very own home."

Ezra walked into the big open concept space and stopped just inside the door as he took it all in. Sabine had painted the whole area in the palest of earth tones that were the perfect background for her colourful paintings that hung everywhere, and the equally colourful furniture. "It's perfect, Sabine," he breathed in wonder, amazed that this was the same dark and dusty space he used to live in.

Sabine beamed happily and continued the tour, showing him their state of the art refresher room with an extravagant tub big enough for both of them, and then their bedroom with the biggest bed he'd ever seen holding center stage, with covers and pillows in a blue and orange pattern. Ezra gawked at the bed for at least a minute as the very long list of things he wanted to do with Sabine in it ran through his mind, not speaking until Sabine prompted him to.

"Well? Do you like it?" she asked anxiously.

Ezra looked down at her and gave her his best dopey smile. "It's almost as perfect as you are, Sabine Wren."

Sabine relaxed and did her best to snuggle into his side, smiling up at him just as dopily, she was sure. "Thank you, Ezra. And it's Wren-Bridger now. I officially changed it."

Ezra stared at her, speechless for a moment at how much that meant to him. "Oh, Sabine. You're the best wife ever."

Sabine grinned. "I know, but hearing it is always good."

"Then I'll be Wren-Bridger too," Ezra declared. "It has a cool ring to it, don't you think?"

Sabine grinned wider, wishing she could kiss him right now, but not sure if he could do the solid thing again so soon or even in the same visit. "It does."

Ezra glanced at the bed again. "Do you think I could see you lying on that? Preferably without clothes? Maybe you can do something that will help with your earlier dilemma?"

Sabine inhaled as thoughts raced through her mind. Her fiery eyes went from the bed and then back to Ezra, turning all soft and sultry. "Perhaps I could. Would you like to watch and maybe help?"

Ezra's face split into a satisfied tooka grin. "Would I ever."

Sabine felt her core clench in desire at the idea of Ezra watching her pleasure herself. She quickly pulled her blouse over her head and shimmied out of her trousers and panties.

Ezra sucked in a breath at the knowledge that she hadn't been wearing a bra. And her body was still perfection in his eyes. He loved her strong lean muscles and curves.

Sabine walked backwards, eyes never leaving Ezra's, enjoying the look of desire and love on his
handsome face. Her hands itched to bury themselves in his shaggy blue hair to hold him still while she kissed him senseless. When the back of her legs hit the bed, she crawled onto it, still backing up away from him, not stopping until she found a comfortable spot with her head on a pillow.

Ezra followed like he was mesmerized. He stopped at the edge of the bed, wondering what he should do next.

Sabine solved that for him. "Lose the clothes," she breathed huskily as she patted a spot on the bed beside her.

Ezra happily changed his concentration to alter his appearance so he was as naked as her and placed his image on the bed beside her in a rapt kneeling position. He bent down and placed a ghostly kiss against the gentle curve of her lips, not able to resist the temptation.

Sabine smiled up at him as he sat back up, raising a hand to her lips and rubbing a finger over the tingles left over from his touch. "Feel free to touch me as much as you want, Ez'ika. The tingles just make it better."

Ezra grinned, happy he could make her feel something. "It would be my pleasure, cyar'ika." He was going to enjoy this very much. (He could never have too many memories of Sabine to dream about at night.) At the same time, he still needed to keep his focus or he'd lose his Force projection and end up back in his body before he wanted to. (At least he didn't pass out anymore when he got back.) Ezra had a feeling he'd return to find his body quite ready to have its own self pleasing session. And with the fresh images of Sabine touching herself in his mind, he'd probably explode in seconds.

Sabine drank in the sight of Ezra's strong copper toned skin and his brilliant blue eyes gazing at her adoringly. Just the idea of what they were doing was making her hot and wet. It felt so daring and naughty. She ran her hands down her sides, watching Ezra's eyes follow the movement. Her hands ran back up and cupped her breasts, rubbing the nipples lightly. She bit her lip invitingly as Ezra gasped at her boldness. "Touch them for me, babe," she whispered as her hands travelled back downwards.

Ezra complied immediately, placing his transparent hands on her boobs reverently, circling the nipples. Sabine moaned as they immediately started tingling like mad, shooting sparks straight down to her pussy. Her fingers delved between her legs and rubbed her clit, driving her passion higher. A finger from her other hand pressed into her tunnel and up into her g-spot. Sabine's eyes closed in bliss as her climax built in her at lightspeed. She'd never been so worked up so fast before when she was on her own. Having Ezra watch her made all the difference in the world.

Ezra was basically running through meditation chants to help him keep his focus right now. Sabine was so incredibly hot and sexy right now he could barely stand it. Her head was thrown back as ecstasy built in her expression. Her muscles were tight under her pale skin as her body strained for release. Her legs were spread, knees bent and feet planted on the bed as her back arched into the touch of her fingers. He replaced one of his hands on her breasts with his mouth, kissing it reverently, while the now free hand snaked down and joined hers between her legs.

Sabine gasped as she felt the tingles added to the sensations on her clit and she came hard, moaning, "Ezrrraaaa!" She rode the wave of pleasure until her body finally relaxed, opening her eyes and smiling at her husband. He had his chin more or less propped on her chest as he watched her face, looking both fascinated and very aroused. He took his hand off her mound and ran it up her side, leaving a trail of tingles. She smiled warmly and cupped the back of his head, indicating he should come up higher. "Can you do it again? Go solid?"
Ezra nodded and concentrated. Sabine felt the silky strands of his hair on her hand and smiled in bliss. She grabbed his head with both hands, burying her fingers in his hair and pulled him down she could kiss him properly, deep and hot and loving.

Ezra held it for as long as he could, savouring the kiss and feeling so turned on right now. He reluctantly pulled back when he felt his energy depleting quickly. "I'm sorry, Sabine. I can't hold it anymore," he apologized.

Sabine sighed as the feel of his hair disappeared and she felt like she was holding nothing but air again. "That's okay, Ezra. You did great. Thank you." She glanced down and saw his straining hardness. "I wish I could help you with that."

Ezra smiled ruefully. "Don't worry about it. That's practically going to take care of itself the moment I get back." He brushed her flushed cheek gently with the back of his fingers, wishing he had enough energy to feel her again. "I have to go now, Sabine, but I'll be back tomorrow. I love you."

Sabine smiled sweetly and sadly up at him. "Love you too, Ezra."

Ezra pressed one more imaginary kiss to her lips and left on a sigh.

Sabine wriggled around on the bed a little, still feeling aftershocks and tingles all over her body. She wanted Ezra back so they could cuddle properly in the afterglow. She wanted to make him feel as good as he made her feel. She just flat out wanted. Seeing him for half an hour every day was better than nothing, but Sabine wanted Ezra back for real. If someone had told her five years ago that she'd come to love having a man in her life day in and day out, she would have laughed and called that person insane. Now she craved Ezra's company even worse than when she was on Krownest for a few months without him, and that was bad enough.

A mournful little sigh escaped again as she rolled over and grabbed a pillow, hugging it to her chest as she curled around it. "Ez'ika," she whispered to herself. "I miss you."
Ahsoka Meets Luke

A/N: I'll expand this chapter eventually.

Ahsoka Meets Luke:

\textit{D150/0 ABY, Hoth}

Ahsoka and Lux were greeted by a familiar voice as they disembarked from their shuttle in the icy cold air of Hoth. Rex was bundled up so much he was barely recognizable. "Commander!... Er. I mean, Ahsoka. Welcome to frozen hell," he said with a frost covered grin through his equally frost covered fuzzy hood and goggles.

Ahsoka shivered just out of principle even though she'd only been exposed to the frigid air for ten seconds. Wrapping her arms around herself for warmth, she huddled deeper into her winter jacket. "Hi, Rex. Please tell me you have somewhere warmer for us to go."

Rex chuckled and nodded towards the glacier behind them and turned that way as well, walking towards it with Ahsoka and Lux quickly following behind through the snow. "We have a base hidden in the glacier there. It's a work in progress right now, but yes, there is something resembling heat. It's actually comfortable if you leave your winter clothes on."

Ahsoka groaned and Lux laughed at Rex's teasing tone. They all hurried through a small hidden door and were greeted by the sound of hundreds of people and machines hard at work. Ahsoka looked around at the massive cavern that had been carved out of the ice. "This is amazing," she said.

Rex pushed his hood back and pulled off his goggles. "Welcome to Echo Base," he said with a sweeping gesture of his arm. "You'll find out soon enough why we called it that. This big area is going to be the hangar for the ships eventually, but for now it's the space where everything is. We're slowly carving more tunnels to other, smaller, natural caverns for the command center and barracks and such, but this is all we've completed so far."

"Well, I'm impressed," Ahsoka said as they walked amongst and around the organized chaos.

Rex looked like a proud parent as he led them towards the temporary command centre. "This isn't the only base the Rebellion is working on, but we're hoping it will eventually be the main one. There's enough room here and it's easily defendable. AND only a complete di'kut would want to live here, so the Empire isn't likely to find it. Only set back is the wampas keep sneaking in and slowing down our progress. I say it's good training for the shinys but some of the others aren't quite as enthused. I don't know why. These wampas are nothing compared to some of the creatures we encountered during the war with the Seppies."

Ahsoka grinned. "You mean like the giant Zillo beast that I never actually got to see except in vids?"

Rex nodded, eyes going blank as he remembered the old days. "Yah, that was a good one. But there were others. So many others. Lost a lot of good brothers to some of those creatures."

They'd almost reached the corner of the big cavern that command had confiscated for themselves when a silver and blue astromech rolled up. Ahsoka lit up as she caught sight of the droid.
"Artooie! You still keeping your masters out of trouble?"

R2 beeped proudly and swivelled his dome towards the group of people having a conference in the corner around makeshift equipment. Ahsoka caught sight of a familiar female figure amongst others that Ahsoka either knew well or were complete strangers. But this one had been in danger last she knew. Ahsoka was happy to see her safe and whole. She'd have to remember to ask someone later about the Organas so she knew how to address the issue of their home planet being exterminated. "Leia!"

Leia spun around at the sound of her name and her eyes widened when she caught sight of Ahsoka and Lux. "Ahsoka! Lux! You're back!" They hurried to meet each other and the girls exchanged a tight hug. "Is your quest over yet? Have you found Ezra?"

Ahsoka shook her head ruefully. "Yes and no. I know he's alive, but we haven't found the planet he's stuck on yet. There's just so much unexplored space out there. Someone really should have done this a lot sooner."

Leia snorted. "The known galaxy has enough problems without adding more planets to the equation."

Ahsoka rolled her eyes. "So far, we've found nothing truly interesting and no new intelligent races. Ezra is on a planet full of Force users though, if I can ever find it."

Leia gaped. "How do you know this if you don't know where he is?"

"Ezra learned some new Force tricks from his new friends and he's used his bond with Sabine to throw a spirit projection across space. It's quite amazing," Ahsoka explained.

"I've seen it and it really is," a new voice said. Ahsoka and Leia turned their focus to the blond and blue-eyed young man who spoke.

While Ahsoka gaped, Leia smacked him in the arm. "How come you never told me this? It would have been nice to know that one of my friends is still alive for sure."

Luke shrugged and looked at the floor bashfully. "I don't know," he mumbled. "I didn't know you'd be interested," he offered as an excuse.

"Idiot," Leia muttered. She shook her head and finally noticed Ahsoka's look of fascination. "What? What is it?"

Ahsoka remembered to close her mouth and breathe. "Who are you?" she asked of the young man who looked about the same age as Ezra and Leia, just to make sure her guess was correct. He bore a striking resemblance to Anakin and his Force signature... She hadn't felt one like it since Anakin's either. And there, on his belt, hung Anakin's old lightsabre. She recognized it immediately in both sight and how the Kyber crystal felt in the Force. He had to be the son Obi-Wan mentioned. But if he was here, shouldn't Obi-Wan be as well? But Ahsoka didn't fell his presence.

Luke raised a brow and studied the togrutan female curiously. Older than him off course, judging by her long lekku, but pretty. And strong in the Force. Really strong. Rex was looking between the two of them with a fascinated expression and Luke was getting an inkling towards who she was. "My name is Luke," he said. "Luke Skywalker." Ahsoka smiled at being right. "I'm guessing you're Ahsoka Tano," Luke continued. "Rex has told me a lot about you. And Leia some as well. It's nice to meet you, Lady Tano. Rex said you could tell me more about my father?"

Ahsoka nodded dumbly, mind whirling. How much should she tell him? The good stuff from
Anakin's past was easy, but what about what he'd become? Did Luke really need to know that his father had turned into Darth Vader? She hadn't told anyone that secret. Not even Lux. Ahsoka was torn. Luke deserved to know the truth, but at the same time, that was the kind of truth no one wanted to hear. Not even her. It had practically torn her in two when she'd first figured it out. She decided that for now she'd stick to just the good stuff. One day, there might come a time when Luke needed to know, but today wasn't that day. And she was grateful for it.

Ahsoka took a deep calming breath and glanced up at Lux thankfully as he sidled a little closer to her, lending his support. She nodded again. "Yes, I can tell you stories about your father. He was an amazing man. A great teacher. And an inspirational Jedi. But most of all, he was my friend, or more realistically, like an older brother to me. He called me Snips, and I called him Skyguy. We both hated our nicknames at first, but then they grew on us. Not that I'd ever let anyone else call me Snips, but if Anakin came back and did so, I'd be very happy to hear it."

There wasn't a single person in the immediate vicinity who didn't notice the wistfulness in her voice. Leia noticed too and nodded towards a deeper corner of the cavern where it was quieter. "Why don't you two go talk? I know you have a lot to say. Luke, you should tell her about Obi-Wan and the Death Star and your training with Sabine too. She'll want to know."

Luke nodded in understanding while Ahsoka's eyes widened again. He'd trained with Sabine? And she'd forgotten to ask about the Death Star last time and... "What about Master Kenobi? What happened to him?"

As Luke led the way to the semi private corner, he sighed and shook his head. "Vader. Vader happened to Ben."

Ahsoka's shoulders slumped in sorrow and she had to blink back the tears the filled her eyes. Her Master really was gone if he could kill his own Master; a man that she knew Anakin had loved like his own older brother. Somehow, she put on a brave face for Luke's sake and brought up happier memories. Memories of the days when Anakin was a good person. Someone she had looked up to. Someone with a heart of gold who cared about the galaxy and the people he loved. Darth Vader was not that man. And from now on, she wouldn't let herself think of Darth Vader as Anakin. They were two entirely different people, and for the sake of her sanity and Luke's, he needed to stay that way.

The next day, when it was time to continue the search, Ahsoka didn't want to leave. She felt responsible for Luke, being the only available trained Light side Force User left that she knew of. (And he was kind of like a nephew.) Master Yoda might be alive still, since he'd appeared to both Ezra and Kanan, but he could have done that from the other side just as easily. Ahsoka wasn't counting on Master Yoda to help Luke. Sabine had taught Luke the basics of the lightsabre decently enough, but Luke still knew almost nothing about how to use the Force. He didn't even know how important meditating was. From what he'd told her, it sounded like Obi-Wan had done his best to give him a crash course in the Force and the lightsabre, probably knowing he wasn't going to be able to teach Luke for very long, but the Force wasn't meant to be learnt that way. So she'd spent most of the day with him, teaching him what she could about the Force in the time she had. And even those few hours weren't even close to enough. At least he knew how to meditate now and connect to the Force on purpose and use it to strengthen himself. The rest of the lessons would have to wait for another day. Many other days in fact.

The new hope of the galaxy was only partly trained. And she had to leave him behind to go find Ezra. Ahsoka had never been so conflicted in her life. Even leaving the Order had been an easier decision than this. In the end, Ahsoka did leave Luke and continue her search with Lux at her side.
She had made a promise to Ezra first and she felt honour bound to keep it. Whatever the cost.

But this time, she found someone to marry them before they left again. Their hasty marriage ceremony was the excuse everyone on the base needed to take a much needed break, and was cause for much celebration. Mon Mothma was happy to officiate the ceremony and Ahsoka had Leia as her maid of honour and Lux had Rex as his best man. When they finally did leave, after much protestations from the partiers, Ahsoka and Lux left behind hundreds of Rebels who were all well on their way to getting happily drunk and no longer feeling the cold. It turns out Han had a whole case of Corellian whiskey hidden on the Millennium Falcon and decided that a wedding was a good enough excuse to open it instead of selling it. He even sent Ahsoka and Lux away with a bottle as a wedding present. Luke had whispered loud enough for the whole cavern to hear that he thought Han was just trying to impress the Princess again. The corresponding blushes from both Han and Leia had definitely given that theory merit and caused a wave of laughter from the crowd.

Ahsoka left Hoth feeling guilty and ridiculously happy. It was a strange combination that didn’t sit well but she looked at Lux sitting beside her in the co-pilot’s chair and was comforted by his presence, knowing she was doing the right thing.
Kanera's Vows

A/N: I'll probably add a lemon to the end of this one when I'm feeling inspired.

Kanera's Vows:

D180/0 ABY, Lothal

Now that Hera's enforced maternity leave was finally over, she decided she was going back to the Rebellion where she belonged. She knew she said she didn't want to raise Jacen in the snow, but she was done with being left out of the action. Not that she didn't appreciate the holiday, she really did. But six whole months of a holiday? That was just too much. Aside from taking care of Jacen, she really had nothing else important to do. The Ghost had been given a complete overhaul. Twice. The Lothhawk got her special attention as well. Hera had begged and pleaded and wheedled until she had to use her General voice to get them to let her play with the Defenders too, since no one but herself thought she should be working. She'd finished fine tuning those three months ago. After that, she got the bright idea of giving flying lessons to the newer Defender pilots and anyone else who wanted to learn to fly. Teaching people to fly was a pretty good way to pass the time, if she knew she wasn't needed elsewhere. She might even make that her full time job one day. But not yet. The Rebellion was still in full swing and Hera was determined to go back to it.

Tonight was her last night on Lothal. Sabine and Ezra had made her a special dinner and were sad to see her go, but they understood. Now it was hours later, and Hera was impatient for morning to come so she could leave for Hoth. She was doing anything but sleeping like she should be as she stared up at the ceiling and counted rivets when the more solid form of Kanan that she could actually see appeared in the bed beside her.

"Darling," he said. "You're supposed to be sleeping."

Hera rolled her eyes and turned on her side to face him, propping her jaw on her hand. "Thank you, Kanan Obvious, for the update."

Kanan barked out a laugh. "You haven't called me that for years. Not since before we were a couple."

Hera raised a brow, her eyes twinkling, thankful for the distraction from her insomnia. "Is that what we are?" she teased. "Can we be a 'couple' when you're only half here? Wouldn't that make us only three quarters of a couple?"

Kanan chuckled, not offended by reality. "Ah, but if you round up, it still makes a couple," he said with a 'so there' tone.

Hera inclined her head in a nod of acknowledgment. "I'll grant you that one. But as far as the vast majority of the galaxy is concerned, I'm a single." She sighed forlornly, only half joking. "I don't think I like being a single."

Kanan scooched over the last few centimetres between them and grinned, wiggling his eyebrows at her as his hand caressed the line of her jaw, thumb rubbing gently over her lips, making Hera inhale at the contact. "I'll just have to fix that now, won't I?" he said half playfully but with a hint of serious undertones.
Hera gave him a look. "What do you mean by that? Despite everything I just said, you know I consider us to be practically married."

Kanan cupped her face in his hands and kissed her gently. His eyes searched hers as he said, "What would you say to getting married for real since we never got to make that happen after you asked me? Well, sort of real. I'm not exactly alive and it would be just between us, kind of like the Mandalorians do. But I've always wanted to marry you and I never got the chance."

Hera looked into his eyes, so sincere and loving, and felt awful about putting off making them official before he died. Awful that it took extreme circumstances for her to even realize how much she was not contributing to their relationship that she really should have. And he never complained. If he wanted to marry her now, she felt like it was the least she could do for him. Yes, he was just a ghost, but Hera couldn't see herself ever loving anyone else. Her heart would belong to Kanan until her dying day and every day after that as well. "I would say yes, Kanan," she answered. "I would love to marry you."

Kanan's face turned up in a massive smile. "Thank you, Hera," he breathed before kissing her hard and quick and then jumping off the bed. Hera sat up and watched him curiously as he started rummaging through the drawer under her bed.

"What are you doing, or should I even ask?" Hera asked dryly.

Kanan emerged from his digging with a triumphant look on his face and tiny bag in his hand. "I hid this at the back of your junk drawer years ago, knowing you never really look in there or clean it out. There's stuff in there from ten years ago, I swear. I figured it was the perfect hiding spot."

Hera looked at the bag resting on the palm of his hand, knowing she'd never seen it before. "You weren't wrong. This is a surprise."

Kanan smiled happily and climbed back on the bed, kneeling in front of her. He opened the bag and emptied two simple gold rings into the palm of Hera's hand. "I bought these for us a few years ago with the hope that one day we could make our relationship official. That was actually just before we joined Phoenix Squadron. It's one of the reasons I was such a jerk about joining the bigger Rebellion. I saw my dreams of a quiet life for us flying out the airlock," he explained apologetically.

Hera stared at the rings in her hand, tears welling in her eyes. "Kanan," she said. "I wish I'd known. I wish I'd done things differently. A lot of things, in fact."

Kanan shook his head and leaned forward, kissing the tears off her cheeks. "It's okay, darling. I knew how much you loved me. I can feel your emotions after all," he said with a crooked smile. He closed her fingers around the rings. "It would make me very happy if you wore them both for me, on a necklace perhaps, since my ring would never fit you. I'd wear it myself but I can't exactly take it back with me into the Force, so that wouldn't work."

Hera nodded quickly. "Of course I'll wear them. I might have to go shopping for a chain first, but I promise I'll do that first thing in the morning."

Kanan smiled, sighing happily. "Good. That's good." He took her hands in his and looked into her beautiful shimmering emerald eyes. "Hera Syndulla, I have wanted you since the moment I first heard your voice. I have loved you since the day you accepted me as part of your crew. It would be my greatest honour to be your husband for the rest of time."

Hera beamed at him, eyes looking back into his glorious teal ones, so happy to get to see them
again every day. "Kanan Caleb Dume Jarrus, I have wanted you just as much since I first saw you even If I didn't let myself do anything about it for a ridiculous amount of time. I think I loved you almost as long, but again, I refused to let myself feel that, which was beyond stupid, but I know for sure that I love you now even more than I ever have. I will wear your rings and be your wife for as long as I live and beyond."

They leaned towards each other and sealed their vows with a sweet kiss that slowly turned passionate and fiery. Hera blindly reached over and placed the rings on her bedside table and wrapped her arms around his neck. They loved each other for as long as Kanan could hold his solid form, leaving Hera finally tired enough to fall asleep.

Kanan used the last of his energy to kiss Hera on the forehead and then ghost across the hall to Jacen's room and press a kiss to his sleeping son's soft green hair. Finally feeling complete, Kanan returned to the Force to recharge for another day so he could spend more time with his little family tomorrow.
Sabezra Goes Dancing

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. I think I'm going to leave this one short and sweet.

Sabezra Goes Dancing:

D2/1 ABY, Lothal

Sabine was waiting for Ezra’s projected form to arrive in the same cluster of mountains where he’d first appeared to her. She hadn’t been back since that day, but she figured today was the perfect day to revisit the memory heavy location.

Sitting on the blanket she’d spread on the young spring grass, Sabine watched the sun creep closer and closer to the horizon through a gap in the rounded mountains. She rubbed her bare arms as a sudden breeze picked up. *Ezra better appreciate this. I feel more naked than if I actually was.*

Sabine was wearing a dress.

A shimmery bronze spaghetti strap dress that hugged her torso and belled out in a huge skirt. Despite the skirt, her legs felt bare. Her torso felt bare. Her arms were definitely bare.

And it was all for her absentee husband who’d, a few weeks ago, randomly said he wanted to take her dancing when he got home.

She had to admit it was a good idea, considering it was something they’d never tried. But she had no desire to embarrass herself in public, so she was tweaking the date to suit her. She even had a datapad filled with sappy waltz music to play for them. She figured waltzing was a safe enough option and didn’t require too much actual skill. It’s not like either of them actually knew how to dance so winging it was going to have to be good enough.

She sighed in relief when Ezra finally shimmered into view and became nearly solid looking with just the faintest hint of a glow to him that only became obvious in the dark. “Hello, Ez’ika.”

Ezra froze in the act of returning her greeting, his mouth stuck open. “Cyar’ika, you look absolutely amazing. Is this for me?”

She accepted the hand he held out that he made solid enough to pull her up to her feet, smirking up at him as she rose. “Of course this is for you, babe. Who else would I go to all this trouble for?”

*HOLY FORCEBALLS! IS THAT SABINE*?!*

Now she really looks like a goddess. A fairy goddess.

Sitting on the ground, surrounded by her shimmering skirt, she took his breath away. (His body on another planet far, far, far away actually stopped breathing.) She’d dyed her short hair to match her dress, so it looked like orange, gold, and bronze fire upon her head. She was even wearing makeup around her eyes, again to match. And at her throat was the amber pendant he’d given her for her eighteenth birthday, hanging off of a fine gold chain.

Ezra finally remembered to suck in air before his real body passed out. He swallowed convulsively and stepped forward. “Cyar’ika, you look absolutely amazing. Is this for me?”

She accepted the hand he held out that he made solid enough to pull her up to her feet, smirking up at him as she rose. “Of course this is for you, babe. Who else would I go to all this trouble for?”
Ezra shrugged even as he eyeballed her up and down a few more times. “I don’t know. Some fancy ball thing in your honour or something? Considering everything you’ve done for Lothal, it wouldn’t surprise me if they threw one for you.”

Sabine laughed. “They already did, near the beginning of last year.”

“Oh.” Ezra frowned in disappointment. “I would have liked to see that.”

Sabine grinned, shaking her head. “Don’t worry, you didn’t miss much. I wore my armour.”

He guffawed for a moment. “Of course you did. I bet they loved that.”

Sabine shrugged, drawing his eyes down to the golden skin of her shoulders. “Ryder didn’t look impressed, but since Ketsu showed up in her armour as well, on the arm of his nephew, he probably just assumed it was a Mandalorian thing.”

“And is it?”

“Not really. Even us Mandos are civilized enough to dress up for formal occasions. I just didn’t feel like going to the effort since I didn’t have my favourite lothrat to impress, and Ketsu supported me by not dressing up either.”

“That was nice of her. And thank you, for saving this for me. You literally took my breath away.”

He brushed her cheek with soft fingers, leaving the anticipated tingles in their wake. “May I ask what for, though?”

Sabine touched his cheek in return, correctly assuming that he’d put forth the effort to solidify himself so she could. “Can’t you guess?”

Ezra shook his head. “I have no idea.”

“It’s our fifth anniversary, Ez. How could you forget that?”

Ezra’s eyes widened. “Is it? I actually don’t know what the galactic standard date is anymore, having no way to keep track.”

“You don’t? You never mentioned it.”

“No. My chrono died. My wrist computer died. The escape pod I arrived in died. It’s like modern technology doesn’t mix very well with Cerulia’s heavy Force presence.”

“Hunh. Strange. Well, anyway, happy anniversary, Ez.”

He wrapped his projected hands around her waist and nuzzled his nose against hers, beaming a smile into her gorgeous amber eyes. “Happy anniversary, Sabine.” And then he imagined himself kissing her, using the Force to give her the sensations associated with the act.

Sabine hummed happily into the kiss, reaching up to wrap her arms around his neck. When he pulled back with a kiss to her cheek that slid into another along her jaw, and another below her ear, she practically purred. “Dance with me, Ez.”

He pulled back a bit to look at her in surprise. “Really?”

“Really. I didn’t put all of this on for nothing.”

Ezra chuckled. “All right.” He stepped back. “Just give me a sec. I feel horribly outclassed.” He
called up an image he’d seen in a holomovie once and copied it.

Sabine watched as he closed his eyes and the plain grey tunic and slacks he was wearing were instantly replaced with a black tuxedo topped by a bronze bow tie to match her dress. His shoulder length hair slicked back into a tail at the nape of his neck, a top hat appeared on his head, a hip length bronze cape settled around his broad shoulders, and a cane made of gold appeared in his hand. Wow. Just wow. He looks like a movie star.

Ezra held his arms out. “So? How do I look? Classy enough for a beautiful dame like you?” he said in the most posh and affected accent he could remember hearing. (Which just happened to be from the same holomovie.)

Sabine giggled. “Ezra, you look classy enough to win the hearts of Coruscant’s elite. Shabla.”

He flushed in pleasure. “Thanks, cyar’ika. So do you.” He held his arms out. “Shall we?”

She held up a finger. “Just a sec. I have music.” Carefully kneeling down, she turned on the datapad and hit play. The soft opening notes of a famous waltz filled the air around them and echoed off the mountains. She rose and turned back to her gorgeous riddur. “Now we shall.”

She took a step forward and then paused again. “I love the cape and hat and cane, but lose them, I think, for dancing.”

“Right.” Ezra vanished the requested articles and then he bowed as elegantly as he knew how. “My Lady.”

Sabine giggled again and curtsied, feeling ridiculously girly but not caring at all, holding her skirt out. “My Lord.”

Rising, he held his arms out again. “May I have this dance?”

She moved into his arms and wrapped hers around his neck again. “You may. And every other dance for the rest of our lives.”

Ezra closed his arms around her and sighed in contentment as she rested her head on his shoulder. They swayed to the music for a few minutes, both rejoicing in the moment and making the bare minimum of actual steps with their feet.

Eventually, he broke the silence. “I’ve been wondering.”

“Hmmmmm?”

“Technically, we have two anniversaries to celebrate now, but they’re only twenty-four days apart. Do you want to do both, or just this one?”

She leaned back a little to look at him, raising a brow. “What do you think?”

He smirked ruefully. “I think we do both.”

She patted his cheek. “Right answer.” She laid her cheek on his shoulder again and the music took over for another minute before she suddenly added, “But this anniversary will always be just a little more special to me.”

Ezra kissed her fiery hair. “Agreed.”

They swayed round and round to the music for maybe another ten minutes before Ezra reluctantly
pulled back as he felt his energy fading. “I’m sorry, Sabine. But I have to go now. Holding a solid form for this long has tired me out faster than normal.”

She sighed, rising on her toes to kiss him quickly one more time before he faded away. “It’s okay. I understand. It was worth it.”

Ezra reached up and brushed her lips with ghostly fingers. “One day, I promise we’ll dance for real. And all night if you want to.”

Sabine stared at his now transparent image with her heart in her eyes. “I’d like that. Love you, Ez’ika.”

He smiled somewhat mournfully. “I love you more.”

The words seemed to hover in the air even after his image was gone.

She wrapped her arms around herself, suddenly feeling the cool evening air again.
Today was the two year anniversary of the search for Ezra.

By this point, Ahsoka had gone through several different emotions regarding her mission; from excited, to resigned, to despair, to loathing. Now she was just determined. She was pretty sure Lux was blessed with the patience of a Jedi Master to have dealt with her many different moods in regards to what they were doing. Maybe it had something to do with being a politician. She supposed you needed an incredible amount of patience to deal with all the backstabbing crap that came with being a Senator for half your life under the rule of Palpatine. You'd think that with all her Jedi training that Ahsoka would be the one with the greater capacity for patience but it wasn't so. Ahsoka was more of the let's get results as fast as possible type (possibly something she'd learned from Anakin), and that hadn't really changed much as she got older. Her job as Director of Intelligence for the Rebellion had always kept her occupied with new missions to run or even go on herself if she wanted. This flying around endlessly and not accomplishing much had seriously gotten on her nerves somewhere near the year and a half mark, but Lux had talked her through that one and now she was in a much better place in her mind. (Thank the Force.)

Now that they knew where Ezra was, they had managed to speed up the process slightly by looking for planets that had a high concentration of water only, which they could do with the long-range sensors. At the moment, Ahsoka was on flying duty while Lux slept, and was going to bypass a planet that didn't even come close to having enough water to qualify when she felt a small nudge from the Force.

She stopped the T-6 shuttle where it was, still too far away from the planet for it to be in sight and not wanting to waste fuel flying to it for no good reason, but not wanting to get any further from it yet if the Force wanted her to go there. Ahsoka closed her eyes and fell into an easy meditation, listening to what the Force had to say. She felt a pull towards the planet that she couldn't resist. Hoping it wasn't another planet of Force hungry plants, Ahsoka sent the shuttle towards her new destination and then went to wake up Lux once the auto pilot was engaged.

She walked into their cabin and couldn't help but smile at the sight of Lux sprawled face down across the bed, butt naked and head half buried under a pillow. She thought it was funny and sweet that whenever he slept by himself, he took up as much space as possible, but when they shared the bed, he curled himself around her protectively and used up very little space. Ahsoka stalked silently up to the bed and whispered a finger down the line of his spine between the muscles of his back and his cute rear end.

Lux shivered almost violently at the touch and jumped into a kneeling position, pillow flying. He glared at Ahsoka as she giggled quietly. "You know, there are nicer ways you could wake me up, Soka," he growled. "You know how much that tickles."

Ahsoka grinned at her glowering husband. "Sorry, Luxi. I just can't help myself." She jumped on the bed and knelt in front of him, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Let me make it up to you," she said sweetly, eyes sparkling with mirth and desire. His gentle fierceness always made her want him. She loved that he had a bit of a warrior in him that emerged every once in a while from the politician persona.
Lux’s glower turned into a knowing smirk. He growled playfully in his throat and tipped them over so Ahsoka lay on her back on the bed. "You can wake me up any way you want to if you keep looking at me like that, baby," he said as he scattered kisses over her face, neck, and lekku.

Ahsoka moaned a little and rolled them over so Lux was on his back, capturing his wandering mouth with hers and starting a deep kiss that lasted for endless bliss filled minutes. One hand was locked in his hair but the other wandered over his trim form that they kept up with daily exercise and mock hand to hand fights that often ended in laughter and rolling around on the floor for an entirely different reason. The sensitive pads of her fingers loved the feel of his hard muscles covered in soft skin and the fine hairs that covered some of his body, so different from her own hairless skin.

Lux was thoroughly enjoying his amended wakeup call when Ahsoka reluctantly pulled away. He tightened his arms around her back a little, not wanting her to move away. "Why'd you stop?" he asked curiously.

Ahsoka smiled apologetically before giving him a quick kiss on the nose. "I actually came in here for a purpose other than getting frisky with you." She pulled away from his arms and rolled off the bed, heading for the closet. "I've found a planet that the Force wants me to explore." She glanced over her shoulder at Lux as he sat up and looked hopeful. "And no, it's not Ezra's planet, before you ask." She dug into the closet and pulled out her boots, armour pieces, belt, and lightsabres, getting fully dressed for the first time in weeks. The crystals hummed happily to be back in her vicinity, making her smile slightly. "I have a feeling about this one. Like something very unusual is about to happen, but I have no idea what."

Lux jumped off the bed in excitement at a possible adventure. "If that's the case, I am definitely coming with you," he said determinedly. He walked to the closet as well and pulled out his own clothes, including his belt that held his blasters, just in case.

Ahsoka buckled on her belt and kissed him on the cheek softly after his head emerged from his shirt. "Thanks, Lux. You have no idea how much I appreciate that you're with me on this journey."

Lux grinned at his wife and pulled her close with one arm around her waist. "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else." He dipped his head down and gave her a thorough kiss before releasing her, happy with himself at the dreamy look in her big blue eyes, and finished dressing.

Ahsoka smiled fondly at the top of his head as he bent down to pull on a boot. He was just so perfect. She didn't know how she got so lucky, but she thanked the Force everyday for bringing him back into her life.

Ahsoka flew her red and white shuttle around the planet, trying to get a sense of what the Force was trying to tell her. All she saw was plain beige and grey rocks interspersed with an occasional pool of stagnant looking water and some very sad looking black trees and bushes trying to grow near the pools. This planet looked like it was hanging onto life by the barest of margins. The sensors didn't find any signs of animal life either.

"Looks pretty bleak," Lux commented.

"I've seen worse places," Ahsoka said dryly. "But not by much." She nodded to the controls. "Can you take over flying for a minute? I think this is going to be a game of hot and cold and I need to concentrate for that."

"Sure, Soka," Lux said as he took control of the shuttle from the co-pilot's chair. "Just tell me
which way."

Ahsoka nodded and closed her eyes, putting all of her concentration into the Force. Her head turned to the left as she felt a pull from that direction. Lux turned the ship that way as soon as he saw her head turn, and Ahsoka smiled, eyes still closed, at his quick ability to read her signals.

Lux flew the ship over more endless rocks, following the ever decreasing miniscule turns of Ahsoka's head. After they had flown for about ten minutes, she suddenly said, "Stop! Go back."

"Kay," Lux said as he circled the ship back to the canyon they'd just passed over. "You want me to land in there?"

Ahsoka studied the dry canyon bed closely before nodding. "Yes. Whatever is strong with the Force is in here somewhere."

Lux landed their shuttle at the bottom of the canyon and they checked the sensors, not liking the readings on the air quality, but it was survivable for a short while. They both disembarked cautiously, eyes searching the shadows for any unknown threats, despite what the sensors said about no living animals or people.

When nothing jumped out to eat them (it had happened in the past), they relaxed slightly, smiling at their own silliness. Ahsoka walked onto the canyon floor, stepping with care on the loose rocks, Lux following. She closed her eyes again, head turning from side to side as she felt the Force around her, throwing her senses out to scan the area. Her face settled on one direction, opening her eyes to see an opening in the canyon wall about half way up. Just as she was about to point it out to Lux, a small green bird flew out of the hole, chirping excitedly.

Lux spun at the sound, drawing his blaster and pointing it at the possible threat. Ahsoka swiftly put a hand on his arm to lower it. Lux raised a brow at the huge smile that had taken over her expression.

"It's Morai," she explained as she raised an arm for the convor to land on. Ahsoka stroked the little bird's head with her free hand, Morai closing her eyes in adoration at the loving touch. "It's been a long time," she said to her feathered friend. "I missed you."

"How did she get here?" Lux asked curiously, admiring the pretty convor, but not sure if he should touch her; the bird was practically a sacred object and wasn't really just a bird from what he'd heard of the stories about Mortis and the Daughter.

Ahsoka looked up at the hole in the wall that Morai had come from. "I think I know what's up there. It must be a portal to the World Between Worlds. Morai uses them at will as far as I can tell." She glanced at Lux apologetically. "I'm sorry, but I think you should stay here. I doubt you'd be able to enter a Force portal anyway."

Lux shrugged, not bothered. "That's quite alright, Ahsoka. I'm sure it's amazing, but the Force is your thing. I'll just stay here," he indicated the shuttle, "and wait for you."

She smiled gratefully and cupped his cheek, kissing him quickly. "I don't know when I'll be back, but I promise I will be."

Lux nodded and trailed a hand down a lek in parting before he watched her jump effortlessly about ten stories to the hole in the wall and disappear with Morai flying in behind her. He shook his head in admiration. Her Force abilities always impressed him, no matter how many times he's seen them. He strolled back into the shuttle and settled into the pilot's chair, putting his feet on the
consol and closed his eyes, prepared to wait as long as it took.

Ahsoka walked down the sculpted tunnel that had obviously been carved out by intelligent life at some point in history, following Morai who'd taken on a faint glow in the dark as she got further and further away from the daylight of outside. Ahsoka wasn't sure how to feel about where the Force had led her. The possibility of seeing the World Between Worlds again was thrilling, but the Force wouldn't have led her here if it didn't have a purpose, and she was leery of what that could be. She already knew that she couldn't change the past because what's done was done and should stay that way, but on the other hand, some things must be meant to be, like Ezra saving her from Vader's death blow.

After walking for a few minutes through a tunnel that curved only a few times but also seemed to have a slight upward tilt, they finally came to a small chamber. A weak trickle of sunlight filtered in through a few cracks in the ceiling, telling her that they weren't that far from the surface. Ahsoka looked around curiously, expecting to see something interesting, but there was nothing immediately apparent. At first glance, it was just bare rock walls, floors, and ceiling. "Now what?" she asked Morai who had had landed on her shoulder.

Morai chirped and basically rolled her eyes. Ahsoka sighed to herself. She must be missing something obvious. She closed her eyes and used her Force senses to look around instead. With her eyes closed, the patterns in the Force immediately became visible. She walked forward until her feet were in the center of the circle that glowed on the floor. As her feet came to a stop, the circle fluctuated and Ahsoka felt a brief sense of dizziness and then everything settled again.

Ahsoka opened her eyes. She wasn't in the World Between Worlds like she expected and the air was much better as she took her first easy breath since leaving the shuttle. Instead, she was in a large chamber that felt kind of like a Jedi Temple and yet not. The feeling was different. More like the Father's monastery that was a balance between the Light and the Dark. Ahsoka felt an immediate sense of welcome and belonging, something she hadn't felt in the Jedi Temple on Lothal. That had been more of an acceptance of her presence, but nothing more.

It took her a moment to realize that the Temple was self lit by an unknown source of light. She also had the impression that they were now deep underground, unlike the first chamber. The big chamber had many small tunnels leading off of it, which she was dying to explore, but for now, she sensed there was a purpose she should accomplish first. She walked to the center of the chamber and knelt in the middle of a series of circles that were permanently painted on the smooth rock floor. Ahsoka closed her eyes again and quickly fell into a deep meditation, communing with the Force more easily than she ever had.

She was shown a map of the Temple and a quick history of the beings who had built it. They were humanoid, like her, but that was where the resemblance ended. They looked vaguely like a cross between humans, rodians, and gungans and were generally some shade of brown to beige skinned. Ahsoka saw the planet they were on in its original glory. It used to be a beautiful place, with many green trees and blue oceans. The people lived in underground caves, leaving the landscape untouched and glorious for the animals to roam freely. Ahsoka could sense that the people lived in balance with the Force, following neither the Light nor the Dark, but both equally. And then one day something changed. An asteroid hit the planet, the impact killing everything in the vicinity instantly. The resulting dust cloud that covered the atmosphere and blocked the sun for years eventually killed everything else, for life needed the sun to survive. Millennia later, all that was left was a struggling planet trying to revitalize itself and losing the battle. Tears fell from her eyes as Ahsoka felt its pain, knowing there was nothing she could do for it.

Despite the planet's poor state, the Force was still very strong in the Temple, like it had converged
here in self defence, but who knew how long that would last? Ahsoka knew that she needed to find Ezra, but she also felt like this might be her only chance to learn everything she could from this Temple and the people who used to live here. She couldn't pass up the opportunity. Ezra would just have to wait a little bit longer.

Ahsoka rose to her feet and headed for one of the side tunnels, confident in where she was going. She hadn't been wrong earlier. There actually was a portal to the World Between Worlds here, and the Force still wanted her to go there, but it hadn't told her why yet. Ahsoka couldn't contain her curiosity about that anymore, so off she went with Morai accompanying her, who was radiating a sense of 'finally'.

She walked down the short tunnel, which stopped abruptly at a bare rock wall. She touched the wall, pouring the Force into it and it turned liquid under her hand. Ahsoka walked through the wall and into a different universe. One of endless space and floating pathways and darkness filled with billions of stars. It was exactly like she remembered it, and different too, like she was in a different section of the massive portal universe. She paused and stared in wonder for a while. "I don't suppose you brought me here so I can grab Ezra from one of these, hmmmمم?" she said to the air. Morai chirped out what sounded suspiciously like a laugh and flew along the pathway in front of her. Shaking her head in resigned amusement, Ahsoka walked down the pathway, glancing behind to memorize the shape and patterns of the portal she'd just come through. (It wouldn't do to get lost. Lux was waiting for her after all.)

As she passed by portals, they lit up with little pieces of her past. The first one showed the day Master Plo Koon had found her on Shili. She had to pause and gawk at that one for a moment. Ahsoka couldn't believe how small she was as a three year old and how stubby her lekku were. She stroked a finger down a lek appreciatively, thankful they'd grown so long and beautiful. Not that she was vain or anything, but a togrutan's lekku were a matter of pride.

The next portal showed her in the temple with the other younglings her age, getting lightsabre lessons from Master Yoda. She smiled at that one, as it was a fond memory. Even back then, she'd wanted to hold her lightsabre backward, and it had driven Master Yoda up the wall as he tried to convince her it goes the other way. (Even though it was known for them to be held backwards in a variant of Form V called Shien.) Ahsoka had always liked being just a little different from the norm. (Probably why she got along so well with Anakin.)

Ahsoka wandered on, intrigued with this journey of her past. She stopped and watched, a fond smile on her face as the next portal showed her and Anakin trudging through the sand of Tatooine with Stinky the Huttlet in a pack strapped to his back.

"Master Yoda has a saying: 'Old sins cast long shadows.' Do you know what he means by that?" a fourteen year old Ahsoka asked, trying to get more background story from her new Master, knowing perfectly well what the saying meant.

"He means your past can ruin your future if you allow it," Anakin replied. "But you forget it was Master Skywalker who said: 'I don't want to talk about my past.'"

Young Ahsoka suppressed the urge to roll her eyes, knowing he'd sense it if she did. "Okay, fine. There's so much more we can talk about out here. Like... the sand."

Ahsoka shook her head and walked on, amused with her younger self. She sure had been a cheeky thing. Good thing for her that Anakin was just as unconventional and sarcastic for a Jedi. (Something he picked up from Obi-Wan for sure.)

The next portal wasn't anywhere near as fun. In fact, Ahsoka watched in disbelief at the images that
crossed the portal's surface because she didn't remember this at all. And apparently her Master and Obi-Wan decided she never needed to know. Ahsoka felt very differently as the scene from Mortis played out before her.

"Hey, what's wrong with you?" Anakin said, looking very worried.

"Always with the criticism, Master," Dark Ahsoka snarled at him. "Never really believing in me. Trusting me. Well. I don't need you anymore," she said as she turned her back on her former Master.

"Ahsoka," Anakin whispered in despair and then said her name again louder. "Ahsoka, listen to me. He has done something to you. Snap out of it. This isn't you, Ahsoka."

"Isn't it?!" she exclaimed, running her hands from her black lined face and down her body. "I feel more like myself than I ever have." Her yellow eyes gleamed with hate and excitement. "He asked me to give you a message. If you don't join him, he'll be forced to kill me." She laughed in disbelief at such a silly idea. No one could kill her now. She felt invincible with all the dark power coursing through her.

"I won't let him!" Anakin exclaimed.

Dark Ahsoka spun around, pointing at the one who had held her back for so long. "Then you will be forced to kill me."

The real Ahsoka covered her mouth in shock as tears fell from her eyes, watching as her younger self attacked Anakin. He only did what he had to to protect himself but never attacked in return. Obi-Wan soon joined the fight as well, and the younger, evil Ahsoka enjoyed the challenge, but Ahsoka could see that she was basically just flailing at them with her lightsabres and they were only holding her off.

When Obi-Wan produced a dagger that could kill the Son and end Ahsoka's connection to him, the Son's voice came out of her mouth, shocking her further. The Son and Daughter falling from the stained glass window above ended the fight between Ahsoka and her Masters but it began a new fight between the Son and his Father. When Obi-Wan went to throw the dagger to Anakin so he could end the Son, Dark Ahsoka intercepted the throw and gave the dagger to the Son. He smiled evilly at her and ended Ahsoka with a touch to her forehead. This wasn't how Anakin had said she had died. Ahsoka remembered being bitten by a creature and feeling horrible pain. Anakin had told her she had been poisoned and that the Daughter's remaining life force was given to her to bring her back. That was the scene she remembered waking up to. Whatever else remained of the Daughter resided in Morai, the Daughter's pet, who now followed and helped Ahsoka.

Ahsoka turned away from the portal, not wanting to see any more, shoulders slumped in despair. She had gone to the Dark side, even if it wasn't voluntarily, and it tore her apart that no one had ever told her. That was the kind of thing she thought she deserved to know. Ahsoka had long ago been disillusioned with the yuppie, emotionless Jedi teachings, but she never wanted to go Dark. She liked her middle ground, where she lived in the Light, but allowed herself to feel emotions like a normal person. Technically, Kanan and Ezra weren't old school Jedi either, but they were much closer to it than she was. They were what the Jedi Order should have and could have been if it hadn't been decaying from the inside out with Palpatine making sure that nothing went well for the ones who could have changed things like Obi-Wan and Anakin.

She wandered on, lost in thought, barely glancing at the portal that showed the final words between her and Anakin on the Temple steps, the day she left the order.
"I understand, more than you realize. I understand wanting to walk away from the Order." Anakin's last words haunted her as she continued on. Ever since she found out that Anakin had turned to the Dark Side and was Darth Vader, those words had haunted her. She would always have to live with the possibility that if she had stayed, perhaps she could have prevented him from falling. She should have talked him into leaving the Order as well. The galaxy would be a different place right now if she had. Padme would still be alive. Luke would have his father. Obi-Wan wouldn't have had to live like an exile on Tatooine for endless years, aging him before his time. Palpatine might have been discovered as the Sith Lord before he could take over the galaxy, and the Republic would still be thriving.

That thought made her stop in her tracks and run back to the portal. Her figure was gone, but Anakin still stood where she'd left him, a tear slowly trickling down his cheek as he clenched her Silka beads in his fist. Ahsoka reached for the image of Anakin, wanting to comfort him. She wanted to yell at her younger self to go back and stop being a teenager for just a minute. But her younger self was already gone. Her fingers touched the portal, falling through, a great debate raging within her. She could do it. She could change everything. All she had to do was tell Anakin that Palpatine was a Sith Lord and he'd believe her, after he got over his shock at seeing her older.

She just about took the last step when Morai flew in front of her with a screech. Ahsoka reared back and shook herself out of the spell that had befallen her. "Of course you're right, Morai," she reassured the convor that was still flapping around her head agitatedly. "I know I can't change the past." She thought of Ezra and Jacen. Ahsoka doubted Jacen would exist if Order 66 had never happened, for it was a lot less likely that Hera and Kanan would have met. And if they never met, Kanan would never have found Ezra, and Ezra would have never met Sabine. She couldn't do it. She couldn't take the chance that she'd change things for the people who were her friends.

Ahsoka took one last look at Anakin, committing to memory once again how he used to look when he was still good. His shoulders slumped and he sighed, stuffing her beads into a pocket before walking dejectedly back into the Temple. "I'm sorry, Master," she whispered to the image before turning away as well. She didn't see the image of Anakin pause and look around with hope for a moment before he slumped again and continued back into the Temple. Ahsoka continued her journey through memory lane, not so sure she wanted to see any more, but walking on nonetheless because Morai still seemed to think she hadn't accomplished her purpose yet, whatever that was.

A sense of foreboding filled her as she approached the next portal. Her steps slowed even further, but something drove her on. Morai landed on her shoulder and lent her comfort as Ahsoka watched the agonizing images transpire before her. She knew Anakin had transformed into Darth Vader, but she'd never known exactly how before. The story taking place before her was almost more than she could bear to watch as she fell to her knees with a cry as Anakin struck down younglings and padawans without mercy in the Jedi Temple, a contingent of 501st Clones at his back, watching from the sidelines and occasionally gunning down a youngling that tried to run. She'd known the Clones had turned because of chips in their heads, but it hurt almost as much as watching Anakin do evil things. She'd fought beside them, cared for them, and laughed with them for what felt like a lifetime in an endless war. The image eventually moved on to Mustafar and the final battle between Master and Padawan. Obi-Wan's cry of, "You were my brother, Anakin. I loved you," basically broke her heart, because she could say the same. She could barely stand to see Anakin burn, even though she knew he deserved it. Now she understood why he wore his mechanical suit. There was almost nothing left of the original Anakin Skywalker. The Sith in the suit was not her Master and never would be again. She stood and left the portal as she saw Obi-Wan picking up what looked like Padme's lifeless body, not able to watch anymore.

Ahsoka came to the next portal and stopped, surprised. The portals were determined weren't they? She wasn't expecting to see this. And oh Force, was she supposed to keep this a secret too? In the
portal, she saw a clearly exhausted looking Padme on a hospital bed. She was shown a baby by Obi-Wan and she called him Luke. Then she was shown another and she called it Leia. They were twins! Ahsoka had no idea what to do with the new knowledge. Senator Organa must have known and kept it a secret for a reason. Her eyes teared up again as Padme lost the fight to live, while declaring that there was still good in Anakin. In some ways, she wished she'd never seen that. Her friend didn't deserve an ending like that. No one did. Padme's love had turned to the Dark, lost faith in her, and practically Force choked her to death. Everything she had fought for in the Senate had been for naught. And she'd only just gotten a glimpse of her children before she died. Ahsoka couldn't imagine having to go through the same thing.

Ahsoka glanced down the line of never-ending portals and decided she'd had enough. There was no way she was watching any more of the past that was probably depressing and bound to make her cry even more. She already knew everything there was to know about her own life after this point; she didn't need the reminder. Ahsoka turned and walked back the way she came at a brisk pace, refusing to look at the portals again as she passed.

She wasn't going to stop at any of them again, but Morai changed her mind by landing on the Mortis portal. Ahsoka didn't want to see herself as a Darksider again, but Morai chirped at her until she turned and looked. She was almost pleasantly surprised to see an earlier scene from Mortis. At least she wasn't all creepy looking this time. Instead, her younger self looked peaceful as she slept in a cave illuminated only by Kyber crystals in the walls and a fire in the center of the big space. Ahsoka's head tilted to the side, remembering this place. She distinctly remembered having a vision while she was sleeping of her future self looking as old as she did now. Ahsoka glanced down at her clothes and blinked. But no. Those weren't right. The future vision had been wearing the exact same outfit as the young version. She shook her head at the silliness of her random idea.

She waited for a while, curious to see her younger self's reaction to the words of warning her vision had given. When nothing seemed to be happening, Ahsoka looked up at Morai questioningly. The convor chirped encouragement to her and Ahsoka blinked in surprise. "But that can't be right. I can't be in two places at once, can I?" Morai chirped again, so Ahsoka sucked in a breath for courage and stepped towards the portal. She hoped her younger self didn't pay too much attention to what she was wearing. Young Ahsoka didn't need to constantly be wondering where the new lightsabres came from, or why she wore armour now, or why she was wearing the headpiece of a mated togruta. As Ahsoka watched her sleeping self, she tried to remember what exactly she'd said the first time she'd heard it. A wave of peace came from Morai and suddenly it all came back, clear and precise, and it made sense with everything she'd just seen.

She put just her mouth up against the portal and spoke. "Are you happy, child?"

Young Ahsoka sat up quickly and looked around the cave frantically, searching for the voice. Ahsoka almost got a kick out of freaking her younger self out. This would have been such a good prank to play on Obi-Wan or Anakin. She continued her little speech. "Your Master. Does he treat you well?"

While the young one still looked around the cave for where the voice was coming from, Ahsoka stepped forward through the portal and behind the fire, careful to leave the edge of her heel just inside it so she could return and it wouldn't close her in the world of Mortis. Their eyes locked as young Ahsoka spotted her.

The young one rose to her feet, hand on her lightsabre, ready to fight if need be. "What concern is it of yours?" she asked defensively.

Ahsoka was proud of her old self for being wary. "I am your future. Your potential."
The young one wasn't buying it. She drew her green lightsabres and got into an attack stance. (One she still used, to be honest.) "This is a trick," she accused.

"There is a wildness to you, young one. Seeds of the Dark Side planted by your Master," Ahsoka warned. "Do you feel it?"

"No!" the younger replied. "He is like no other Jedi. Passionate. Impulsive. But I trust him with my life."

Ahsoka looked away because the younger one was right. At the time anyway. "There are many contradictions in you. And in him." She needed to warn her, more than was necessary just to get her point across. Ahsoka faced her again, eyes blazing. "Be warned! You may never see your future if you remain his student! Leave this planet!" Ahsoka sent a gust of Force energy at the fire, making it roar so she could step back into the portal and disappear. A quirk of a smile crossed her face as she realized that she'd just pulled that off. Morai chirped proudly at her and landed on her shoulder again.

They both watched the younger version pacing the cave anxiously, trying to understand what she'd just seen. Ahsoka felt bad for her so she stuck her hand back through the portal when her back was turned and sent her a wave of peace and tiredness, allowing the younger girl to lie back down and fall back to sleep.

Finally sensing that she'd accomplished what she was meant to, Ahsoka strode back to the portal that led to the Temple. It let her and Morai through easily and then sealed shut behind her again. She had no idea how long she'd been in the Temple and the World Between Worlds, but Ahsoka realized she was starving when her stomach growled at her. She shushed it and hurried for the exit.

Lux waited patiently for the first five hours and then not quite so patiently for the next five hours as he started to get worried. And then some very ominous clouds rolled in overhead and the ship started to rock as a vicious wind picked up. He peered up at the sky worriedly through the window. A drop of rain fell and struck the ship, immediately sizzling on contact and chewing through the paint. Lux's eyes widened and he dashed for the pilot's chair, frantically hitting buttons as he started the shuttle and raised the shields. With a look of apology at the hole in the canyon wall, he lifted off the ground and zipped through the clouds full of acid rain and up into orbit where he could hover easily, using very little fuel.

Lux settled back into the chair as the tension left his body. He tried to reach Ahsoka over the comm, but all he got was static. The worry came back, but he tried to tell himself he was being silly. Ahsoka had survived a great deal in her life. One little hole in the wall on a lifeless planet was not going to be her end. Right?

Ahsoka used the little teleportation thing to get back to the small chamber near the surface. She emerged into a chamber that had water puddles on the floor where it dipped, and dripping from the ceiling where daylight used to be. Now the cracks in the ceiling were almost as dark as the rest of the space. Just because, she avoided the drips, but her boot stepped into a puddle. The sole immediately started to smoke. She jumped back onto a dry spot with a curse. Acid rain! She should have known this poor cursed planet would have acid rain. Walking much more carefully, Ahsoka used one of her lightsabres as a source of light, since Morai hadn't followed her out. (The bird probably knew the weather was disagreeable right now.) She walked through the dark tunnel which gradually lightened the closer she got to the outside world but not very much.

Ahsoka peered out, careful not to go near the rain, not sure if she was happy or not that she didn't
see her shuttle and Lux waiting for her. She tried to call him on the comm, but all she got was static. Ahsoka grumbled at the rain that was blocking the signal and turned around. The clouds looked like they were going to stay for awhile and Lux would be smart enough to keep her shuttle out of the rain. Trusting that he'd come back when he could, Ahsoka went back to the Temple where the air was better and more knowledge was waiting for her to find.

Ignoring her grumbling stomach, she wandered the entire Temple, studying left behind objects curiously, trying to get a sense of the people who used to own them. In one room, she found an entire wall of shelves full of manuscripts on delicate looking tree parchment. She tried to look at one, but it crumbled in her fingers. Not wanting to destroy any more, she left the rest alone. From the glance she did get, it wasn't a language she knew anyway.

After a few hours of exploring, Ahsoka eventually came to a series of rooms that looked like sleeping quarters. Almost all were identical with nothing in them but old furniture. One was a little bigger than the rest, though, and this one had a treasure that she couldn't resist keeping for herself. She discovered it because it sang to her as she got closer and closer to the room. The song was like that of her lightsabres, but clearer and more beautiful, if that was even possible. In the corner of the room, the white staff with the circle on the top leaned against the wall. Ahsoka picked it up reverently and carefully, before feeling that it was incredibly sturdy and made of a wood that almost felt like durasteel. She tried to figure out where the Kyber crystal was, but eventually came to the conclusion that it was buried within the wood itself, like the original tree had grown around the crystal.

As she concentrated on it and poured a bit of Force energy into the staff, the circle at the top lit up with a silver light. Ahsoka gawked at it for a moment before concentrating again. It was like the energy of a lightsabre but directed in a different way. She swung the staff experimentally and the light shot out of the circle and hit the wall like a blaster shot but went right through the rock wall, making a fist sized hole. Holy kriff, she was going to have to be careful with that! Ahsoka focused the light again but this time swung the staff very carefully and imagined just a small amount of energy escaping the staff. She smiled as a small beam smacked into the wall, making it smoke but not going through. Sweet. Now it was like a blaster and not as deadly.

Ecstatic with her new find, Ahsoka checked outside and found it still raining and the comms still non-functional. She went back to the meditation circle in the center of the Temple and got lost in time in the Force, seeing more images of the people who used to live here and how they used the Force. There was nothing quite as exciting as Ezra's Force Projection trick, but Ahsoka was happy with the knowledge she gained about balancing the Light and the Dark without using the Dark side as an evil thing like the Sith, but like just another tool in her repertoire. She was also shown the true intricacies of Force Healing, which she was very happy about, having nothing the basic first aid type knowledge that all Jedi had when it came to using the Force to boost the healing process.

Now feeling like she'd learned everything she could from the Temple without being able to read their books, Ahsoka felt free to continue on her quest for Ezra.

After what had to be a whole twenty hours in the Temple, Ahsoka emerged again, this time with Morai at her side, which she took as a good sign. The sun shone brightly on the freshly washed world, and felt really nice on her face as she looked up at the sky, searching for signs of Lux and her shuttle. She was just about to try him on her wrist comm when movement in the sky stopped her.

Ahsoka smiled as the landing platform was lowered near the hole in the canyon wall and she jumped lightly over to it. Morai chirped a happy farewell to Ahsoka as she flew around her head
before disappearing back into the tunnel. "Until the next time," Ahsoka called to her friend. She wished Morai would stay with her, but being stuck in a ship was no place for a bird and she knew it.

As soon as Lux had the shuttle back in space, he jumped out of his chair and ran the few steps into Ahsoka's waiting arms. They hugged each other tightly, pressing kisses to each other's faces.

"I'm so happy you're okay," Lux breathed into her montral.

Ahsoka laughed lightly and pulled back just a little. "You were worried about me?"

Lux nodded, pressing a kiss to her forehead. "Of course. It's been almost a whole day and I couldn't contact you and..."

Ahsoka stopped his rambling with a kiss. "I'm fine, Luxi. Just very hungry." She brought her arm from behind his back and showed him the staff still clutched in her hand. "And look, I found something really amazing."

Lux admired the staff appropriately, all while backing her towards the galley so he could feed her. "It's beautiful, but what does it do, other than the obvious of smack idiots over the head?" He knew she wouldn't have kept it if it was just a simple staff.

Ahsoka grinned widely. "I'll show you the next time we're not in the ship. I don't dare try it in here until I have better control of it."

Lux's eyebrows rose up to his hairline. This had to be good. And possibly scary. Oh well. He pulled her close for one more kiss, just to reassure himself she was still alright, then marched into the galley; his woman was hungry.
Sabine's Reconciliation:

D340/1 ABY, Krownest

It had been two and half years since Ursa had seen her daughter and she was finally ready to admit she might have been wrong. She knew she'd overreacted to Sabine's semi betrayal of her Clan almost as soon as the words of banishment had left her mouth but she couldn't take them back. She still couldn't, not exactly, not without losing the respect of her Clan. There was no possible way she could reinstate Sabine as heir for a second time, but there was something she could do. She could visit her and hopefully restore the tentative friendship that they had been developing years ago when Sabine had come home for a short while.

Ursa stared out over the winter landscape of her lakefront property while leaning on her private balcony railing, not bothered by the cold air. She heaved a sigh and rested her chin on her folded arms. It was time to make up with her daughter, and that meant leaving her planet. Her domain. Her place of power. She didn't like doing that, but Tristan was more than capable of leading their people while she was away. Ursa was proud of her son. He had stepped into Sabine's place without a single complaint. Twice. He would be a great leader for their Clan when Ursa was ready to step down from her position as Countess. But that wasn't just yet. She was only forty-eight and could still take down any challenger who dared try. Unless something unforeseen happened, Ursa fully expected to continue to lead their clan for at least another ten years.

She heard the sliding glass door open and close, then soft footsteps walk up behind her. Ursa straightened up a little, but otherwise didn't move as Alrich wrapped his arms around her from behind and propped his chin on her shoulder. "What's troubling you, cyar'ika?" he asked, pressing a kiss into the sensitive spot below her ear.

Ursa closed her eyes in pleasure for a moment, placing her hands over his, holding his arms to her. "Sabine," Ursa said as her only explanation. They'd already had many discussions about their daughter and didn't need to reiterate it all over again.

"Ah," her husband said on a sigh, not surprised. His arms tightened a little more in support. He understood his two girls and knew this was going to have to be something they figured out on their own. However long that took.

Ursa continued to look out over the frozen lake and the sun setting over the mountains in the distance, not really seeing it. "I want to go with you," she said suddenly.

"What?"

Ursa turned her head and looked up at him. "The next time you go see Sabine," she explained better. "I want to go with you."

Alrich smiled slightly, breathing deeply in relief. "Of course, Urs'ika. I had tentatively planned to make a trip next week in fact."

Ursa nodded to herself, satisfied with that. "Good." She turned around in his arms and cupped his dear, handsome face in her hands, staring into his beautiful golden brown eyes. "Thank you, Alrich, for being who you are and not pushing me."
Alrich ran his hand down the length of her long, unbound midnight and silver hair. "Ursa, you never have to thank me. I may not have always agreed with the decisions you've made regarding our children, but I will always stand beside you. You're my Countess and I know you need unquestioning support every once in awhile."

Ursa smiled sweetly at him. "And that's why I fell in love with you. You are an incredibly brilliant man. I never would have thought our marriage would turn into something so perfect all those years ago when an artist was chosen as my husband, even if you are from a powerful, allied Clan. I remember thinking I could never respect someone I could wipe the floor with, but my father obviously knew better than I that intelligence is worth just as much as strength."

Alrich chuckled lightly and kissed her forehead before resting his chin on top of her head and hugging her close. "Ursa, I never told you this before, but I was terrified of you for the first few months of our marriage. I knew I wasn't a match for you when it came to being a warrior, and your giant father hovering around didn't help either."

Ursa pulled back, laughing. "Al'r'ika, it's a good thing you hid that, because I never would have learned to love you if you acted like a coward." She cupped the back of his head and pulled his mouth down to hers, kissing him quick but thorough. She grabbed his hand and led them back into the bedroom, fully intending to have her way with him to show her appreciation for everything he did for her. (And the fun they had in bed was still the best part of her day, even after all their years together.)

Alrich smirked knowingly as she led him, knowing what was in store for him and looking forward to every moment.

D352/1 ABY, Lothal

Ursa's Kom'rk class transport/fighter (aka Gauntlet Starfighter in Basic), the Jai'galaar, came out of hyperspace in front of a pretty green and blue planet. Ursa admired the planet silently, wishing Mandalore could return to its former glory as easily. "It seems to have recovered well," she commented to Alrich, having heard about how it used to look like a ball of orange fire and grey smoke.

"It has," he replied. "I saw it once when the grass was still dead and the skies were still murky. The people of Lothal were pretty pessimistic about the grass growing back the next spring, but it did. Life is an amazing thing."

Ursa was about to comment on that when a TIE Defender flew up to them and hailed them. "Welcome to Lothal," a male voice said. "Please state your intentions for visiting our planet."

"Welcome to Lothal," a male voice said. "Please state your intentions for visiting our planet."

Ursa raised a brow in surprise at the welcoming party, eyes giving the small fighter a thorough once-over. So this was the ship that Sabine was proud of. Not like she'd designed it or anything, but according to Alrich, Sabine had made a few modifications over the years to make them even faster and more deadly than the original design. It was quite impressive to look at, at least. She would reserve her real judgement until she saw it in action against one of her own Mandalorian fighters.

Alrich answered the comm, familiar with the routine. "This is Alrich Wren. I'm here to see my daughter."

The TIE's pilot's voice warmed a degree. "Welcome back Lord Wren. I'm sure the Director will be very happy to see you again."
Ursa and Alrich looked at each other in confusion. "The what?" he asked the pilot.

The pilot laughed quietly. "I guess she never told you. Sorry if I ruined the surprise. Governor Azadi decided Sabine deserved an official title after everything she's done for us. She's now the Director of the Lothal Expansion Project. It's basically just a fancy way of saying she oversees and designs pretty much everything around here. There's not a single new building or vehicle or ship that doesn't have your daughter's signature written all over it in invisible paint. I think she even had a hand in designing the layout of the new parts of Capital City."

Alrich and Ursa blinked at each other, a little speechless. They knew she was working on Lothal, but she'd never said that she was single handedly in charge of basically the entire infrastructure of the planet. "Umm. Thank you," Alrich said to the unknown pilot. "I'll have to congratulate her on her formal title."

"You do that," the pilot replied. "Enjoy your visit," he said before signing off and returning to his duty of guarding the planet.

Alrich took over the controls and flew them down to the Tower, since he knew where he was going. They flew over the orderly looking city that gleamed brightly in the first rays of the rising sun, bordered by a pretty blue ocean on one side and green grasslands everywhere else, with the citizens just waking up for the day.

"You never saw it how it was after the Empire was kicked off," Alrich said, "But this city looks and feels nothing like the original. The people of Lothal have made incredible improvements to their way of life, and apparently our daughter had a lot to do with that. She really isn't one to brag, but I wish she'd told me at least a little of how important her role is here. Whenever I come to visit, she takes a day off and we spend the whole day painting and talking about her other family and what our Clan is doing and the progress Bo-Katan has made on Mandalore. Getting her to talk about what she's doing is like pulling teeth out of a nexu." Rather like her mother, Alrich thought as he glanced at Ursa's thoughtful expression.

Alrich followed the new highway that led out of the city towards the Tower. New buildings were in construction on both sides of the highway and then the grasslands took over again the closer to the Tower they got.

"A couple years ago, you said she helped train the Lothal military, both the ground and the air forces," Ursa said. "I assumed she was still with the Military in some fashion."

"Honestly, so did I," Alrich said with a shake of his head as he landed their ship beside a slightly smaller version on a new landing pad near the Tower. As he powered down their own gold, silver and black Jai'galaar, he nodded towards the silver, blue and orange Kom'rk fighter. "I never told you this, saving it as a surprise for just the right moment, but Sabine called her and Ezra's ship the Lothhawk."

Ursa raised a brow and then laughed, shaking her head. "You're right, Al'rika. We really are alike." Ursa continued to chuckle as they walked down the ramp. Her new ship, which she just purchased two years ago and named after the native bird of prey of Mandalore, the shriek-hawk, was her new favourite toy. How Alrich had managed to keep a straight face when he heard the name of her new ship was beyond her. "Does Sabine know?"

Alrich grinned as he led the way to the entrance of the Tower. "Yes. And we had a very good laugh over the name choices."

Ursa rolled her eyes as they stepped through the door after Alrich had keyed in the code to open it.
After they had boarded the lift to the apartment at the top of the tower, Alrich wrapped an arm around her waist and kissed the top of her head. "I'm glad you came with me, Ursa."

Ursa leaned into the half hug and sighed. "I just hope this wasn't a mistake."

"I'm sure she'll be happy to see you," Alrich said optimistically just before the lift doors opened.

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**Half an hour earlier.**

Sabine rushed around the apartment, tidying things up for her father's visit. When he'd commed last night and said he was bringing a surprise, she'd been too tired to care that she hadn't cleaned up lately. Now she was wide awake and she kept spotting things that needed help. She alternated between gulping caf and running around. She still needed to shower and dress and have everything ready to go so they could have a nice breakfast together.

Finally satisfied that it was as good as it was going to get, Sabine inhaled the last of her caf and headed for the shower. She'd just turned on the water and stepped into the stall when she heard Ezra's voice beside her. "Want some help?"

Sabine eeped and spun around, hucking the bottle of soap she'd just picked up at him out of reflex.

Ezra didn't even blink as the bottle soared right through his image, smashing into the wall a moment later. He grinned at her cheekily instead and leaned a shoulder against the shower door. "What? No help then?"

"Ezra! Kriff! You scared me," she glared at him. Her eyes widened as she realized the import of seeing him right now. "Wait. It's morning. You don't visit in the morning."

Ezra smiled and lost his clothes, stepping into the shower with her so he could run the back of his now solid fingers over her cheek affectionately. "I'm strong enough now to visit you twice a day. If you want me too?" he finished, a little unsure all of a sudden.

"Of course I do!" Sabine exclaimed, wrapping her arms around his neck and pressing herself close to his hard body. Her fingers delved into his hair that didn't get wet despite the water streaming over them. "This is wonderful, Ezra," she said happily. "I'll take as much time with you as I can get."

Ezra sighed in relief and picked her up, kissing her enthusiastically as her legs wrapped around his waist.

Sabine was instantly lost in the kiss and turned on. She moaned into his mouth, so happy to have her husband in her arms. She rubbed her core against his hard length, wanting him inside where he belonged.

Ezra groaned a little, moving his kisses to her neck. This still took a ridiculous amount of concentration and was more for her benefit than his, as he didn't actually feel Sabine's skin against his or her touches, but he never told her that, not wanting her to be disappointed. If she hadn't made the connection by now that if his image didn't get wet in the shower then he also didn't feel other stimuli, he wasn't going to be the one to point it out. What he did feel was the Force in the water drops and Sabine's signature wrapped around his, which he found highly erotic. He did get an incredible amount of joy from feeling her pleasure through their bond too, and the visual stimulation of what they were doing was more than enough to make concentrating his image into a solid form a serious challenge. But one he gladly took on every day to please his wife. (And his own enjoyment once he was back in his body.)
Sabine shifted around just enough so that she could sink his hard length into her eager heat, surprising Ezra at the sudden move. He rolled his eyes at himself for not expecting it though. Sabine was usually the more aggressive one when it came to their lovemaking. He walked forward a step and pressed her up against the wall so he could thrust into her properly. Her water slicked body looked amazing wrapped around his, and he knew he'd have the image of her face with the dripping teal blue hair and the closed eyes and parted lips imprinted on his mind for the rest of the day. (Which he'd have to shield like mad from his friends.)

Sabine tightened her arms and legs around Ezra as her climax built inside her, clenching all of her muscles and her core. His hard cock moved so deliciously inside her, and his hands caressed her just right, and his mouth. Kriff, his mouth. He knew exactly which spots to kiss and suckle to drive her nuts. She would never complain about him being able to read her mind and emotions as long as this was the result. With a gasped, "Oh, Foooorrrrrccceee!" all the tension in Sabine's body exploded into a shattering orgasm that left her reeling in Ezra's arms.

As Sabine finally regained enough sense to stand again on her own, she lowered her legs from around his waist and put her feet back on the shower floor. She stared dreamily up into Ezra's molten blue eyes. "Thank you, babe," she whispered before drawing his head down for a long and luxurious kiss. "You are the most amazing husband a girl could ask for."

Ezra smiled back at her, pleased with her compliment and himself for another successful trip through the land of desire. "It's my pleasure, my Lady." He kissed her forehead and then stepped back, returning to just an image again. He summoned the bottle of soap with a gesture of the hand and it floated over to Sabine. "I'm afraid you'll have to wash by yourself, cyar'ika."

Sabine grabbed the bottle out of the air with a smile. "Not a problem, babe. I'll take what we just did over a back wash any day."

Ezra smirked and stepped out of the shower, materializing his clothes again while he watched her scrub herself quickly from top to bottom in two minutes flat. "What's the hurry, Sabine?" he asked curiously. They'd done this routine before, and she usually drew out the washing scene as long as she could with a touch more sensuality than Ezra could stand but he endured the visual torture anyway. (Who wouldn't?)

Sabine glanced over at him. "My father is coming to visit today and he'll be here in a few minutes. I do NOT want to be caught in the shower when he shows up."

"Ah, I understand." Ezra smiled. "I like your father. I'll stay till he gets here and say hi."

Sabine stepped out of the shower and smiled in thanks as a towel was floated over for her. "I'm sure he'll like that. You two don't see each other often enough."

Sabine hung the damp towel on the rack and walked across the hallway to their bedroom, immediately diving into her closet for an outfit that said nice, comfortable, but she wouldn't cry if it got paint on it. She emerged wearing flowing grey slacks and a form fitting teal t-shirt that matched her hair. Sabine stopped in front of a mirror and fluffed her almost dry hair. There were a few distinct advantages to having very short hair that she had come to appreciate. Taking care of it was ridiculously easy and it dried in minutes instead of the half hour or longer that her longer hair used to take without the help of a dryer.

She turned around and caught Ezra staring at her with a dopey look on his face. "What?" she asked.

Ezra walked up to her and cupped her face in his hands, going solid again for the moment so he could kiss her. "I love your armour, don't get me wrong, but it's really nice to see you in other
clothes too. They make you look more..."

"Girly?" Sabine suggested with a roll of the eyes as she pulled away and headed for the living space of the apartment.

Ezra followed her. "No, and yes. But no, that's not what I was going to say. I was going to say more approachable. Less warrior goddess and more real life woman."

Sabine stopped and turned, eyes going all soft and sultry. "Ez'ika. There is not a single thing with what you just said that doesn't make me love you more. Do you really think of me as your warrior goddess?"

Ezra nodded, eyes gleaming, stalking towards her, making her take a few steps back until her back was up against the back of the royal blue couch. "Yes, I do. My very own sexy, butt kicking, blow stuff up, warrior goddess who can masquerade as a normal woman if she wants to, but we both know the warrior is still under those clothes."

Sabine smiled a deadly smile and wrapped her arms and legs around Ezra again, not even questioning that he wouldn't be solid for her to do so. She tipped them over the back of the couch and made sure she landed on top with a deft twist that had Ezra lying along the length of the couch and her straddling him. She planted her hands on either side of his surprised face and put hers only a few centimetres away. "Well, this warrior goddess has found her own sexy warrior Jedi and she loves him very much," she whispered before starting a duel of the mouths that would have gone on indefinitely if the door to the apartment's lift hadn't opened.

Ursa stared in shock at the scene that she'd walked in on. Sabine was sitting on some man and was making out with him like her life depended on it. Her opinion of her daughter dropped like a rock as she had thought she was faithful to Ezra, who Alrich had said visited Sabine in the evenings. "Sabine!" she scolded.

Sabine looked up with a shocked face and blinked at her parents. "Mother! You're here!" She jumped off of Ezra and took a few steps towards them before stopping and eyeballing her father. "This is your surprise?"

Alrich nodded, eyes going back to the couch where Ezra had sat up as well and was hiding his very red face in his hands. Alrich started to chuckle as he looked from Ursa's accusing glare to Sabine's confused face and Ezra's very embarrassed one, already understanding everyone's thought processes.

Ursa crossed her arms over her chest. "I think coming here was a mistake. You're even less honourable than I thought," Ursa said with a pointed look at the man on Sabine's couch, then turned and walked back into the lift.

Sabine was taken aback. That was one of the worst insults you could give a Mandalorian. Why would she say that? She looked back at Ezra and understanding dawned. She whipped back around. "Mother, no. That IS Ezra." She glanced over her shoulder and hissed at him, "Get your butt over here, and show my mother that you are not some random guy."

Ezra winced and got off the couch, his eyes meeting Alrich's for a moment, getting an amused look for his trouble. He walked all the way to the lift, passing Sabine, and stopped in front of Ursa. "It really is me, Countess. I'm sorry for the confusion." He demonstrated by running a hand through the wall so she could see that he was only an image.

Ursa stared at Ezra in disbelief. This was the same scrawny child that she'd first met four years
ago? He certainly had grown up and filled out in that time. The shaggy blue hair was different but the eyes were the same and he still had the distinctive scars on his cheek. And that whole transparent thing was not something you could fake. She glanced at Sabine, seeing pride in her daughter's eyes. Who would have thought that Sabine had actually picked a man worthy of her instead of the man wannabee that Ursa had first met? Ursa nodded regally at them. "I too am sorry for jumping to conclusions." She walked back out of the lift and looked around the apartment for the first time. It was a little too colourful for her taste, but everything looked like good quality and worthy of her daughter. "You're home is very nice. You have done well with the renovations," she said to Sabine.

Sabine let herself smile a little. "Thank you, Mother."

Ezra walked back to Sabine and touched her shoulder gently. "I'm going to leave now. I'll be back tonight at the usual time. Please enjoy your day with your parents," he said with all sincerity, knowing he would never pass up the opportunity if his parents walked through the door. (Not that that could ever possibly happen, but he dreamed of them sometimes.)

Sabine nodded in acknowledgement of the hidden meaning in his words (Give your mother a chance.), and kissed his cheek in farewell. He whispered a loving hand down her cheek, eyes speaking volumes, and then disappeared.

Ursa strangled a gasp at the further evidence that Ezra was real or not real, depending on how you looked at it. "Everything's true then," she said as she stared at the spot where Ezra had stood only a moment before.

Sabine smiled tightly at her mother. "Yes, Mother. Everything is true. The purrgil, The Force, Ezra, our marriage. Everything. We are very much bonded and no matter how much you dislike my choice of husband, that will never change."

Ursa sighed and met her eyes steadily. "I may have been wrong about that."

Sabine's eyes widened as she stared at her mother in astonishment. She had never heard her mother admit to being wrong about anything. Ever. She glanced at her father and got an encouraging nod. Okay then. The ball was in her court then. Sabine breathed deeply once to compose herself. "Father and I usually have breakfast first and then paint. How about instead, today, I take you two on a tour of the city after breakfast?"

Ursa and Alrich smiled and nodded. "That sounds lovely," Ursa said. "You're planetary guard mentioned that you had quite a lot to do with the rebuilding of the planet's infrastructure. I look forward to seeing your work, Director," she ended with pointedly.

Sabine blushed and winced a little at being caught in an omission. She'd been keeping that ridiculous title a secret for months now. Only Ezra knew. "About that...," Sabine started to explain but Alrich waved her to a stop.

"Don't worry about it, Sabine. We understand and your mother is just teasing you."

Sabine sighed in relief and led the way to the kitchen part of the open concept apartment, pulling ingredients out of the cooling unit to make omelettes before remembering an important detail. She excused herself from her parents' presence where they'd sat at the kitchen island and quickly walked to her room, grabbing her wrist comm off the bedside table and putting it on before keying in Ketsu's code.

Ursa and Alrich unabashedly eavesdropped from the kitchen.
"Hi, Ketsu," she said quickly. "Can you have someone deliver a speeder to my tower as soon as possible?"

"Um, sure," Ketsu replied. "There's always a few lying around the Base and a new recruit who can run errands. What size of speeder do you need?"

"One that fits three and possibly some packages," Sabine said.

"May I ask what for, or do I even want to know?" Ketsu said teasingly.

Sabine shook her head at Ketsu's silliness. "My parents are here. Yes, both of them," she said before Ketsu could make noises of surprise. "I'm going to take them on a tour."

"I see," Ketsu said with a smile. "I can just imagine you trying to get all three of you on your bike. Now that would be something to see."

Sabine laughed. "Yes it would. And it will never happen, so don't hold your breath."

"Wasn't planning on it," Ketsu replied. The sound of a baby crying in the background got Ketsu's attention. "Sorry, Sabine. Gotta go. Joshua needs help feeding Ryder Junior again. He's such a mama's boy."

Sabine chuckled again, having personally witnessed the scene of Joshua attempting to convince the one year old that baby food was good. "Okay. Thanks. I might see you later. I'll stop by the base at some point. And good luck with R.J."

"Kay," Ketsu laughed and signed off quickly to more wails from her son.

Alrich and Ursa looked at each other with complete understanding as Sabine made her way back to them. Their daughter was clearly happy here and had friends like she'd never made on Krownest. Ursa wouldn't try to talk to talk Sabine into moving back to Krownest like she'd been thinking of doing.

After breakfast, they headed down the lift and outside to find a green speeder waiting for them. Sabine silently thanked Ketsu for her efficiency as they all climbed in. Sabine's wrist comm beeped, letting her know she was getting a call on the Lothhawk's frequency, but she'd fiddled with her wrist comm to reroute voice calls straight to it. She pushed a button to answer.

"Hey, Sabine," Hera's voice said warmly.

"Hera," she replied just as happily as she started the speeder and headed down the highway. "What's up?"

"I have to go on a mission for a few days and I don't want to leave Jacen on Echo Base with a series of random babysitters. Can I bring him to you?"

Sabine smiled at the thought of seeing her little brother again. It had been almost two months and she couldn't wait to see how he'd grown and changed. "Of course, Hera. You know I love having Jacen with me. It will make Ezra's day too. Oh. And speaking of Ezra. Guess who showed up in my shower this morning?"

"Ezra?" Hera guessed the obvious.

"Yes," Sabine said excitedly. "He says he's strong enough now to visit twice a day."
"That's fantastic," Hera replied. "I'm so happy for you. I have to go now, but I'll be there sometime this evening. Hopefully in time to catch Ezra. We can talk more then."

"Okay. Bye, Hera." Sabine turned off her comm only for it to beep again with a local signal. "Good morning, Ryder."

"Morning, Sabine," he replied. "We have a representative coming from a big technology company coming in this afternoon. They're very interested in your city shield generator design and would like to meet with you about purchasing the design from you or at least the rights to mass produce it and you would get a cut of the profits. I say go for the second option, but that's just me."

"I agree, Ryder. Thank you. Send the info to my personal computer and I'll be there." Sabine said as she pulled up at the first construction site at the outermost edge of the city, not seeing the surprised looks on her parents' faces at the news. She jumped out of the speeder and they followed her.

Sabine gestured to the massive, sprawling building under construction. "Welcome to the Ezra Bridger Children's Home. This is something Ezra and I cooked up one night when we were talking about how many orphans were being fostered all over Lothal. The city is funding the materials and crew and I provided the land. Ezra and I will run it together when he gets back, but for now it will be just me and a few people I've picked out to take care of most of the day to day details of raising happy children. They'll have five acres of grassland to play in and I'm importing full grown trees compatible with Lothal soil so they'll have a proper wilderness to explore. And then there's the lothcats." Sabine nodded towards a herd of semi wild lothcats who were watching the construction process with great interest. "The lothcats will be free to come and go at will and interact with the children as they wish. Both Ezra and I believe that having animals to care for and play with will help the orphans with the stress of losing their parents."

"It's like the tookas know this place is for them too," Alrich commented.

"They probably do," Sabine said dryly. "The animals on this planet are not normal animals. They're scarily smart and some of the lothwolves can even talk to some extent."

"Director!" a man called from the construction site.

"Excuse me," Sabine said to her parents and jogged over to see what the foreman wanted.

Her parents watched curiously as the man produced a large roll of blueprints and they talked about them for a few minutes with lots of hand gestures and pointing to various places on the blueprint. "She really does have her hand in everything on this planet doesn't she?" Ursa commented quietly.

Alrich wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulders and gave her a half hug. "Yes, I think she does. She is a leader, just like you. She was just never meant to take over your position but to find her own."

Ursa nodded in agreement. "I suppose it is for the best then that things turned out the way they did. Tristan is happy with his life on Krownest. I think the girl he's courting from Clan Kryze is a suitable choice as well. He really is the better match for life as the next Count. Sabine never was and I see that now."

They smiled at Sabine as she jogged back. "Sorry about that," she said. "The foreman had a question about the training gym I want the children to have. He seemed to think having a pool indoors was more work than necessary and that they could have a pool outside. I disagree of course. Our pool is in the basement gym at home and we all made use of it on a daily basis. The
weather here is much nicer than Krownest of course, but there are still winter months when no one will want to swim outside. Needless to say, I set him straight and they're putting in the pool where I want it." Sabine grinned.

"As if anyone could change your mind about something once you set your mind to it," Alrich said, glancing at Ursa and letting her know he included her in that statement.

Sabine shrugged negligently, walking back to their borrowed speeder. "I am a Mandalorian," she said as a statement of fact.

"Yes, you are," Ursa said quietly to herself. "There is something that I'm curious about," she said as they caught up to Sabine. "You said earlier that you provided the land for the orphanage. What did you mean by that?"

Sabine faced towards her tower. "I own everything you can see from here onwards. Don't tell Hera, but I'm going to build her a house near the tower so that she can retire here when she's ready to stop being a General. I'll probably end up building another house for Ezra and I if we have kids. The tower is really nice, but there isn't really room for more people."

Sabine had made her parents gawk at her yet again, but this time she saw it. Ursa closed her mouth with a snap. "How are you paying for all of this?" she asked incredulously, knowing that Sabine wasn't using any of the Clan credits that Alrich had offered her many times over the years.

Sabine shrugged again, climbing into the speeder. "The land was my salary for the first year of work for the planet, but now I get a very nice paycheque from Ryder every month that keeps me comfortable. Aside from that, I sell a painting or two and have some investments that are doing well."

"Like your shield generator?" Alrich asked after they were underway again.

"Yes, like that. I've invented a few things that others are interested in." Sabine said as she stopped at another completed building.

"Why do I get the feeling that that's an understatement?" Ursa said under her breath to Alrich.

Alrich nodded in agreement as they disembarked the speeder again. He looked at the new building curiously. Only a few speeders were parked in front of it, so it wasn't a major place of business. "Where are we now?"

Sabine smiled proudly. "This is my baby, the aforementioned shield generator. The roof opens when the generator is on," she explained as she led the way through the doors that opened into a large space with a massive generator holding center stage.

A technician wandered by, reading a datapad, absently smiling at Sabine as she passed. "Morning, Sabine."

"Morning, Taki," Sabine replied. "Everything good today?"

"Yes. Your baby purred like a kitten when we ran it through the morning checks," the technician said as she continued on from over her shoulder.

"That's good," Sabine called to her retreating back. "Because we might have a buyer for the design coming this afternoon."

Taki stopped in her tracks and whirled around. "Oh. Wow. Congratulations, Sabine. I'll tell the
others. I promise your baby will be gleaming and ready to do a full demonstration of her power for them."

Sabine nodded in appreciation. "Thanks, Taki." The tech continued on her journey, an extra bounce in her step that wasn't there before.

"What's so special about your shield that differs from others?" Ursa asked curiously.

"It has different settings of power. Zeb once commented to me after the attack on Atallon that I needed to invent a shield that the enemy can't just walk through, so I did. At its highest setting, not even a speck of dust can get through. At its lowest, it will stop your average orbital bombardment, but a walking human can still pass. There's one of these babies protecting every city and town on Lothal, and the range on this one extends all the way past my tower for future growth of the city," Sabine said proudly.

"No wonder someone wants to buy it," Alrich said.

"No wonder the Empire never bothered to try to take back the planet," Ursa said, more importantly. "Between your orbital guard and your planetary defences, you've got this planet very well protected."

Sabine smiled happily at the compliment. "Thank you, Mother. That might be the nicest thing you've ever said to me."

Ursa was a bit taken aback by that. Had she really not complimented her on anything more important than that? She would have to try to remember to praise her more often. Tristan too.

Alrich saved her from having to come up with a suitable response. "I'm sure this shield thing is very fascinating, but what else have you got hidden up your sleeves that you haven't told me yet?"

Sabine smiled widely and walked out of the building. "I have a surprise for you, Father, that I think you'll appreciate." Sabine jumped back into the speeder and waited sort of patiently for her parents to join her so she could drive on. She manoeuvred through the city, now teeming with people from all over the galaxy going about their daily lives. A surprising number of them waved to Sabine as she passed and she always waved back. Sabine pulled up in front of a nice two story building in what could only be called the heart of downtown. The sign read, "Wren Art Gallery."

Alrich gaped at the sign. "You have your own gallery now, too?"

Sabine smiled sweetly. "It's not as big and successful as yours on Mandalore, of course, but I do okay."

They entered the building and stopped just inside the door as Alrich took it all in. He observed at least a dozen shoppers wandering the store, looking enthralled with Sabine's paintings, and it was still morning, nowhere near peak shopping hours. "Something tells me you do better than okay, Sabine."

She shrugged again and waved a greeting to a clerk that had spotted her. "I do okay. After paying the mortgage and utilities and the staff, I only make a small profit, but it's worth it. People like my paintings, and that's enough for me."

Alrich wandered over to a painting of the Lothal mountains in the sunset and glanced at the price tag. "You could do better if you raised your prices a little. Your paintings are worth much more than you are charging."
"Perhaps, one day," Sabine said, not worried. "But right now, I'm just a nobody in the art world. I'd rather sell them at half their worth then have them sit unsold. The day a collector from Coruscant wants one of my paintings is the day I can start charging more."

Alrich could understand her thinking in that. But he still thought she could do better. He would put the word out to a few friends, who would talk to their friends and so on. It wouldn't take long for that collector that Sabine was looking for to show up in her store.

Meanwhile, Ursa was wandering the store, pleasantly surprised at the beautiful paintings hanging on the walls, all with her daughter's signature phoenix in the bottom corner. Sabine was better than she thought and had never given her credit for. She cringed at the thought that she'd done her best to squash her artistic spirit when she was a child. Thank goodness for Alrich and his gentle encouragement. He'd always been the better parent and Ursa was starting to see that she'd been lacking as a mother for too long. Ursa was determined to change that. Even if it was just spending more time with her children and letting them be themselves and not what she expected them to be.

After leaving the art gallery, Sabine took them to the new military base on the other side of the city that spanned acres and bordered the beach. Ursa was very impressed with the training the soldiers were getting, since it was based on Mandalorian fighting techniques. They also managed to find Admiral Ketsu and chat for a brief time, before she had to run off.

Ursa watched Sabine's friend stride away with a thoughtful look. "I should have a word with her Clan. I doubt her father knows that his daughter is doing so well and with such a high ranking position. I believe that he thinks she's still with Black Sun or bounty hunting on her own. Maybe they can have a reconciliation as well."

"And you were only fifteen," Ursa said mournfully. "I'm sorry for that, Sabine. And the second time as well. I don't know how I can ever make it up to you. You already seem to have everything you need."

"Almost," Sabine said softly. "I don't have my mother or my Clan. Yes, I've found a new family, but they're not my true Clan and I'm sorry I ever said so. Clan Wren will always be who I am."

Ursa did something she hadn't done since Sabine was very little. She stepped forward and hugged her, drawing her daughter into her arms and rested her cheek on the dreadful short teal hair. "I am so very sorry, Daughter. My temper gets away from me and then my pride won't let me take things back. No matter where you live or who you live or your life with, you will always be my daughter and a Wren."

After her initial shock, Sabine buried her face in her mother's shoulder and hugged her back, a few tears escaping to wet the paint on her armour. "Mother. Thank you," she whispered.

Alrich wiped away a tear that escaped as his girls finally made up for real. Even when Sabine had come home the first time, they'd never really forgiven each other. This was so long overdue. Eight years in fact. Eight painful years where he hardly ever saw his daughter and Ursa had never been quite as happy as she should be, the guilt of disowning her daughter eating away at her. Alrich closed the distance between them and hugged both of them, kissing the top of his wife's head.

After half a minute, both women pulled away, a little embarrassed at the show of affection and not really looking at each other, but smiling nonetheless.
Sabine noticed that they'd drawn a bit of an audience from the people wandering around the base and gave a glower that made them scurry off with a hasty salute. She chuckled silently to herself. She might be an eye rolling 'Director' now, but she'd trained a lot of these people herself and they knew she was as just as much a leader of the Military as Ketsu and Joshua were. It was only by choice that she wasn't in charge of the Military herself.

Ursa quirked a smile as she followed Sabine to a different section of the base. She would have had to be blind to not notice the way the soldiers here saluted Sabine and made way for her as Sabine passed. They obviously respected her, despite her small size and lack of a uniform or even her armour. That was good and as it should be.

Sabine led her parents to the section where all the Defenders were parked. After what felt like years of work, for the most part building them by hand (since the factories had been torn down and there was no extra fuel for them anyway), they now had a full two hundred working TIE Defenders. And not a single one looked exactly like another. Sabine was very proud of her Defenders and it showed as she looked out over the sea of them parked in neat rows on the duracrete.

"That's a lot of fighters," Alrich commented.

Sabine grinned. "You're looking at one hundred and eighty of them. Twenty are always in orbit in various places around the planet on guard duty on four hour shifts."

"And you have two hundred trained pilots to fly them?" Ursa asked incredulously.

"I do," Sabine said proudly. "All trained by Hera, Ketsu and myself." She led the way to what had to be the brightest painted one on the lot, sitting at the end of a row.

Ursa took one look at the royal blue, orange and silver streaked TIE with Loth animals all over it and said, "This has to be yours."

Sabine patted one of the wings proudly. "Yep. I do my guard duty at least three times a week. More if I have time. Some people have tried to argue that guarding the planet is a waste of fuel and credits but the rest of us disagree. We honestly believe the Empire would attack again if we didn't have the defences in place. And everyone knows they have spies everywhere, so we can't let up on the routine we've established."

"No. I agree. You are doing the right thing," Ursa said. "I know you didn't want to be Mand'alor, but you would have made a fine leader for our people."

"That was never my place," Sabine said with a shake of her head, internally savouring the second big compliment from her mother in one day. "Bo-Katan is now and always has been the rightful person for that job. Besides, even with the Darksabre, getting people to follow me would have been almost impossible and would have caused even more dissension on Mandalore. I am happy with my life now and am where I belong. I might not rule this planet exactly, but there is very little that doesn't happen without someone asking my advice. That is more than enough for me."

"All the power without the fancy title," Alrich observed.

"Precisely," Sabine said with a grin, happy they were speaking in Mando'a so that those passing by didn't know what they were talking about. She glanced up at the sun which was almost directly overhead. "And now, I think it's time for some lunch. I'll take you to my favourite Cafe beside Kanan's Park."
"The Jedi has a park?" Ursa asked curiously as they made their way back to their speeder.

Sabine nodded solemnly. "Yes. Well, sort of. Mostly. It's more like a park in progress. The ruins of the fuel depot were cleared out a couple years ago and truckloads of dirt brought in. We planted grass seeds and every single person who lived in the city planted a baby tree anywhere they wanted. Now we have a grass park with tiny trees all over the place in what looks like no pattern whatsoever. No one dares play in it until the trees mature a little more so we don't damage them, but paths have been established around them and picnic tables placed. It's one of the nicest places to eat in the city and just happens to have a view of the ocean. Cafes and restaurants have been popping up all around the outskirts of the park ever since."

"Has Kanan seen it? Does he like it?" Alrich asked as he climbed into the speeder.

Sabine started the speeder and nodded. "Yes. And he loves it. He says that from above, the randomly placed trees will actually form the symbol of the Jedi once they've grown up enough. He thinks it is a sign that everything worked out the way it was supposed to."

"That's amazing." Alrich said.

"I know," Sabine replied. "I can't wait for the trees to be big enough to see the pattern from my ship."

That evening, Sabine and her parents prepared a cold meal that could be eaten outside on blankets in the grass. Sabine had just laid down the last blanket when the Ghost landed on the duracrete beside the two Gauntlets. She ran over to meet the ship and arrived just as the ramp lowered.

An almost two year old green haired boy toddled down the ramp, squealing happily at the sight of Sabine. "Sabie! Sabie!" he called, arms up in a pick me up position.

Sabine swept the boy up in her arms, swinging him around in a circle, making him giggle and cling to her neck. She came to a stop and rubbed her nose in his soft, wild hair. "You're just so cute, I might have to gobble you up," she teased Jacen.

Jacen's dark blue eyes widened in mock fear. "No, Sabie! No eat."

Sabine laughed and kissed him on the cheek. "I couldn't eat all of you anyway. You're getting so big!" She groaned exaggeratedly and pretended to almost drop him.

Jacen laughed again, tightening his arms around her neck and smacking her cheek in a return kiss. "Sabie no drop me. Sabie strong."

Sabine laughed again, hugging him. "You're too smart for me."

Jacen looked at her seriously. "Yep."

Sabine met Hera's eyes over Jacen's head and they smiled at each other as Hera walked down the ramp followed by Zeb, Rex, Wolfe, and surprisingly Kallus too. Sabine and Hera exchanged a quick hug after Sabine put Jacen down and he ran off to play in the grass, calling for the lothcats that he knew where hiding somewhere. She greeted all the guys with friendly smiles and a punch for Zeb. She tilted her head at Kallus. "Tired of the Intelligence division already?"

Kallus chuckled, shaking his head so his blond hair flopped over his forehead. "No. I'm just going on this mission with the others. I have a few skills that will be beneficial to the op."
Sabine raised a brow, deciding that was comment enough. She gestured to where the blankets were laid out in the distance and her parents waited patiently. "I've got dinner ready. I hope you have time to stay and eat."

Hera nodded. "We don't have to leave until morning."

Sabine smiled brightly. "That's great!"

From her place on the blankets, Ursa watched Sabine interacting with her other family and had to tell herself it was silly to feel jealous, but she did. Sabine was so relaxed and happy with them, she was like a completely different person. And the way she loved the little boy, Ursa knew she would have children of her own eventually. Ursa was happy she'd finally talked herself into making up with Sabine. There was no way she was missing her grandchildren grow up they way she'd missed a good portion of Sabine's life.

As Sabine and her family walked towards them, they were joined by the two ghostly Jedi as if they'd always been there. Ursa watched as Ezra kissed Sabine and Hera on their cheeks then dashed through the grass to rescue the child who was wondering too far away in pursuit of a bounding lothcat. He picked up the child and tossed him in the air, leaving him up there with a show of Force, the child giggling like mad at his flight through the air, putting his arms out like he was really flying. Ezra flew the child all the way to the blankets and then set him right into Kanan's waiting arms. The smiles of love they exchanged as the boy said, "Daddy!" was just about the sweetest thing Ursa had ever seen.

Everyone greeted Ursa and Alrich like they were part of the family group and were happy to see them, even if they hardly knew each other, and then dug into the many covered dishes, eating like they were starving. Ursa picked at her pasta salad, spending most of her time watching the interactions between the others. This incredibly diverse group really was a family. Sabine's family. She suddenly understood the difference between family and Clan. And right now, in this moment, family looked a lot more appealing.

"So what's your part in this secret mission?"

Ezra and Kanan were catching up on Jedi stuff when they heard Sabine ask Hera about the mission. They immediately stopped to hear her answer for different reasons.

Hera paused in the act of feeding Jacen bits of cold lothchicken and blushed a darker green. "I'm going undercover as a dancing girl," she admitted. "I'm the only twi'lek in the Rebellion willing to do it."

Sabine and Ezra gawked at Hera. "Can you even dance?" he asked without thinking.

Hera glared at Ezra and Kanan smacked the back of Ezra's head. "Of course she can dance."

"Really," Sabine said with a healthy dose of disbelief. "Hera, the straight-laced General who won't be caught dead even singing in public, never mind actually showing public displays of affection, is going to DANCE. In a skimpy outfit. For everyone to see. Not in a million years."

"Actually..." Hera started.

"She's done it before. Twice. Back before you two joined the crew," Kanan finished with a gleam in his eyes. "Hottest thing I'd ever seen. It was after the first mission that I couldn't take it anymore and talked Hera into giving us a chance as a couple. Thank the Force she said yes, because that outfit near drove me mad."
"Kanan!" Hera said admonishingly, blushing harder. "There's a child present!"

Kanan looked at his son and grinned. "Yep. And you can thank Dancing Hera for that too."

The whole group burst into laughter while poor Hera blushed like mad. Jacen crawled into her lap and put his hands on her hot cheeks. "What funny, mama?"

Hera shook her head and hugged him, hiding her face in his precious green version of Kanan's hair. "Nothing, sweetie. Maybe daddy will tell you when you're older."

Jacen nodded wisely. "Kay. Ask 'morrow."

Jacen had no idea why everyone laughed even harder, but he didn't mind. His mama was hugging him and his whole family was in one place. Everything was right with his world.
Sabezra's 6th Anniversary

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Sabezra's 6th Anniversary:

D2/2 ABY, Cerulia

Ezra had been carefully keeping track of the days by starting a journal of sorts with the same paper like product that Link used to keep track of his patients’ records. The stuff was made from a clear type of seaweed that dried white and was nearly indestructible and waterproof. Ezra’s ‘journal’ rarely included anything more than the date and a heartfelt scribble of Sabine’s name in aurebesh, but he also used it to scribble down random thoughts like possible names for their children if they ever got to have any.

The only one he was sure of was Mira, after his mother, for his first born girl.

Ezra was particularly eager for his day on Cerulia to end so he could greet Sabine as she woke up to start her day on Lothal because it was their anniversary again. And this time, he wanted to make sure to say the words first so she knew he was paying attention and cared about the important things.

There were many knowing smiles in the community hall as Ezra inhaled the last of his dinner and then dashed out of the round building at a near lope. He didn’t care. It was common knowledge that he spent his evenings and early mornings with his wife and family via Force Projection. That didn’t stop them from still being amused by his continued impatience for time to pass more often than not.

Ezra locked himself in his room and placed himself in a comfy kneel on the bed that his body could maintain with very little brain power for the next hour or so.

Closing his eyes, he found his place of deep meditation within only a few minutes from long practice, and then he was leaving his body behind and soaring through space like a blur, drawn along the bright path of his bond with Sabine. Only seconds later, he was floating above her sleeping form where she had herself buried under the covers of the big bed in their tower suite so that only the top of her bright blue head was visible. Oooooo. New colour. I like it.

Gathering more Force energy into his incorporeal form, he solidified it enough to become visible and vaguely tangible. Then he settled behind her curled up form, on top of the covers, and tugged them down just enough to expose her face. Leaning over her, he kissed her cheek softly, leaving his lips there, letting the tingles she was always talking about to do their work.

It only took two seconds for her to take a deep breath and open her eyes. Ever the warrior. She turned over onto her back and returned his smile.

Ezra gathered up a little more Force and solidified his form even more, then pressed his lips to hers in a sweet ‘good morning’ kiss. “Happy sixth anniversary, cyar’ika,” he murmured against her mouth.
Her eyes opened, shining with joy. “You’ve kept track of the days!”

_Not that this would have been hard to figure out, considering yesterday was my twenty-first birthday and she said so. But I knew it before she said it. Raign threw me a party and everything. He grinned smugly anyway. “I have.”_

She lunged up at him, tossing off blankets and wrapping him in her arms, and then rolling them over so she was on top. Planting her hands on either side of his head she leaned down and gave him a very thorough kiss that had him fired up in an instant.

She wriggled happily against the hardness that he’d manifested for her and he basked in the shockwaves through the Force and through their bond. His real body would have to wait for him to return to it to have a real release, but he’d learned to truly enjoy sharing her orgasms as his primary source of pleasure.

While she was busy kissing him, Ezra was just as busy pulling her silky nightgown up and over her head, interrupting their kiss for a necessary second.

His hands were just reaching for her perfect hand filling breasts when an insistent chiming started.

“Ignore it,” he pleaded as she turned her head and glared at her armour piled on a chair in the corner of the room.

“I can’t,” she huffed as she crawled off him and out of the bed, stalking over to the chair and pulling out a frantically blinking vambrace.

Ezra admired the view of her lithe nakedness even as he released some of the Force energy keeping him there; there was no point wasting it being solid if she couldn’t feel it.

Sabine read the message on her wrist comm and then dropped it back on the pile. “I have to go,” she said even as she made for the closet. “There’s been sightings of Imperial ships in the sector. It’s best if we go ‘dissuade’ them from coming any closer.”

Ezra was disappointed to lose some play time in the bed, but he was nearly as excited about the prospect of going flying in a TIE Defender. (He hadn’t been in one since he’d crash landed Thrawn's prototype years ago.) He jumped off the bed and watched her dress in triple time. “This sounds like fun. Can I come with?”

Sabine shot him a surprised look. It hadn’t even occurred to her that he’d want to. “Sure. Why not.”

“Sweet.” Ezra gave Sabine his best smile that reminded her of Jacen’s effervescent one that absolutely no one could resist.

She laughed. _Sometimes, males will always be just like little boys._
Ahsoka's Orphan

Ahsoka's Orphan:

D362/4 BBY, Chandel

The small family was eating a meal. The mother, blond, blue eyed, and pretty in an elegant, peaceful way, exchanged loving glances with the father as they ate. His hair was a rich brown, long, flowing and wavy, settling around his shoulders in a soft cloud. His eyes were also brown, but they sparkled so much, they almost looked silver. His shoulders were broad and capable looking and his clothing was simple but neat. The mother's mother was also at the table, blond hair turned grey but still looking young in her features. Off to the side of the room, a four month old baby slept in her playpen, her short brown curls the same colour as her father's.

They made their living from the sea that surrounded their floating home that was attached by two tunnels to the floating city that claimed kilometres of the ocean's surface. The seas of Chandel were always calm and peaceful. The water planet had no moons to affect the water and no land to feel the tides if there had been any. The fish were plentiful and the life simple for those who chose to live there. The planet was far from the politics of the Empire, so it made a safe haven for those who wanted peace.

Like an ex Jedi who had escaped the execution of his Order almost sixteen years ago.

The husband stopped eating all of a sudden, tensing with his fork half way to his mouth and his eyes going blank as the Force he had mostly closed himself off from yelled a warning at him, making him pay attention. His fork clattered to the table a few seconds later.

The wife stared at her husband in wide eyed alarm. "What is it, Willan?"

"Red blades," he whispered in fear. Not for himself. They weren't coming for him. They were coming for his daughter. His precious Alora. Who shone like a beacon in the Force. He'd done his best to mask her presence, but shielding had never been his strong suit.

Willan turned to the mother-in-law. "Take her. Take her away now. Get off the planet. Disappear. And if you can, find someone who doesn't wield a red blade. They need to teach her. Save my daughter, Darja. Save her."

Darja nodded, eyes wide. She surged from the table, wrapped the baby in the blanket she had made for her when she'd first heard her only daughter was expecting, and grabbed her purse from a counter. She ran out of the room and was running down the secondary tunnel to the city in one minute flat.

Willan went around the table and gathered his quietly sobbing wife into his arms and kissed the top of her head. "I am sorry, Elana. So very sorry." He opened his connection to the Force as wide as he could, blazing his signature as brightly as possible, hoping to mask the fact that his daughter was on the move.

The door from the main tunnel suddenly opened with no warning and two people dressed in black and dark grey stood there, looking menacing and deadly. The female stalked ahead of the large male.

Willan pushed Elana behind him and pulled his lightsabre from under the back of his tunic. He
ignited the blue blade and took up a defensive stance between the Darksiders and his wife.

The female threw the table and chairs out of her way with a sweep of her hand, sending them crashing into the wall, and pulled her circular lightsabre off her back, igniting one of the red blades. "Where is the child?" she said sweetly, opening her mask to reveal a sickly yellow skinned mirialan.

"There is no child," Willan said firmly, fingers tightening on the hilt of his lightsabre in anticipation of the coming fight. He hadn't fought anyone in years, but he'd do whatever he could, despite knowing how this was going to end. Maybe he could save his precious Elana at least.

The Seventh Sister glanced at the playpen full of stuffed animals, now buried under the remnants of the table and smirked. "I doubt that very much. Jedi aren't supposed to lie, you know. They aren't supposed to get attached either. You appear to be failing your teachings."

Willan sucked in a breath. "I'm not a Jedi anymore," he said, and attacked.

Blue blade clashed with red in a hiss and a sizzle. And then there was a second red blade as the grey skinned male joined the fight. The dining room / kitchen combo wasn't really large enough for a proper lightsabre fight and soon the walls and counters were slashed and scorched.

Elana shrunk down to the floor to avoid being decapitated and started crawling towards an exit. This was no place for her and she knew it. Tears were still falling from her eyes.

"I don't think so," the Seventh Sister said as she spotted the woman trying to sneak away. Leaving her reluctant partner to take care of the ex Jedi for a moment, she grabbed the woman with the Force and lifted her off the ground, causing her to give a strangled scream.

"No!" Willan cried, seeing his wife's distress. "Let her go!"

The Fifth Brother took advantage of his distraction and disarmed William, slashing through the hilt of his lightsabre and severing the better part of his hand at the same time.

Willan screamed gutterly.

Elana whimpered.

The Inquistors smirked.

"Tell me where the child is," the Seventh Sister demanded.

"Never!" Willan stated, voice ringing with determination, and cradling his smoking stump.

"Pity," the Seventh Sister said glibly. And she crushed Elana's throat then let her go, watching the body fall to the floor dispassionately.

She turned to face Willan fully. He had turned as pale as death and was quivering with delicious rage. "Let's try this again, shall we? Where is the child?"

"I will never tell you, Vryal Trejee."

The Seventh Sister blanched as she heard her real name for the first time since she'd turned to the Dark side.

"Yes. I remember you." Willan said, at this point just doing whatever was necessary to buy time for Darja to get as far away as possible. "You're a traitor to the Order and the Light side."
"Shut up," She hissed as she placed her hissing red blade at his neck. "You know nothing."

"I know you used to have friends in the Temple. What would Aayla think of what you've become? Snatching helpless children for your nefarious purposes? Working for the Sith like an obedient mooka? You sicken me."

The Seventh Sister paled even more.

The Fifth Brother almost rolled his eyes. "He's stalling. End him and we'll track the child through the Force again."

The Seventh Sister narrowed her glowing yellow eyes as she realized he was right. She hissed and and swung her red blade, ignoring how Willan's eyes stayed firmly on hers right to the end, judging her.

Willan died with dignity, standing tall and firm for one last moment even as his head hit the floor.

Darja ran. She ran like the mookas of the seven hells were chasing her.

She didn't know a whole lot about what she was running from, but Willan had let slip enough over the past few years that she knew he was one of mythical Jedi. She also knew that said Jedi had been hunted to near extinction.

Her heart was crying for the fate of her daughter and son-in-law but she had to protect Alora first and foremost.

She ran straight to the spaceport and purchased a ticket on the next public transport leaving the planet. She didn't care where it was headed. Just getting offworld was enough for now.

By some miracle, there was a ship leaving in five minutes.

Darja and her precious granddaughter were on it.

With Willan no longer confusing their Force senses, the repulsive beacon of the child's Light signature was once again easy to feel.

The Inquisitors ran down the tunnel back to the edge of the city and the spaceport. They glared at the departing transport that was just visible in the wispy clouded sky.

The Fifth Brother touched his comm and contacted the Star Destroyer that had brought them here. "There is a transport headed your way. Stop it but do not destroy it. We'll take care of the passengers ourselves."

"Yes, Sir," the comm officer replied.

The Fifth Brother snarled at his hated companion he'd been forced to work with. "Let's go."

With their prey being caught for them, they didn't exactly rush to the landing bay that held their modified TIEs.

Arriving in the ISD's hangar that also held the captured transport, the Inquisitors jumped out of the TIEs. The transport was being guarded by a squadron of troopers. Their posture stiffened respectfully or fearfully (the Inquisitors didn't care which as long as the troopers showed them their due) as they approached.
"We've held them for you, Sirs," a trooper with a sergeant's white pauldron said briskly. "They're demanding answers for their capture."

The Seventh Sister's lip curled in scorn under her mask. "They won't be asking much longer." With that, she swept the door to the transport open with the Force and stalked up the ramp, the Fifth Brother following in her wake.

The troopers glanced at each other but said nothing. They didn't dare. They stood rigidly at attention and pretended that they didn't hear the screams and the sound of lightsabres slicing through durasteel and... other things.

Ten minutes after entering, the Inquisitors strolled back down the ramp, a bawling infant wrapped in a blue blanket held under the female's arm like a helmet.

She glanced at the sergeant as she stalked towards her TIE. "Space the transport and tell the Captain to meet us over Coruscant in two days."

"Yes, Sir."

The troopers waited for the two TIEs to fly out of the hangar before the sergeant and his second walked up the ramp, fairly certain of what they would find, but needing to check to put in the report he'd have to file about the Inquisitor's activities. They walked into the transport, took one look at the bodies littering the hallway and walked right back out.

"They never leave any witnesses, do they?" the second asked the sergeant.

The sergeant just shook his head.

He gave the order to use the tractor beam to toss the transport back out into space and went to report to the Captain of the ISD that they were heading back to Coruscant, minus the two beings that almost every member of the crew secretly despised. The ship might even have a party while they were gone.

Fifteen minutes after the Star Destroyer jumped out of the system, a CR90 Corvette with the call sign of 'The Reckless' jumped in.

Standing in the bridge, Ahsoka gazed out the window at the transport floating aimlessly in space and felt the echoes of death in the Force. Blue eyes sorrowful, she nevertheless portrayed a calm front to the officers on the bridge. "Dock with that transport as quickly as you safely can," she instructed the Captain.

"Yes, Sir," she nodded and instructions rang through the space.

Ahsoka strode out of the bridge and down hallways, making for the airlock. Crewmembers respectfully made way for her, sensing she was a woman on a mission. She stopped in front of the airlock and waited patiently, sensing the docking process through the Force. As usual, Ahsoka gave thanks for her efficient crew when the light over the door turned green in only another minute, signalling it was safe to cross to the other ship.

Entering the transport, she glanced at the bodies but tried not to look too closely. She'd seen a lot of death in her time, but familiarity didn't make it any easier. Instead, she concentrated on the one life force left within the ship that had held over fifty living people only an hour ago. Ahsoka felt terrible she hadn't gotten here sooner, thinking she might have been able to prevent this massacre.
Opening a door, Ahsoka knelt by an older woman whose life force was flickering, but still hanging on. She had a lightsabre wound in her abdomen, an intentional injury meant to cause pain and a long, lingering death. She touched the woman's shoulder gently and sent her a burst of Force energy.

The woman moaned and her eyelids fluttered open. She gasped in pain the next moment.

"Shhhh," Ahsoka murmured, touching her head and blocking the pain for the most part. The lines of agony eased in the woman's face. She looked up at Ahsoka gratefully. "What happened here?" Ahsoka asked gently.

The woman's eyes widened in remembered fear. "Red blades. They took her. They took Alora."

Ahsoka felt a sudden sense of urgency from the Force. She gathered the woman up in her arms and strode back towards the Reckless. "Who's Alora?" she asked, glancing down.

Tears were falling from Darja's eyes now. "My granddaughter. She's Force sensitive, like her father. Like you. You have to save her." Darja had seen the lightsabres hanging from the togrutan's belt. She'd seen her son-in-law's a couple times and knew the cylinders on her belt were similar enough they had to be the same weapon.

Ahsoka raised a white eyebrow marking at the woman as she entered the Reckless and aimed for the medbay. The woman was definitely astute, near death or not. "I will do my best, that is all I can promise."

Darja blinked slowly in understanding. She couldn't really ask for more. The togrutan laid her on a bed and a medic immediately started fussing over her. Before the togrutan could turn to go, Darja stopped her with a shaking hand. "Wait. Please. I need to see that you're not another one."

Ahsoka stared at the woman for a moment before understanding dawned. She unclipped both her lightsabres and ignited them both, showing that they were white. "Okay?" she asked the woman.

Darja smiled slightly. "Okay. Alora, she will need a teacher."

Ahsoka's mouth quirked at the thought of being a teacher as she put her lightsabres back on her belt. "We'll talk about that after I find her." Ahsoka looked up at the medic. "Take good care of her."

He nodded. "Don't worry. I'm sure she'll make it. Her life signs are stabilizing and the wound seems to have missed anything vital. She won't be able to carry a child again, but I'm guessing she's old enough that wasn't going to be an issue anyway," he teased the woman on the bed, winking at her.

Darja rolled her eyes at him and snorted, making Ahsoka grin at her. She nodded to them both and strode out of the medbay, now aiming for the hangar with her personal A-Wing in it. On the way, she commed the Captain. "I need to go on a solo mission. There are bodies on the transport that need taking care of. Contact the authorities on the planet below and inform them that the Imperials attacked one of their transport ships, leaving no survivors. There is a woman in the medbay; find out where she lived and have a team go to her house. I have a feeling there will be more bodies there. Have them brought up to the ship and wipe her family's records from the planet's and the transport's registry. After that, head back to Garel."

"Understood, Director Tano," the Captain replied. "It will be taken care of."

"Thank you," Ahsoka turned off her comm and started her fighter. Once out in space, she set
coordinates for Takobo, where she'd sent Kanan, Ezra, and Zeb. If the Inquisitors were just here, the odds were good they'd be going to Takobo next. With any luck, they'd still have the child with them.

As the lights of hyperspace took over her view, Ahsoka closed her eyes and settled her breathing into the familiar rhythms of meditation.

A teenage boy dressed in orange, with blue eyes and dark blue hair, carrying an ithorian infant, bangs on a large door marked 87. It is nighttime, the streets illuminated by the lights in the buildings. He bangs again. "Let me in! Let me in, Chopper!" he yells. "Paranoid droid," he mutters under his breath. Without touching his wrist comm, he activates it and calls, "The door is locked, Kanan! The door is locked!"

A voice calls from afar, getting closer as the man runs away from two figures wreathed in shadows. "I'm a little preoccupied at the moment!" The man in green called Kanan comes to a stop and turns to defend himself, igniting a glowing blue sword. His companion, a very large purple striped being with pointy ears and lime green eyes pulls a blaster rifle of some sort off his back and shoots at the enemy.

The masked female figure in black turns on a spinning, double ended red sword and blocks the shots of the purple one. The male figure in black holds out his hand and the purple one flies backward, crashing to the ground and doesn't get up.

The female leaps into the air, red sword still spinning, and descends on Kanan. Their swords clash as she attacks him, slashing over and over. He fends her off, but just barely, backing up with every step as the female's vicious swordplay outclasses his defensive moves.

The grey male joins the fight, slashing once with his own red sword before clenching his fist and Kanan rises in the air, a grimace of pain taking over his features. The female leaps and kicks Kanan back, sending him flying and then crashing to the ground. He doesn't get up either.

The teenager, still holding the pink infant, steps forward and ignites his own blue sword, a look of determination on his face.

"I don't have time to waste on you, child," the female says through the buffers of her mask, sounding mechanical. She raises a hand and the teenager flies backwards as well, crashing into the door he'd been pounding on only a minute ago.

The Dark ones move forward a step but stop abruptly as the big door suddenly opens and another female figure is outlined in the light behind her. She steps forward, looking calm and unperturbed by what she sees as the door opens. She is tall, dressed in grey and burgundy armour, and has white and blue striped lekku and montrals. She is the togrutan, Ahsoka Tano.

Ahsoka ignites two white lightsabres and moves them to a reverse grip, staring down the Dark ones.

The female's face is now uncovered, revealing yellow skin and glowing yellow eyes. She looks surprised. "Unexpected, but not unwelcome."

Ahsoka looks down at the teenage boy. "Ezra, get the younling to the ship." He nods and she winks. Then Ahsoka leaps high in the air, coming down almost on top of the female, who raises her red sword just in time to avoid instant death.

The male moves to help the female, but Ahsoka holds out two fingers, while still holding her
While Ahsoka and the female clash swords, double sided red one against two white ones, Ezra prods his fallen companions off the ground. "Come on, guys! Guys, get up! We've got to get moving!"

The purple one and Kanan groan but stagger to their feet. Kanan rubs his arm and glances at the fallen male and then back at the two female combatants. "What about Ahsoka?"

Ezra looks too and smirks as Ahsoka easily parries the female's almost wild swings. "She's doing fine." They run into the big doorway and board a shuttle.

The females are still fighting, Ahsoka making the Dark one use every trick she had just to stay alive. As the yellow skinned one made her sword spin again in a blur, holding Ahsoka back, Ahsoka says, "I know why you want the children."

The female looks smug. "Well, who doesn't want to be a mother?" thrusting at Ahsoka at the same time.

Ahsoka parries the thrust and the fight was back on faster than ever.

The male finally gets up and runs back into the fight. Ahsoka pushes the female back with a white sword and then flips away from the overhead blow raised at her by the male. While still fighting the female, she parries yet another clumsy blow from the male as he ran at her again. She uses his momentum against him and swings him around, right into a pillar. He hit the ground again.

Ahsoka's and the female's white and red swords are practically a blur as they exchange blows back and forth across the duracrete. Seeing an opening, Ahsoka kicks the female back, but she goes with it and comes to a stop still in balance.

Looking completely unfazed, Ahsoka turns off her lightsabres and kneels on one knee. The female tries to take advantage and rushes at Ahsoka. With eyes closed and a peaceful expression, Ahsoka uses her bare hands to take hold of the spinning sword, right on the circular hilt, and the red ends disappear.

To say the female was shocked would be an understatement.

Ahsoka snatches the female's sword out of her hands and throws it behind her like garbage while rising to her feet. Then she raises both hands and flings the female back so she crashes into the same pillar the male was still lying beside. Ahsoka stalks forward and points one of her white swords at the female. "You are beaten," she states with grim authority.

The female laughs as Imperial ground transports and soldiers in white armour arrive at the scene. "It looks like you are the one that is beaten."

Ahsoka doesn't look particularly worried.

The female summons her double ended sword, the red blades flying towards Ahsoka's back. Ahsoka leaps into the air over the spinning sword and lands lightly as the female rises to her feet and the male finally struggled off the ground again. "You're capture will please Lord Vader."

Ahsoka glances at her wrist comm as it flashes, glances up at the sky as a shuttle flies overhead, and then smirks at the female. "Tell your Master he'll have to wait."
The female snarls and the male throws his spinning red blade at Ahsoka, only for Ahsoka to leap the sword easily yet again.

Ahsoka then clips her lightsabres to her belt as she runs past the Dark ones, dodging a slash by the female, and then pushes off the ground and FLIES up into the air. She lands on the roof of a building with a graceful flip and then leaps yet again, looking like a wingless angel as she defies gravity. She catches the open back door of the shuttle and then swings inside as the troopers down below shoot at the shuttle ineffectively.

The shuttle flies away and the Dark ones are left snarling in defeat, squabbling with each other as they blame the other for losing the two children and all three of the Jedi targets.

They are still sniping at each other when they arrive at their landing bay and find their TIEs in a state of nothing more than scattered pieces of charred metal. They stare in shock for a moment before the female starts laughing manically. "Lord Vader is not going to be pleased," she says between snorts of laughter.

The male just looks at her like she's lost her mind.

Inside the shuttle, there is a bit of a celebration going on.

The ithorian infant is reunited with his mother, who is cooing over him. Kanan, who is flying, is laughing with the purple striped one he calls Zeb over their escape from a building and how they fell on a speeder out of sheer luck. Ezra is gushing over Ahsoka's badass fighting style and begging for more lessons as she smiles at him indulgently, promising nothing.

And in the manipulators of a slowly spinning ancient orange and white astromech, there is a baby girl in a blue blanket with a brown curl hanging over her forehead. Her name is Alora Sunchaser.

Ahsoka pauses Ezra's gushing by standing and walking up to Kanan and directing him to a nearby rooftop where she'd parked her A-Wing. With a, "I'll see you all back at Garel," she opens the back door and jumps out of the flying shuttle, landing lightly beside her A-Wing like she hadn't just plummeted a hundred metres.

Ahsoka stares up into the night sky as the shuttle flies away then looks back the way they'd come from. "We will stop you," she vows into the night breeze. "One day, every Force sensitive child will be safe again."

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**D27/2 ABY, Iktotch**

Alora opened her eyes and stared at the barely visible ceiling of her dark room for a few minutes while she processed her latest vision, committing it to memory. She rose quietly from her bed, careful not to wake Pipey, who was in the bed on the other side of the room, and tiptoed out of their room.

Padding softly down the hall, she went to her grandmother's room and slid into the bed beside her, snuggling into her warmth.

Darja woke at the movement of her mattress and peered at her precious granddaughter, whose chocolate brown curls were rioting around her head and shoulders wildly. "What is it, baby? Another vision?"

Alora nodded, eyes serious in the dim light. "I saw Ahsoka again. She was fighting the Dark ones."
The ones that killed mama and papa. It was the day she rescued me and Pipey from them. When is she coming back, Grandma? I want to learn to fight like her.

Darja smiled sadly and brushed a hand over her soft curls. "I don't know, Alora. She was supposed to be back long ago. Maybe one day you'll get a vision about what happened to her."

Alora sighed and snuggled deeper under the blankets, yawning sleepily. "I hope so, Grandma."

"Me too," Darja whispered into the dark, worried for the woman who had saved her life. Ahsoka had promised to come teach Alora and Pipey the basics of how to control the Force within them when they were three years old, saying the planet she'd smuggled them onto was strong enough in the Force to hide them from any more Inquisitors and they should be fine until then as long as they kept a low profile.

The children were now well into their fifth year and growing stronger in their powers by the day. Alora had visions at least two or three times a week now and Pipey was constantly making things float whenever his mood changed even the slightest. She was getting worried and Pipey's mother was already at her wits end trying to deal with her son.

Ahsoka needed to come back.
Sabezra's Shaky Anniversary

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Sabezra's Shaky Anniversary:

D2/3 ABY, Cerulia

It was anniversary day again and Ezra was determined to make it as romantic and prolonged of a session in bed as he could for his beautiful and mostly patient wife. Last year’s anniversary had been a complete write off, what with the battle with the Imperials who couldn’t take a nice ‘get lost or die’ warning seriously. And then when he returned for what was Sabine’s evening and his morning, practically their whole family was there to celebrate the minor victory, even Ahsoka and Lux, who just happened to be coming back for supplies.

He’d been happy to see everyone, of course, but that anniversary had essentially been a no go.

At least their third wedding anniversary a couple weeks later had gone according to plan with a lovely breakfast in bed that he’d managed to do entirely by manipulating things through the Force with Kanan’s ‘help’. (More like lothhyena-like laughter filled observations.) If any of it had actually been audible to Sabine, there was no way she would have slept through it, but Kanan and Ezra had perfected Force Ghost to Force Projection telepathy long ago. It wasn’t that different from the bond telepathy they’d had when they were both physical beings, anyway, because they were still bonded.

As usual, Ezra locked himself in his room and knelt on the bed. A few minutes later, he was hovering above his wife who seemed to be sleeping in their cabin in the Lothhawk. (He had no idea where the ship itself was and he honestly didn’t care.)

Because she wasn’t asleep.

And she wasn’t wearing anything.

And she had a hand between her legs and another squeezing a breast.

He was surprised enough that it took him a few very appreciative seconds to focus enough to manifest a visible body for Sabine’s benefit. Long enough to hear her moan, “Anytime, Ezra.”

He settled in a crouch over her, smirking. “I’m here, wife.”

Sabine’s eyes flew open and then mostly closed again into a heavy lidded look of appreciation as she took in his naked form. The hand that had been on her breast rose up and grabbed his long hair, forcing him downwards. “About time, husband.”

Then she plastered her mouth to his as he replaced his own hand between her legs, strumming her even higher in her pleasure.

Her now free hand grabbed his ass and she arched her back towards him. Tearing her mouth away for a moment, she panted, “In me. Now!”
Ezra happily obliged, thrusting deep and true into her depths, making her moan loudly. “Shabla, I know that’s not real, but it still feels amazing.”

Ezra stilled his movements, raising a brow teasingly. “Better than the real thing?”

She all but rolled her eyes right out of her head at him and even tugged on his hair a bit. “Of course not, di’kut. The sensations are there, but there’s no heat or vitality, you know that.”

“I can stop if you want,” he said with pretend seriousness.

She tugged his hair harder and raised her hips again. “Don’t you dare.”

Ezra resumed his Force filled thrusting motion. “That’s what I thought.”

He settled a little closer into her body so her pointy nipples rubbed against his chest, sending more tingles through her, and he took over the kissing for a bit. When he raised his head sometime later when it became apparent she needed to breathe (he didn’t, because his real body was breathing just fine elsewhere) he gave her a happy smirk. “Happy seventh anniversary, Sabine,” he said as he continued a slow and deep motion within her that was keeping her right on the edge of bliss.

Sabine moaned in return, head now thrown back, inviting him to kiss her delectable neck. “Stop torturing me and make me come,” she demanded.

“As my lady wi…”

Back on Cerulia, Ezra’s body was jolted violently, disturbing his concentration.

He disappeared from Sabine as he was pulled back into himself.

Sabine was left in shock, rising up onto her elbows and looking around the cabin as if that would make him appear. “Ezra? Where the frag did you go? This isn't funny. I swear to the Manda, Ezra Bridger, if this is a joke, you are going to seriously regret it!”

Meanwhile, back on Cerulia, Ezra was picking himself up off the floor from where he’d been thrown. Staggering to the door over a strangely heaving floor, he managed to unlock it. “What’s going on?!” he sent in a telepathic call to Link, Raign, and Wayve all at the same time, hoping someone would hear him and answer.

“It’s an called an earthquake, Ezra,” Raign sent back as Ezra used the walls to stay upright while he made his way out of the small house he shared with Link. “Have you never experienced one before?”

“Uh. No. Lothal doesn’t have earthquakes.”

“Strange. It’s a common enough occurrence here. There just haven’t been any on this side of the planet since you arrived. Until now.”

“Fan-fragging-tastic,” Ezra grunted mentally. He was now outside and he could practically see the ground roll and shake under his feet.

“I could use a little help over here,” Link interjected in a somewhat panicked tone.

Ezra looked towards the clinic and saw it shaking worse than the other buildings. He started running. “I’m coming! What do you need?”

“See what you can do to stop the building from falling, please. I’m trying to save my equipment at
“Got it!” Ezra turned his focus inwards and sent his Force senses out towards the clinic, looking for weaknesses in the structure. Holding his hands out, he used the Force to hold together a beam that was shaking alarmingly on its post. Within a minute, he was joined by a dozen others, including Raign and Krystal, in a circle around the clinic as they manipulated the Force to hold the building together. Glancing across the little village, Ezra could see another twenty or so doing the same with the community hall.

A minute later, the shaking stopped and everyone heaved a sigh of relief. “That was crazy,” Ezra thought to his friends.

Raign grinned at him as Link emerged from inside the clinic. “It’s not over yet.”

“It’s not?” Ezra’s brows shot up.

“Nope. There’s still the impending tsunami to deal with.”

“The what?!”
Hera never would have gone on the recon mission if she had known what was going to happen. But she did.

Hera hugged her son one more time, just as reluctant to leave him behind as all the other times she had to, but she knew he was in good hands and would be okay without her for the day and a half she would be gone. He'd probably even be sleeping for a third of that time anyway.

Jacen hugged his mother back, sensing her reluctance to let him go. "I'll be fine, Mama,” the almost four year old who was wiser way beyond his years said. "Auntie Leia and Unkie Luke are good at sitting me." (He knew it was Uncle and not Unkie but Unkie was so much more fun to say.)

Hera smiled into his hair, amused at how he'd deliberately cut off the baby part of babysitting. Jacen knew perfectly well how to say it right, he just chose not to, because he didn't see himself as a baby anymore. She heaved in a bit of a sigh and kissed his wild hair before pulling back and showing him her loving smile. "I know, sweetie. I just miss you when I'm gone."

Jacen smiled just as sweetly as his personality. "I miss you too, Mama, and I know you have to go. But you're MY mama, and will always come back for me," he said with all the confidence in the world. He pecked her on the cheek and bounced down the ramp of the Ghost, backpack slung over his little shoulder with his things for the day, grabbing Leia's hand where she waited patiently at the bottom of the ramp. He looked back up at his mama with a 'See? Everything is fine and you can go now' look.

Hera sighed again, waved goodbye to her son, and called a, "Thank you," to Leia. As the ramp closed, she caught sight of them waving back. Forcing her legs to turn and climb the ladder, Hera talked herself into work mode.

Jacen watched the Ghost leave the frozen hangar of Echo Base, a small sad smile on his face. He wished the partings were easier on his mama. Feeling her sadness every time she left him behind to run a mission made him sad too, but he always tried to be cheerful so she wouldn't feel as bad. He didn't mind being left behind, knowing he wasn't big enough yet to go on missions, but he couldn't wait until he was older. Jacen knew he was going to be just like his parents when he was bigger. He was going to fly ships like his mama and save the galaxy like his daddy. He was going to be a flying Jedi, like the bedtime stories of General Skywalker he got sometimes from Unkie Rex, except he'd do it without all the crashing.

The pretty Princess with the braided hair looked down at him and squeezed his hand. "Are you hungry, Jacen? Cause I think I am and I'm pretty sure it's supper time in the mess hall."

Jacen's eyes lit up and he nodded enthusiastically. He was always hungry, which his mama said was because he was growing like a weed and weeds need food to survive. Jacen wasn't so sure about that comparison, since he'd never actually seen a weed grow faster than the other plants around it. Jacen also loved the mess hall because all the people gathered in one place made it almost warm, and everyone was always happy to see him and told him fun stories, AND the cooks always seemed to have a treat for him.
Jacen was working on his dessert of frozen blue cream covered in chocolate sauce when he felt the atmosphere in the mess hall slowly change from happy to worried. He looked up and watched people talk as the word spread about something bad. It didn't take long for him to find out what was going on as Unkie Wedge came to talk to Leia, looking paler than normal and feeling like he didn't want to say what he was about to, but resigned to do it anyway.

"Princess, I thought you should know that Luke never came back from his patrol and that Han went out to find him on a tuantaun."

Leia instantly went as white as her clothes and filled with fear. Jacen felt her try to cover it up with anger, but she wasn't very successful. "That stupid idiot is going to freeze to death! It's way too late to go back out on a tuantaun!" She rose swiftly from her seat, no longer hungry. "What was he thinking?"

Wedge shook his head and shrugged. "Saving Luke?"

Leia stomped towards the exit. "Luke's probably fine. I'm going to the command centre to see if I can get either of them on the comm."

Jacen blinked as his sitter forgot about him, then shrugged and dug back into his dessert. It wasn't the first time he'd been left alone while the Princess ranted about Han. Someone always noticed eventually that Jacen was on his own and stepped into the sitting job without a complaint.

Wedge stared after Leia, a perplexed look on his face. "I don't know why they don't just get together already. It's been years. If they did, maybe the fights would calm down a bit," he mumbled to himself. He looked down at Leia's unfinished plate of dinner and slid into the space beside Jacen, picking up her fork and digging in. "I guess it's you and me now, little J."

Jacen glanced up and nodded. "Sure, Unkie Wedge."

After dinner, Wedge took Jacen to the men's refresher and made sure he was alright with getting ready for bed for the night. Including brushing his teeth, which made Jacen roll his eyes at Wedge, because he knew how to change into pajamas and take care of personal hygiene all by himself, thank you very much. Sometimes, the old people forgot that he was a big boy now and could do things on his own.

After that, Wedge escorted him to his very own tiny room. This was an improvement over the last time he'd been left alone overnight. Jacen had had to share a room with Luke, Wedge, Hobbie, Dak and a dozen other pilots, which theoretically should have been fun, but the guys snored worse than Zeb when you put all of them together. Jacen had spent the night with his pillow over his head, trying to muffle the racket.

Jacen bounced onto the bunk, which for him was huge, but for a regular sized person would be considered tiny. Wedge chuckled at the boy's enthusiasm. "Are you going to be alright if I go now? I'll come back and check on you later. I'm going to find out what's happening with Han and Luke."

Jacen nodded and reached down, digging around in his backpack, producing a datapad to show. "I'm fine. Got cartoons."

Wedge grinned. "Gotcha. Don't stay up too late or your mother will have me scrubbing carbon scoring off the Ghost for a week."

Jacen grinned back. "No worry, Unkie Wedge. I won't tell if you won't."

Wedge chuckled and shook his head before leaving the little room.
Jacen jumped off the bed, excited at his apparent freedom to do whatever he wanted for the rest of the night. Mama and Chopper would never have let him stay up late, watching cartoons or whatever. He ran to the door and opened it, peeking out and looking up and down the hallway, making sure Wedge had really left. Seeing no one, Jacen let the door close and went back to his backpack. Opening a separate section, he pulled out his daddy's lightsabre, which he'd smuggled into his bag when his mama was distracted by the arrival of Leia. (They liked to talk a lot.)

Jacen knew he wasn't supposed to play with the lightsabre, because it was dangerous, but he liked to keep it with him because it reminded him of his daddy and it sang such a pretty song, making him feel like he was always connected to something. It looked massive in his tiny hands but Jacen didn't care. One day he'd be big enough to wield it without his mama frowning at the thought. (He hoped.)

Climbing back onto the bunk, Jacen hugged the lightsabre with one arm while the other pulled the blankets up over his legs. (Even in the living areas, Echo Base was way colder than the Ghost.) Looking further down the bed to where he'd dropped the datapad, Jacen frowned at it for a moment before his face set in determination. Holding his free hand out, he focused like mad on the datapad, calling it to him, feeling its very essence in the Force like daddy taught him. The datapad wiggled a little and then floated up and over into his waiting hand. Jacen let out a little cheer. That was his best effort yet at floating something, and no one was here to see it. Oh well. Maybe he'd do even better the next time there was an audience.

He'd only made it halfway through one cartoon when he felt the signature of Auntie Leia approaching quickly. Jacen tucked the lightsabre down under the blankets out of sight and continued watching his cartoon like a perfectly innocent little boy.

The door opened and Leia came in in a rush, only stopping after she'd seen for herself that Jacen was perfectly alright. She smiled apologetically. "I'm so sorry, Jacen. I left you and then forgot about you. And it's all that nerfherder's fault," she finished with under her breath. Leia took the last two steps to the bunk and knelt beside it, stroking a hand over his hair gently. "Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?"

Jacen put his datapad down and reached over, patting Leia's cheek reassuringly. "You don't have to, but I like bedtime stories."

"Of course I can tell you a story," Leia said with relief in her brown eyes. Jacen had to be one of the nicest, most understanding kids in the galaxy. Leia climbed up onto the bunk with him and leaned against the glacier wall, covered only in a thin sheet of white insulation. Despite her vest and winter thermals, she still felt the cold at her back. Jacen snuggled up into the crook of her arm as they settled into story telling position. "Have I ever told you the story about the first time I met your father and Ezra?"

Jacen shook his head, eyes wide. "Please tell that one."

Leia smiled and kissed the top of his head fondly. "It was seven years ago that I first met your Ghost family. I was delivering three corvettes to Lothal for the Rebellion to 'steal.' Your father and Ezra met me dressed as a stormtrooper and a cadet. It wasn't even a minute later that things started to go wrong..."
being alive flying around the galaxy and gaining the attention of Darth Vader and the Emperor. His family didn't need that kind of grief for no good reason.

"...And then I gave Ezra permission to stun me to keep up appearances," Leia said.

"No!" a wide eyed Jacen said.

"Yes," Leia nodded.

"What's it like?" Jacen asked curiously.

"Nauseating," Leia said with an exaggerated grimace. "And you have a headache for hours after. When I woke up all the ships were far in the distance and Lyste was trying to be helpful by helping me stand," she said with a roll of the eyes. "I demanded repayment for my lost ships and transport home. Just to bug him, I asked for his shuttle, knowing perfectly well that we'd already destroyed it. You should have seen the poor idiotic man's face when he realized his shuttle was also missing."

Jacen giggled, imagining the scene. "That was a good story. Thank you, Auntie Leia."

Leia ruffled his hair and extracted herself from the small bunk. "You're welcome, Jacen. Now you should go to sleep. I'm going to see if there's any news about Han and Luke yet."

"They're still missing?" Jacen asked as Leia walked to the door.

She said, "Yes," over her shoulder, a slump to her shoulders that hadn't been there a moment before and reached to open the door.

"Wait!" Jacen called.

"What?" Leia asked, turning back around.

Jacen got up onto his knees in a meditation pose. "Let me see if I can feel them."

Leia raised a brow in surprise, but leaned back against the door, surprised to see that Jacen was able to meditate at such a young age. "You can do that?"

Jacen nodded, closing his eyes. "Daddy taught me. He said younglings learn to meditate as soon as possible. It's how we connect with the Force."

"Oh," was Leia's only response. She'd heard enough mentions about Kanan's Force Ghost to not be surprised that Jacen was learning from him, but she still wasn't convinced that Jacen wasn't being taught too soon. She might talk to Hera about that when she got back.

Upon hearing that Luke Skywalker was missing in the freezing cold of Hoth, Kanan had immediately retreated back into the Force and sought out Master Kenobi. He found him a moment later, after imagining the feel of Kenobi's signature. "Your Luke is missing," he told the old Master who didn't look so old right now, as he chose to wander around the Force in an image of what he looked like in his thirties.

Kenobi stroked his trim chestnut beard thoughtfully. "Yes, I know. That one is ever in trouble, just like his father."

Kanan raised a brow. "It's not my place to say, Master, but couldn't you help him learn more? I know you can be a Force Ghost if you choose."
Obi-Wan shook his head. "That is not what is meant to be. Another teacher is destined for him. If he was meant to learn to be a proper Jedi before now, something would have happened in a different fashion, making it so either you, Ezra, Ahsoka or I would still be available for his training. Instead, I believe that Master Yoda is meant to be his true teacher. Yoda did not have a padawan of his own for many years before the end of the Order, instead concentrating on training the younglings. I think it is time for the old hermit to come out of his hole and teach a padawan again. He spends far too much time in the Force with us."

Kanan rolled his eyes slightly. "That is true. But what about Luke right now? He could be freezing to death as we speak."

Obi-Wan sighed. "Yes, he is actually, but help is almost upon him. I'll go give him a boost and a message. Hopefully he remembers it when he wakes up tomorrow."

Kanan exhaled in relief as Master Kenobi disappeared and then promptly did the same, returning to Jacen's room on Echo Base where he found his son in meditation, doing a relatively advanced Force search. Kanan was kind of shocked, because he never taught him that. Because of Ezra and Kanan, Jacen's concept of what was possible was so far beyond his age, and the child just assumed that because his father and brother did something, he could too. And he pulled it off more often than not, not having the self doubt that would hold back an older youngling or adult. Kanan was both proud of and scared for his son, worried that one day, that unquestioning confidence in himself would get him in trouble. Nevertheless, Kanan watched his son's amazing growth in the Force with a pride that only a parent could truly appreciate.

Jacen breathed deep and slow, spending a few minutes feeling the Force all around him. Sending out his senses, he felt Leia's distinctive presence first. She had a LOT of Force in her, almost as much as Luke, but she didn't seem to know it. Jacen always wondered why no one ever told her that she could be a Jedi too if she wanted, but he figured if no one else had by this point, it wasn't his place to do so either. As Jacen started looking for Luke's strong Force signature, he brushed past something that made him smile (silly Daddy, thinking he could hide from him), but he kept to his self appointed mission.

Jacen found Luke's signature a moment later, easily drawn to it because he knew him so well. His signature was shivering and flickering but strong enough for now. He then went looking for Mr. Solo's signature. He didn't have even a smidgeon of Force strength in him, but his signature was distinctive anyway, always crackling with semi suppressed energy and aggression. Jacen didn't consider Mr. Solo one of his many uncles even though he saw him often enough and he was sort of connected to Auntie Leia. Mr. Solo was just not that interested in hanging out with a kid and it showed in his emotions even if he never let it show in his actions. (Jacen tried not to let what he sensed bother him too much.) Jacen found Mr. Solo's signature not too far from Luke's, and knew he was bound to find him soon.

Jacen felt a reassurance from the Force that they would be okay so he opened his eyes and smiled at Leia reassuringly. "It's okay, Auntie Leia. They're both alive and Mr. Solo will find Unkie Luke soon. You should find them to the east of the base in the morning."

Leia sighed in relief, not sure why she believed the word of a not quite four year old, but she did. She took the few steps back to the bunk and hugged him quickly. "Thank you, Jacen. That makes me feel a lot better."

Jacen grinned at Leia. "I know."

She ruffled his hair affectionately and helped him back under the blankets. "Cheeky tooka. Now its
definitely time to go to bed AND to sleep." She grabbed the datapad that was sitting beside his pillow and tucked it back into his backpack. "You can watch more cartoons after your lessons tomorrow."

"Yes, Auntie Leia," Jacen said obediently, even though he knew he wasn't going to sleep just yet. (Daddy was still waiting his turn.)

Leia left the room with a, "Good night, Jacen. Sweet dreams," turning off the main light on her way out, leaving only the faint glow of the secondary lights around the edge of the ceiling to illuminate the room.

Kanan's image immediately winked into view, walking over to Jacen's bunk. "Hi, Daddy!" Jacen sat up again eagerly and scooched over so his daddy could sit beside him.

"Hey, my little man," Kanan smiled back as he concentrated enough energy into his form to make it solid enough for Jacen to snuggle into his side, wrapping an arm around his warm little form. "I see things are exciting here as usual."

Jacen nodded eagerly. "Uh huh. The base is never boring."

Kanan chuckled and lifted the blankets with a thought, summoning his lightsabre from the depths of them. "And someone's been sneaking this past his mother again." Kanan twirled the unlit lightsabre through the air with a swirl of his finger, floating it in front of Jacen.

Jacen reached for the lightsabre, hugging it to his chest. "I know I'm not supposed to take it off the Ghost, Daddy, but I feel like I'm missing something if I don't have it with me all the time."

Kanan sighed. "I know exactly what you mean, son. I won't tell your mother if you don't."

Jacen shook his head quickly, eyes wide at the thought. "I wouldn't dare. Mama would have a fit." He stared at the lightsabre for a minute. "Daddy?"

"Hmmm?"

"When I can I start learning how to use it?" Jacen asked solemnly, peeking up at Kanan through his dark green eyelashes.

Kanan had been expecting that question to show up eventually and had thankfully already thought of his answer. "When you can hold it in one hand easily and your fingers can touch each other, so you have a proper grip on it. We wouldn't want you to accidentally cut off your foot or something if you dropped it."

Jacen sucked in a breath at the thought, wiggling his toes reflexively. "I need my feet, don't I, Daddy?"

Kanan laughed. "Yes, Jacen, you do. But we could always get you a mechanical foot if you ever lose one," he teased.

"Not funny, Daddy." Jacen gripped the lightsabre tighter, holding it up with two hands. He let go with one so it rested on just the palm of one hand, feeling heavier by the second, and examined how far his tiny fingers had to grow to be able to reach around the hilt. He groaned exaggeratedly at how far that seemed. "My fingers are too short still," he grumbled.

Kanan laughed and plucked the lightsabre from Jacen's hand, easily demonstrating how his long fingers wrapped around the hilt he'd designed for himself when he was thirteen years old. "Tell you
what, little buddy. I'll have Zeb find us some sticks and I'll start teaching you the Forms. That way, when you are big enough to hold the lightsabre easily, you'll already know the moves. Sound good?"

"Sounds great," Jacen said happily, hugging his short arms around Kanan's chest as best as he could.

Kanan squeezed him a little closer and kissed the top of his head. "Love you, Jacen," he whispered.

"Love you too, Daddy," Jacen whispered back.

After a few minutes of just enjoying the moment, Kanan sighed and reluctantly extracted himself from Jacen's embrace, tucking the lightsabre under the pillow. "I'm going to see your mom now. You okay here by yourself for the rest of the night?"

Jacen nodded and squiggled back under the blankets. "I'm fine, Daddy, really. I'm a big boy now, and nobody seems to get that," he said with a hint of exasperation.

Kanan laughed and ruffled the green hair he loved so much. "I know you are, son. You're growing up so fast."

"Not fast enough," Jacen grumbled, making Kanan laugh again.

"Good night, Jacen," Kanan said.

"Night, Daddy. Say hi to Mama for me," Jacen said, eyes starting to close from exhaustion.

Kanan smiled at his sleepy son and disappeared from the room, zipping though the Force to Hera and the Ghost, wherever it was in hyperspace, still on the way to its mission. He found Hera in her cabin, sitting up in bed, already changed into one of his old green shirts that she'd taken to sleeping in years ago, reading a datapad, a little frown of concentration on her face. Kanan materialized his form without any clothes and slipped into the bed beside her, kissing her cheek in greeting. "That's from our son and I."

Hera hummed in pleased appreciation, her frown smoothing away into a small smile. She finished the sentence she was reading with details on her current mission, then turned off the datapad and placed it on the bedside table. She turned her focus on her handsome mate, meeting his smiling teal green eyes and brushing her fingers through his long hair which was already loose from its customary tail. "How's Jacen?"

Kanan caressed a lek in return, running a finger up and down the length with the barest of touches. "Jacen's fine. Better than fine actually. Our son just keeps amazing me with what he knows without being taught."

"What's he done now, aside from sneak off with the lightsabre again?" Hera asked, forcing herself to concentrate despite the small shivers that ran through her with each pass of Kanan's hand.

"Oh, you know about that, do you?" Kanan said with a glitter of laughter in his eyes.

"Of course I do," Hera said. "You don't think I don't know how much he adores that thing? And that it keeps disappearing from the drawer under my bed every time he has to stay with a babysitter?"

Kanan chuckled and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her closer into his chest. "Nothing gets past General Hera."
Hera smirked and rubbed her cheek against his chest lovingly. "Nope. Especially when it comes to our way too smart for his own good son." She looked up at Kanan, propping her chin on his chest. "So what's he done this time?"

Kanan explained about Luke, Han, and Jacen's Force search and that he'd never taught him how to do something quite like that. "I swear our baby has better developed Force senses than the son of Anakin Skywalker," he finished with.

"And that's saying something," Hera said, now grazing her hand up and down the muscles of Kanan's arm.

Kanan scoffed a little. "Well, it should be, but Luke is so undertrained for his age, it hurts. And honestly, I think there's more spirit and determination in Luke than actual talent."

"At least he's got something," Hera said, starting to lose focus on the conversation as Kanan had once again started running his hands over her lekku. "He's a good pilot, too. Gotta give him credit for something," she mumbled.

"Sure," Kanan chuckled. Hera was ever determined to find the good in people. He was finished with talking, too, as his eyes closed in pleasure as Hera pressed kisses to the bare skin of his chest. Kanan grabbed the bottom of Hera's sleepshirt and pulled it up and over her head so that all she was left wearing was their wedding rings on a silver chain around her neck. Kanan tossed the shirt away and rolled them over so he was now above Hera in the position of power.

Or not, Kanan thought as Hera's hand wandered down his chest and abs and took a firm yet gentle hold of his eager cock, stroking it in a manner that made his eyes practically cross. Kanan managed to compartmentalize the pleasure so he could focus on Hera as well. He started with a passionate kiss to her luscious mouth, which distracted her enough that she stopped the movement of her hand on him, but didn't let go.

When he was sure Hera was properly kissed, Kanan moved on, nipping and kissing the line of her jaw over to the spot below her ear cone that made her shiver. He continued, trailing kisses down the length of a lek until he reached her chest. Kanan moved over, paying homage to her perfect breasts that fit in his hands just right and had the dark green nipples that were so responsive to his touch and especially loved his tongue. He kind of missed the year that they'd been a bit bigger with milk for Jacen, and even more sensitive than normal, but he'd never tell her so, knowing it would be a sad reminder that they'd never have another child together.

He eventually moved further down, which made her lose her grip on his more than happy throbbing length, but she moved her hands to his hair instead, burying her fingers in the long strands. Kanan kissed his way down her softly rounded stomach, not stopping until he'd reached her bare pussy lips.

Hera moaned softly as Kanan's mouth latched onto her clit, fingers tightening in his silky hair. (Due to the close quarters of the ship, she'd long ago learnt how to keep her pleasure cries muffled to the barest possible sounds that only Kanan could hear.) She bit her lip as jolts of sensation ran through her, closing her eyes for a moment as she savoured the pleasure, before forcing them open again so she could watch Kanan work on her pulsing clit. Kanan's eyes met hers, a knowing gleam in them, before he bit her clit ever so gently, making Hera shake in a mini orgasm. "You're so bad," she whispered.

Kanan grinned up at her and licked the length of her slit, savouring the taste of her escaping juices. "And you love it," he whispered back.
Hera tugged on his hair. "Just get up here and love me already."

He licked her again. "I thought I was already doing that," he said teasingly before thrusting his tongue into her dripping pussy.

Hera's eyes rolled up for a moment at the pleasure of his intrusion. She tugged on his hair again, getting his attention as he tortured her with his tongue. When his eyes met hers again, she gave him a look that said she was done with foreplay. Hera wanted his big cock in her now.

Kanan grinned knowingly, kissed her clit once, and then surged up her body, planting his mouth on hers. Hera gasped and accepted his tongue, tasting herself and finding it highly erotic. Her tongue fought with his in a happy duel while his cock found her sheath in an unerring thrust that buried him to the hilt. Hera gasped into his mouth again and wrapped her legs around his as he thrust into her slow and deep in a steady rhythm that he could maintain for a very long time. Hera, on the other hand, would go nuts eventually and demand he go faster.

And that's exactly what happened some twenty minutes later, when Hera had been hovering on the edge of a climax for too long to bear. She dug her nails into Kanan's back and growled at him. "Kanan," she whispered warningly, telling him that if he didn't get a move on and let her come already, there would be serious consequences.

Kanan grinned into her neck and picked up the pace. He reached back and grabbed her lethal hands, interlocking their fingers above her head. She wrapped her lekku around his neck instead, determined to hang on to him as much as possible. Kanan kissed each lek lovingly and then her mouth hungrily as she started to moan, swallowing the sounds. Kanan thrust even faster and harder, calling on a little bit of Force speed to send his wife over the edge in a shattering climax that had her clenching her pussy around his cock in a mind stopping manner that he loved. When she relaxed enough, Kanan thrust on, now aiming for his own orgasm. At this point it was a simple matter of letting go of his control on himself. Two hard thrusts later, Kanan experienced his own euphoria, groaning quietly into Hera's neck.

They stayed like that for awhile, basking in the afterglow. Eventually Kanan rolled them over so Hera was draped over his chest and wrapped his arms around her. Hera hugged him in return, snuggling her cheek into the crook of his neck. "Love you, Kanan," she whispered tiredly, eyes closing and quickly falling into a deep sleep.

"Love you, too," he whispered back, knowing her subconscious would hear him.

Kanan held her for as long as he could, stroking a soothing hand up and down the light green satin skin of her bare back, until he felt his energy waning. With a sigh, he gently moved her off to the side and gave her a pillow to hug instead. She mumbled into it sleepily but didn't wake up. Kanan kissed her forehead softly and pulled the blankets over her. Drinking in the sight of her beautiful face at peace one more time, Kanan dematerialized and returned to the Force.

Jacen woke up early the next morning to an already bustling base. After changing back into his day clothes, he left his things in his little room for now. Jacen wandered through the base, hitting the refresher on the way to the mess hall for breakfast. He found a few people in there, but not many, most already having eaten breakfast. Jacen went to the counter where food was served and got a big smile from the soldier on kitchen duty that day.

"Morning, Jacen."

"Morning, Buzz," Jacen replied.
Buzz looked around. "No one watching you this morning?"

Jacen shrugged. "Guess not. Sokay though. I know my way 'round."

Buzz grinned. "I'm sure you do. You should try the command centre. The Princess is already there, I think, overseeing the search for the missing Commanders."

Jacen nodded. "Okay. May I have some breakfast first?"

Buzz grinned. "Of course! I saved some of the good stuff for you, in fact." He reached below the counter and pulled out a covered plate and took off the lid with a flourish.

Jacen's eyes lit up and he grinned in return. "Space waffles! Thank you, Buzz!"

Buzz handed the plate and a fork over the counter. "You're welcome, little J. Always happy to be of service."

Jacen smiled once more in appreciation before turning around and deciding where he should sit. A table full of mechanics waved him over and Jacen happily joined them, eating his waffles while he listened to them tell stories about how they fixed this or that, learning with every word spoken.

Jacen didn't move on until the mechanics did, taking his dirty plate to the pile awaiting cleaning. He waved goodbye to Buzz and wandered out of the mess hall, heading for the command centre. Just as he entered, he almost bumped into a relatively rushing C-3PO. The droid looked down at Jacen. "Master Jacen! My mistress just sent me to wake you up and look after you for the morning. She mentioned that you have school lessons to do?"

Jacen nodded up at the droid. "Sure, Threepio. You can help me with them. I'm working on my letters right now."

Threepio seemed excited at the idea. "That is excellent, Master Jacen. I am versed in over four million written forms of language. Which one are you learning? Or would you like to learn all of them?"

Jacen giggled. "Just Basic for now, Threepio."

Threepio seemed a little sad for a moment but got over it. "Oh, well. Basic is a good start anyway. But you should consider learning more. Your mother is from Ryloth. You could learn twi'leki too, although without the lekku, some of the language would be missing. And then there's binary. You never know when you'll need that. Mandalorian is also a good one to learn, considering you are associated with Lady Wren and Captain Rex and Commander Wolffe. Oh, and you have a lasat in your crew. I could teach you his language as well."

Jacen's eyes widened at all the options Threepio was spouting before bursting into laughter. "Really, Threepio. Just Basic to start. But I promise we'll work on something else after. Maybe Mando'a. It'd be cool to surprise Sabie one day."

Threepio gave a droid sigh. "Yes, Master Jacen. As you wish."

Just then, they heard a crackle from the comms in the command centre. "Echo Base, I've got something. Not much, but it could be a life form."

The room hushed and Jacen poked his head in, curious to see what was going to happen. Everyone waited for a good minute, not making a peep, before the voice came back. "Echo Base, this is Rogue Two. I found them. Repeat. I found them."
Jacen joined in the big cheer that went through the room. He saw the Princess sag into a chair in relief and smiled at her with a little wave. Leia smiled back but then turned her attention back to one of the displays. Sensing he wasn't wanted in the command centre, Jacen looked back up at Threepio. "I guess we'll do my lessons now."

Threepio inclined his head. "Yes, Master Jacen. That would seem to be the correct course of action." They made their way back to Jacen's little room where the datapad with the preprogrammed lessons was. Whenever they were in an empty hallway, Jacen would call out silly things, just to listen to the glacier walls echo his voice back.

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After his morning lessons, Jacen and Threepio returned to the mess hall, with Threepio then toddling off to see how Master Luke was doing.

While Jacen was eating lunch with a table full of pilots, including Wedge and Hobbie, the base alarm sounded the Wampa Alert. Everyone in the room immediately tensed and pulled their blasters if they had them. Soon enough, there were numerous comm calls as people tried to figure out where the wampa was. Jacen stayed in the mess hall, protected by dozens of soldiers, all on high alert for a good half hour until someone reported the wampa had been trapped in the quarantine room. The feeling in the room instantly changed to relief and people relaxed, returning to their lunch of standard issue ration packages. Jacen was more than used to this as his normal food and considered anything more real to be a treat. He didn't know where the cooks came up with the treats they gave him, but he was always extra thankful.

Not long after the wampa had been trapped, Luke meandered into the mess hall with a grumbling stomach. He was a few meals behind and his stomach was telling him so.

Jacen sensed Luke enter the room and jumped up to meet him. "Uncle Luke! You're okay!"

Luke bent down and picked up the boy, a big smile on his face. "Yeah, I'm good, Jacen. Sorry you had to have Threepio as your babysitter this morning, but you've got me for the rest of the day. I promise."


"Oh, she does, does she?" Luke said with a grin, walking to the counter and picking up a lunch tray. "All right then. I'll change my vow to: you have my undivided attention for the rest of the day as long as nothing unforeseen happens. How's that?" Luke sat down at Wedge's table, putting Jacen down on the bench beside him.

"Better." Jacen touched Luke's injured face gently, wishing he could make it better. "Does it hurt?"

Luke shook his head and dug into his food. "Nah, just stings a little. The bacta did its job well enough."

Jacen studied the injuries some more, feeling the Force swirl around him a little, like it was telling him he could help if he wanted. His mind went back to a scene about half a year ago when they'd been visiting Sabie on Lothal at the same time that Auntie Ahsoka had come back for a day. Sabie had come home with a nasty cut on her arm from a malfunctioning piece of machinery that had decided to blow up while she was trying to fix it, sending a shard of metal right past her, catching her arm as she ducked. Auntie Ahsoka had cleaned it up and then closed her eyes, gathering the Force around her and sending it into Sabie's cut, healing it in only a few minutes. Jacen wasn't the only one who had gawked at her. She said she'd known a bit of Force healing before but learnt how
to do Force healing properly from the same place she got her cool new staff.

Recalling everything he'd felt while Ahsoka healed Sabine, Jacen closed his eyes and put his hand back on Luke's face, drawing the Force to him like he was meditating. Luke looked up in surprise, fork halfway to his mouth. The table went silent as well as they sensed that something was happening. Jacen thought about Luke's cuts being healed and then sent the gathered Force into Luke for as long as he could. One minute later, Jacen was exhausted and his hand fell from Luke's face.

Luke caught him before he slid off the bench, too tired to hold himself up anymore. "Are you okay, Jacen?"

Jacen nodded slowly, opening his eyes and smiling a little to see that the healing had worked. "Jus' tired. Need nap," he slurred.


"What!?!" Luke said, letting go of Jacen with one hand to feel his face. He'd felt the Force swirl through him, but he'd had no idea what Jacen had been trying to do, only that his energy level picked up drastically. Luke's fingers felt only his usual skin, no scabs at all. "Holy kriff!" he breathed, staring down at the child in his arms in awe. "This is one special kid."

The others nodded in agreement, speechless.

Luke froze as a thought occurred to him. He narrowed his eyes at his friends. "This can't leave this table. Can you imagine what the Empire would do if they heard rumours about a kid who could heal?"

Everyone sucked in a breath at the dreadful thought.

"Don't worry," Wedge said. "We can keep a secret, right boys?"

Everyone nodded solemnly.

Luke glanced down at Jacen again. "As far as the base is concerned, the bacta healed me completely, right?" He'd have to tell Leia, Han, Chewie, Artoo, and Threepio because they knew differently, but they were his best friends and he trusted them.

"Right," came back the reply in chorus.

Luke smiled at his friends thankfully and stood, forgetting his lunch, holding an already passed out Jacen in his arms carefully. "C'mon, little miracle. Let's find you a bed to sleep in," he said to the sleeping boy. Luke went to his own barracks, not knowing that Jacen had his own room this time, and put Jacen in his own bunk, covered him with the blankets fondly and smoothed down the wild green hair that looked like it hadn't been brushed yet today. "Thank you," he whispered to the little boy, before putting a commlink on the bed beside the pillow in case Jacen woke up before Luke got back, and left the large room to try and find the Princess. She'd kissed him and he was over the moon about it. Maybe he did have a chance with her. Which he thought wasn't likely, considering he hadn't felt any real desire in her kiss, just affection, and Han went running after her right afterwards, but hey, a guy could dream, right?

It turned out that the meteor Luke had seen yesterday before the wampa had taken him out wasn't a meteor at all. It had been an Imperial probe droid and it had called the Empire.
Four hours after the Wampa Alert, the base rang with alarms again as a Star Destroyer appeared in orbit and then another and another and so on, until the whole planet was blockaded. Luke ran back to his barracks to change into his pilot gear. Spotting Jacen still asleep in the bed, Luke shook him awake while he hastily changed. "Come on, Jacen. Time to get up. We're evacuating the base."

Jacen blinked up at him sleepily, not really registering the words. "M'kay," he mumbled.

Luke finished his quick change and double checked that he had all his gear, including his lightsabre. He picked up Jacen and ran out of the room that now had a few other pilots also changing in double time. Luke jogged down the hallways to the hangar that held all of the transports. Spotting the person in charge of evacuations, he handed Jacen over. "Make sure he gets on the first transport out of here," he said before taking off to join the other pilots getting into snowspeeders to fight the encroaching Imperial army.

By this point, Jacen was wide awake and staring at the organized chaos with wide, curious eyes. He was handed from person to person until someone put him on his feet and pushed him up the ramp of a big transport. "Go find a seat, kid," the soldier said.

"But..." Jacen said in protest, turning around and going back down. "My things. I can't leave without my bag."

The soldier shook his head and nudged Jacen up the ramp again. "Up, kid. Stuff can be replaced."

Sensing he wasn't going to win this one, Jacen did as he was told. For five whole seconds. He walked up the ramp a ways, waiting for the soldier's attention to be caught by someone else, then dashed back down the ramp as fast as he could go, just eluding the arms that tried to catch him on the way by. Ignoring the call of, "Hey! Come back!" Jacen booted it for the living quarters section of the base, past a sea of moving adult legs. There wasn't a thing or person on this planet that could stop him from going back for his daddy's lightsabre.

While he ran, the glacier started to rumble with the start of the battle. The shield generators that Sabine had designed were doing their job keeping the enemy fire off Echo Base directly, but it didn't protect the land around it, and the glacier was being shaken from the ground up with enemy fire. Jacen ducked a few times as icy snow fell from the carved out ceilings of the hallways, just managing to dodge the frozen bombardments in time. He finally made it to his little room, passing a few preoccupied stragglers on the way. Only one of them had tried to stop Jacen from running the wrong way, but Jacen dodged those hands too and kept going.

Jacen dashed into his room, the automatic door closing behind him. He grabbed the lightsabre from under the pillow and stuffed it into his bag, closing it frantically, making sure the lightsabre couldn't fall out accidentally. Putting the backpack on, he turned around and had taken only one step towards the door when the lights went out. Jacen froze, terrified that what he thought had just happened did. Carefully taking the last few steps to the door, Jacen reached forward tentatively, feeling for the door. He exhaled when he finally touched it, further away than he thought. Picturing the door in his mind, he felt around until he came to the wall on the right side and reached up for the door controls, pressing the button to open the door. Nothing happened.

Jacen's lower lip wobbled as he fought the urge to cry. He was trapped in a tiny, pitch black room, with no power and no way out.
Jacen's Rescue

Jacen's Rescue:

D349/3 ABY, Endor

Hera regrouped with her crew at the designated meeting point two hours before the deadline, relieved to see her crew show up one at a time from their recon missions. "Well?" she asked as they started walking back towards the Ghost some two kilometres away through the thick forest.

"Definitely some sort of Imperial facility," Rex said, wearing stolen stormtrooper armour. "We wandered around a bit inside and blended right in. I can guarantee the Ewoks didn't build it and probably didn't approve it."

"And you?" she addressed Zeb.

"I found four different entrances in a five kilometer radius. There must be something really large underground."

Hera sighed and looked up at the massive shapeless something that was in construction over the moon, making the guys look up too. "Well, whatever they're building up there, I can guarantee that it can't be good for the Rebellion."

"Is anything?" Wolffe wondered.

Hera smiled slightly. "Well, we have four established bases scattered around the Outer Rim and a wandering Headquarters. I say the Rebellion is doing all right and that we just might be able to handle whatever the Empire decides to throw at us next."

"And if it's another Death Star?" Rex only half joked.

Hera gave him a quelling look. "Don't even think it. Having to deal with a second one of those things would just put me in a very bad mood."

Rex pretended to cringe away in fear. "We wouldn't want that, would we, boys?"

The guys laughed together as Hera gave them a disgusted look that did nothing to shut them up, so she upped her game, walking a little faster. "Anyone still laughing in five seconds will be cleaning the refresher and the galley for the next year with a toothbrush. Your own," she said over her shoulder in her General's voice. The laughter died instantly and Hera smirked to herself as she strode on, stepping over the five millionth tree root, and continuing on with a little bit of extra sway in her lekku.

The clones might look old, but they were technically only thirty-six going on twelve. It was like the older they got and the further away they were from the constant war they were bred for, the younger they acted to make up for having to grow up and act like real adults by the time they were seven or eight. And Zeb? He was forty-eight, but his species lived a long time and was basically just a teenager as well. The three of them combined with Chopper and her four year old made Hera's days VERY interesting. And not always in a good way. Sometimes dire threats were all she had left. At least they worked. (After making good on one once.) It made her really miss Kallus' presence. The guys were much more dignified around him, following his example. And in comparison, Ezra and Sabine had been angels, despite the occasional prank war.
How she missed them.

Home One, somewhere in space.

Director of Intelligence, Alexsandr Kallus, combed a frustrated hand through his hair as he read through what had to be the eight hundredth report of the day, just before one of his assistants came running into the room.

"Echo Base is under attack! They're evacuating as we speak!"

Kallus jolted to attention, all tiredness suddenly gone at the shot of adrenaline that coursed through him. His first thought was a vile swear that would make a Hutt proud. His second was for Jacen, possibly the only kid he'd ever liked. Kallus knew that Hera was away on a mission right now, having been the one to recommend her crew for the job. He also knew that Jacen would have been left behind on the base under Leia's care. And he knew if anything happened to him, Hera would probably lose it. Permanently. "Get me Echo Base. I want to talk to the Princess."

"Yes, Sir!" The assistant ran out and came back with a holo commlink a minute later. "The Princess, Sir."

Kallus looked at the rather harried looking hologram of the planetless Princess. "Leia, I just heard. Please tell me you got Jacen on a transport?" Kallus said in a tone somewhere between no nonsense and pleading.

There was a long pause that Kallus didn't like as Leia's face went through a few different emotions. "I'll have to get back to you, Kallus," Leia finally said. "Luke was looking after him this afternoon."

"And do you know where Luke is?" Kallus demanded.

"In a snowspeeder?" Leia said with a definite cringe on her face. "Just give me a minute and I'll call him."

Kallus drummed his fingers on his desk impatiently while Leia's image disappeared for a minute.

Leia finally came back on the comm. "You can stop worrying, Kallus. Luke says he put Jacen on the first transport off planet and it already left successfully. After making some random jumps, it should rendezvous with Home One sometime tonight."

Kallus breathed a sigh of relief, but just to make sure... "Can you give me their frequency so I can give it to Hera? I'll call her next and let her know not to go back to Hoth."

"Oh, that's a good idea," Leia said. "Just hang on." A moment later she rattled off the frequency and Kallus typed it into a datapad just because, but he'd already memorized it.

"Thank you, Leia. Good luck," Kallus said in parting.

Leia gave a brief disbelieving laugh. "Ha. We're gonna need it." And then the comm went silent.

Kallus started to enter the frequency for the Ghost, but changed his mind halfway through. Starting over, he entered the transport's. A moment later he got an answer. "This is Director Kallus. Can you please confirm that you have Jacen Syndulla on board?"

"Uhyyyy, the kid?" came back the surprised reply from the pilot. "Hang on, there's a couple
hundred people on here. I'll send someone to check."

Kallus once again waited with drumming fingers. He was getting a very bad feeling about this. A
good ten minutes later, the pilot's voice came back. "I'm sorry, Director, but we searched the ship
twice. The kid's not here."

Kallus hung up with a curt, "thanks," and immediately tried to call Echo Base back. He cursed
under his breath when the signal wouldn't go through. They must have lost communications.
Running a shaking hand though his hair again, he mumbled more curses as he commed the Ghost.

When all he got was the disrespectful droid, Kallus breathed in through his nose once, containing
his frustration. "Please, just tell Hera to call me when she gets back to the ship, alright?"

"Fine, mutton chops," the droid beeped and then hung up on him.

Kallus' eyes narrowed in anger. That droid had driven him up the wall when he lived on the Ghost
and he still did, even a good chunk of the galaxy away. Before moving into the Ghost, Kallus had
thought the droid was an efficient model who did a marvelous job working against the Empire. It
only took two days for his opinion to change drastically. In his admittedly Imperial opinion, droids
shouldn't have attitudes, and Hera's had the worst attitude he'd ever encountered in a droid. But he
was Hera's, and Kallus would never say anything to her about the droid because despite everything
else, it was incredibly devoted to Hera, and she deserved all the loyalty she could get. Kallus
would forever be grateful to her for accepting him into her family group despite his rather sketchy
past.

Kallus rubbed his forehead as the headache that had been threatening for the past three hours
decided to start pounding. He didn't know what to do. There was no way he could magically go
search for Jacen himself. Not in the next few minutes anyway. But perhaps...

Mind made up, Kallus stood from his desk abruptly and strode for the command centre. He was
going to Hoth and taking a corvette and a small fleet of X-Wings with him, whether Mothma and
Ackbar liked it or not. He knew he could round up a whole crew and a bunch of pilots who either
owed Hera a favour and / or loved the kid. Home One was about three and a half hours away from
Hoth right now. Not an unreasonable amount of time to fly to search for one small boy who had
practically become the Rebellion's mascot. It didn't hurt that he was the son of Kanan Jarrus, Jedi
Knight, either. The legend of Kanan and Ezra had spread through the Rebellion like wildfire after
the liberation of Lothal.

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**Hoth**

After half a minute of standing frozen in the dark, Jacen sucked in a big breath. 'Okay,' he told
himself. 'I'm a Jedi. We stay calm and think things through. There's nothing to be afraid of. It's just
the dark. First thing to do is get some light.' He had two options for that. His datapad would light
up a little if he turned it on, but it wasn't going to get him out of here.

As the ground shook and tiny pieces of ice fell from the ceiling, Jacen went for option number two.
With hands slightly trembling with fear and excitement from what he was about to do, Jacen took a
couple steps back and shrugged his backpack down his arm and around to the front of his body.
Feeling around for the zipper, he opened it a little and fished out the lightsabre, then closed the
zipper and put the backpack back around to his back. Very carefully feeling the lightsabre, he made
sure it was pointed away from him, and with a shuddering breath for courage, he pushed the button
to turn it on.
Jacen's eyes went super wide as he held the lit lightsabre for the very first time, gripped tightly with both hands. (Not wanting to drop it and cut off his foot.) "Whoa," he whispered, feeling the power of the Kyber crystal sing through him in welcome. The blue glow of the lightsabre lit the room easily and just fit within the space Jacen had left between him and the door. Jacen had thought that the lightsabre would feel heavier this way, but it actually felt lighter as the Force seemed to bolster his strength.

Jacen eyeballed the closed door with a determined look. He'd heard countless stories about doors being cut open with a lightsabre and no one ever said it was hard to do. Taking a step forward, Jacen touched the door with the end of the lightsabre. It sank through the durasteel like butter. "Holy nerfherders," he exclaimed. "It works!"

"Of course it works," Kanan said with a hint of laughter in his voice, despite the worry about his son's situation. He'd felt Jacen's wave of fear and immediately come to investigate. Somehow, he wasn't surprised that Jacen had already figured a way out on his own. "You think I'd lie to you?"

"Daddy!" Jacen said in surprise, automatically turning off the lightsabre because he knew he wasn't supposed to play with it, plunging the room into darkness again except for the glow of Kanan's ghost form. "I was just... Power gone... And..."

Kanan touched Jacen's head reassuringly. "It's okay. I know. And you did the right thing. But I'm here now and you don't have to do it on your own anymore."

Jacen sighed in relief, leaning into his daddy's gentle hand.

Jacen held the lightsabre up for his daddy to take, but Kanan shook his head with a smile. "You seem like you're doing alright with that, so why don't you keep it and it can be our light out of here?"

"Really?" Jacen said in disbelief.

"Really," Kanan replied, smiling wider.

"Sweet," Jacen breathed. He carefully pointed the lightsabre away from them and turned it back on, lighting up the room again, making Kanan look normal as the blue glow from the lightsabre obscured Kanan's.

The glacier rumbled again threateningly, making more small pieces of the ceiling fall on them.

"What was that?" Kanan asked in surprise. He had assumed Jacen was trapped because of the sketchy wiring in the base that tended to short out on a regular basis. He suddenly realized the situation was a lot worse than he had thought.

"We're under attack and 'vacuating," Jacen explained.

Kanan instantly understood that time was of the essence. "Gotcha. Time to go." He had been thinking about letting Jacen finish the hole he'd started for the fun of it, but that would take too long. Kanan waved a hand at the door and it slid open obediently.

Jacen grinned at his daddy for the show and then dashed into the dark hallway, leading the way back to the hangar at a quick jog. The glacier base rumbled and shook as they ran, raining more ice particles on them.

Outside, an AT-AT blew up the shield generators, causing a massive explosion that rocked the whole area. The already shaken glacier rumbled again, shaking under Jacen's feet. He came to a
stop to keep his balance, Kanan skidding to a stop behind him, not actually affected by the movement of the ice because he wasn't in a solid form. Jacen waited for the shaking to pass before continuing on.

Only a few seconds later, they heard a massive crack, as if the glacier itself had been snapped in two. Jacen and Kanan looked up as cracks appeared in the ceiling above them, quickly running down the entire length of the hall in front and behind them. "Kriffing hell!" Kanan whispered as a sense of impending doom struck him. He picked Jacen up with the Force and ran like lightning down the hallway, making Jacen screech in surprise. At the last millisecond, Kanan put Jacen down and threw up a shield around them just as the ceiling collapsed, sending tonnes of ice down on them.

Shaking, Jacen raised the lightsabre and gawked at the perfect dome of ice that surrounded them. He looked at his daddy in awe as Kanan crouched on the ground, arms out to the sides, eyes closed in concentration. "Daddy?" Jacen whispered. "Are we in trouble?"

Kanan opened his eyes and tried to smile but it came out a little shaky. "To be honest, Jacen, yes we are." Jacen went to snuggle into Kanan's leg for reassurance but there was no solid form for him to lean on. "Sorry, buddy," Kanan explained as Jacen looked up at him in surprise. "I can't do that too." And that's what had Kanan really worried. He didn't have the energy to spare to summon help for Jacen. He could hold the shield or he could go get help. There was no question as to which he was going to do. Kanan could feel the pressure of the tonnes of ice pushing down on his shield. If he let it go, Jacen would be crushed and he would never let that happen, no matter how long he had to hold his shield.

"Jacen," Kanan said very seriously. "I need you to get help. You're going to have to meditate and contact someone to come dig you out. Can you do that?"

Jacen nodded solemnly. "Yes, Daddy." Jacen carefully set the lightsabre on the ground so it wouldn't turn off and moved into his meditation pose. He sent his will into the Force, aiming for the one person he knew might actually be able to hear him. Jacen looked for his big brother.

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**Cerulia**

Ezra was sleeping deeply when his dream randomly changed from him and Sabine playing in the fields of Lothal with a pack of lothcats and two laughing children that had his dark blue hair and her eyes, to a battle scene on an ice planet. He tossed over, agitated that his pleasant dream had disappeared, brows frowning in his sleep. Ezra watched an AT-AT explode and a figure leap away from the blast. A few snowspeeders flew around, doing what damage they could. Ground troops fought valiantly against the Imperials who were clearly winning. The explosion of the shield generators was the definite tipping point in the Empire's favour. The rebels retreated in double time, escaping as fast as they could on transport ships off the planet. Ezra tossed over again, grumbling, thinking if he and Kanan had been there, those AT-AT's would never have gotten close enough to Sabine's shield generator to take it out.

Ezra watched a handful of Imperial shuttles land near the mostly evacuated base, a feeling of dread descending on his dream as a figure dressed in black marched down the ramp of one of the Lambda shuttles, cape swirling at his feet, along with dozens of snowtroopers.

Suddenly a voice was added to the dream. "Ezie, help! We're buried, Ezie!" An image of Jacen and Kanan lit only by the light of a lightsabre and surrounded by snowy walls flashed into the dream.

Ezra sat up on a gasp. "Jacen!" He immediately closed his eyes again and sent his image to Sabine.
Darth Vader strode through the icy hallways of the Rebel Base, certain that his son was on this frozen hell planet somewhere. His head whipped to the left as a strong sense of the Force became apparent. Stalking the beacon of the Light side like it was his prey, Vader and a few of his elite 501st troopers made their way towards the living quarters area of the base. It wasn't long before they came upon a collapsed section of hallway just past where it joined to the main one.

Vader glared at the ice, certain he felt something he wanted on the other side of the barrier.

"Shall we dig, My Lord?" an astute Squad Leader asked.

"Yes," Vader snarled. He paced the area nearby for a minute while more troops and tools were called for. Realizing his frustration was not helping, the Sith Lord made an attempt at calming himself down and was rewarded with the sense of another presence in the Force that he knew relatively well. Vader smiled evilly under his mask as he strode away towards the new enticement. The Princess was here, too. She would make a fine prize in his war against the Rebellion.

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**Lothal**

Ezra appeared to Sabine, looking somewhat frantic, hours before his usual evening visit. "Sabine! Call Hera! Jacen's in trouble!"

Sabine put down her paint brush, eyes wide, sensing Ezra's distress. She immediately pushed some buttons on her wrist comm, contacting the Ghost. "Hera?" she said hopefully when the call went through.

"Not here," Chopper beeped in response. "On a mission. Will be back in two hours."

"Kriff," Sabine cursed and ran to her bedroom, Ezra following. "Tell Hera that Jacen's in trouble."

"Buried," Ezra supplied. "There was a battle on Hoth. Vader's there. Jacen's buried in the snow somewhere."

Sabine's eyes widened even further as she relayed the message to Chopper. "Do whatever you have to to get a hold of Hera," she told the droid before hanging up and swiftly changing into her armour and strapping on her blasters. While the lift was taking her down to ground level, Sabine called Ketsu. "Ketsu, I need you and our fifty best Defender pilots to meet me in the atmosphere. We're going to Hoth."

"What?" Ketsu squawked.

"I'll explain once we've jumped. I promise," Sabine said as she jogged over to the Lothhawk and dashed up the ramp.

"Okay," Ketsu said with a voice dripping incredulity.

While Ezra got the ship warmed up for her, Sabine made another call to Ryder, giving him a very brief explanation as to why she was taking a quarter of the Defenders off planet, not giving him a chance to protest before she disconnected.

Sabine took the Lothhawk up to the atmosphere and started calculating the jump to Hoth. Fortunately, the coordinates were still in the nav computer from when she'd installed and tested the improved shield she'd made for Echo Base a year ago. Unfortunately, she already knew the jump would take three hours. Those were going to be three of the worst hours of her life while she
imagined horrible things happening to Jacen.

Jacen opened his eyes and looked up at his daddy. "I did it, I think. I told Ezie to get help. I'm pretty sure he heard me."

Kanan gave his son a strained smile. "That's great, Jacen. Hopefully the word will get to someone still here on the base sooner than later." Kanan closed his eyes again, sorry he had to cut his son out, but he really needed to concentrate right now. Holding this shield was the second hardest thing he'd ever done.

Jacen watched his daddy for a few minutes, noting the strain on his face that he was trying not to show, but Jacen knew his daddy, and that was not a relaxed and happy face. Wondering if there was something he could do to help, Jacen returned to meditating. His senses brushed against the shield, trying to figure out how his daddy had made it, but not really understanding the advanced Force technique without any explanation.

Thinking he could possibly get Unkie Luke to hear him if he tried really really hard, Jacen started searching for his signature. What he found instead made his insides freeze with fear. "Daddy?" he whispered.

"What?" Kanan said softly.

"There's someone out there. Someone really really cold," Jacen whispered, shivering. "And I think he knows we're in here."

Kanan cursed silently. Could this situation get any worse? "It's a Darksider, Jacen. Remember how I said they feel cold?"

Jacen nodded, eyes wide with trepidation. "Can I help you, Daddy? Help with the shield? Can we keep the Darksider out?"

Kanan thought for a minute. Putting up a shield would be very draining for Jacen, assuming he could even understand how. On the other hand, Kanan was using everything he had to hold it, which would leave him with nothing to defend them with when the Darksider found them. And Kanan was sure that would happen now. At least it would get them out of the ice. They'd have to deal with whatever happened after that as it came. Kanan sighed, stuck between two awful choices. "Okay, little buddy. You can try and help me, but I doubt it will keep the Darksider out, so you'll have to be prepared for that when he finds us, okay?"

Jacen nodded. "What do I do?"

"Close your eyes like you're meditating," Kanan said quietly. "Now, can you feel my shield?"

"Yes," Jacen said in a whisper. "It's strong."

Kanan smiled slightly. His son was amazing. "All you need to do is hold out your hands and imagine shaping the Force into another layer of the shield inside mine, like a different colour of a rainbow, where it blends into the colour above it."

Jacen smiled at the imagery, because he could immediately understand what his daddy meant. Jacen gathered up the Force around him and spread a thin layer of it all over his daddy's shield, imagining his daddy's shield as the green layer and his as the blue layer, melding the two layers together to make a pretty teal colour where they met that looked just like his daddy's eyes.
Kanan exhaled in surprise as he felt his shield gain strength, instantly relieving some of the pressure he was under. He glanced down at Jacen. "Little buddy, you are officially the most amazing son a man could ask for. Are you okay?"

Jacen nodded confidently, eyes still closed, pulling on the Force that swirled around him helpfully to maintain both his energy level and the shield. "I'm good, Daddy. I had a nap."

Kanan barked a quick laugh before closing his eyes again and putting himself in a partial meditative state so he could channel the Force for as long as he had to, determined that the shield would be mostly his work, with Jacen just being a bit of a support.

Disregarding Hera's order to stay with the ship, Chopper flew out of the Ghost on one wheel and zoomed through the forest floor to where Hera, Zeb, Rex, and Wolffe were scouting out an Imperial facility. He couldn't call her on her wrist comm because she'd turned it off to avoid detection from Imperial scanners. Much to Chopper's relief, because the forest floor was terribly hard to roll over quickly and he was in a serious hurry, he met them only halfway to where the facility was, as they were on their way back early.

"Chopper!" Hera exclaimed. "What are you doing out here?"

"Jacen!" Chopper beeped quickly. "Sabine says tiny organic is buried in snow. Echo Base under attack. Darth Vader there too."

Hera went pale and started running, Chopper zipping along in her wake.

"Karabast!" Zeb exclaimed and dashed after her.

Rex and Wolffe looked at each other. "That's not good," Rex said, before they too were running flat out through the forest.

It wasn't until the Ghost was back up in hyperspace to make the five hour return trip to Hoth that Hera sagged in her chair, shoulders and lekku drooping. "I never should have left him behind," she whispered to herself. He would have been safer staying on the Ghost with Chopper.

Zeb put a comforting paw on her shoulder, his eyes sad and ears laid back in sorrow. "It's not your fault, Hera. You couldn't have known."

Hera shook her head, burying her face in her hands, feeling the tears escape. "A war is no place for a child, and I knew it. I grew up in one. Why am I raising my son in another?" her voice caught in a sob at the end.

Zeb exchanged helpless looks with Rex and Wolffe, who just shrugged in complete cluelessness. The clones had no idea how to comfort a grieving female. Zeb pulled Hera out of her chair and hugged her to his chest, which she promptly buried her face in and soaked his shirt with tears. Zeb sighed and patted Hera's back a little awkwardly, wondering where Kanan was when you needed him.

Darth Vader growled in frustration as the cursed hunk of junk known as the Millennium Falcon flew away with the Princess onboard. With a snarl, he commed the Captain of the Executor. "There's a small freighter leaving the planet. Do NOT let it escape!"

"Yes, My Lord!" came back the snappy reply.
Vader clenched his fists and swung around on the ball of a mechanical foot. With determined strides, he marched back in the direction of his other prize. Along the way, he saw a couple of snowtroopers staring at a door with a torn yellow sign on it in apparent shock.

Lying through his teeth, one snowtrooper said, "Everything's under control."

Vader scoffed and marched on, having already sensed the animal inside the room and the dying throes of the man who'd been caught in the trap. If the surviving troopers wanted to save face, he didn't care.

Vader arrived at the scene of the cave in, where some progress had been made, but not enough for his satisfaction. Thoroughly annoyed now, he tossed the snowtroopers out of his way and concentrated on the blocks of ice and snow that prevented him from reaching his prey. With a jerk of his hands, the ice flew backwards down the hallway, hitting a trooper or two on the way, but Vader didn't care about that either.

Instead, his eyes took in the surprising sight of a Jedi reported as deceased and a tiny green haired boy, both kneeling in a meditation pose, holding a strong shield that Vader could feel from here. At their feet, a blue lightsabre glowed, illuminating them clearly.

Luke snuck into the hangar, surprised that there weren't more snowtroopers around. He shrugged, assuming they were all inside the base somewhere, searching for whatever they could find.

Dashing over to his X-Wing that already had Artoo in it, he climbed up the ladder and jumped in. "Let's go, Artoo. I'll be happy to see the last of this iceberg."

Artoo beeped an affirmative and got the fighter running while Luke put his helmet on. He took off a moment later, laughing a little as a trooper appeared from a side hallway and tried to shoot him as Luke left him in his wake.

After Sabine and her escort of fifty Defenders had jumped into hyperspace, Ezra finally stopped his pacing as he came to a decision. He walked over to Sabine, where she sat in the pilot's chair, pretty much vibrating with suppressed agitation, staring straight ahead blankly. He touched her cheek gently to get her attention and met her questioning eyes. "I'm going to try and find Jacen. Or Kanan. I have a bond with both of them. I've never tried to go to either of them before, but it can't be any different than finding you. I feel like they need help. Now."

Sabine nodded, amber eyes filled with worry. "Okay, Ez'ika. Be careful."

Ezra kissed her on the cheek and smiled just a little. "I'll be fine. I am just an image. Kind of hard to hurt that. If I can, I'll come back later and let you know what's happening."

Sabine smiled just as tightly, neither of them in the mood to pretend actual humour but vaguely trying to put up a brave front anyway. "Thank you, babe." She watched with sad eyes as Ezra's image winked out, then shook herself back into action. She needed to let Ketsu and the other pilots know what they were flying into. At this point, Sabine assumed the Empire would still be on and around Hoth by the time they got there, even if all of the Rebels were gone. Standard procedure was to investigate every nook and cranny of a Rebel facility to learn as much as they could when capturing one.

After that was done, Sabine had an inner debate with herself about calling her mother. Krownest was only two hours away from Hoth. If she called her now, her Clan could join in the battle as well. The question was whether or not they would be inclined to do so for a sort of disinherited
daughter in a battle to protect a Jedi boy.

Hoping she wouldn't regret it, Sabine punched in her mother's frequency.

When the noises of the digging reached them, Jacen temporarily lost his concentration and his layer of the shield slipped for a moment.

"It's okay, Jacen," Kanan said reassuringly. "Just put it back up."

Jacen frowned in concentration and imagined his rainbow again. "What are we going to do when they get to us, Daddy?"

"Exactly what we are doing, little buddy. We hold the shield and we don't let them in. Help will come eventually," Kanan replied, keeping his voice as steady as possible. He actually didn't know if that would work, but he had to believe it would so that Jacen could too.

"But what about the Dark man? Won't he be able to get in?" Jacen whispered, flinching at the sound of voices that now filtered through the ice.

"Just have faith in the Force, Jacen. We'll get through this. And if for some reason the Darksider does get a hold of you, I want you to remember that you're a Jedi, no matter what he says or does to you. And what is a Jedi?"

Jacen smiled a little. "Jedi are filled with the Force, compassion, peace, and love, and are calm when things go wrong so they can think things through."

Kanan smiled down at his son, sensing that the reminder helped a lot. "Very good. Now, when they break through, you're going to act like nothing's changed and it's just you and me, okay?"

"Okay, Daddy." Jacen devoted his attention to his breathing, feeling the Force whisper reassurances to him, and holding his shield. He could do this. His daddy wouldn't let anything terrible happen to him.

Suddenly they felt a wave of furious impatience hit them and then the ice and snow in front of their shield disappeared like magic. Jacen took one look at the scary figure in black and immediately closed his eyes tight. 'It's just me and my daddy. It's just me and my daddy,' he repeated to himself over and over, ignoring the glare of the black mask.

And then something else occurred that almost broke even Kanan's concentration.

Ezra appeared, kneeling beside Jacen and adding another layer to the shield. He smiled at them cockily as they gawked at him. "Hey, guys. So I figured you two could use a little help. What with tall, dark, and freaky over there."

Kanan chuckled a little. "I am so happy to see you right now, Ezra."

"Me too," Jacen chirped with a happy smile at his big brother.

Ezra's blue eyes twinkled in the light of the lightsabre. "Glad to hear it. You've got help coming in about two and three quarter hours. Between the three of us, we should be able to hold out till then," he whispered in the barest audible tone he could get away with.

Kanan breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank the Force."
Vader wasn't the only one who was taken aback by the sudden appearance of another man inside the shield. The troopers that had regained their feet all gasped in surprise. It took Vader a minute to recognize the blue haired brat he'd wiped the floor with on Malachor, but when he did, his eyes narrowed in thought. This one was supposed to be either dead or missing. And the other Jedi was also supposed to be dead. How then were they here, obviously protecting the little boy. Could they actually be Force Ghosts?

To test his theory, Vader concentrated on the lit lightsabre, turning it off. The little boy gasped and the two men glowed, the older one a lot more than the younger, but Vader didn't think that was of importance. Vader almost smiled in satisfaction. They were ghosts. Excellent. No real threat then. That left him with one obviously Force strong child. Vader instantly had designs on taking the child to train as his own apprentice.

First thing to do was take care of that pesky shield. Vader poured every ounce of concentration into dissolving the shield, but nothing happened. The three calmly meditating Jedi built it back up as fast as he imagined it gone. Frustrated, Vader walked up to the shield to see if he could walk through it. He pushed a hand against it and the shield pushed back.

Vader stepped back again, crossing his arms over his chest while he thought. He couldn't hurt the ghosts, but perhaps... The child. If he threatened the child the ghosts would let down their guard and the shield would drop. Vader concentrated on the lightsabre again. It turned on, floated into the air, and pointed straight at the boy's heart.

Jacen stopped breathing and forgot about holding his layer of the shield, crawling backwards away from the lightsabre that followed him until his backpack bumped into the shield.

Both Ezra and Kanan reached over and grabbed the hilt of the lightsabre with one hand, keeping up the shield with the other. Kanan's eyes met the black mask of Darth Vader. "You will not hurt my son," he growled.

Vader raised a brow in surprise. He actually could sympathize in some small fashion with the dead Jedi, but it mattered not. He stared back at the Jedi ghost and flicked his hand forward, pushing the still lit lightsabre another fraction closer to the trembling boy. "Really? I don't see why not. The boy is destined to either turn to the Dark or die. Which would you prefer, Jedi? I recommend you drop the shield if you want your brat to live."

Kanan poured more Force into his grip on the lightsabre, trying to get it to turn off, but Vader had just the slightest amount of an edge because he'd grabbed it first. "Never. You won't win, Vader."

Jacen stared at the lightsabre in fear, before he registered that the crystal inside was whimpering instead of singing. It didn't want to hurt him, but was being forced to against its will. Jacen closed his eyes and strengthened his connection to the Kyber crystal, and thus the lightsabre itself. With a tiny smirk, Jacen turned off the lightsabre with his mind and heard the crystal sing again in joy. Feeling the Darksider's momentary shock at the change, Jacen took control of the lightsabre entirely, gently tugging it away from Ezra's and his daddy's hold and floated it into his hands.

Vader was impressed with the child. No one had ever done that to him before except his Master. "I will have you as my apprentice, boy. You show much potential."

Jacen shook his head adamantly. "Not in a million years, you sleemo nerfherder."

"Over my already dead body," Kanan said vehemently.

"And mine," Ezra added, allowing Vader to assume he was a ghost as well, because it suited him
for the Empire to think so.

Obi-Wan appeared in front of Vader in his younger persona. "I won't let you have the boy either."
Obi-Wan flung out a hand, sending Vader flying backwards several metres into the connecting
doorway's wall. Obi-Wan walked calmly over to his ex-apprentice and looked down at him as he
wheezed in air. "This one is not for you and never will be. Understand that he is protected by many
and shall never fall into your hands."

Vader struggled to his feet and then stood staring down at the ghost of his old Master, not saying a
word for a minute. "So be it, Kenobi. My son is better anyway," he said in disdain. (Hoping his
words were true, because he actually didn't know.) With a wave of his hand, Vader collapsed the
ice back around the shield, thoroughly burying the child again. "If I can't have him, then no one
shall." Vader turned on his heel and strode away, gesturing for his troopers to follow.

Vader had left the partially destroyed base before he noticed that the presence he was actually
searching for could no longer be felt. If steam could erupt from his helmet, then it would have, he
was so pissed off.

As his shuttle took off from the ground, he commed the Star Destroyers still in orbit. "Destroy the
base. I don't want there to be a single block of ice left when you're done."

"Yes, My Lord," came the prompt reply.

As the ice closed them in again, Jacen crawled back to his position in the middle of the ice covered
dome. He put the lightsaber back on the ground and turned it back on with his mind, just because
he could. Settling back into his kneeling position, Jacen put his layer of the shield back up. "We're
back. In the ice," he said with a completely straight face at his own mocking joke.

Kanan laughed and grinned down at his son, wishing he could ruffle his hair. "Yes, we are. But at
least the Sith Lord is gone."

Ezra smiled at Jacen from his other side. "Sabine's coming. She'll get us out as soon as she gets
here."

Obi-Wan appeared in front of them, kneeling as well, smiling in an apologetic fashion. "I'm afraid
it won't be as simple as that." He raised his hands and added his own layer to the shield.

"What do you m..." Kanan started. But the sound of the glacier exploding around them was answer
enough. "Well, that sucks," he said as the weight on their shield increased tenfold.

Ezra winced as the sound of multiple explosions echoed through to them. "I think that might be an
understatement, Kanan."

There was the sound of faint laughter and then the four Jedi settled into a peaceful meditation
while they held the shield and waited for someone to come rescue Jacen.

After taking out his frustrations on the Officers who'd let the Millennium Falcon escape, Vader
ordered most of his fleet of Star Destroyers to search the nearby asteroid field for the missing
freighter. He left the last ten ISDs in orbit around the white planet, under the command of General
Veer, in case someone who was actually still alive returned to Hoth to try to rescue the boy.

Two and a half hours later.
General Veers cringed as another ISD went down in flames under the assault of the Rebel forces that had shown up. With great reluctance, he placed a comm call to the Executor, Vader's flag ship. Veers put on a game face and stood straight and tall, hands resting at the small of his back, as Lord Vader's holo image appeared in front of him. "My Lord, I regret to inform you that we are being defeated as we speak. The Rebels arrived en force. They have little fighters that look vaguely like TIEs but I've never seen them before. There must be at least fifty of them and they're taking out our TIEs almost faster than we can deploy them."

Vader was not impressed. "You have over seven hundred TIEs at your command and you can't take out fifty Rebel fighters?"

Vees resisted the urge to flinch at both Vader's tone and the explosion he heard from the depths of his own ship. "I regret to say not, My Lord. Their fighters have shields and ours don't," he explained. "And that's not all," he continued before Vader could disparage him further. "There's also Mandalorian fighters. At least twenty of them of varying sizes. I just watched a group of their warriors disembark on one of our ISD's and take it out by HAND by running around on the hull and blowing up anything they could before flying off with their jetpacks. I think they're on my ship now, from the sounds of things."

"Is that all?" Vader asked in a deadly calm voice.

This time, Veers did flinch. "No, My Lord. A Rebel Corvette with a company of a dozen X-Wings dropped out of hyperspace just before I called you. The last I saw, they were going after the last ISD not already in flames."

"I see," Vader said. "I'm sorry things have gone so poorly. If you can make it to an escape pod, I might consider sending someone to pick you up eventually, only because you did win the battle on the planet. You can consider yourself demoted though, Lieutenant," Vader finished with pointedly before abruptly turning off the comm.

Vees sighed in relief. That had actually gone much better than expected. He made the call to abandon ship and took off at a run with the rest of his bridge officers, praying that they made it to the escape pods before the ship blew up.

Vader turned away from the holo emitter and went back to the windows to stare out at the asteroid field. Kenobi hadn't been lying when he said the boy had a large number of people willing to die for him. He was guessing the shielded fighters were Thrawn's Defenders that Lothal had claimed for themselves. The Mandalorians were a surprise of sorts. Although now that he thought about it, he was pretty sure one of Jedi Jarrus' associates had been a Mandalorian Countess. Or was it the heir to the Countess? Whatever. It made no difference either way. Ever since the Mandalorians had won their world back, neither Vader nor the Emperor had been interested in trying to reclaim it. Just like Lothal, it had lost its usefulness and would be better left as an example to blow up later when the second Death Star was completed. The Corvette and the X-Wings were self explanatory, being typical Rebel ships.

Vader spared a brief thought for the boy's mother, wondering who the Jedi had a relationship with before he died, but decided it was unimportant. If the Rebels were that determined to protect the green haired boy, they'd probably be just as enthusiastic about his mysterious mother. Wait. Green hair. Pointed ears. Twi'lek hybrid. Vader smiled. Sort of. He knew the mother. General Syndulla the second. Quite the family, that one, always causing the Empire grief like a pesky mosquito.

If the Jedi brat survived the destruction of the glacier, the Rebellion was welcome to him. By the time he was old enough to do any damage as an actual Jedi, Vader fully intended to have all of the
boy’s associated worlds obliterated and the Rebellion thoroughly squashed. And if things played out the way he hoped, he'd have his son at his side and Darth Sidious would be no more. Vader would take over ruling the galaxy, the way he'd planned since the day he'd realized that his Master had lied to him about Padme and his child.

As the surviving Imperial forces flew their escape pods in the general direction of an asteroid field about a two hour flight away in a crawling pod, Sabine opened a general comm channel to everyone who’d shown up to fight the battle with her, many of which she hadn't been expecting. She hadn't heard back from Ezra, which she hoped meant that Ezra was still with Jacen, but continued on with her plan anyway.

"Thank you, everyone, for helping with that. It's been a long time since I got to hand the Imps their asses on a platter, and I have to say, that was rather fun." Sabine heard quite a lot of laughter and agreements in response over the comm. "I'm heading down to the base now. You can stay if you want. All I know for sure is that Jacen is down there somewhere, buried, but presumably alive."

She closed the comm and flew down to the base. Or at least, what was left of it. Somehow, she wasn't surprised when every ship and fighter followed her. As Sabine got closer, she could see the ruins of the battle, lit by the reflection of two of Hoth's three moons on the white snow. There were downed AT-ATs and snowspeeders, bodies everywhere with wampas already feasting on them, and the blackened circle that used to be the shield generator. Sabine narrowed her eyes in anger at the nearest wampa eating a body and fired at it. Soon, every wampa had been taken out as the other fighters followed her lead.

Sabine landed the Lothhawk near the ruined base, but away from the bodies. She walked down the ramp and up to where the big hangar door used to be, staring at the mass of snow particles and ice chunks that was once a glacier with hallways and rooms and people running through it. She was so dismayed at what she saw, she barely even felt the chill of the Hoth night, which was twice as cold as the day.

Sabine stood there so long that her mother, Tristan, Ketsu, Bo-Katan and her husband, Fenn Rau-Kryze, Kallus, and a dozen other leaders of various clans came to stand beside her, with the rest of the roughly three hundred people falling into rough lines behind them.

"How are we supposed to find one small boy in all of that?” someone that Sabine didn't know finally voiced from behind her.

Sabine shook her head, because she didn't know. A scanner would never give an accurate reading through that much snow.

Ezra opened his eyes as he felt Sabine's presence draw near. He also felt her despair, which would never do. Ezra cleared his throat quietly to get the attention of Kanan and Obi-Wan, not wanting to wake up Jacen who'd fallen into an exhausted slumber more than an hour ago. Frankly, Ezra was impressed with how long the boy had lasted. His little brother was already way stronger than Ezra had been in the Force when Ezra was four times as old. When the other two Jedi opened their eyes and acknowledged Ezra with a curious look, Ezra nodded in the general direction of his wife. "Sabine's here. I need to go show her where to dig or we could be here forever," he whispered.

Kanan and Obi-Wan just nodded, resigned to taking even more of the load.

"I'll be back as fast as I can," Ezra promised before disappearing and reappearing beside Sabine. He heard a rather large gasp in chorus behind them but ignored it.
Sabine looked at him, relief in her eyes, noting how transparent his image was compared to normal and the exhaustion on his face. "Ezra. Thank the Force. Please tell me you know where Jacen is?"

Ezra nodded and led the giant group of people around the width of the glacier bits to the far side and about half a kilometre down before leaping up onto the mess. Ezra closed his eyes, clasped his hands together and pushed them apart out to the sides in a flinging motion, sending a large amount of the debris flying, leaving a fair sized crater a few metres in front of him. He turned to Sabine as she clambered up and stood beside him. He nodded to the hole he made. "He's down there, maybe another five metres deep. I wish I could dig out more for you, but I have to go help hold the shield again. Kanan and Obi-Wan are getting very tired."

Sabine nodded, face set in determination, noting that he didn't mention his own depletion of energy. "Don't worry. We'll work fast."

Ezra brushed a ghostly hand over her cheek in loving gratitude and disappeared again.

Sabine turned to her mother, who had climbed up behind her. "Please tell me you brought the shovels?"

Ursa nodded and sent a look to Tristan, who immediately gathered up a vast group of Clan Wren and they took off back to the ships in a brisk jog, used to running in the snow. She put a supporting hand on Sabine's shoulder. "Don't worry, daughter. We'll rescue the little ad'ika. There are many hands here. The work will go quickly."

There were enough shovels and space to work for about half of the people there. Kallus took control of the rest and organized a retrieval of the deceased, wrapping up what was left of the remains and putting them in the cargo hold of the corvette. They'd figure out who was who later.

Despite the large number of people helping, it took an hour to remove five metres worth of ice chunks and snow. There was a cheer as the people who were anything but cold despite the very sub zero temperatures finally caught sight of the top of the shield and the four figures inside it, lit by the blue glow of Kanan's faithful lightsabre.

Sabine tossed her shovel aside as it became clear that they'd dug far enough and were practically standing on top of the shield. "Now what?" she called down to Ezra from her perch on the sloped snow.

Ezra looked up at her with a tired smile on his face. "We're going to drop the shield and throw him up to you at the same time. The snow might collapse, so you should all get up higher. Don't worry about us though. Kanan and Obi-Wan will go back into the Force and I'll go back to my body. Don't expect me for my next usual visit, though, cyar'ika. I'll probably be sleeping, but I promise I'll see you again in a day."

Sabine smiled understandingly and blew him a kiss, which made him grin a little. Just before she turned to scramble up higher with the others who'd already started to retreat, Kanan called to her.

"Sabine, tell Hera that I'll come see her as soon as I've recharged a little."

"Don't worry, Kanan, I will," she called back, then made for the top of the snow pile. "I'm ready," she called down.

Ezra tucked Kanan's lightsabre into Jacen's backpack and then lifted the boy up with the Force. He nodded at Kanan and Obi-Wan and they dropped the shield at the same time that Ezra flung Jacen up to Sabine's waiting arms with a big Force push. Without the support of the shield, the snow
immediately began to shift around and collapse. The three Jedi were long gone before their space was filled in.

Sabine held Jacen tightly as the snow moved around under her feet for half a minute and then settled again. She gazed down into his peaceful looking face while he slept, completely oblivious to the fact that he'd been rescued and that three different factions of Rebels had rescued him. She hugged him closer with one arm while the other hand brushed a lock of green hair to the side fondly. "You are one lucky kid," she whispered to him. Sabine walked carefully over the snow to the edge of what used to be a glacier and stopped for a moment so everyone could see that they'd been successful. The cheer that erupted made her smile and want to hold him up like a prize trophy, but she refrained. Instead, she handed him down to Tristan, who handed him to Kallus and so on until he made it back down to ground level.

Sabine climbed down the snowy mess just as the Ghost appeared in the sky above them, practically jumping right into the atmosphere if Sabine wasn't mistaken. She thought about chiding Hera for taking such a risk, but then thought that if she'd been in the same position, she might have done the same. Sabine retrieved a still sleeping Jacen from her mother and walked quickly over to where the Ghost had landed as close to the people as it safely could. The ramp opened and Hera ran down, followed by Chopper and the guys. There were tears streaming from her eyes as she met Sabine halfway and practically snatched her son from Sabine's arms.

Hera hugged her son close, crying into his hair, so thankful that he seemed alright, if sleeping soundly. After a few minutes, she managed to get herself together enough and look up at all the people who'd come to rescue her son. "Thank you," she whispered, as that's all that came out of her closed throat. Hera wiped her eyes and cleared her throat and tried again, calling out in nice loud voice that could be heard by all. "Thank you. Thank you so much. I owe you all a great debt."

The Countess was the first to shake her head, stepping forward and meeting Hera's eyes. "You owe us nothing, Hera. You and yours have done so much for the galaxy, we all owe you. Rescuing your son is an honour that Clan Wren is proud to do."

Every single person nodded in agreement with the Countess and smiled at Hera. Hera smiled gratefully back, squeezing Jacen to her just a little tighter.

Jacen finally woke up, blinking his eyes sleepily and then smiling at his mama, reaching up to touch the tear streaks on her face. "Mama, you wouldn't believe the great adventure I had while you were gone!"

Hera choked on a laugh / sob and buried her face in his hair for a moment before meeting his smiling eyes. "You'll have to tell me all about it, baby."

So Jacen did, wrapping his arms around his mama's neck as she walked back towards the Ghost. "First, Unkie Luke went missing and then Mr. Solo went to find him in the cold..."

Sabine couldn't help the dopey smile she was wearing as she watched mother and son retreat to the safety of the Ghost, followed by her crew except for Zeb, who'd made a beeline for Kallus to talk to in a very animated fashion. She glanced at her own mother, who stood at her side. "I guess we all go home now."

The Countess nodded slowly, looking back at the crowd who'd already had the same idea for the most part. "I guess we do." Ursa touched her daughter's cheek with the back of her fingers gently. "Until the next time we meet, daughter." The Countess turned and started organizing her Clan, who were already gathering up shovels and heading back to their ships.
Ketsu strolled up to Sabine and gazed after the Countess. "You know, Sabine? If I'd made a bet six years ago that you and your mother would never act like you were related again, I would have lost big time."

Sabine chuckled. "I would have lost, too. It's ironic that it was Jedi that brought us back together and actually made our relationship better than it ever was. I don't know if she's realized that yet."

Ketsu grinned. "I won't tell her if you won't."

Sabine sighed as they started trudging through the snow back towards Ketsu's purple streaked Defender. "I wish the same had happened for you and your father."

Ketsu shrugged. "I wish I could say that too and that it didn't still hurt, but I'm okay with it. I have a wonderful husband and son and a best friend who would fly across the galaxy to rescue us if it ever came to that. What more can a girl ask for?"

Sabine smiled and pulled Ketsu into a very quick hug. "Nothing, Ketsu, but we still unofficially belong to Clan Crazy."

Ketsu burst into laughter and started climbing up the wing of her Defender. "And I wouldn't have it any other way!" she called over her shoulder.

Sabine laughed as well. "I'll see you at home in a bit. I'm going to spend a few hours with Hera first."

Ketsu nodded in understanding just before dropping into the hatch of her fighter.

Not far away, Sabine spotted Bo-Katan and Fenn climbing up the ramp of their ship. She ran over, catching the Mand'alor's attention with a call. They turned back around and smiled warmly at Sabine with questioning expressions. Sabine stopped at the bottom of the ramp. "I just wanted to thank you for helping. I thought when I called my mother that I would be shot down. I was surprised when she agreed to come. I was even more surprised when you and the other Clans showed up with her."

Bo-Katan shrugged with a smile shining from her green eyes. "Your mother was hosting a Clan meeting. When we heard where she was going, the rest of us couldn't let your Clan have all of the fun. It's been about a year since we've had a proper battle to fight as well. I think we all enjoyed it. I may even consider allowing those who wish to to join General Syndulla's Rebellion. There's more than one warrior getting restless in our Clan and I'm sure other Clans have the same problem. We don't know how to be peaceful for long. Better to fight the Empire than ourselves."

Sabine blinked for a moment and then smiled widely. "I'm sure Hera would be thrilled to have our warriors join her cause. We Mandos are the best fighters in the galaxy after all."

Bo-Katan grinned back. "Perhaps a slight exaggeration, but I won't dispute it." She shared an amused smile with Fenn and they said their farewells to Sabine before continuing up the ramp into their Kom'r'k fighter.

Sabine waved goodbye as their fighter took off, followed by the rest of the Mandalorians and the Defenders. She turned to where Zeb and Kallus were still talking and walked over to them. Sabine raised a brow at Kallus. "You surprised me when you showed up."

Kallus raised his own brow in return, a small smile tilting his lips up. "You surprised me as well when we dropped out of hyperspace to a battle already taking place. I never even thought that you would be here too."
Sabine grinned. "You should know me better than that by now, Kallus. My family means everything to me and I will do anything to keep them safe. I heard Jacen was in trouble and poof! Here I am." She looked at him curiously. "How did you know Jacen needed help?"

Kallus shrugged, hands tucked into his pockets as he finally started to feel the cold now that he wasn't working anymore. "I actually didn't. Not for sure. But I had a feeling. So I came running."

Zeb clapped his friend on the back with a grin. "Perhaps you're turning into a Jedi, Kal," he teased.

Kallus rolled his eyes. "I better not be. We have enough craziness in this family without my going all spooky too."

Sabine smiled and watched them banter back and forth for a few more minutes, wishing her own spooky Jedi could be here in person. She sighed to herself and headed for the Ghost with a wave goodbye to Kallus. Sabine wanted to spend some time with Hera, just knowing that Hera would need the support of another girl right now. Sabine knew how terrified she'd felt about the whole buried Jacen thing. She couldn't imagine how much worse Hera had it. It didn't even bear thinking about what would have happened to Jacen if he didn't have a ghost for a father who could appear in an instant. Sabine was glad she wasn't raising a child in this war torn galaxy. Even if Lothal was peaceful right now, there was no guarantee that it would stay that way. Until the Empire was defeated for sure, Sabine was content with her life as just a wife, albeit a part time one for the moment. If wishing could have changed that to full time, Sabine would have had Ezra back four years ago.

Just before walking up the ramp, Sabine stopped and looked up at the stars. "Hurry up and find him, Ahsoka. I want my Ez'ika," she whispered.

A/N: So I had some delusions of grandeur when I first envisioned this chapter. In my original mind draft, I had Obi-Wan and Vader fighting it out with lightsabres (Obi-Wan was using Kanan's.), and Obi-Wan kicked Vader's butt from one side of the base to the other, possibly even chopping off an arm or two. (Something we all wished had been in Episode IV, I'm sure.) Unfortunately I couldn't make this work for two reasons. One, I'm really not that good at writing fight scenes, so I couldn't even begin to do it justice. (My dad suggested I get some actors and cameras and film it. I replied I would need a few million to do the scene in my head and he laughed.) Two, I couldn't figure out how to get Kanan's lightsabre out of the shield without Vader taking advantage and getting in.

The other thing I had planned for this chapter was for Jacen to actually get caught by Vader and they would have to rescue him from the Executor, which would have been a very convoluted scene that I just couldn't figure out how to fit within the bounds of the movie. What I did write, I think does fit within the movie with maybe only one or two tiny plot holes that I might have missed, but I spent days researching as many facts as I could to make this as canon compliant as possible. (Silly, I know, considering a good chunk of my story is anything but, but I just felt like it needed to be that way.)

Anyway, I hope you liked what I did write. I agonized over this chapter forever. It has a million scene changes that I hope flowed well enough, and another million characters who all wanted screen time in my head but the chapter would have gone on forever if I actually gave them all the time they deserved. (My apologies to the characters.) You guys are just going to have to imagine Hera's agonizing five hour journey from Endor to Hoth, Kallus'
conversation with Mothma and Ackbar when he said he was going on an apparent wild goose chase, Sabine's conversation with her mother when she asked for more help, and so on and so forth.

Thank you for reading.

MaybeImARebel
Hanleia, Finally!

A/N: The beginning of this chapter references deleted scenes from Episode V. The first being the extended scene before Leia kisses Luke and the second being the alternate kissing scene between Leia and Han. (The deleted version is better in my opinion and kriffing hot.)

Hanleia, Finally!

D349/3 ABY, Asteroid Field

Leia was in a bad mood. Actually. Let's call it a VERY bad mood.

Absolutely nothing was going right lately. Not that it ever usually did, but the last two days were just that much worse than normal that she was ready to shoot the next thing she saw, and if that happened to be a certain hotshot pilot, she wouldn't mind.

First, Luke went missing. Than Han went chasing after him. Then she abandoned a baby to his own devices on a base that was frequently overrun by wampas. Thank the Force Jacen was a good kid and attached himself to another adult instead of wandering off. Then she spent a sleepless night worrying about Luke and Han, despite Jacen's reassurances that they were okay. Then Han said he was leaving. Then Luke said he was leaving too. Then she KISSED Luke just to spite Han. She was still cringing at that stupid idea. Not that kissing Luke was terrible or anything, but it felt like she was kissing a brother, and now she worried that he'd have even more wrong idea's about the two of them getting together. Before they were interrupted, she was ninety percent sure Luke was about to confess to being in love with her. And then there actually WAS a wampa in the base, shortly followed by the Empire showing up and kicking their butts in a frankly embarrassing fashion.

And now here she was, trapped in this stupid cave, in this stupid ship that should have been recycled for spare metal parts years ago, on an asteroid with the Empire flying around above them, making escape impossible. Then again, this stupid ship was still barely functional, despite the hours of repairs they'd already done. As long as she could remember, Han and Chewie had been repairing their ship, like it never could be fixed properly again. Why couldn't they have a nice ship like Hera's? She never saw Hera constantly having to jury rig things together to make her freighter fly. Hera did regular maintenance and promptly fixed things that broke in battles or whatever. It was hard to believe that the two ships both came from the same ship building company. Then again, if you compared the two pilots, it made perfect sense.

Leia didn't know what to do about Han anymore. They were so different, and fought like slavering mookas over a bone about absolutely anything and nothing. And yet... Despite saying he was leaving many many times over the last four years, he was still here. They'd even come close to having a civilized conversation a few times over the years that had made her think that maybe, just maybe, they could work it out and finally give in to the attraction between them that sparked like a wildfire whenever they were close to each other for longer than a second. But then he'd say something stupid again and Leia would get frustrated and they'd be back at the beginning. She was twenty-two years old (almost twenty-three) and had never had a boyfriend. It was bloody sad. She'd turned down so many offers of dates over the years, all because of her attraction to that stupid nerfherder who was way too old for her anyway. What was she doing? Why couldn't she just fall for Luke, who was sweet and noble and her own age? Or there was Wedge, who was only a few years older, and was one of the hottest pilots in the Rebellion. He'd asked her out a few times
whenever he was between girlfriends, but Leia'd never been able to make herself say yes, because that just never felt right either. She'd once had a bit of crush on Ezra, before meeting Han, because Ezra, despite being a bit goofy, was a genuinely nice person and gorgeous and her age as well, but she'd never gone after him either, somehow just knowing that Ezra only had eyes for Sabine, even before she'd seen them together.

Anyway, back to her bad mood...

She mentally growled at the part she was welding back together, cursing the stupid ship that couldn't stay together if you paid it to. With a silent 'Ha,' of triumph she finished what she was doing and hung up her goggles and reached to push a connecting part back into place. And promptly began cursing again is it refused to connect properly.

Then Han wandered in, putting his arms around her, trying to be all helpful, but Leia wasn't in the mood and shouldered him off to the side, determined to finish what she'd started on her own.

"Heyyyy! Your Worship. I'm only trying to help." Han protested.

Leia couldn't take it anymore. She'd heard more than her share of Your Worships and Highnesses. All it did was remind her that she didn't have a home anymore. Or parents. "Would you please stop calling me that," she gritted out while still fighting with the obstinate part.

"Sure, Leia," Han said apologetically.

Leia huffed a sigh. Wow. He actually knew her real name. "You make it so difficult sometimes," she vented.

"I know. I really do," Han admitted. "You could be a little nicer though," he pointed it. "Come on. Admit it. Sometimes you think I'm alright."

Leia FINALLY got the cursed part to cooperate, but pinched the skin of her finger in the process. She stifled the urge to curse and raised her hand to her mouth reflexively. Leia turned to Han.

"Occasionally. Maybe. When you aren't acting like a scoundrel." Han grabbed her sore hand and massaged the hurt away, sending tingles through Leia that she was doing her best to ignore.

"Scoundrel? Scoundrel. I like the sound of that," Han said as he held her hand to his chest and looked into the prettiest chocolate brown eyes in the galaxy.

Leia knew she had to stop this before it went any further. The nerfherder was leaving after all. She glanced at their joined hands. "Stop that," she said softer than she intended. His ministrations were making flutters go through her and they were going straight to her head.

"Stop what?" Han said innocently.

"Stop that," she said again, frantically thinking up an excuse. "My hands are dirty."

Han just kept his smouldering eye contact and kept caressing her hand. "My hands are dirty too. What are you afraid of?" he asked as he leaned a little closer.

Leia reared back a bit. "Afraid?"

Han leaned closer still. "You're trembling," he whispered.

Leia shook her head in denial, even as her body shook with desire. "I'm not trembling," she whispered back.
Han was only millimetres from his goal now. "Maybe because I'm a scoundrel. I'm the scoundrel in your life," he mumbled.

Leia was still shaking her head. "I happen to like nice men."

Han nodded a little. "I'm a nice man." One more fraction to go.

"No you're not, you're..." Leia managed to get out just before Han closed the last distance between their mouths, her hand still held to his chest. Leia closed her eyes as passion roared through her and Han kissed her like she was his only air to breathe. Now THIS was amazing. Leia pulled back a fraction and met Han's pleading, passionate eyes. "Okay, hotshot." He smiled in relief and she pulled her hand out of his grasp and wrapped it around his neck, pressing closer to his hard body as he put an arm around her back and they kissed passionately for five blissful seconds, finally indulging in the spark that flew between them.

And then Threepio had to ruin it all, tapping on Han's shoulder. "Sir. Sir. I've isolated the reverse power coupling."

Han growled a little in his throat and pushed the droid out of the room. "Thank you," he said, sarcasm dripping that went right over the droid's head. "Thank you very much."

Leia made her escape while she could, heart pounding and limbs trembling. Oh Force, what had she started? That was more passion than she'd ever experienced in her whole life and it scared her more than she cared to admit. So she ran. Not that she got very far. Or could go very far for that matter, being stuck in this ship.

Han cursed when he turned around and saw just a glimpse of Leia's white clothes disappearing out the other door. Stupid kriffing droid with his terrible timing. He wished he could melt him down and sell the scrap metal for whatever credits it was worth. He'd been waiting four kriffing long years for an opportunity like this to show up, and it finally does, and then Threepio just had to stick his big mouth in. No matter how many times he'd told himself to leave the Rebellion behind because it wasn't good for a person's health, he never did, not able to leave the snarky Princess. He felt an overwhelming need to take care of the tiny woman that he just couldn't shake no matter how much he tried.

He kept saying he was leaving, hoping it would prompt some kind of reaction from her. Preferably a 'please don't leave me, I love you,' kind. But that's never what he got. Then she went and kissed the kid right in front of him, and Han had thought his chances with her were officially shot. But now...? Han saw a glimmer of hope that he clung to like a lifeline. She'd kissed him back. Really kissed him back. There were tongues and everything, and possibly even a whimper. No way was he letting her get away now and let her have too much time to think and change her mind.

Han ran after her, catching up in the common area at the centre of the ship. "Leia! Stop please," he called as she was about to walk down the hallway that led to one of only two cabins that actually had a bunk in them. She'd appropriated his for herself, even though all of his stuff was in it.

Leia turned at Han's call, not sure what to think. He stopped right in front of her, a desperate look on his handsome face. "What, Han?"

"Please, Leia. Please give us a chance," Han begged. "I know I'm not the galaxy's greatest guy, and I'm not a superhero type like Luke, and maybe I am a little scruffy looking. But please. Don't walk away from me now. I worship the ground you walk on. Why do you think I call you that all the time?"
Leia shook her head, eyes wide at the confessions pouring out of Han.

Han continued. "Because I do. I worship you. You're so far above me, a worthless scumrat from Corellia, but all I ever wanted was a chance with you. So please. This is me begging, something I've never done for anyone, and I swear I'm never doing again. If you want me at all, it's now or never. Or if you'd rather have Luke, just tell me, and I'll go away forever."

Leia's heart froze at the thought of never seeing Han again. She could feel her limbs trembling at all the emotions she was trying to contain. The fear. The passion. The love. Oh Force, the love. She'd been hiding it from herself for so long, but it was the only explanation for why she couldn't bear to be parted from Han's company for long. Biting her trembling lower lip, Leia took the step that closed the distance between them and cupped Han's face in her hands, searching his hazel eyes and seeing only the utmost sincerity staring back at her. "Han," she whispered. "All I ever wanted was you."

Han groaned, wrapped her in his arms, lifting her slight weight just a little, and mashed their mouths together in a fury of passion that was anything but elegant. After a minute of frantic kissing, his brain sort of turned back on and he gentled his mouth on hers, trying for a little more finesse before he completely scared her off. Fortunately for him, Leia didn't seem to mind his out of control moment. In fact, she seemed to be trying to climb up higher in his arms. Han pulled back a little, grinned at his Princess, and picked her up all the way and twirled her around in a circle a few times, laughing.

Leia wrapped her arms around his neck tighter, giggling at the most joy she'd ever seen on Han's usually grumpy face. Apparently kissing was all he needed to lighten his personality. She'd have to remember that in the future, maybe for the next time he tried to get in argument over something stupid.

Han came to a stop, stared at the woman in his arms in awe for a moment, then let go with one arm, tucking it under her knees instead, lifting her higher and holding her closer to his heart, where she belonged. "You just made me the happiest man in the galaxy, sweetheart." He glanced towards the cabins, a question in his eyes that he was afraid to voice.

Leia looked down the hallway as well and thought for a moment, knowing this decision would officially change her life forever. She looked back at Han, his expression waiting patiently but not expectantly, letting her know that he was fine with whatever she decided. That was the deciding factor for her. Leia sighed and laid her head on his shoulder, one hand playing with his soft, shaggy brown hair. "Yes."

With that one word, Han's chest tightened with emotion; joy, love, and fear all fighting for dominance. He was terrified he'd not be good enough to please her. Ecstatic that she wasn't going to make him wait another three years before letting him in her bed. And so ridiculously in love with her, it hurt. Han pushed the fear away, telling himself to calm down and just go with it. He smiled softly down at the beautiful goddess in his arms and kissed her forehead before taking the first step towards his new life of being Leia's man. There was no question in his mind that he'd never leave her again as long as she wanted him at her side. At least as long as nothing unforeseen happened. (Like Jabba sending a bounty hunter or ten after him.) That thought made him wince a little, but he kept walking. With the crazy life they lived, who knew when he'd get another chance to love her?

Leia snuggled deeper into Han's firm chest, feeling safe and cherished for the first time in too many years. Every since her parents were murdered by the Death Star, she'd thrown herself into the running of the Rebellion, surrounding herself with as many people as possible, but not really feeling like she was part of a family anymore. She had some very close friends that came close,
like Hera and Luke, but the sense of belonging to someone had been missing. But now, in Han's arms, that feeling was back and it made her heart soar.

Han stopped in front of the door to his cabin and Leia helpfully hit the button to open it with her boot, grinning a little at her ingenuity. Han grinned back at her, walking in a cloud of happiness he hadn't felt for a very very long time. Hopefully this cloud would last a lot longer than his last relationship that he'd put his faith in, back when he was still a naive teenager.

Han placed Leia down on the bunk gently, pressing a quick kiss to her smiling mouth, before straightening back up and walking the two steps back to the door, closing AND locking it, not wanting any more interruptions by a certain annoying gold droid. He walked back to the bunk, then stood staring down at Leia while she looked up at him expectantly. "Uhh. I know this isn't really an easy thing to ask, but have you ever done this before? And are you on anything?"

Leia's face reddened in embarrassment, causing her to sit up and put her back against the wall and wrap her arms around her raised knees. She reluctantly shook her head, too mortified to speak.

Now Han was feeling decidedly uncomfortable as well. "Was that a no to the first or the second?" he cringed as he asked, but this was too important to ignore.

Leia shuddered in a breath and whispered, "Both. No to both."

Han ran a frustrated hand through his hair. This was a problem. He could deal with the first problem. Actually, it kind of made him preen a little that she'd never been with another guy and he'd be her first, and hopefully her only. It was the second that was going to cause a few issues. The random girls he'd had relations with in the past had all been on contraceptive shots, and those weren't exactly something he kept in stock in his rather sparse medkit. "Okay," he breathed out in a huff. "We can make this work. There's always the old fashioned way."

Leia looked up at him like he'd lost his mind. "The what?"

Han shrugged out of his jacket and toed off his boots, then slowly settled on the bed beside her, leaning back against the wall as well, sensing Leia was on the verge of bolting out of the room. "I'll tell you later." He raised a knee and casually rested his arm across it, leaning his head against the wall and staring up at the ceiling, desperately trying to think of something to talk about that would settle her down again. He blurted out the first thing that came to mind. "Soooo. That kiss you gave Luke. That was just to make me jealous, wasn't it?"

Leia shot him a look, then smacked his arm. "You're still a nerfherder, you know that?"

Han rolled his head over and smirked at her with a twinkle in his eyes. "Of course. Well...?"

Leia rolled her eyes, but relaxed a little, turning towards him a bit. "Yes, you cocky moron, it was meant to drive you nuts."

Han grinned, not offended in the least by her insults. He'd been called so much worse by so many different people, he just let them go right over his head. And really, at this point, he'd decided that her insults were actually terms of affection. "Did you like it?"

Leia smacked his arm again. "You're not supposed to ask that. It's rude."

Han just looked at her with a raised brow.

Leia huffed, knowing he'd wait until he got the answer he was looking for. "No. Okay? It was like kissing a family member. Affection but no real passion."
Han's eyes lit up and he leaned a little closer. "But it's good with me?"

Leia leaned closer too. "Now you're just fishing for compliments. I don't think your ego needs any help."

Han pouted a little then grinned. "You do think it's good with me. You'd tell me I sucked otherwise."

Leia just shrugged, not willing to admit anything one way or another. She closed the remaining distance between them so that she was looking right in Han's mirth filled eyes. "I'm not opposed to doing it again, if you like," she admitted.

Han thought a silent thank you to whomever. "Gladly," he whispered against her lips, reaching over and tilting her head just right with a finger under her chin.

Leia sighed into the gentle kiss. He was so GOOD at this. There was something to be said for falling for a guy almost thirteen years older than her; at least one of them knew what they were doing.

Somehow, all while kissing her senseless, Leia found herself being undressed by Han's deft fingers. One moment she was wearing a vest and then she wasn't. Then her boots disappeared. Then her shirt and slacks. Everything came to a stop after that as Han paused to look at the second layer of long sleeved thermal shirt and leggings that still covered her from neck to toes. He chuckled a little. "This is definitely the most layers I've ever taken off a woman."

Leia wasn't sure if she should be offended or not. On the one hand, it sort of confirmed that he hadn't been sleeping around on Echo Base, because practically everyone wore double layers there. On the other, she'd rather not hear about his previous conquests. "Just shut up and kiss me again," she commanded.

Han smiled knowingly and cupped the back of her head, pressing his mouth to hers and delving his tongue into her waiting mouth, loving how sweet she tasted. He put his undressing mission on hold for the moment to feel for the pins that were holding the braid together on her head. With a mental smirk of success (since his mouth was busy right now), he finally got her hair undone. Cascades of silky brown stuff fell over his hand. Han pulled back and looked at Leia in shock as she reached up and finished undoing the now loose braid and shook out her hair. "Holy nerf, that's a lot of hair!" he exclaimed. "No wonder you keep it braided."

Leia ran a hand through it self consciously and glanced down at the bed. "You don't like it?"

Han raised her chin back up with one hand while letting waves of it fall through the fingers of his other hand. "No. I love it. It's beautiful." He looked her in the eyes, so she knew he meant it. "You're beautiful."

Leia beamed at him and threw herself at him, knocking him onto his back, surrounding them in her almost waist length hair. She ran her own hands through his thick shaggy collar length hair. "You're not so bad looking yourself, hotshot. And I'm sorry I called you scruffy looking. You actually clean up pretty nice when you try."

Han laughed and wrapped his arms around her back, grabbing fistfuls of the silky hair. "From you, Princess, that must mean I'm pretty kriffing hot."

Leia rolled her eyes, but kissed him anyway for a minute. "Still an egomaniac," she whispered teasingly.
Han captured her mouth again to move things back in the direction he wanted, all the while removing the rest of her clothes and his own, his hands exploring the curves he uncovered as they appeared. Her skin was so satiny soft, he could stroke it all day. And despite being tiny, she had proper lush curves in all the right places.

Leia found herself on her back with no memory of how she got there and Han's mouth worshipping her breasts and his hands stroking up and down her sides and along the length of her legs, making shivers battle with the jolts of electricity his mouth was sending through her with his sucking of her nipples. One of her hands clenched in his hair and the other did a little exploring of her own as she felt the muscles of his back and ran down to his backside. (A backside she'd admired on the sly for a very long time.)

When Han started kissing a path down her torso and over her stomach, she looked at him in surprise. He couldn't actually be aiming for where she thought he was aiming, could he? Leia gasped as his mouth landed on her clit and she closed her eyes in amazed bliss. Yes. Apparently he was. She opened her legs a little wider, perfectly happy to let him do whatever he wanted to her if he made her feel like that.

Han glanced up and smiled at the expression on her face. His princess looked like she was in heaven, which meant he was doing it right. Returning to his mission of making her cry in ecstasy, Han added a hand to his ministrations of her core, finger carefully probing her tight opening, finding it wet already. He slipped a finger inside, all the while working her clit and raising his other hand back up her body and squeezing a luscious breast, keeping her distracted. He gradually worked her sheath open a little at a time, preparing her for his cock that was frantically telling him it had been WAY too long since it last had any attention. Han did his best to ignore the mindless length, instead concentrating on making Leia come. He breathed a sigh of relief when she finally tightened around the fingers he had in her pussy and gently bit her clit, sending her over the edge, looking up at her to see her face as she cried out his name.

Leia panted in the throes of a climax that ripped through her, sending her far and beyond any she'd ever managed to give herself. She barely noticed as Han surged up her body, pressing kisses all over her jaw and neck. She definitely noticed when something bigger and hotter than his fingers entered her and thrust into her depths, only causing a slight pinch of pain that barely registered within the electric shocks that still kept her body tensed on the edge of no tomorrow.

Leia reflexively wrapped her arms and legs around Han, holding on for dear life as he thrust in and out of her, hard and deep, not letting her climax taper off for at least a minute. The feelings were indescribable as they looked at each other, getting lost in each other's eyes.

Han groaned as Leia's brown eyes stared up at him, love shining in them clear to see, despite the blown wide pupils. She was so soft, and hot, and wet, and kriffing tight. He'd never known it could be this good. He kissed her again, tongue mirroring the movements of his hips. Knowing he wasn't going to last much longer, Han pulled away from her mouth and kissed a path to her ear. "Come again," he whispered.

Leia gasped as he changed the angle just enough to rub against something new inside her, eyes closing as she concentrated on the new feeling that pushed her to the brink again. Her insides tightened around the intruder inside her again before sending her into another climax only minutes after the first.

Han pressed his forehead to Leia's as he thrust hard through her clasping tunnel a couple more times, feeling the climax build to almost unbearable levels before he quickly pulled out and came
all over Leia's flat stomach, groaning in relief as the pressure finally abated.

They panted in exhaustion, both trembling from the exertion, eyes meeting as they both slowly recovered their wits. Leia ran a hand up and down Han's back while one of his hands stroked her hair away from her glowing face. He leaned down and kissed her again softly before rolling them over onto his back, draping Leia over his chest.

Leia sighed in contentment, not even caring that he'd left a sticky mess on her and that she was covered in rapidly drying sweat. She felt positively boneless and more relaxed than she could remember ever being. No wonder people did this whenever they got the chance. And to do it with someone you loved... Well, that just made it perfect. She snuggled into a comfy spot on his chest and closed her eyes, quickly falling into a deep slumber. It had been a VERY long time since she'd gotten some proper sleep, and right now, there was nothing in the galaxy that was going to stop her from sleeping in the arms of her love.

Han watched Leia with half lidded eyes, a sense of utter contentment filling him as she fell asleep under the soft strokes of his fingers through her amazing hair. "I love you," he whispered when he was sure she was definitely too gone to hear him. Han kissed the top of her head, and with some careful squiggling, managed to get a blanket over them without waking her up. Then he succumbed to his own exhaustion, happily holding the girl of his dreams in his arms.

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Twenty something hours later...

Threepio and Chewie sat at the dejarik table, attempting to play, hearing the faint cries of passion and the squeaking of a bedframe for what had to be tenth time in the last cycle.

"How long are they going to stay in there?" Threepio wondered.

Chewie shrugged and rumbled out, "I don't know."

Threepio stared down at the holo characters forlornly for a minute. "Anakin and Padme were like that as well, engaging in extended periods of mating. They were always yelling at me to 'go away' too."

Chewie rumbled out a laugh before looking thoughtful. "I met Anakin Skywalker once."

That got Threepio's attention. "Oh. Tell me. I miss my mistress and her husband. I can never have too many stories to keep in my databanks."

So Chewie did, telling the golden droid about the time he'd met Ahsoka Tano and the adventure they'd had together as they saved themselves from sport hunters and how that led to his meeting of her Master.
Sabezra's 8th Anniversary

A/N: This scene is part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. It will become an entire chapter on its own eventually, but for the time being, it fits here.

Sabezra's 8th Anniversary:

D2/4 ABY, Cerulia

In a big way, Ezra found it depressing that he now had the opportunity to try take three of the Force Projection in a bed anniversary because it meant that he was still separated from his wife and family by unknown lightyears. He’d had no idea it would take this long to be found and that he’d asked Ahsoka to do such a monumental task that would take her away from a war she should have been fighting. With her vast experience, it was possible she could have turned the tide of the war long ago in the Rebellion’s favour.

But despite the not so ideal circumstances, his enthusiasm for his home visits hadn’t waned at all. If anything, the visits were more important to him than ever.

Today he finished his dinner as fast as possible with just as much of a lack of decorum as two years ago on this day. Ezra rose from the dining table in King Wayve’s suite with an apologetic smile to the assembled close friends and family of the king. “My apologies for taking off early, but it is my anniversary today and I dare not be late.”

“Of course, Ezra,” Wayve replied with a regal nod. “We understand. Give your lovely wife our regards at an appropriate moment.” His big black eyes twinkled with teasing humour because it was a known fact that Sabine tended to pounce on Ezra as soon as he showed up. Or vice versa if she happened to still be asleep. (Despite keeping his shields up more often than not, the highly telepathic Cerulians were much too good at picking up on any little thought or image that Ezra let slip. He suffered through much good natured teasing because of it.)

“I will, thank you. Now, if you all could perhaps tell the planet to save any earthquakes for another day, I would be most grateful.”

Ezra stepped into the transitional antechamber to much mental and physical laughter as they all recalled how upset Sabine had been about being left literally on the edge of orgasm last anniversary. (Another little detail that had snuck past his shields and he’d had to live with a year’s worth of teasing over it.)

Ezra created a Force bubble of air for himself around his entire body and then he was stepping into one of the hallway-like water filled tubes that traversed the underwater palace made of one massive Kyber crystal. He popped out into the main hall a handful of seconds later and then he used a Force push off a wall to get him going in the right direction and out the front ‘door’. (Just a huge and ornate opening really. No doors ever actually closed off the palace from the sea.)

Once outside, he sent out a mental call for the sea creatures that closely resembled lothdolphins that he’d befriended long ago. A whole pod appeared within a minute, chirping happily to see him. Ezra laughed as they surrounded him and poked at his bubble, trying to get in to nuzzle him with their noses. “Not yet! Once we’re on the surface of the ocean! You know that. Push me up and we can play for a minute.”
As a unit, they assembled under and around him and started swimming upwards, pushing his bubble towards the surface.

The Cerulians had been astonished when Ezra had first befriended the creatures so easily, saying they were usually very shy and rarely came anywhere near the underwater cites. They were even more astonished when Ezra had chosen to use the somewhat slower but way more fun method of riding the creatures to get from place to place on the ocean planet as opposed to Force swimming like they did.

Ezra would always choose to interact with animals if he could, as they brought him joy and peace.

His air bubble broke the surface of the ocean and Ezra let it disappear. He treaded water as the sea creatures the Cerulians called water sprites surrounded him again. He rubbed all of their snouts in turn but, as usual, ended up paying special attention to a certain one that he’d watched grow up from a small pup to the biggest one in the pod. “Think you can set a new speed record and get me home faster than ever, buddy?”

The water sprite nodded his head, throwing the lukewarm ocean water on Ezra playfully. Chuckling, Ezra swam around and grabbed onto a wispy looking but very strong top fin that was nearly as tall as he was.

And with that, they were off, shooting through the ocean at incredible speeds, leaping high up into the air every half minute or so and jumping waves just for the fun of it. Ezra timed his breaths with the leaps out of practice.

In only minutes, they’d swum across about a hundred kilometres of ocean and the sprites slowed to a stop just before the water became too shallow for them near the beach of the Ezra’s island home. He let go of the fin and swam around, petting the sprite’s head fondly. “Thanks, bud. You’re the best.”

Ezra received another faceful of water in their traditional goodbye, leaving him sputtering and laughing. He swam towards the beach with the sprites chirping their goodbyes in his wake. “Later, my friends,” he called back mentally.

He walked onto the soft sand beach, waving a greeting to some of the human (or mostly so) villagers that were playing in the sand. Ignoring the discomfort of his wet shorts (all he was wearing, much like a native of the planet), he walked up to his home which was empty because he’d left Link behind at the palace, who was keeping a close eye on Krystal who was due to pop her and Raign’s firstborn any day now.

Once in his room, he stripped off the shorts and shrugged into a simple robe for warmth. He knelt on his bed and settled his breathing.

And then he was flying to Sabine again in a use of Force that he’d done so many times now that it was just as easy as breathing.

Much to his surprise he landed in the training gym of the Clan Wren stronghold right beside a Sabine who was in a rather fierce looking martial arts fight with her mother. Even though he wasn’t solid yet, he automatically dodged a flying foot as the older woman instinctively struck out at a perceived threat. He also instantly imagined himself with clothes on. So much for our sexy time on a bed anniversary. Maybe I should give up on hoping for that one and stick to the romantic dates like we do for our wedding anniversaries. Those always work out well.

Sabine and Ursa’s fight came to a stuttering halt as they registered his presence.
As did all the rest of the clan who was downstairs for a morning workout, gawking at the ‘ghost’ in their midst. (Their homes on Krownest and Lothal were within a couple of hours of the same timeframe, which was convenient.)

“Ezra! Is it that time already?”

He raised a brow and crossed his arms over his chest. “It would seem so,” he answered his wife dryly. “Might I ask what we’re doing here so unexpectedly?” (She hadn’t mentioned anything about a trip to Krownest when he’d seen her last night, her time.)

Sabine rolled her eyes in her mother’s direction, who simply gave Ezra and her daughter a steely look with an underlying smirk that you had to really look to see. “Mother commed me last night just after you left and ‘invited’ me to come over. The Mand’alor will be here by lunchtime and is bringing her riddur with her as well as their infant son. It seems that Fenn wants us to meet the newest Kryze heir and got tired of trying to find time to make the trip all the way to Lothal.”

Ezra smiled in anticipation of seeing an old friend he hadn’t seen for years. “I guess that’s worth delaying our anniversary for.”

Sabine stepped up close to him, looking very lickable with her glistening skin clothed in only a tight sports bra and shorts, and wrapped an arm around his waist. She stood on tiptoe to whisper in his ear, “Don’t worry, Ez. I still have plans for your visit tonight. I should be all alone on the Lothhawk by then. Our eighth anniversary isn’t dead yet.

Ezra put a hand on her back and tugged her a fraction closer as he whispered his lips over her cheek. “Good,” he murmured. “Because I had every intention of making you scream eight times this morning to celebrate.”

Her breath caught and she looked up at him with dilating eyes. “Stars, Ez, you sure do know how to torture a girl, don’t you?”

He hummed in agreement as he pressed a promise of a kiss to her neck.

A loudly cleared throat had them parting abruptly, looking somewhat guiltily at Ursa.

The Countess in question gave Ezra an unimpressed look. “Since you have more than ably demonstrated your ability to be solid and whole looking, would you care to back that up with a round or two of sparring?”

“Uhhhhhhhh.”

Sabine elbowed him in the side.

“Sure.”

Not exactly how I envisioned this day going, he thought as he vanished his shirt and faced his mother-in-law with fists raised in readiness for her first attack.
Freemakers Victory

A/N: If you have not watched Lego Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures, some of the next two chapters might leave you feeling a little clueless. Although the show isn't canon, I fully believe it should be and I just had to include the Freemakers in here. Before you read this, I recommend watching Season 2, episodes 10-13. These chapters tie directly into them and Episode VI, but I made a few additions for the fun of it.

Freemakers Victory:

After the near tragedy on Hoth, Hera made a few changes to her way of life. The most important being that she no longer went on any missions that she couldn't take Jacen with her. Which basically meant that she stayed on Home One and actually acted like a General instead of flying all over the galaxy fighting small battles and running spy missions. A piece of her missed being part of the action on a regular basis but the rest of her (the part that was Jacen's mother and the part that was tired of the constant fighting and the not knowing if she was going to survive to see tomorrow), was more than happy to actually sit back and relax just a little more than she had in a long time while still being helpful to the Rebellion.

Occasionally, Hera would grab Jacen and Zeb and they'd go on a supply run, just to give the Ghost a purpose and themselves a change of pace from life on a teeming city sized ship. Hera also made sure to take Jacen to see Sabine or his grandfather every month or so, not wanting her son to forget what earth felt like under his feet. Kanan never said much about Hera's decision to live a quieter life, but she could tell he was relieved that she had. After what had happened to Jacen, no one else higher up in the chain of command had questioned her decision either, which was something Hera had been worried about. But they were supportive and made it easy for her to take a more authoritative role over the running of the Rebellion.

Zeb and the clones were fine with moving to different groups of the Rebellion. Having seen Hera's agony at the possible death of her son on the long trip from Endor to Hoth, they never wanted to have to see her go through that again and understood her decision to semi-retire the Ghost. Zeb stayed on Home One, near Hera, Jacen, and Kallus, more or less just doing grunt work (which he was good at), and occasionally joining a mission that required a tracker or lots of brute force (and we all know he was really good at that), never one to turn down the opportunity to smash some bucket heads.

Rex and Wolffe were each put in charge of their own battalions of soldiers on different bases, Rex finally getting the title of Commander that he always should have had, resuming the roles that they had played in the war against the Separatists around twenty-five years ago. Hera had offered them the chance to retire again, as they'd done more than their share for the good of the galaxy already, but they both declined. Rex said he was going to fight till the Force chose to end his life on the battlefield because he didn't want to die an old and lonely man on a bed sometime in the next decade. Wolffe had nodded in agreement, not saying a word, but Hera could see the weight of their abbreviated lifetimes starting to weigh heavily on their minds and reflect in the look of sadness and resignation in their eyes. She'd asked them once why they hadn't found themselves wives when they first went into retirement years ago. Wolffe's answer had near broke her heart.

"I could never do that to a woman; make her watch me age two to three times faster than her, and then have to bury me when I should have been in my prime."
Rex joined in too. "And to be frankly honest, Hera, I'm pretty sure they bred the urge to settle down and marry right out of us. The boys and I had many conversations back in the day about girls. Almost every single one of them said that while they could appreciate the sight of a pretty girl, they never ever saw one and felt the urgent need to claim one for themselves."

Hera had stared at the clones in horror. "Does that mean that you can't... ummm... you know? Perform?"

Rex and Wolffe had stared at her for a moment before bursting into peals of laughter. When he could, Rex wheezed out between chuckles, "Geez, Hera, is that what you got out of that? I'm just saying that the Kaminoans didn't want us wandering away from the army and not coming back because we were dreaming of white picket fences. I assure you that our equipment came fully operational, if sterile, and that there are plenty of girls across the galaxy who were more than happy to give a brother a few minutes of their time."

Wolffe nudged Rex, a devilish gleam in his eye. "A few minutes? That's all you're good for? I wouldn't go bragging about that if I were you," he teased.

Rex narrowed his eyes at his brother in mock anger and pounced. "You know perfectly well that I can outperform you any day."

Hera's eyes had widened as she quickly backed out of the common room before the conversation got any more cringe worthy. This was quickly turning into the category of WAY TOO MUCH INFORMATION! The last thing she heard before the door closed on them was Zeb laughing like a loon at her retreat and the clones listing the names of girls who could personally attest to each brother's superiority over the other. That was the last time she ever asked about their personal lives.

Near the beginning of 4 ABY, one of the clones got their wish to go down fighting. Commander Wolffe led his soldiers to a small but significant victory on Ryloth at the side of Cham Syndulla and his resistance fighters, finally pushing the Empire out of the Tann Province and taking back the Syndulla properties. (What was left of them.) During the battle, he sustained a blaster injury to his chest that he didn't tell anyone about until it was too late, suffering internal bleeding that eventually had him collapsing after the battle was over. Cham said Wolffe died with a smile, content in the knowledge that he'd recovered Hera's and Jacen's ancestral lands and that Cham could finally rebuild his home on Ryloth. "Tell Hera thank you," he'd said with some of his last breaths. "Thank you for making me feel like part of her family."

"I will," Cham had promised, kneeling at the clone's side, knowing the look of a dying man much too well.

Hera had mourned Wolffe's passing, having grown to love the steadfast clone like an older brother, but nowhere near as much as Rex had. Poor Rex was left feeling like the last of his kind, being the last of the clones as far as he knew. If others had survived their time working for the Empire, Rex hadn't heard about it. He was sure that by now they all would have been retired (if they were lucky), or more likely 'decommissioned' like any clone used to be when they were no longer useful. A brother's worst nightmare had always been the fear of an injury that wasn't life threatening but would leave them unable to fight efficiently enough to keep them in the war. Those brothers had been sent back to Kamino and were never seen again. Hera hadn't known that depressing fact until Rex had told her. He said the Republic had kept the less glamorous parts of their clone creations hidden from the public for obvious reasons. It was the first time that Hera hadn't been sympathetic to the Republic about being taken over by the Emperor.

Jacen too, had mourned with Rex, the first passing of someone he considered part of his rather large family. It came as a bit of a shock to the four and a half year old that his family wasn't
actually immortal and that Wolffe wouldn't be coming back as a Force ghost. It made the boy lavish even more love on the rest of his family, (especially Rex, whenever he saw him), wanting them to know that they had been cherished as much as possible.

Aside from losing an 'uncle,' Jacen's life on Home One was pretty good as far as he was concerned. Unlike Echo Base, Home One actually had a few other kids to play with. A new addition to Home One was Rowan Freemaker and his older siblings Kordi and Zander. (Who took care of him like parents, since they'd lost theirs in the war.) Despite the fact that Rowan was twelve, and a whole eight years older than Jacen, they became instant friends, sensing that they were similar in their ability to use the Force.

It didn't take long for Kanan to figure out Jacen's new friend not only knew about the Force but had some training as well, a lot of it self taught from the memory files of Rowan's reprogrammed B1 battle droid, RO-GR, but some from Rowan's first teacher, Naare, who was a Darksider pretending to be a Jedi to exploit Rowan's natural skill at finding Kyber crystals to her own advantage. Whenever the opportunity presented itself (since Rowan was away so often on adventures), Kanan would add Rowan to the lessons he was teaching Jacen about the Force and they even practiced with their lightsabres in the cargo hold of the Ghost. (Kanan was still avoiding showing himself as much as possible.) Poor Jacen still wasn't quite big enough to start his real lightsabre training, but he watched avidly from the balcony while Rowan and his father danced around the cargo hold, memorizing every move and (more or less) patiently waiting for his turn to do more than practice with a stick.

The boys helped each other with their Force strengths whenever they were left alone to play, Rowan being considered just old enough to watch Jacen without constant supervision. Jacen was a natural at connecting to other people and their emotions, and became pretty good at healing too, fixing their bumps and scrapes from playing before Hera and Kordi could fuss over them. Rowan, on the other hand, was amazing at controlling objects with the Force, so much so that he could build anything he could imagine using just the Force and whatever scrap pieces were on hand. He even built a brand new type of fighter, called the Arrowhead, that was powered by a huge Kyber crystal Rowan built from many small ones, and could cut right through Star Destroyers like they were made of fluff instead of durasteel. One of the very very few real missions that Hera went on was one of the test runs of the Arrowhead, since it was basically undefeatable with its Kyber shield and she couldn't resist the temptation of trying out a new fighter, as she would always be a pilot at heart. (Don't tell the Ghost, but it may have been the funnest thing she ever flew.)

Which brings us to today...

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*D198/4 ABY, Home One*

When Hera woke up in the mornings, she almost always found Jacen already bouncing around the Ghost, ready to attack the day. On the few days that she woke up first, Hera always worried, usually for nothing, but today it turned out that she had a good reason.

As Hera made her way back from the refresher, she poked her head into Jacen's room. Spotting his little form still making a lump under the covers, Hera called, "Time to get up, baby," before walking across the hallway to her own room to get dressed for the day.

"Kay, Mama," she heard in a sleepy voice and then a cough that stopped her in her tracks halfway through her door.

Hera whirled back around and marched back into Jacen's room, turning the lights up to full. "Are you feeling okay, Jacen?"
Jacen sat up sluggishly and pushed his blankets off. "Yah. I'm fine, Mama," coughing between every second word. "Just a little tired."

Hera sat on the bed beside him, studying his appearance. He looked paler than normal except for the flushed parts of his face and his eyes looked a little glazed over. She hugged him into her side and felt his forehead with the back of her hand. He was also hotter than normal, just as she expected. Hera sighed and kissed the top of his hair that was sticking straight up. This was his third cold this year. At least they only lasted a day or so. (Hera had questioned the med droid about whether that was a normal time frame for a cold to run its course and was told that most colds can last up to a week. She credited the quick recovery time on the meds and the twi'lek half of Jacen. Little did she know that Jacen was doing Force Healing on himself to help beat the colds.) Home One might be a relatively safe place to raise Jacen, but it had its negatives as well. So many people came and went from the Rebellion headquarters that they were bound to bring a wide variety of viruses with them. Poor Jacen just happened to be prone to picking them up, his hybrid physiology not quite as strong as if he'd been a full twi'lek. The med droid assured her that it was normal for human children to get many colds and that the older Jacen got, the more immunities he would build up and get fewer colds as a result. Hera still didn't like it, but she'd learned not to panic about it.

Hera picked Jacen up and he immediately snuggled into her, instead of squirming to get down like he usually does these days, confirming that he wasn't feeling great. "Come on, my little miracle, let's get you some medicine." Hera carried Jacen to the refresher and pulled the cough medicine out of the built in cupboard. Jacen didn't protest much at the taste of the medicine, aside from making a face, used to it by now. Hera ran her hand fondly over his head, smoothing down his hair, and kissed his overly warm forehead. "You want any breakfast this morning, baby?"

Jacen thought about it for a moment, then shook his head. "Not hungry."

Hera suppressed the urge to sigh yet again and tamped down the worry. "Okay. But you have to drink something so you don't get dehydrated. How about your favourite meiloorun smoothie? Special treat?"

Jacen perked up a bit and smiled. "Sure. I could drink that."

Hera smiled back. "I thought so." Hera rose from where she was kneeling on the floor in front of her son. "I'll be in the galley when you're done in here. If you don't show up by the time I have your smoothie ready, I'll assume you're too tired to walk that far and will send Chopper to carry you like he used to," she teased lightly.

Jacen giggled a little. "Please don't, Mama. I'm fine, honest," as he coughed again and then sneezed a copious amount of mucous all over his face.

"Right," Hera said with a healthy dose of sarcasm and reached for some tissues to clean him up. "You are staying home today, young man. No playing with Rowan and wandering all over Headquarters."

"But, Mama!" Jacen said with big pleading eyes.

"Sorry, baby." Hera said apologetically. "General's rules. Besides, you wouldn't want to get Rowan sick too, would you?"

Jacen's face fell and his shoulders slumped a little. "No, Mama. I wouldn't want that. I'll stay on the Ghost."
"Good boy," Hera said as she finally left the refresher. "Smoothie will be ready in ten minutes," she called through the door that had basically closed in her face.

"Yes, Mama," came back the reply through the door. Hera could practically hear the eye roll in his words. She shook her head with a smile and went back to her room to get dressed. Kanan's shirt was comfortable, but not exactly work appropriate.

Half an hour later, after settling Jacen on the common room couch with his lessons and strict instructions for Chopper to make sure Jacen did them BEFORE he watched any cartoons, Hera left the Ghost and walked into the already busy hangar of Home One. (One of the many hangars on the enormous ship.) She ran into Rowan on her way out of the hangar as he was on his way in with Roger trailing behind, the droid rushing to keep up with the almost hyperactive child.

Rowan skidded to a stop in front of her. "Morning, General Hera," the light brown haired boy chirped with a cheeky salute and a twinkle in his caf coloured eyes.

"Good morning, Rowan," Hera replied with a smile. "Jacen isn't feeling well today. I'm afraid you'll have to occupy yourself without him."

Rowan slumped and some of the energy looked like it had been drained out of him. "Awww. That's too bad. I can still comm him though, right?"

"Sure, sweetie," Hera said. "I'm sure he'd love to talk to you. Don't let him talk you into doing his homework for him though. He needs to do his own lessons."

Rowan grinned at her, some of his natural enthusiasm returning. "You don't have to worry, General. I wouldn't do that, would I Roger?"

Roger nodded his skinny little head. "He's not lying. Kordi had to practically tie him to a chair to get him to do his school lessons when he was younger."

Hera raised a brow, somehow not surprised. Rowan wasn't exactly one who liked to sit still. Jacen, on the other hand was perfectly all right with it and incredibly self sufficient. She assumed it had something to do with the way he'd been raised, living with so many babysitters and learning Jedi stuff at such a young age. Rowan was a much more typical child, not learning about his Force abilities until he was already twelve.

"And now?" Hera asked, just out of curiosity, even though she was due in the Command Centre in only a couple of minutes and it was quite a hike to get there.

Rowan grinned wider. But it was Roger who answered again. "We've got it down to a science. We put his dinner down in front of him along with a datapad. For every sentence he reads, he gets to eat a bite of food."

Hera blinked. "And this works for you, Rowan?"

The boy nodded enthusiastically. "Yep. I'm doing two things at once! It's great. Leaves more time for more important things like building ships with Quarrie."

"Okaaaaaaay then," Hera said, so glad that Jacen was who he was and she didn't have to go through that kind of struggle to get him to learn things.

Rowan rocked on his feet, feeling kind of awkward all of a sudden. "Ummm. I guess I'll go see if Kordi or Zander need help," he said as he inched backwards and then turned and dashed off.
Roger shrugged at Hera and then followed after his human friend. "Wait up, Rowan!" She heard the droid call as the boy disappeared around a corner in the hallway.

Hera shook her head at the pair and hurried on her way. She arrived at the command centre just in time to catch a holo call from Rex, who was on Kashyyyk with a large contingent of soldiers, helping the wookiees with their Imperial infestation.

As Rex spoke, everyone in the repurposed holo theatre could hear blaster fire in the background along with the occasional curse or scream. "We could really use some help down here, Hera. We're outnumbered and outgunned. We've been here for weeks and are just about out of supplies. I hate to say it, but we might have to retreat and regroup before we can win this one."

Hera frowned in thought. "What's your biggest problem right now, Rex?"

"It's gotta be the shabla AT-ATs. There's about twenty of them and they've got us almost pinned. We could really use some Jedi right now."

Hera smiled as she came up with a solution. "I don't have any of those for you at the moment (not considering Rowan to be old enough to send into a war), but I've got the next best thing. I'm sending Zander Freemaker and the new fighter. He should be there in about an hour." She smiled slightly as a helpful aide ran off to tell Zander to fly out. (The aide just happened to be one of the many girls who were trying to catch the attention of the handsome nineteen year old boy. Too bad for them that Zander was stuck on some girl called Becky something or other that Zander had never actually talked to, back at their old home of the Wheel. At least, that's what Jacen said Rowan said.)

Rex looked puzzled. "The new kid and the what now?"

Hera grinned. "Yes, and just wait and see. I promise you'll be impressed."

Rex blew out a breath. "I've seen some crazy things, but I'll eat this rather useless helmet if one fighter can take out twenty Walkers." He missed his old helmet, even without a working HUD in it, but it made him stand out too much. For that matter, he missed his old armor too. He felt ridiculously unprotected in Rebel issue armour, but a soldier did what he had too. And right now, blending in with the other soldiers and the trees was more important than sentimental old armour.

"You better prepare some sauce for that helmet, Rex, cause you're about to eat it," Hera said with a decided glint of mischief in her eyes, to accompanying chuckles from others listening to the conversation who knew what the Arrowhead could do.

Rex gave Hera a skeptical look, but he shrugged and said with a good natured grin, "I guess I'll start looking for some barbeque sauce, assuming the wookiees have something like that here." Rex glanced down as his wrist comm beeped. "I'm getting a call from Lieutenant Valeria. Her team's working with Wullffwarro and his family to free their home province. I should answer this. Thanks for sending help. Gotta go."

Hera crossed her arms as Rex's image disappeared. Even after more than a year, she still felt wrong not being in the thick of things. This leading from afar business really didn't sit right.

Zander, Kordi, and Rowan were doing general maintenance on Red Squadron's X-Wings when a pretty blond girl ran into the hangar. As the girl skidded to a stop near Zander, he looked up and his first thought was, 'Becky!' Then he looked again and his heart sank, telling himself he was stupid for even thinking the idea that Becky would ever leave the Wheel and magically be on
"General Syndulla wants you to fly to Kashyyyk in the Arrowhead and do your thing," the girl said between panting breaths, apparently having run all the way from the command centre.

Zander was immediately filled with adrenaline at the prospect. He finally got to go on a REAL mission! On purpose! This was so sweet! He jumped off the X-Wing and threw a happy smile at the girl on his way past. "Thanks, ummmmm..." he called over his shoulder.

"Lana," she called helpfully.

"Right. Lana," Zander mumbled, already forgetting the name, his eager eyes on the Arrowhead. Zander climbed up into the fighter and started flicking switches. Before he could close the hatch to the cockpit, Kordi and Rowan dropped in too. "Hey! This is MY mission!" he protested.

Kordi smiled sweetly at her younger brother by two years. "And we're joining you. So get over it and start flying."

Zander mumbled something unintelligible under his breath but did as ordered. It would take too long to get them out of the fighter and he'd probably lose the battle anyway.

As the Arrowhead flew out of the hangar, Roger ran up to where it had been sitting just moments before. "Wait for..." He sighed and shook his head. "Why do I even bother? Oh well. I guess I'll go bake. Maybe I won't burn the cookies this time." With that hopeful thought, the old battle droid wandered towards the Freemakers' personal ship, the StarScavenger.

After taking care of Lieutenant Valeria's little Walker problem, Zander flew over an ocean and a vast forest of trees as fast as the Arrowhead could go (which was pretty kriffing fast, if he did say so himself), on the way to help the main Rebel army in their fight against the Empire. As they approached, they could hear the battle even inside the fighter. The sound of blaster fire and explosions filled the air before the battle even came into view.

All of the Freemakers' eyes widened in awe at their first sight of a real battlefield. The whole clearing in the trees was lit up with red and green blaster fire. The soldiers from both sides refusing to give ground as they shot from the cover of the trunks they were hiding behind. In the trees behind the Rebels side was a sheer drop off down to a rocky beach about fifty meters below. If they retreated any further, they'd be in BIG trouble. To make the situation just a little more desperate, there were AT-ATs firing on the Rebels as well, crashing through the trees as they advanced and flanked the Rebel soldiers and wookiees.

"Whoa," Rowan breathed. "That's a lot of blaster fire."

"Too much fire," Kordi said. "Zander, I think we're past the point the being nice. Go get 'em."

"Glad to." Zander grinned briefly before his face settled into a determined mask. He pointed the Arrowhead at the nearest Walker and flew straight at it.

At the sound of something new and fast approaching, Rex looked up through the clearing in the trees, still firing with his blasters without fail at the enemy lines across the way. The arrow shaped fighter that appeared was pretty impressive to look at, he'd give it that. When Lieutenant Valeria had commed and said that they were wrapping up on her side, he'd been amazed. Apparently the new fighter had easily dispatched the four Walkers that had pinned her ground troops at the edge of the ocean. Now he watched in shock as all the blaster fire gradually came to a stop as every single person stared in amazement as the fighter literally flew THROUGH the necks of every single
Walker, rendering them useless as they crashed to the ground, taking down trees with them.

Rex eventually shook himself out of his stupor and yelled at his company of soldiers. "Don't just stand there like stupid nerfs! Get your shebs in gear and ADVANCE!" They jumped into action and followed Rex as he left the cover of the trees and ran across the clearing, firing at the still shocked Imperial troopers.

One of the troopers decided he was suddenly on the losing side as he saw his walking tanks fall and a roaring mass of Rebel forces come running straight at him. The trooper tossed his blaster to the ground and hightailed it back towards the Imperial base about a kilometer away through the trees, all the while thinking that he hadn't signed up for this bantha poodoo.

With the retreat of one trooper, a sudden exodus of the rest was soon in full swing. Men in white armor dashed away from the screaming and grinning Rebels and towering, ferocious wookiees, some not focusing on where they were going through their limited vision helmets and smacking right into tree trunks and knocking themselves out.

When there was no one still standing and visible left to shoot at, Rex raised a hand and called a cease fire. The pretty fighter flew around overhead, looking for more targets to take out. Rex commed the fighter. "Great job, Freemaker. Now I have another one for you."


"Blue Squadron is heading for the Imperial base about a click north of here next. Why don't you meet them there and help them take it out? I'm assuming that thing comes with some regular guns?"

"Of course, Commander. We're on our way, Sir," Zander replied with zeal and then took off in the direction indicated.

"We?" Rex asked in surprise, but got no response. He shook his head, dismissing it as unimportant. What he was really wondering was if he was going to have to actually eat his helmet now or if Hera would let that one slide. He jogged over to where Zeb and a few wookiees were helping fallen troopers go back to sleep if they showed any signs of waking up. "I'm going to take most of the troops and head for the Imperial base. You're in charge of rounding up stragglers."

Zeb grinned and cracked his knuckles. "My pleasure, Rex. They can hide in the trees as much as they want. The wookiees and I will flush them out in no time."

Rex clapped the lasat on the shoulder and then gestured to his troops, taking off through the trees at a brisk jog. There was one good thing about all the fighting he'd been doing over the last few years. His old armor actually fit the way it used to, just like when he was eleven or so. Not that he got to wear it much anymore, but he still put it on whenever he could.

Zander met Blue Squadron, led by Lieutenant Valeria, not far from the base. "What's the plan, Lieutenant?" he asked over the comm.

Valeria glanced over the schematics her astromech sent to her computer and decided to go for the annihilation approach over precision. "We'll hit it hard and fast with everything we've got. We want to take it out before those troops get back here. Give them no place to go. Zander, you take out the hangar and anything parked in there that might be useful to them. The rest of us will get the main building."

"Yes, Sir! Ma'am. Sir," Zander fumbled.
Kordi rolled her eyes and smacked him on the back of the head. "You'd think you'd have it right by now, nerfherder."

Zander rubbed his head and flew towards the hangar at the same time. "I'd think so, too. Except I still don't know which is right."

Rowan giggled and Kordi rolled her eyes again. "Just fly and go shoot something."

Zander shot her a look. "Well, I'm trying to, but someone keeps hitting me."

"Uhh. You know your comm is still on," Valeria's voice filled the fighter, sounding like a cross between holding in laughter and exasperation. "And Sir is fine."

Zander turned beat red and apologized quickly before turning off the comm.

Rowan cracked up in his seat in the back, thinking this day was turning out to be pretty fun. And it wasn't even noon yet.

As Rex was jogging through the woods a wookiee came running up, panic in his eyes, and growled something at him with some frantic arm gestures that Rex only sort of understood. He did catch the rumbles that sounded like children and base. "Are there children in the base?" he asked, hoping he was wrong.

The wookiee nodded frantically and growled out some more desperate Shyriiwook.

"Kriff." Rex commed Lieutenant Valeria as he picked up his pace. "Hold that attack, Lieutenant! There are wookiee younglings being held in the base as hostages. I think that's what has kept the wookiees under Imperial control all this time."

The wookiee running beside Rex looked relieved that Rex had got the right idea.

"Understood, Commander!" Valeria called back, and then immediately called off her pilots and the Freemakers, who were only meters away from firing range of the base. "Abort! Abort! Regroup, people. We're coming up with a new plan of attack."

Blue Squadron and the Arrowhead immediately swerved away from the durasteel building and flew up into the clouds and hovered, waiting for further orders, unhappy that they'd lost the element of surprise.

"Can I see the schematics for the base?" Kordi asked over the comm. "I have an idea."

Lieutenant Valeria smiled and nodded as Kordi told everyone her plan, opening the channel to Commander Rex as well so he could hear. Kordi's plan was solid, even if it did depend on the abilities of a twelve year old. She'd seen the Freemakers in action enough times now to know that they could be depended on. "Let's do it."

"Are you sure?" Rex asked. He, on the other hand had no idea that Rowan Freemaker was more than he seemed.

"I'm sure, Commander," Valeria reassured. "We'll just wait for you to get here."

"ETA one minute," Rex said as he ran around another tree in his way. If only Kanan could see him now. He'd have nothing to tease him about in regards to Rex being out of shape.

One minute later, Rex and his soldiers came to the edge of the trees that surrounded the Imperial
facility that looked very out of the place on the forest planet. They'd caught up to the retreating Imperial troopers, who were all making their way back into their facility like cowards. "We're good to go," he said, only lightly puffing from the run. His soldiers were also doing well, having trained for this type of mission for months before they felt they were ready to attack the Imperials on Kashyyyk.

"Copy that," Valeria replied. "Freemakers, you're up."

With a grin of glee, Zander dove the Arrowhead back down through the clouds, swooping towards the base. At the same time, Rex and his soldiers ran towards the base across the clearing with Zander laying down cover fire at the troopers who were turning around to fire back at Rex. Zander shot forwards and took out the canon turrets on the roof, the Kyber shield on the Arrowhead impervious to the canon fire shot at them. When all the canons were taken care of, Zander popped the hatch and Rowan jumped out with a cheery wave at his siblings. Zander closed the hatch again and reengaged the shields before flying off towards the hangar of the base to take out anything in there that might cause problems for the Rebels.

Rowan ran to the edge of the roof at the side of the building were a small door closest to the detention cells was located. He pulled his blue lightsabre out from under his jacket where he kept it hidden and ignited it, easily jumping down to the ground below where Rex and a small group of his best close quarters fighters and a wookiee were waiting for him, firing at any troopers who dared to come around the corner.

Rex looked at the brown haired boy that landed lightly beside him in surprise. When Kordi had said that her little brother could get them into the building, he'd assumed the boy was good at slicing open locked doors. He was NOT expecting the child to be wielding a lightsabre and jumping around like a proper Jedi. Did Hera know about this kid? Cause if she did, she sure had a lot of explaining to do. Rex had jokingly asked for a Jedi or two earlier. He hadn't expected one to actually show up. Even if this one was way too young to be in a war. Speaking of... " Ummm, kid, are you even old enough to use that thing?"

Rowan smiled cheekily at the grey bearded Commander that Jacen said was one of his 'uncles' but that Rowan had never had the chance to meet yet, all while digging his lightsabre into the durasteel door and starting a big circle shaped hole. "I'm twelve and half, Commander Rex, Sir, and I've had a whole six months of practice with this 'thing'."

Rex gawked at the kid for a moment. "Oh yah, that definitely qualifies you as being old enough to be here," Rex said, his voice dripping sarcasm that went right over the kid's head.

"Yep," Rowan said happily, finishing his circle. He pushed the circle of durasteel into the building with a burst of the Force and jumped through, dancing around on the spot as he waited for the old people to climb through the hole he'd made, then dashing down the hallway towards the detention cells, having memorized the schematics of the facility while Kordi was explaining her plan. Rowan, of course, had already known what his part would be.

Rex and his small group followed after the kid, raising a brow in surprise as the boy skillfully dealt with troopers that showed up in his path. The boy blocked blaster fire easily with his lightsabre and grabbed their blasters right out of their hands with the Force, literally disassembling the blaster rifles as he ran like it was nothing. Rex had never seen a Jedi do that before and was quite impressed. Rex and his team put the stunned and confused looking troopers out of their misery with a bash or two over the head or a blaster bolt as they ran by.

Rowan skidded to a stop in front of a cell door, closing his eyes for a moment as he concentrated on the life forces around him. He smiled and opened his eyes when he felt the distinctive signatures of
many small wookiees on the other side of the door, feeling kind of scared and excited at the noise they could hear coming from outside the building. It was always nice when he guessed right.

Rowan went to make a hole in the cell door when he realized the door was just another thing that had been put together. And if something had been put together, it could be taken apart. He imagined the locking mechanism of the door falling apart and it did, just like that, releasing the lock on the door. Rowan flicked the door open with a wave of his hand and looked in on the twenty or so surprised looking young wookiees with a smile and wave of greeting, ignoring the smell that wafted out of the room. "Hi!"

From over Rowan's shoulder, the adult wookiee rumbled at the younglings and they all stood up quickly from their seated and prone positions on the duracrete floor, having nothing to sit or lie on, running towards the door and freedom, smiling at Rowan, understanding that the human boy was responsible for their release.

"Right," Rex said. "Let's get out of here so phase two of the plan can commence." Everyone took off down the hallway back the way they came, Rowan once again leading since he could block any new blaster bolts coming their way. Once they made it back to the outside world and were headed back towards the trees, Rex commed Valeria. "We're clear. Take it out."

"Yes, Sir!" Valeria said with enthusiasm. "Blue Squadron, you know what to do." She flew her X-Wing towards the facility, her squadron falling into formation behind her and the Arrowhead joining the V formation at the end of one side. They flew over the facility, hitting it with every torpedo they had, cheering as the building blew up spectacularly as they sped away.

Rex and his group joined the main Rebel forces watching the fighters do their thing from the safety of the woods. He turned to the boy who was watching the noisy explosion with an awestruck expression on his face. "You did good today, kid."

Rowan looked up at Commander Rex with a smile and a shrug. "Thank you, Sir. But really, that was nothing compared to some of the things I've done and fought over the last half year. My life is a little crazy right now, and I've got an insane droid hunting me, but I think it's great, even if Kordi doesn't."

Rex chuckled. "I think that's what the females are meant to do; keep us males from enjoying the action too much and turning into savages."

A female soldier who was standing nearby let out an offended, "Hey! Us females like to kick butt too sometimes and don't you forget it."

All the men laughed and the girl punched the nearest guy in the shoulder as hard as she could, just to prove her point, which just made them laugh louder, everyone enjoying the relief of finally winning a battle that had dragged on for way too long.

The Arrowhead hovered overhead in front of the group and the hatch opened. "There's my ride," Rowan said to the soldiers. "Maybe I'll see you all later." He gave them a cheeky salute and effortlessly Force jumped up into the fighter, leaving more than one soldier gawking up at the fighter as it joined Blue Squadron again and flew off, headed back to Home One, waiting for them a short jump away.

Rex watched the Squadron fly away and commed Hera to give her the good news that the battle had been won and to recommend that the female Freemaker would make a good leader, being wasted as a mechanic. AND to ask her about the youngest Freemaker and if she knew about him. For that matter, did anyone? Like Luke? Surely Luke would want to know that there was a trained Jedi youngling in the Rebellion too?
Rebellion's Victory

Rebellion's Victory:

D198/4 ABY, Home One

While everyone else was furthering the Rebellion cause on Kashyyyk, Hera went back to the Ghost to check on Jacen. She found him sound asleep on the couch behind the dejark table, datapad fallen to the floor from where it had slipped from his hand. Chopper was standing guard nearby and acknowledged Hera's presence with a soft beep. Hera patted Chopper on the dome for doing a good job and got a quiet purr in response. Hera picked up the datapad and turned it off, placing it on the table, then she gently scooped up her son and carried him to his room so he could sleep more comfortably. His arms wrapped around her neck and he snuggled his face into her shoulder with a sleepy, "Mama." Hera hugged him just a little tighter, her throat tightening with emotion. Her little miracle was the most precious thing in the galaxy to her and she couldn't stand the thought of anything hurting him. Not even a common cold.

After setting Jacen in his bunk, Hera went to the galley and made soup for lunch. She left a bowl in the warmer for Chopper to give to Jacen when he woke up and reluctantly went back to work, wishing she could just stay on the Ghost and take care of her child. Even if all that entailed was watching him sleep.

Aside from the fact that the battle on Kashyyyk had been a success, Hera's day went from bad to worse, even if it didn't seem that way at first.

The Freemakers came back from their mission, and based on Rex's recommendation and Hera's own observations over the last month, they promoted Kordi to Lieutenant Commander. Hera also noticed the way Wedge was one of the first people to meet the Freemakers as soon as the Arrowhead landed and how Kordi blushed at his congratulations. Hera hoped that went somewhere because she really liked Kordi and poor Wedge had gone through a number of girlfriends over the years and none of the relationships ever worked out for him. He was seriously overdue to find the right girl and have his happy ever after.

Zander was made an official member of Blue Squadron after Lieutenant Valeria practically begged High Command for him to be added to her team. Zander was over the moon about it of course. He hadn't exactly been subtle in his hints to want to fly as an official pilot.

And Rowan? Hera actually had no idea what happened to him. Last she saw, he was with his droid, eating cookies. Four hours later, after Kordi proved once again that she was an excellent strategist, and Zander, in the Arrowhead, decimated yet another fleet of Star Destroyers, Kordi reported that Rowan, Roger, and the StarScavenger were gone and no one was answering the comm. A couple more hours after that, Kordi and Zander ran into the Command Centre claiming that Rowan had been captured by Darth Vader and taken to Coruscant and that they wanted to launch a full scale attack on the Imperial Capital to get their little brother back. Hera felt terrible when she supported Mothma's and Ackbar's decision not to do so, based on the insanity of the idea, but she had to.

And then one of Kallus' aides came running into the Command Centre, crying the news Hera'd been dreading to hear for over a year. The thing being built above Endor's moon was in fact a second Death Star. The missing boy was instantly pushed to the back of everyone's minds as the Rebel leaders went into something resembling panic mode for a minute or ten. Everyone, that is, but his siblings. It came as no surprise to Hera when it was reported that the Freemakers had taken
the Arrowhead without permission to go rescue their brother. She silently wished them luck and then went back to strategizing in a meeting that went late into the night and early morning. Except for the two more times she'd gone back to check on a rapidly improving Jacen, who was being kept entertained by Kanan for the evening, Hera was in the Command Centre for almost twenty hours straight.

Plans were made to attack the Imperial facilities on Endor and the Death Star in two days, giving Luke time to return from his and Leia's long overdue rescue of Han from Jabba the Hutt. They recalled Rex's battalion from Kashyyyk so they'd have a day to rest and summoned every single Rebellion ship and soldier scattered across the galaxy to the staging ground near Sullust, as there was a (not so) secret Imperial hyperspace route called the Sanctuary Pipeline running by that planet that would lead them safely to Endor right under Imperial noses without detection until it was too late.

High Command made plans and backup plans, almost all of which didn't include the missing Arrowhead fighter and the equally AWOL Freemakers, much to everyone's dismay. Upon hearing about his missing apprentice, Quarrie had taken the StarScavenger and followed the older Freemakers to Coruscant. The last thing he'd reported was that Rowan had been rescued but the Arrowhead was now in the hands of M-OC, the Imperial hunter droid who'd been after Rowan for months, and that the droid was tracking them all over the galaxy as they tried not to get killed by their own fighter. To make matters just a little bit more depressing and urgent, Darth Vader had extracted the location of the Kyber rich planet that Rowan had found from the boy's mind. There was no doubt in anyone's minds that the second Death Star would be the recipient of those Kyber crystals.

The last thing Hera did before collapsing on her bunk in Kanan's waiting arms for a few hours of much needed sleep was tell Zeb not to disappear because she needed him for something tomorrow. He wanted more details at the time, but Hera refused to say more, not wanting to deal with the inevitable protests just yet.

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Hera rolled over, reaching for Kanan in her sleep and moaned a little when her hand felt nothing but air on his side of the bed. She groaned louder when her son bounced onto the bed and forced her out of a wonderfully sexy dream. She grabbed Kanan's pillow and put it over her head, feeling the heat in her face at the subject matter she'd been dreaming about when Jacen arrived in her room.

Jacen bounced again, a grin on his face as he pulled the pillow off and smiled at her squinty eyed look. "Morning, Mama. I'm hungry. I've been up for hours. I'm hungry. Can I leave the Ghost today? I'm much better, promise. I'm hungry. When will Rowan be back? I'm hungry. Where are we now? I felt the big ship move. I'm hungry."

Hera closed her eyes again and groaned in an extra exaggerated fashion, flopping her arms to the sides. "Too much energy," she bemoaned with a faint smile on her face. Jacen dived down onto her chest and hugged her, rubbing his face in her neck and laughing, which Hera knew he would do, having done this routine many times. She wrapped her arms around his squirming little body and tickled his sides, sitting up with him in her lap as her son's giggles rang through the cabin, filling her with happiness. "My weed is hungry, is he?"

Jacen nodded, still giggling, dark blue eyes alight with contentment with his world. "Yep."

"And neither Chopper nor Zeb could find something for you to eat?" Hera asked curiously, hand running through his ever wild hair, trying in vain to smooth it down.
Jacen shook his head solemnly. "Zeb's still snoring and Chopper said I'm old enough to get my own food. I tried, but the only things I can get to are the ration bars, but I wasn't hungry enough to eat one of those," he said with a scrunched up face.

Hera sighed and put Jacen down on the floor. "Why don't you go wake up Zeb and I'll make space waffles?"

Jacen cheered and ran out of the room and down the hallway then instantly ran back and stuck his head back in the cabin. "What about all of my other questions? I can ask them again if you forgot them."

Hera shook her head, laughing. "That won't be necessary. Yes, you may, for a few hours. I don't know, because we don't know where he is. And we're near Sullust."

Jacen blinked as he processed, then nodded. "Kay. Thanks, Mama. I can find him later if you want." He took off again, banging on Zeb's door once, before barging right in and jumping on the lasat's chest. "Wake up, Zeb! Mama's making space waffles!"

Hera smiled to herself as she threw on some clothes and listened to the grumbling and giggling coming from Zeb's room. "Kanan, I don't know if you're listening right now, but thank you for our son, even if he does have the most unfortunate timing sometimes."

Hera felt a faint caress on her cheek and a laughing whisper in her ear cone. "Which one was it this time?"

Hera felt her face heating all over again, despite the fact that Kanan knew her naughty dreams almost as well as she did by now. "The dancing slave girl mission from when I was twenty."

"Ohhh," Kanan breathed. "That's definitely one of my favourites. We can recreate that night later if you want. Especially the dancing part. You still have that outfit, right?"

Hera smirked to herself as she walked down the hall, talking softly again once she was out of hearing range of Zeb and Jacen. "Of course I do, love. You'd have to pay me a lot of credits to give it up."

She stopped outside the refresher door as a faint kiss brushed her lips. "Good. You know I'd be devastated if I couldn't see you in it every once in a while. You're still the most beautiful girl in the galaxy."

Hera smiled and wrapped her arms around herself, hugging in the warm feelings. "And you're still MY super hot man."

Kanan laughed again and left her with a final soft brush of his fingers down her lek.

Hera shook her head at the shiver he gave her, smiling ruefully, knowing that later was going to be way too long from now.

"Zeb, I want you to take Jacen to Sabine in the Phantom II." Hera told the lasat over her shoulder as she prepared the boys' favorite space waffles.

"Sabie!" Jacen said happily

"But, Hera!" Zeb protested loudly at the same time. "That means I won't get to be in the battle with Rex! I was looking forward to that."
"I'm sorry, Zeb. But I need someone I trust to do this for me. And there's no one I trust more than you to take care of my son. And honestly, Zeb. I have a bad feeling about this one. I want as much of my family as far from this war as possible."

"But you're staying?" Zeb said accusingly. "I thought you weren't going to do that anymore. And you're letting Rex fight," he pouted.

Hera sighed and put the finished waffles onto a plate and poured more batter into the waffle iron. "I know, Zeb. But this one is incredibly important. We can't afford to lose. We're going to need every available ship and commanding officer to even have a chance. Besides. Rex is doing what he wants and he only has a few more years left in him before his body gets too old to fight anymore. You, on the other hand, are still young for your kind and will find many more battles to fight in the next few centuries, I'm sure." Hera put a plate of waffles in front of both Jacen and Zeb. "Now stop complaining and eat your food."

Zeb sighed, but dug in anyway. Nothing could ruin his favorite food.

Hera's chest tightened with sadness as she met the blue eyes of her son. He wasn't even accusing. Just asking. What did she ever do to deserve such a mature little boy? "Yes, baby. I'm sorry, but I have to. But I'm making you this promise: If we win this one, I'm never going to fight another battle again. I'm going to retire and we can live on Lothal with Sabine. Would you like that?"

"That would be great, Mama!" He paused with a bite of waffle almost to his mouth as a thought occurred to him. "But what about Rowan? Can he come live on Lothal too?"

"I'll ask the Freemakers when I see them again. If they want to come, I'm sure we can find a place for them too."

Jacen nodded and ate his waffle, happy with her answer.

Hera sighed softly and made a plate for herself before sitting beside Jacen. Everything was so up in the air right now. She didn't know if the Freemakers would bring the Arrowhead back with them, assuming that they survived to do so. She didn't know if they were going to win the battle to destroy the second Death Star. She didn't even know if Luke, Leia, Lando, and Chewie had managed to rescue Han yet. The worst thing she didn't know was if she was going to survive to see her son again after all of this was said and done. And she hated all of this not knowing. Hera put on a happy mask as Jacen glanced at her, doing her best to hide everything she was worried about.

Jacen glanced at his mama, feeling the waves of worry and sadness coming off of her. He gave her an equally happy mask of a smile as he worried about her. He glanced over at his daddy, who was standing beside Hera with a worried frown on his face, not visible to anyone but Jacen. They exchanged knowing looks and Kanan nodded reassuringly, telling Jacen without words that he would make sure that Hera would be okay. Relieved, Jacen felt free to enjoy his breakfast again.

Hera was picking at her waffles, barely chewing as thoughts went through her head, when something Jacen said earlier suddenly came back. She looked up suddenly. "Jacen, did you say you could find Rowan?" Jacen nodded as he took a giant bite of waffle. Hera waited sort of patiently with a raised brow while he chewed and chewed and finally swallowed. "Can you explain how, please?"
Jacen shrugged negligently. "We play hide and seek all the time on Home One. I'm much better at finding than he is, but he's really good at hiding. I used to follow his Force signature until I finally found him but then I got smarter. Now I look at a schematic of the ship and let the Force tell me where he was. I could probably do the same thing with a star map."

Hera gawked at her son, and Zeb even stopped inhaling waffles to stare in astonishment. "Uhhh. Is that a normal Force thing?"

Hera shrugged and shook her head with wide eyes.

Jacen shrugged too. "Don't know. Rowan can do the same thing to find Kyber crystals but he can't do it to find me." He glanced over to where Kanan was still standing in invisible mode with a questioning thought. Kanan nodded and smiled encouragingly at Jacen. "Daddy says yes it is. I can try if you want."

Hera nodded, not surprised that Jacen was communicating with Kanan without talking since they'd been doing that for Jacen's whole life, and looked around for Chopper. He had the most up-to-date star map available, including the new systems that Ahsoka had charted. Not seeing the droid in the galley, Hera commed him. "Chop, need you in the galley please."

Chopper replied that he'd be there in a moment and promptly rolled through the door a moment later. "What's up?" he asked with a curious beep.

"Please project a star map of the whole known galaxy, Chopper," Hera said.

Chopper beeped and did as requested, lighting up the small room with millions of dots representing suns and planets.

Rowan stared at the map in stupefaction for a minute until he felt his daddy's reassuring hand on his shoulder. "Right. It's just like Home One, but with a lot more closets to hide in."

Zeb snorted and Hera smiled. "Don't worry if it doesn't work, baby. This isn't a test."

Jacen nodded and closed his eyes, centering himself in the feel of the Force around him. He concentrated on the feel of Rowan's signature and let the Force guide his hand to point to a quadrant of the galaxy. He opened his eyes and saw he was pointing at a section of the Mid Rim.

"Just that part now, Choppie," he told the droid. A good ninety percent of the dots disappeared and the Mid Rim filled the room instead. Jacen repeated his earlier process, opening his eyes again when his hand was pointing.

Hera looked at the planet that Jacen was pointing at and smiled. "Of course. I should have known Quarrie would take them to Shantipole. No better place in the galaxy to defeat another pilot because the atmosphere would do a lot of the work for you."

Zeb ruffled Jacen's hair in congratulations, giving the boy a big grin when a thought struck him. "Hey, kit, do you think you could find Ezra like that too?"

Jacen's and Hera's eyes widened at the possibility. "I don't know, Zeb," Hera pointed out. "Isn't he in uncharted space?"

Zeb shrugged. "But what if he isn't?"

"I'll do it," Jacen said suddenly. "Let me try."

Hera nodded and told Chopper to reset the holo map to the whole galaxy. Jacen closed his eyes and
thought about Ezra, fiercely picturing in his mind how his big brother's signature felt. He let his hand point towards Ezra and opened his eyes. Everyone sighed at the same time, even Chopper, to see that Jacen was pointing at the wall of the galley, past where Ahsoka's chart ended.

Hera stroked her hand over Jacen's hair at the disappointed look in his eyes. "It's okay, baby. At least we know Ahsoka's looking in the right direction. I'll tell her the next time I see her."

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_D200/4 ABY, The Ghost_

Hera was just finishing prepping the Ghost for battle when she heard Kallus walk up the ramp and call up the ladder, "I hear you're looking for a gunner?!"

Hera looked down the opening in the floor to see Kallus grinning up at her. "Why, yes I am, but I never expected it to be you."

Kallus shrugged and started climbing up to the bridge. "I refuse to sit at a desk while everyone else has all the fun. It's been much too long since I got to shoot something."

Hera snorted lightly but indicated the co-pilot chair as she sat in her own. "You might as well sit in comfort while Home One carries us to Endor. I heard this new hyperspace lane will get us there in only fifteen minutes. You got here just in time. We're just waiting for word from Han's and Rex's ground teams that they have the shield around the Death Star down."

Kallus nodded and reclined in the comfy chair, indulging in not having to think too much for once. "I heard a rumour that you're retiring if we win this one," he said with a sidelong glance and the barest possible amount of curiosity in his voice.

Hera sucked in a big breath and crossed her arms over her chest, staring up at the ceiling as if it held all the answers to all the questions in the galaxy. "It's true. I'm done. I've devoted nineteen years of my life to this Rebellion and lived in a war almost constantly through my childhood. I hardly ever saw my father and now I'm doing the same to my son, even now with the lack of missions. He's more than four and a half years old already, Kallus! When did that happen? I feel like I've barely been there for most of it. He has a dozen 'aunts' and 'uncles' because he's been foisted off on others so many times. I can't do it anymore. I just can't." Hera kind of deflated as she finished her rant.

Kallus reached across the space between the seats and put a comforting hand on her shoulder for a moment. "It's okay, Hera. I understand. We all understand. There's not a single person in the Rebellion who thinks your retirement is a selfish move. A lot of us thought you'd retire after the Hoth incident. You've only gained more respect for sticking it out as long as you have."

Hera smiled weakly at Kallus before turning her eyes back to the ceiling. "Thanks, Kallus. It means a lot to hear that," she said softly.

The comm jumped to life with Admiral Ackbar's voice. "All groups. Assume attack coordinates."

Hera and Kallus sat taller abruptly, adrenaline starting to thrum through her.

Two minutes later, Akbar spoke again. "All craft. Prepare to jump into hyperspace on my mark." She waited with baited breath for half a minute. "Jump in three. Two. One." Hera stared past the window of the Ghost and out through the hangar, waiting for the lights of hyperspace to appear past the shield. She finally breathed again when they did.

"And now we wait and see if we're needed," Hera said, anticipation racing through her veins.
Despite deliberately choosing not to be in the groups directly attacking the Death Star, the familiar urge to test her skills against the enemy came rushing back. The unfinished Death Star was supposed to be undefended, but Hera didn't trust their intel on that any more than she'd trust Lando to keep his hands off any vaguely available pretty female. If there wasn't a whole fleet of Star Destroyers hiding nearby, she'd eat her cap.

Hera and Kallus sat in comfortable, if somewhat tense, silence for the next fifteen minutes, just watching people hurry around the hangar, prepping the backup fighters, mostly consisting of older A-Wings and Y-Wings, and dubbed Phoenix Squadron in honour of Hera's original team, in case things didn't go as planned. The flagship of Admiral Ackbar dropped out of hyperspace and things finally got interesting while they listened to the comm chatter.

"All Wings, report in," General Calrissian called.

"Red Leader, standing by," Wedge answered first.

"Grey Leader, standing by."

"Green Leader, standing by."

"Blue Leader, standing by," from Lieutenant Valeria.

"Lock s-foils in attack positions," Wedge called to his team.

"May the Force be with us," Admiral Ackbar prayed.

"Break off the attack! The shield is still up," Lando commanded.

"I get no reading. Are you sure?" Wedge questioned.

"Pull up! All craft pull up!" Lando called.

"Take evasive action. Green Group. Stay close to holding sector MV seven," from Ackbar and then a few seconds later... "It's a trap!"

"Fighters, coming in." Lando again.

"There's too many of them," somebody Hera didn't recognize called in a panic.

"Accelerate to attack speed. Draw their fire away from the cruisers," Lando ordered.

"Copy, Gold Leader," Wedge replied.

Hera looked at Kallus. "I've heard enough. We're joining this fight."

Kallus nodded and made for the top gun.

Hera opened the channel to Phoenix Squadron while she was flicking switches to get the Ghost up in the air. "Phoenix Squadron, this is Phoenix Leader. Let's go help them out, shall we?"

"Copy that," Mart Mattin replied. "We're right behind you, General."

Hera smiled just a little and took off for open space, listening to the battle over the open comm channel with half her attention. As she emerged from the hangar, she took in the battle scene in a glance. The two thirds finished Death Star hovered over the moon of Endor. Rebel and Imperial fighters zipped all over the place between the Rebel cruisers. And as she flew around the side of
Home One, a rather impressive fleet of Star Destroyers hovered in the distance, waiting for some reason that she didn't like the feeling of.

"Alright, Kallus, Chopper," Hera called over the ship comm. "I'm going to fly at as many TIEs as I can. Take 'em out."

"You got it," Chopper and Kallus both replied at the same time in Binary and Basic eagerly.

"Phoenix Squadron, same for you. Pick a TIE, get it, and repeat," Hera said as she flew straight at the nearest TIE pursuing an X-Wing, Chopper already shooting at it from the nose gun.

At some point, Hera flew past the Millennium Falcon, taking out a TIE that had been chasing the other Corellian light freighter. "Thanks, General," Lando called.

"You're welcome, General," Hera called back. "Your debt to me just keeps growing," she teased.

"Ha. You're never going to the let the Azmorigan thing go, are you?" Lando called back as he flew off in a different direction.

"Never," Hera called back, making for a group of TIEs that were harassing the Medical Frigate.

A minute later, Hera was flying near one of the cruisers in pursuit of yet more TIEs when Kanan suddenly appeared beside her. "Hera, move!"

"What?!" she stared at him wide eyed for half a second even as her inherent trust in him had her pointing the Ghost away from the cruiser and putting on a burst of speed to anywhere else.

Two seconds later, the cruiser she'd been beside blew up to literal bits, only tiny fragments left floating through space left. If she'd still been beside it, she'd be just as dead as the TIE that had been caught in the blast.

"Where did that come from?!" she exclaimed. "Did anyone see?"

"I did," Kallus replied from the top gun turret of the Ghost. "It came from the Death Star. That kriffing thing is working! The Emperor has set a very clever trap indeed."

"Admiral," Hera called. "The Death Star..."

"We saw it. All craft prepare to retreat," he commanded.

"We won't get another chance at this, Admiral," Lando called.

"We have no choice, General Calrissian. Our cruisers can't repel fire of that magnitude."

"Han will have that shield down. We've got to give him more time," Lando swore.

"I'm with Calrissian on this one," Hera jumped. "I think we should give Han and Leia a few more minutes. If we retreat now, we're doomed. This Rebellion will officially be over. We have to take out that Death Star, whatever the cost."

"I agree as well," Wedge added.

"Me too," Kallus said. "We can't leave now. To paraphrase one of Rex's brothers; at least we'll go out fighting for something we believe in."

The comm was flooded with Squadron Leaders and cruiser Captains all agreeing to stay and fight
Ackbar sighed. "I don't like it, but I guess we're staying. Let's make it count."

Hera smiled at Kanan as the comm exploded in cheers and war cries. He settled into the co-pilot seat and nodded to the battle. "Go get 'em, Hera. I'll keep you safe, I promise."

Hera glowed at Kanan for half a moment before turning her attention back to the battle. Kanan steered her away from another cruiser that exploded from the Death Star's green laser beam. This time, she saw it for herself, and she wished she hadn't, but it strengthened her resolve to see this through. If that super weapon was left to reign its terror across the galaxy, she just knew that Lothal and Mandalore would be the Emperor's first targets. Those worlds had been ignored by the Empire lately for a reason and would make perfect examples.

"We'll lose all our cruisers at this rate. They're sitting nerfs out here," Hera commented.

"We need to move them closer to the Star Destroyers," Lando replied.

"What?!" Ackbar cried.

"Yes, I said closer," Lando said resolutely. "Keep as close as you can and engage those Star Destroyers at point blank range."

"At that close of range, we won't last long against those Star Destroyers," Ackbar said incredulously.

"We'll last longer than we will against that Death Star. And might just take a few of them with us," Lando said with grim determination.

"Calrissian's right," Hera added. "Move all the cruisers amongst the Star Destroyers. The Death Star will have a much harder time targeting us with their own ships in the way."

"Alright," Ackbar sighed. "I can't believe I'm saying this, but all craft, move to sector four seven amidst the Star Destroyers and do your best to stay alive."

So that's what they did, fighting for their lives against the ships designed specifically for war. At one point, Hera thought she saw the Freemakers' StarScavenger, but dismissed it as wishful thinking, since what she'd glimpsed didn't look quite right. After what felt like both an instant and an eternity, the shield around the Death Star was finally taken down by the ground teams. Lando and Wedge led their small group of handpicked pilots to attack the Death Star from within, Hera silently wishing them luck, hoping they survived what was essentially a suicide run.

"Admiral, we need to distract them somehow. There's too many TIEs going after Gold and Red Squadrons," Hera called as she saw Wedge's and Lando's squadrons getting picked off before they could even make it to the Death Star.

"We've got to give those fighters more time! Concentrate all fire on that Super Star Destroyer," Ackbar called to all fighters.

"You heard him, Phoenix Squadron," Hera called to her group. "Target the bridge deflector shield. We take out the Bridge, we take out the ship."

Hera set her sights on Darth Vader's flag ship, the Executor, with grim determination, despite the herd of TIEs pursuing her. "You might want to hit a few of those, Kallus," she called as she glanced at the sensor screen.
"I'm trying," Kallus called back through gritted teeth. The kripping TIEs were dodging like mad and shooting at the Ghost at the same time, the bigger ship making a much easier target. "It's like we have a bullseye painted on our tail."

"It is one of the most wanted and recognizable Rebel ships in the galaxy," Kanan commented wryly.

Hera grinned. "Exactly the way it should be, dear." She glanced at a consul as an alarm started beeping madly. "We've losing the rear deflector shields. Hang on." Leaving the Executor for someone else to deal with for the moment, Hera flipped the Ghost over her pursuers and chased them instead so Chopper and Kallus could more easily pick them off.

By the time that was done, someone had taken out the Executor's bridge deflector shield generator and Hera watched in wincing sympathy as Green Leader flew straight at the Bridge in a barely controlled dive straight at it. "That's one way to take out a Star Destroyer," Kanan commented, barely able to watch as Green Leader's smoking A-Wing crashed right into the Super Star Destroyer. "But if you try that, Hera, I can guarantee I'll stop you."

Hera shook her head at Kanan and went looking for something else to target. There was another twenty or so ISD's that had intact shield generators that looked like mighty fine targets to her.

"I wouldn't be very pleased either," Kallus called over the comm.

"Don't worry," Hera said. "I fully intend to see my son again."

"Good," Kanan said.

Hera glanced at him. "You know, you could make yourself a little more useful and use the Force or something to keep those TIEs from blowing up my ship. Our shields are down to five percent and Chopper's a little busy right now being a gunner."

Kanan jolted out of his chair. "Why didn't you say something sooner?" He disappeared, presumably to redirect the enemy fire of a TIE or two.

Hera smiled to herself and continued on with her objective, trusting Kanan to keep her ship in one piece.

The ArrowScavenger darted out of the inner workings of the Death Star only half a minute before it exploded to billions of pieces behind them. Zander uttered curses and pleas as he eked out every ounce of speed he could get from his ship as the blast radius pursued them with deadly intent. "Our Kyber shield would be really handy right now," he growled out.

Rowan winced and shrugged from his seat behind Zander. "Sorry, I had to use the Kyber Sword to stop M-OC. It kind of blew up when I threw it into the Super Crystal." Rowan looked back towards the Death Star blast that he couldn't actually see through the ship. "But if you really want a Kyber shield back right this moment, I can get us more Kyber crystals. There's thousands of little pieces floating through space right now that survived the explosion."

Kordi turned around in her chair to stare at her little brother. "But can you get them?"

Rowan shrugged again with a smirk. "Sure."

Zander brought the new hybrid ship that Rowan had made from the pieces of the two original ships to a halt and turned around as the blast came to a stop and started to dissipate. "Alright, little bro.
Do your thing."

Rowan nodded and closed his eyes, concentrating on all the thousands of tiny scared songs he could hear in his mind, calling them to him. The songs got louder and happier the closer to Rowan they floated.

Zander, Kordi, Roger, and Quarrie watched thousands of tiny lights zooming towards the ship through the other debris of the dead Death Star. "Whoa," Quarrie said in awe. He'd seen the boy build a ship from nothing but scrap with just his mind, but this was a whole other level of control.

"Yep," Zander replied with pride. "Our little brother is something special."

The little lights came to a stop just in front of the ArrowScavenger and converged into one solid light that glowed with a blue tinge. With a big flash of light, the ball solidified into a tooka sized blue Kyber crystal.

"Open the scoop, Zander," Rowan said without opening his eyes. Rowan floated the ball through the open hatch into the cargo hold and Zander closed the door and repressurized the hold. Rowan imagined the inner working of his masterpiece of a ship and floated the Kyber crystal to the waiting holding chamber for it that he'd built into the ship back on Shantipole, knowing he'd either get his original Super Crystal back or make a new one eventually. Rowan opened his eyes, job finished. "You can turn on the shield now, Zander."

Zander rubbed his hands in anticipation and turned on the shield and deployed the Embersteel Blade, then turned the ship toward the fleet of Star Destroyers. "Alright, who's first?"

At the call of success from Lando, Ackbar had pulled all of his ships further away from the Death Star, right alongside the Star Destroyers, the only thought in anyone's mind for those few minutes was avoiding the blast radius.

The moment people got over the shock of the massive structure actually blowing up, the battle continued as if it had never stopped. That is, until a new ship entered the fray and started cutting through the Star Destroyers. A cheer went over the Rebel comm system that was near deafening.

"The Freemakers are back!" Zander called over the comm. "Sorry it took so long to get here, Admiral."

"That's quite alright, Freemaker. You just keep doing what you're doing," Ackbar replied, knowing they'd won this battle for sure now.

By the time Zander had cut through three Star Destroyers, the rest had already manoeuvred to make a retreat and then promptly jumped away from the battle scene over Endor.

Hera breathed a sigh of relief as the battle came to an end. She could call Sabine and tell her it was finally over. Hera was going home as soon as this mess was wrapped up. Which... might take a little while, since there was now debris falling on the forest moon of Endor, endangering everyone living down there, including their Rebel troops.

"Admiral. We have a problem..."
Ghost Family Grows

Ghost Family Grows:

D199/4 ABY, Lothal

Zeb landed the Phantom 2 on the landing pad beside the Lothhawk while Jacen bounced in his seat, already spotting Sabine waiting for them on the duracrete. The boy jumped out of his seat the moment the shuttle settled into place and ran to the back, jumping up and smacking the door release. Zeb laughed and powered down the shuttle, following after the kit at a much more sedate pace.

Sabine opened up her arms as Jacen neared and braced her feet, ready for the missile disguised as a boy to launch at her.

"Sabie!" Jacen squealed as he literally jumped across meters into her arms, using the Force without even thinking about it.

Despite being prepared, Sabine still rocked backward and had to catch herself as Jacen hit her. She closed her arms around his form reflexively and laughed. "Jeez, kid, you keep growing and jumping from further away. One of these days we're not going to be able to do this anymore or you'll knock me right over."

Jacen giggled and kissed her cheek. He reached up and patted Sabine's short lime green hair. "We match again! That is so cool."

Sabine kissed his cheek back and put him down, ruffling Jacen's darker green hair. "You know I did it just for you, sweetie. I might even leave it in this time until I see your mother again, just to see her reaction."

Jacen and Zeb laughed, the lasat hearing the comment as he came around the side of the shuttle with their bags slung over his shoulder. "I dare you to do it," Zeb commented. "Just make sure I'm there to see it."

Sabine smiled at Zeb. "You're on. I'll leave it till I see Hera." She looked back down at the boy practically plastered to her leg. "I have a surprise for you." Then she glanced up at Zeb. "Both of you."

Jacen hopped up and down, eyes wide with excitement. "What is it? What is it?"

"Yah. What is it?" Zeb said almost as curiously.

Sabine smiled sweetly at them. "You'll just have to wait and see." She started walking down the stone path that led past the tower to one of her favourite masterpieces; Spectre House. "Come on and I'll show you."

Jacen skipped after his favourite person who wasn't his parents and Zeb followed them both. Sabine came to a stop when the full view of the mansion was visible. Jacen and Zeb stopping beside her. Spectre House was a three story, multi-winged, stone sided, sprawling work of art that had a landscaped courtyard in both the front and the back with imported trees and flowers. There was a section in the middle for everyone to gather in with a huge dining hall, kitchen, and living room, and lots of glass windows. The four wings that branched off all had a view of a courtyard and were made as separate living quarters with their own kitchens and living spaces for Hera and
Jacen, Zeb, Kallus, and Rex, guest quarters, and finally, for Ezra and herself when the tower wasn't big enough anymore. (She was assuming that they'd have their own kids eventually.)

"You finished it!" Zeb exclaimed.

"It's beautiful," Jacen said in awe.

Sabine gazed happily at her work of art. "Yah. It is. The outside's done anyway. I've left a lot of the inside unfinished so you guys could paint and decorate your sections however you want. I'm waiting for Ezra to come home for our part. I want us to finish it together." Her voice was a little wistful as she said the last part, but Sabine mentally shook herself back into the moment. "But this isn't your surprises."

Zeb and Jacen looked at each other and shrugged, following after Sabine who strode towards a side door of the mansion, leading into Hera's wing. For the moment, almost everything in Hera's section was painted a base coat of white and there wasn't any furniture or appliances. She led the way up the stairs to the second floor which she had finished. Hera's third floor bedroom was blank too, for now. Sabine paused in the stairwell, not turning the corner yet that would reveal her surprise. She bent down and picked up Jacen. "Okay, buddy. Close your eyes. I hope you like it."

Jacen was almost vibrating with excitement as he scrunched his eyes shut. The last time he'd been here, Sabine had brought him to this same spot and said this was going to be his room, but it was just a big empty space. Now he felt her walk two more steps and turn a corner and stop, Zeb's signature stopping beside her.

"Okay, Jacen. Open your eyes," Sabine said, a hint of anxiety in her voice. She'd gone ahead and decorated Jacen's room on her own, wanting to do something for him as a present. Plus there was the new addition that she really really hoped he liked, or she'd get stuck with it. Not that she'd minded cuddling and caring for the tiny thing, it was adorable after all, but still...

Jacen opened his eyes and stared in wonder at his room. First of all, it was HUGE. Second. It was perfectly awesome. Sabie had painted his walls with her signature art. Everywhere he looked he saw the Ghost or the Lothhawk or the Phantom or a Defender zipping through space. Some were chasing TIEs with laser shots streaking across the wall. Some were flying through hyperspace. Some were floating amidst spinning galaxies and imploding star clusters. One side of the room was full of new toys. Another side had a big closet and a door leading to his very own refresher. And in the middle, facing a wall of windows, was a BIG bed, covered in a dark blue, star covered blanket. And on that blanket... There was a tiny black lothcat kitten with a white chin, white striped ears and tail, a few white dots on his body, and four white paws, staring back at him expectantly with eerie, almost glowing silver eyes.

Jacen looked up at Sabine, love shining his eyes. "My room's perfect, Sabie. I love it," he said, hugging her neck and then wiggling to get down so he could walk to the bed.

Sabine breathed a sigh of relief as Zeb squeezed her shoulder gently. "I like it too," he said. "I wish I had a room like this when I was a kit."

Jacen held his hands out to the kitten, connecting to it through the Force like Ezra taught him, reassuring it that he was a friend. The kitten jumped up into his hands and started to purr, immediately curling into a ball of fluff in Jacen's hands, closing his silver eyes contentedly as he found the person he was meant for. Jacen snuggled the kitten against his chest and looked back at Sabine. "Is he for me?"

Sabine nodded, smiling at the adorable sight. "Yep. A lothwolf brought him to me this morning."
The kittens usually end up with the kids at the orphanage, but I'm guessing this one's special and the lothwolf knew you were coming or something. I've never seen a black one before either and I've seen a LOT of lothcats," she said wryly. "He's a little young to be away from his mother, so I'm guessing he's an orphan. You'll have to take really good care of him to start with until he grows a little more."

Jacen gazed down at the kitten with adoration. "I can do that. I love him. I think I'll call him Spacey, cause he's black like space and has spots like stars." The kitten opened his eyes and licked Jacen's hand like he was giving his approval and then promptly went back to napping.

"Sounds good to me," Sabine said. "Zeb and I are going to the main living room. You remember how to get there?" Jacen nodded absently, enthralled with his new pet. "You can come down whenever," Sabine continued. "And Spacey too of course, if he wants to. Dinner's in an hour."

Jacen nodded again, climbing onto his bed and lying down on his stomach carefully so as not to disturb the kitten's nap. "Kay," he mumbled, still watching his kitten with big eyes, unable to believe he actually had his very own pet.

Zeb placed Jacen's bag on the floor and followed Sabine back down to the first floor and down the hallway to the common living space. "I sure hope Hera let's him keep it," he commented.

"Me too," Sabine replied. She stopped with her hand on the button to open the door that opened into the big living room. "And now for your surprise." She pushed the button and then stepped to the side so Zeb could go first.

Zeb walked into the room and abruptly stopped, barely registering the huge room decorated in Sabine's framed artwork and colourful, yet somehow still managing to be tasteful, couches and chairs, because sitting on the couches were four lasats, all of which he knew, but two he hadn't seen since before the massacre on Lasan.

The four lasats rose at Zeb's entrance. Chava and Gron smiled in anticipation to see Zeb's reaction to the surprise they'd brought him instead of going straight to Lira San with the lasat refugees who'd been hiding on an obscure planet that Chava had found through the Ashla.

Zeb kicked himself back into motion and walked up to the purple striped lasat that looked so much like him. "Zek?" he asked in barely audible disbelief.

The younger lasat by two years grinned and wrapped Zeb in an enthusiastic hug, squeezing the air out of Zeb's lungs. "It's really me, big brother," Frezek Orrelios said just as softly.

Zeb choked up, almost crying as he hugged his brother even tighter than he was being squeezed. Zeb rested his forehead on Frezek's shoulder, at a loss for words at seeing his brother again after fifteen years, believing him to have perished in the massacre as well. But if Frezek was alive that meant... Zeb pulled back from his brother's embrace with a squeeze to the younger's shoulder. "It's good to see you, my brother."

Frezek nodded in complete agreement. "You too, Zeb. You too."

Zeb turned to the beige and brown striped lasat and knelt in front of the lasat he'd last seen as a barely teenage kit, under Frezek's protection, just hours before the Empire had begun their devastation. "Your Highness, it warms my heart to see you well and all grown up."

Rolanej Zanolios chuckled and pulled Zeb back up onto his feet. "Just Nej is fine, Captain. I haven't been the heir to anything for a long time."
Zeb smiled ruefully. "Call me Zeb then. I haven't been a Captain of anything for just as long."

The two lasats exchanged looks of mournful understanding before all five lasats began an animated conversation about everything that they'd been doing for the last fifteen years.

Sabine leaned against the wall, smiling softly, listening as they slipped into their native language and completely forgot about her existence. Which didn't bother her at all. She hadn't expected to be a part of the reunion. This was Zeb's moment and she was so happy for him to have found his brother again. It was easy to see the family resemblance. Except for the difference in facial hair, Frezek was basically identical to Zeb. When she'd received a rerouted holo call from Chava yesterday that she was looking for Zeb, Sabine had told her to come here, since Zeb was coming this way too. She'd almost been fooled by Frezek, thinking Zeb had somehow managed to arrive at the same time and in the wise woman's company.

With a little sigh of happiness for her friend, Sabine slipped from the room and made for the big kitchen, thinking she might as well start dinner.

Jacen placed his kitten on the bed carefully, then climbed off, making for his bag. Digging around, he found the communicator his mama had given him so he could call her anytime he felt like it. Well, he felt like it. He NEEDED to tell her about his new pet. Jacen punched the button that had her wrist comm signal already pre-programmed in. "Mama!" he said excitedly as soon as she answered with a 'hello?"

"Hi, baby. One sec." Hera replied warmly. She glanced at Mon, nodding towards the exit, letting her know that she'd take her call in the hallway so the others could continue their war meeting without further interruption. Mon nodded slightly in acknowledgement even as Hera was inching towards the door. As soon as the door closed behind her, Hera leaned back against the wall, closing her eyes as she relished the sound of her son's voice. "Okay. I can talk. How are you?"

Jacen went back to his bed and climbed back on, petting his kitten with a finger softly. "I'm great, Mama. You'll never guess what Sabie did as a present for me."

"What, sweetie?" Hera said curiously.

"Sabie made my room! It's wonderful. There's ships everywhere and it's enormous! And guess what else?"

"What?"

"I got a kitten!" Jacen whisper cried happily. "He's black and white and I'm calling him Spacey. Isn't it great, Mama?"

At the word 'kitten', Hera froze for a second, her whole being screaming 'uh oh', but then the absolute happiness and adoration in Jacen's voice registered and Hera knew she could never make him give it back. So she did what all parents do when faced with a situation that they don't like but have to live with; she lied. "That's great, baby! I can't wait to see him. I'm sure he'll be a very good pet."

Jacen gushed on. "Oh, yes, he will. He's very smart, I can tell. He likes his new name, and we connected through the Force. This is soooooo awesome!"

Hera felt herself warming to the idea of Jacen having a pet the more he talked about it. Having another thing running around the Ghost couldn't possibly be that much worse than the chaos she'd already dealt with over the years. It had to be better than the Chopper / Zeb war, right? "I'm glad
"You're happy, sweetie. I can't wait to meet Spacey. Hopefully this Death Star battle goes according to plan and I'll see you in a few days at the most, okay?"

"Kay, Mama. I'm not too worried. Daddy said he'd take care of you. And I had a dream about Rowan. He was inside the Death Star fighting M-OC. Rowan won and the Death Star blew up. It was pretty awesome."

Hera sucked in a shuddering sigh, desperately hoping that was an accurate vision of the events to come. "Thank you, baby. That makes me feel better."

"Welcome, Mama. I think it's dinner time. I better go now. Love you," Jacen said as he scooped up his kitten and put it on his shoulder for the journey through the big house. Spacey purred in his ear after licking Jacen's cheek, making him smile.

"Love you too, Jacen. Be good for Sabine and Zeb," Hera said.

"Yes, Mama," Jacen said, rolling his eyes. He was always good. "Bye."

"Bye, baby," Hera replied, not wanting to end the conversation, but knowing she had to and get back into the meeting. She couldn't wait for this to all be over so she didn't have to have long distance conversations with her son anymore.

When Jacen wandered into the dining room for dinner (with his kitten), he wasn't surprised to see four more lasats because he'd felt their Force signatures long before he got anywhere near them. What he was surprised to see was a Zeb lookalike. "Zeb! There's another you!" he exclaimed, making everyone laugh.

"Little kit, this is my brother, Zek," Zeb introduced.

"Hi," Jacen said enthusiastically. "Are you going to live with us too?"

Zek shook his head with a smile.

"Actually..." Zeb said. "Would you miss me terribly if I went to live on Lira San with Zek?" he asked. "We'd come visit, of course."

Jacen was instantly disappointed but did his best to hide it. "I would miss you, uncle Zeb. But I'll be okay if you go. As long as you promise to come visit at least twice a year."

Zeb ruffled the boy's hair. "Thanks, little J. You're the best, you know that?"


The other four lasats looked confused while Zeb and Sabine exchanged looks of befuddlement. "Uhhh. That is a very good question," Zeb finally said. "Kal doesn't know about Lira San."

"Maybe it's time you told him," Sabine suggested.

"Who's Kal?" Zek asked, tilting his head in curiosity.

"My best friend," Zeb answered.

"An ex Imperial," Sabine also said.

"Zeb's boyfriend," Jacen said too with a big grin.
If Zeb could visibly blush, he probably would be doing so at the gape mouthed looks he was getting from his brother and the other three lasats. "For the five millionth time, Jacen, he's not my boyfriend!" Zeb protested loudly, much to the amusement of those present.

Sabine and Jacen winked at each other in the most obvious fashion possible, since this was their running joke against Zeb. "I think he's protesting too much, don't you, Jacen?" Sabine said with laughter in her voice.

"For sure," Jacen nodded wisely. "Besides, his Force signature blends with uncle Kal's whenever they're together, almost like yours and Ezie's.

Now Sabine was on the verge of visibly blushing, and she didn't have any convenient fur to hide it. Fortunately Zeb's sputtering took the attention of the others. "We do not... blend... or whatever. But even if we did, it's just cause we're such good friends."

"Still protesting too much," Sabine said in a loud whisper behind her hand to Jacen.

Jacen giggled and Zeb crossed his arms with a huff.

"So who is this 'Kal', really?" Zek asked again.

Zeb sighed. "His name is Alexsandr Kallus and he's a human ex Imperial who was one of the commanding officers that executed the people of Lasan."

"How are you friends with that!?" Nej exclaimed loudly, green eyes almost popping out of his head in disbelief.

Zeb snorted. "We weren't, not for years. More like the bitterest of enemies. Then one day, after yet another fight, we got stuck on an ice moon together. We had to work together to survive. Somehow, I converted Kallus to the side of the Rebellion and he began to spy for us, while still pretending to be an agent of the Imperial Security Bureau. I found out that when Kal was younger, his team was slaughtered by a lasat working for Saw Gerrera. He thought all of us were monsters and had no problem following orders when the Emperor decided that we should all be eliminated. I forgave him for what he helped do to our people a long time ago. When you meet him, Zek, I hope you can do the same. You too, Nej, because I think that I WOULD like to tell Kal about Lira San. And maybe even show him. He's been carrying a lot of guilt about what he did for a long time. I think it would make him feel better if he knew he didn't help almost wipe out our entire species. I've almost told him a hundred times over the last four years, but the timing never felt quite right. Now... Now I think it is."

"This human is that important to you?" Zek asked seriously.

Zeb nodded. "Yah, he is. I know I got all excited about moving to Lira San so we could be together again, brother, but I can't see myself not having Kal in my life either."

"Then bring him with us," Zek said. "Our family is small enough as is. If you consider him part of your family, then I'll welcome him as well."

"Thank you, Zek," Zeb said, getting a little teary eyed, blinking rapidly.

"You should surprise him," Chava suddenly said after being silent all this time.

Zeb looked at the old woman with wide eyes. "What?"
"Surprise him. Tell him you're taking him on a vacation or something, and we'll stay hidden on a
different part of the ship." She shrugged her stooped shoulders a little. "Surprise him."

A smile spread across Zeb's face as the idea took root. "I like it. I'm gonna surprise Kal. Do you
know how hard that is to do? He's always a step ahead of everyone." Zeb rubbed his paws together
in anticipation. "This is gonna be great."

Sabine and Jacen grinned at each other again as she poured a cup of blue milk for the boy and a
saucer full for the kitten. "Totally boyfriends," she whispered loud enough for everyone to hear.

The kitten chirruped as if in agreement before diving into his milk. Literally. Jacen laughed as Zeb
scowled and the other lasats chuckled in amusement.

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After dinner, Jacen got to see both his daddy and Ezie, which made him very happy. They both
thought his kitten was special as well and was very strong in the Force for a tooka. They spent a
very nice hour together practicing Form I, and then another half hour working on floating control
as Jacen made all the toys in his room dance and Spacey run like mad trying to catch them, and a
final half hour meditating. Jacen loved when he got to practice his Force stuff with both his father
and big brother. Not just because he got to see them both at the same time, but also because he got
to watch how happy they were to be spending time with each other as well. Jacen could sense the
unbreakable bond between them that was clearly apparent even with both men being basically just
a projection. Jacen's bond with both of them was just as strong, but different, more familial. Their
Master / Padawan bond ran a little deeper somehow, more within the Force. Jacen knew the odds
of him ever finding his own Master were slim to none, and he was okay with that, happy to be
trained by his father and brother, but he occasionally wondered what it would be like to find that
kind of connection with another person.

Nevertheless, Jacen went to bed that night thinking his life was pretty awesome right now and
wouldn't change it for anything. He was in his new room, with his new kitten sleeping in a ball of
fluff on the pillow beside his head. The only thing missing was his mama, but if he concentrated
just a little, he could feel her presence in the Force blending with his daddy's. Sighing in
contentment, Jacen ran a finger over the fur of his kitten and closed his eyes, falling into a deep
sleep almost instantly after such an exciting day.
Ezra Feels Guilty

Ezra Feels Guilty:

*D199/4 ABY, Lothal*

Since Zeb was having a party of sorts with his own kind, and Jacen was doing Force training with the guys, Sabine retreated to the tower to paint. Two hours flew by as she became absorbed in her work, not even realizing that so much time had passed until she felt Ezra's arms wrap around her from behind and his chin prop itself on her shoulder.

"It's beautiful, whatever it is," Ezra commented on the swirls of blues and greens on the canvas.

Sabine hummed and finished the dash of teal she was working on before putting the paint down and turning around in Ezra's arms, which immediately got her mouth captured in a sweet kiss. She smiled as she pulled back a little. "Thank you, but it's not finished. That's just the background."

Ezra shrugged and kissed her nose. "I'd buy it the way it is."

Sabine laughed and pulled away from his arms so she could put her paints away. "Of course you would, babe. Sooo. I have to ask. Did you or Kanan have anything to do with the kitten arriving at my front door via lothwolf messenger this morning?"

Ezra shrugged and tried to look innocent but failed miserably. "I may have had a hand in that, yes. Forgive me?"

Sabine snorted and shook her head at him. "There's nothing to forgive, you dope. I wouldn't want him for myself, but you should have seen Jacen's face when he saw it. That was priceless. Is that lothcat as special as I think it is?"

Ezra nodded. "Yah. I think so. Just as I was leaving you this morning I felt him crying in the Force so I followed the sense of sorrow. Little thing was all alone in the grass a few kilometres from here. I arrived just before a lothwolf did, presumably to help it as well. The kitten was very happy to not be alone anymore. The lothwolf and I had a little talk and I sent him to you. Easy as that."

Sabine rolled her eyes at what Ezra thought of as easy. If every human could talk to animals, then yes, perhaps it would be considered easy. But to her, she was still amazed by Ezra's affinity for beasties. And it looked like Jacen was picking that up as well. Sabine had already come to terms with the fact that her home would probably be overrun with lothcats when Ezra got back, since they liked him so much.

Finished cleaning up, Sabine walked back over to Ezra and snuggled into his embrace again, resting her head on his shoulder, taking advantage of their last few minutes together before Ezra had to leave to go do his daily routine. "I can't wait for the day I get to keep you all night long," she murmured into his shirt.

Ezra rested his cheek on top of her head and sighed. "Me too, cyar'ika. I'm not faulting Ahsoka, but I can't believe how long it's taking to find me. Somehow, I thought I'd be back long before this. I'm sorry that you're doing practically everything by yourself. I should be there with you. I hate that I'm not."

Sabine looked up and cupped his beloved face in her hands. "I'm doing alright, Ezra. You don't have to apologize for circumstances beyond your control. We'll be together again for real
eventually, I know it."

Ezra closed his eyes and bowed his head for a moment, before meeting her sincere amber ones. "I
know it too. I just feel guilty, is all."

Sabine pulled his head down for a quick kiss. "Don't. You keep doing your thing and I'll do mine.
Sooner or later, you'll come home. I can wait."

Ezra rested his forehead on hers. "I love you, Sabine. You're my flame of hope when I feel
hopeless."

Sabine smiled sweetly, lost in the royal blue depths of his eyes. "And you're mine, Ez'i.ka. We will
always be like the phoenix, rising from the ashes of our pasts and soaring together." Then she
grinned a little. "Listen to us, getting all sappy and poetic. Can you imagine the ribbing we'd get
from Zeb and Chopper if they heard us now?"

Ezra grinned back. "I don't want to. It would completely ruin the mood."

Sabine wrapped her arms around his neck. "Ohhh? We're having a mood, are we?"

Ezra lifted her higher so their faces we're even. "Yes," he breathed, eyes going heavy lidded. "We
are."

Sabine smirked slightly then pressed her mouth to his, starting a passionate kiss that would last as
long as there was breath in her lungs.

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**Cerulia**

Ezra danced across the sand, amber Kyber sword flashing in the late afternoon sun as he parried the
thrusts of Raign's dark red sword. Their swords glowed faintly with the strength of the Force and
rang with a pleasant sound as they struck each other. All around them, dozens of pairs of Cerulian
Jedi practiced as well, more for the fun of it than anything else at this point. Somehow, the
relatively peaceful culture had slowly turned to a warrior race as more and more Cerulians took up
the practice of their own version of the Jedi arts.

Master Tia watched from the sidelines, a smile of satisfaction on her face as she cuddled Krystal's
and Raign's six month old baby girl, Skye. The infant had Raign's great big black eyes and Krystal's
dark red hair, making a striking combination. Krystal sparred with her own padawan, a young
teenage boy with Tia's own long tentacles, marking him as one of her great-grandchildren.

Ezra flipped over Raign's head, blocking a strike thrust up at him in midair, and landed laughing.
"You'll have to do better than that, old man," he thought.

Raign scowled jokingly. "Who you calling old?" he thought back. "I'm not even a year older than
you and you're still twenty-three."

Ezra grinned as his sword flashed again, blocking another swing by Raign. "Yah, but I'm not a dad.
You are. Thus, you're old."

Raign snorted and attacked with increased vigour, as if to prove he wasn't old.

It took Ezra a few moments to notice, since he was in such a good mood, but it finally registered
that the Force felt different all of a sudden; lighter, happier, relieved. Everyone on the beach was
slowly coming to a stop and closing their eyes, smiles crossing their faces, including Ezra and
Ezra was so surprised, he spoke out loud. "What happened?"

Raign shrugged, as did everyone around him.

Tia made her way onto the beach, still carrying Skye who was drooling happily all over a lothcat doll Ezra had carved for her. "I think there has been another shift in the balance of the Force. Although this time, for the better," the old Master surmised.

Ezra put his sword in the sheath across his back, sensing practice was done for the day. "Sabine mentioned that the Rebellion was going after a second Death Star today. They must have destroyed it."

Tia smiled at Ezra's enthusiasm. "Yes, that may be part of it, but I think there would have to be something more to it to change the balance so much more in favour of the Light. I would guess that either Darth Vader or the Emperor has perished, perhaps both. Destroy the two most powerful Dark side users in the galaxy and the balance would have to shift."

A mental wave of elation rang across the beach and then made its way around the planet at the news. No one cared that they may have all trained in the Jedi ways for nothing for the past threeish years, since they enjoyed the practice anyway. They did care that the villains of the galaxy had finally been taken care of. That was enough for them.

Ezra started walking briskly towards his home that he shared with Link. "I'm going to see Sabine early today. She'll know what's happened," he called over his shoulder to anyone who cared to hear.

Raign scooped up his daughter from Tia's arms and grinned after Ezra's retreating form. "He'll take any excuse to see his wife he can get away with," he thought with amusement.

Krystal laughed as she walked up and put an arm around Raign's waist, shaking her head at him. "You know you'd be exactly the same if you were in the same position," she thought back.

Raign smiled down at his wife fondly and kissed the top of her head. "Of course I would. I would hate to be parted from you. I don't know how he does it."

Ezra appeared in the tower bedroom behind Sabine's sleeping form. All that was visible of her was her short lime green hair, putting a smile on his face. He carefully folded the blanket back with a wave of his hand and snuggled up behind her, spooning her curled up body, causing Sabine to make a contented sound in her sleep. Ezra simply enjoyed the time watching her sleep since wrapping his Force signature around hers was one of his greatest joys right now and she was just so wonderful to look at. He eagerly looked forward to doing the same with his actual body, but this was all he had, so he savoured it to the fullest.

Sabine was dreaming about colours, so many colours, swirling through her mind, chasing the Ghost through hyperspace. Then she was riding a lothwolf, more colours chasing her through the passage of time. Then she was in Ezra's arms, the ecstasy of joining with him sending more colours through her mind. She moaned a little in her sleep, happy with her dream. It took her sleepy brain awhile to register that she was tingling for real, not just in her mind. But when she did, her eyes opened a fraction to see a familiar bare muscled arm wrapped around her in the faint light of predawn. Sabine closed her eyes again and snuggled back a fraction, even closer to the hard body she could feel behind her, hoping to take her dream into reality.
Sensing Sabine was finally awake, Ezra pressed a kiss to her neck, just below her ear, eliciting another hum of pleasure from his beautiful wife. He slipped his second arm under her body so he could pleasure her with both hands. His right hand found a home at her perfect handfuls of breasts, while his left hand wandered down to her core of pleasure, finding her already wet and ready.

Sabine felt Ezra's hard cock press against her entrance from behind and then slip inside, filling her so perfectly, reaching to the very end of her sensitive tunnel. She clenched around him reflexively and let out a moan of appreciation. She reached back and buried a hand in his hair, holding his mouth to her neck where he was sucking on it just enough to send shivers through her.

Ezra thrust his Force made cock in and out of Sabine's warm depths, paying special attention to her reactions so he knew when he had the angle, speed, and depth just right to send the most pleasure through her. He loved driving her to the brink of climax and then holding her there as long as possible before sending her over, which made her come harder and longer. His fingers stayed busy on her clit while he curled over her body and kissed a path to the breast he could reach, sucking her nipple into his mouth and laving the hard point with his tongue.

Sabine's eyes closed at all the sensations assaulting her, then she'd force them open again so she could drink in the sight of Ezra lavishing attention on her, then she'd lose the battle again and her eyes would close once more. At some point, she tugged on his hair again to pull him up and twisted her upper body just enough so she could mash their mouths together and kiss him like a wild thing, tongue delving into his mouth and duelling with his. She pulled back to gasp in air, eyes meeting his over her shoulder. "You. Are. So. Kriffing. Amazing," she gasped with every thrust of his cock. "But. Please. Let. Me. Come."

"As my lady commands." Ezra grinned wickedly and kissed her again, stealing her breath, all while thrusting harder and faster and sending a jolt of Force energy to her clit.

That did it. Sabine went over the edge and flew through the stars without the benefit of a ship. She shuddered and came and came forever as Ezra kept the sensations going until she couldn't take it anymore and her body collapsed into a puddle of satisfied boneless flesh.

Ezra smiled to himself at once again making his wife scream his name. He flooded her insides with mental Force energy, representing his come, and eased up on his movements until coming to a complete stop and withdrawing his make believe flesh from within hers. He kept himself wrapped around her though, because she liked the snuggling part after too, which was good, because he loved snuggling.

Sabine eventually mustered up the energy to turn around in his arms, kissing him slow and sweet. "I love waking up like that, babe. Thank you."

Ezra smiled, trying to stay humble at least to a small degree, but her praise made him feel like the best man in the galaxy. "It was my pleasure, cyar'ika. You know I'll literally love you till the end of time if you let me."

Sabine smiled back. "I know. And when you get back, I swear I'm going to repay all those hours you've spent loving me and drive you insane in return until you're begging me to stop."

Ezra smirked. "I'm looking forward to it."

Sabine smirked back. "Good." She pushed him a little. "Now get your cute ass off the bed and go wake up Jacen and that kitten you gave him and go make breakfast for seven. We'll comm Hera and see how it's going after I get down there."
Ezra kissed her cheek, and then did as ordered, a happy grin on his face.
Anakin's Redemption

Anakin's Redemption:

D200/4 ABY, Death Star 2

The moment Darth Vader understood that his son's life was worth more than his own was the moment Anakin Skywalker was redeemed and the Light side of the Force filled the empty spaces in his soul like it used to. Knowing it meant his own death, Anakin saved his son from Darth Sidious' lightning, rendering his own cyborg suit that he loathed almost useless with only a few zaps of electricity. Anakin had known his suit was susceptible to electricity, something he was sure his Master had done on purpose, but he never designed himself a new suit that didn't have that flaw, even though he was more than capable of doing so. Somewhere in the back of the persona of Darth Vader, Anakin had still lurked, hating what he had become and not wanting to add to his years of agony. Darth Vader used the pain and hate to make him even stronger in the Dark side, pushing Anakin even further to the back of his mind, but Anakin never did let the Sith side of him fix that suit. It was one of the very few battles between his Sith and Jedi sides that Anakin actually won over the years.

And now here he was, futilely gasping for air, staring at his amazing son with his own eyes, wishing they had more time. Wishing he could do everything over again from the very beginning. And wishing with all his heart that he'd treated his children differently ever since he'd first met them four years ago. He'd tortured his daughter. He'd cut off his own son's hand. He'd pursued them back and forth across the galaxy and made their lives miserable whenever possible. All Anakin wanted to do in that moment was scream that he was sorry, so very sorry, and then curl in a ball and cry. Instead he used his last breath of failing oxygen to convey his apologies as best as he could. "Tell your sister you were right. You. Were. Right."

That was it. That was Anakin's last act as a living person. He'd have to be satisfied with it because he had nothing left to stay alive with. Luke's cry of, "Father! I won't leave you!" rang through what was left of his ears and brought a sense of peace and sorrow that Anakin took with him into the next stage of his existence. Anakin could remember wanting to be a good father, the best father, back when Padme first told him she was pregnant. For five whole minutes, Anakin felt like he actually was one. Though nowhere near the best, it was enough to make him feel a little bit less like scum.

It was a good way to die.

The Force Afterlife

Anakin opened his eyes to see the faces of many Masters surrounding him. Obi-Wan was the first person he laid eyes on, followed by Qui-Gon, Yoda, Plo Koon, Kit Fitso, Depa Billaba, Shaak Ti, Luminara, Mace Windu, and every other Jedi Anakin had ever met over his lifetime. Most of them he'd either personally wronged with his fall or had adversely affected in some way by doing so. Some of them he'd even slaughtered in either cold blood or a fit of rage, depending on the moment. That included the padawans and younglings, much to his eternal mortification.

Anakin jumped up onto his feet, not even noticing that he actually had feet again, and backed away from the stares of so many people. He was in such a panic that he didn't see that they weren't looking at him with loathing, but sympathy. "I'm sorry," he cried. "So very very sorry. I'm sorry I killed you," he said, tears running down his face as he backed even further.
Anakin didn't stop backing away until he bumped into another body. He turned around and came face to face with the Father, his children standing at either side of him. Anakin bowed his head, not able to meet the eyes of the powerful old man. "I'm sorry I didn't do as you asked. Everything that happened is my fault."

The Father nodded once. "That is true. I did warn you that you needed to keep the balance of the Force and you did not. Instead, you fulfilled my Son's visions of your future as I was afraid you would. It fills me with regret that that you have lived in misery all this time. I wish there had been a better path for your life and that I could have done more to help you in the short time I knew you. But I can be of assistance to you now if you need it."


"But you are worth something, Anakin Skywalker," The Father said calmly. "You are still the Chosen One, even in this life. Use your power to help those who can help the galaxy towards a better path, like your children and the Rebellion that they fight so hard for."

Anakin stared at the ground again, still feeling useless. "But I don't know how. Am I not stuck here, wherever here is? I did not give my pathetic excuse for a body to the Force before I died. I am nothing."

The Father smiled slightly. "That is not exactly true. You died as more machine than man. Your essence in the Force is as strong as it ever was. You are the most powerful Jedi ever born. All you have to do is believe that you can do something and it will happen. Have faith in yourself once again."

Anakin sighed, still gazing at the indistinct ground he was standing on, finally realizing that he was in fact standing on his own legs and not metal ones. He raised his hands and looked at the two matching real hands in wonder. He was whole! For the first time since he was a teenager, Anakin was finally whole again. He breathed in a lungful of air and finally met the kind eyes of the Father, and then the sympathetic ones of the Daughter and the knowing gaze of the Son. Anakin smiled ever so slightly as he nodded once in thanks.

Feeling somewhat better, and vaguely courageous, he turned around again and walked back to the crowd of people who were patiently waiting for him to acknowledge their presence. Anakin addressed the group as a whole first, doing his best to meet the eyes of every single person, although there was even more than he realized at first, being over some ten thousand Jedi in the galaxy at the time of his fall and he'd run into a lot of them at some point or another. "I did you all a great wrong and I am sorry. I vow to spend the rest of eternity doing my best to make everything as right again as possible. That is all I can do."

Then Anakin faced Obi-Wan, knowing he'd hurt him the most, eyes misting again at the memory of the terrible ending between them. Both terrible endings in fact. "Master," Anakin said, falling to his knees in front of him. "I am never going to be able to say how sorry I am for not coming to you with my problems instead of the Emperor. I didn't think you would help me because I was breaking the code with Padme. I put my faith in the wrong person and I paid for it. The whole galaxy paid for it. I would never hope to beg for your forgiveness, but if you could find at least a little place in your heart to remember me as I was and not who I became, that will be enough."

Anakin closed his eyes as tears ran down his cheeks, waiting for a word or something from Obi-Wan. Anything to put him out of his misery. Anakin stopped breathing as he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder and the bond he used to have with his Master fluttered back to life in his soul.

have felt your pain at the hands of the Emperor for years. You were his puppet from the day he planted ideas in your mind. It is I who should beg for forgiveness. I knew about you and Padme, but I did nothing to support you. In fact," Obi-Wan glanced at the other Council members, "We all did and did nothing, not wanting to stir up an issue of the code long ignored. It is all of our faults. The fall of the Jedi was a group effort that you took the blame for. Darth Sidious was playing us from the beginning and we were all too blind and stupid to see it. So please, get up, Anakin. You don't belong on your knees before me. There is nothing we can do to change the past, but the future is finally back on the correct course, thanks to you. You are still the Chosen One and it would make me very glad if you would once again consider me to be your brother."

Anakin stared up at Obi-Wan in stunned silence for a moment before surging to his feet and grabbing him in a tight hug, the first display of affection he'd given anyone in more than two decades. "Thank you, Obi-Wan. I missed you."

Obi-Wan pulled back with a rueful smile, holding onto Anakin's shoulders. "I missed you too, Anakin. It's good to have you back."

Anakin was then surrounded by his old Masters and friends, many voices all welcoming him back into the fold, making him feel overwhelmed, but so relieved to be back where he belonged.

After a few minutes, Obi-Wan snagged Anakin's arm and dragged him off to the side, shooing the crowd away. "Anakin. I know this is going to be hard, but there's someone I think you should apologize to who actually deserves it. Someone else who loved you like a brother."

Anakin's eyes widened as he realized who Obi-Wan was talking about. "Ahsoka," he breathed, pain filling his chest.

"Yes, Ahsoka," Obi-Wan said sadly. "She was innocent in everything that happened and wasn't even there at the end, but her life was affected just as much as everyone else."

"I tried to kill her and she saved my life," Anakin said, eyes filling with sorrow. "How could I ever do that to my Snips? For that matter, how could I have harmed my own children? What was wrong with me?" Anakin was on the verge of breaking down again when Obi-Wan wrapped an arm around him and hugged him tight, just like he used to when Anakin was a boy and missing his mother.

"You weren't yourself, Anakin," Obi-Wan said to the top of Anakin's curly hair, as his face was hiding in his shoulder, while patting his back soothingly. "You have to forgive yourself for everything the Dark side made you do." Anakin shook his head slightly, making Obi-Wan sigh. "You have to, Anakin. You'll never be completely free from the Dark unless you do."

Anakin sucked in a shuddering breath, drawing strength from the bond he had with Obi-Wan like he should have years ago instead of shutting his Master out. "Okay." He took another deep breath and stood up straight. "Okay," he repeated. "It wasn't entirely my fault. It sounds kind of cheesy to say the Dark side made me do it, but I guess that's how it goes," Anakin said with a hint of his old humour.

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Obi-Wan grinned at his padawan. "Good. Do you feel better now?"

Anakin nodded, the last remnants of the Dark side that were clinging to him fading away. Relishing the ability to breathe on his own, he smiled a truly happy smile. "I am going to be forever indebted to you at this rate, Obi-Wan," he joked.

Obi-Wan grinned wider. "As it should be, my reckless padawan."
Anakin groaned and shook his head. "I'm going to find my own reckless padawan, thank you very much, before you start making more bad jokes."

Obi-Wan barked a laugh, eyes shining with mirth and relieved joy as HIS Anakin disappeared. And then promptly reappeared. "What now?" he asked dryly.

Anakin waved a hand vaguely over his form. "Master, what do I look like? Am I all creepy looking? Will she even recognize me?"

Obi-Wan chuckled. "Anakin, you can look however you want to look. What you are now is a projection of how you wish to see yourself. If you want to look 'creepy looking' then you may, but what I see is how you looked around your twenty-first year, but without the scar on your eye and two real hands. It's a good choice, in my opinion. You were still happy then."

Anakin huffed out a relieved sigh. "Thanks, Obi-Wan. It's nice to see you looking young again as well. That old man look I saw on the Death Star just wasn't right," he said with a teasing glint in his blue eyes.

Obi-Wan laughed and waved him off. "Just go make up with your padawan, brat."

Anakin grinned and disappeared again.
Cody's Found!

D200/4 ABY, Endor Moon

When Cody woke up with the galaxy's worst headache, he found that he was hanging from his hands and ankles on a pole with another trooper as a couple of youngling sized Ewoks carried him towards their village, their strength defying their size. As they chattered to themselves in high pitched voices, he thought this was a fitting end to his miserable life, because from what he could make out, it sounded an awful lot like they were planning to roast him and eat him.

Cody thought back over the years that had brought him to this point, not particularly sure if any of it had been worth it. The years he'd spent in training on Kamino had been hard, but not too bad, because he was with his brothers. The years he spent fighting beside said brothers during the war with the Seppies, though brutal, were probably the best if pointless in the end. At least then he'd been the Commander of his battalion, the 212th, and Marshal Commander of the 7th Sky Corps, with only General Kenobi to answer to, and the General had been a good friend. Almost as close as a brother. He'd also had a best friend; Captain Rex. They'd been so different from each other, personality wise, but they balanced each other out perfectly. And since his General and Rex's General almost always fought the same battles, he and Rex got to see each other a lot and work together. Those were definitely the best days that he could recall.

But then everything changed and Cody's life became filled with regrets and guilt. He'd listened to Rex when he said Fives had discovered bad controller chips in their brains, but he'd never removed his, being a good soldier like he'd been trained to be. How he wished he could do that one over again, for it had led to him becoming an unfeeling machine at the Emperor's Order 66. He'd ordered his men to fire on his General. In his nightmares, Cody still saw Kenobi fall hundreds of metres, over and over again. All he could do was pray that he survived the fall with some Jedi trick. Promptly after wrapping up the battle on Utapau, his unit had been assigned to find and execute any Jedi at all of the known Jedi temples across the galaxy before they had a chance to disappear into hiding. For that entire week of flying across space and flat out murdering peaceful Jedi, Cody had lived in a haze. His mind wasn't his own. His body wasn't his own. He'd felt like one of the kriffing Seppie droids.

When that mission was completed, adding to Cody's nightmares, the best of the 212th had been incorporated into what was left of the 501st and Cody was kept in command of Darth Vader's personal battalion, since Rex was listed as deceased on Mandalore, for a couple of years anyway. During that time, Cody had done as ordered, knowing no other way of life. He'd never been happy about it, though, feeling like everything he'd previously fought for had been for naught as the Emperor took control of planet after planet with brutal tactics. Cody didn't know where the cyborg Darth Vader had come from, but he had his suspicions that he never dared voice. It couldn't be a coincidence that General Skywalker's battalion was under the command of the magically appearing Darth Vader and that Skywalker was never seen again. There were rumours amongst the men that Skywalker had executed everyone in the Jedi Temple on Coruscant with a small unit of brothers at his back, but those brothers had also been executed to hide whatever proof there was of what Skywalker had done for the self appointed Emperor.

One day, Cody was injured in battle. By the time he recovered, he'd been callously replaced by an Imperial who was NOT a brother. As was the story with every other clone commanding officer that he spoke to. Within five years, they'd all been replaced and the clones were assigned positions
as simple stormtroopers. Cody had remained in the elite 501st for another few years until his aging body had become apparent and he too had been kicked to the side, demoted again and again until he was also just another trooper amongst millions, forgotten.

He'd eventually been assigned to the boring duty of protecting the new Imperial facilities on this moon. That had been a couple years ago. He hadn't been transferred since. Then the Rebels showed up and everything went ballistic. The facilities had been blown up. The Death Star had been blown up. They'd lost the ground battle to a handful of rebels and some Ewoks. And now he was going to get eaten. It seemed like a perfect end to a perfect downward spiral of a life filled with bantha poooky. Cody almost looked forward to it. He was going to end up 'decommissioned' soon anyway, based on how fast he was aging. Might as well fill someone's stomach and be useful one last time.

Cody was now being carried into the outskirts of a village, where he could sort of see through his stupid helmet that there was already a feast being prepared by multiple members of the furry little carnivores. Some of his fellow troopers were already tied up near a big pit with the makings of an epic bonfire in it and a frame over it. He bet they'd cook up real nice in their armour. Cody was so looking forward to that part. NOT. He hoped they knocked him out first.

Suddenly a pretty lady in green Rebel gear with braided brown hair appeared beside the ewok near Cody's head. "Please let them go. We must treat the enemy fairly," she implored. The nasty little creature responded to that by smacking Cody in the helmet with a big wooden spoon, making him see stars yet again. By the time he came to his senses again, he'd been deposited with the rest of the troopers waiting their turn to be cooked. The pretty lady was playing tug of war with an ewok over another trooper who obviously didn't relish the idea of being dinner. Or torn apart, judging by his cries. Poor idiot.

The lady pulled out a communicator with one hand while straddling the trooper's leg so he couldn't be pulled into the quickly growing fire, and made a couple of calls. "Han! You better get back here like yesterday. What's taking you so long?" she berated whoever she was talking to.

Cody could barely make out a reply that sounded a lot like 'Hera's blackmailing me into saying the Ghost is better than the Falcon for the ration bars you want, your Highness,' a man said in a very grumbled out voice.

The lady rolled her eyes. "Just say it. I'll make it up to you later."

"Yes, you will," came back the snarky but somewhat happier reply.

The lady huffed a sigh, but smiled a little too, indicating she wouldn't mind the making up part too much. Then she made another call that almost had Cody falling over. "Commander Rex?"

"What is it, General?" a very familiar voice replied.

"I could really use some help here, if you have a few people to spare. The natives are trying to cook our prisoners."

"I'll be there in five," Rex replied.

Cody had to call on a lot of training to sit still without squirming while he waited. He so desperately wanted to see if it actually was Rex. It had to be. It just had to.

Almost precisely five minutes later, a man, a wookie, and a VERY familiar droid he would swear was Skywalker's R2 unit, showed up with a couple of crates, the poor lady fighting the ewok over
the trooper's protesting body the whole time. A few seconds later, from the other direction, a white bearded Rex jogged into camp with a small number of soldiers at his heels. Cody's heart almost stopped to see his brother. By now, it had been at least five years since he'd seen another brother in the Imperial ranks. He was afraid they'd all been decommissioned by now. And now here was Rex, looking every bit as old as Cody did, maybe even older since he was sporting the white beard, but he still had his pride, unlike Cody, who was just existing for the lack of anything else to do. Rex was a Commander now too. (For the Rebel side, but who cares?) Rex had finally gotten the title he deserved but had never been promoted to, after Commander Tano left Skywalker's side and the 501st, leaving behind a very sad bunch of brothers who'd adored her.

As Cody drank in the sight of his brother, dressed in green like all the Rebel ground troops, Cody couldn't help but laugh silently at the stupid helmet Rex was wearing. It looked even more useless than his own which didn't even have a HUD in it and the vision was severely limited. How he missed his old armour. He bet Rex did too. It was actually worth something, unlike this eye rolling stuff the Imperial's were passing off as armour these days. Poor Rex looked like he was hardly wearing any armour at all. It was a wonder he'd survived this long, if that's how the Rebels outfitted their troops.

Rex indicated to his soldiers that they should guard the prisoners while he talked to the Princess General for a minute. He jogged over to her and wrestled the poor trooper away from the surprisingly strong ewok and then gave the fellow a semi gentle shove in the direction of the other prisoners. The man went happily, probably relieved that he wasn't going to be roasted anytime soon. Rex wasn't actually sure WHAT they were going to do with all the prisoners they were accumulating, but for now, keeping them alive was good enough.

Rex turned to ask the Princess what she wanted done with the prisoners but she'd already gone over to talk to General Solo and the Ewoks were attacking the crates with great curiosity. Rex shrugged mentally and decided to just take the prisoners with him back to Hera's camp where most of the men were gathering for the night and many of the prisoners had already been rounded up. He'd been on his way there when the Princess had commed.

Rex strode over to where most of the troopers had been tied together and started untying the lot. "C'mon, Imps. We're getting out of here before the nasty little critters get bored with the ration bars."

The troopers all stood, most mumbling gratitudes for saving them. Rex grabbed a trooper who was swaying alarmingly as he stood and steadied him on his feet. Even though these guys were the enemy, they still looked too much like his brothers in their white armour for him to be anything but sympathetic to them. "You okay there?"

The trooper nodded slightly, raising a hand to his helmet that had a signifagant dent in it. Poor sod must of gotten a good whack to the head recently. Rex nodded back in understanding and decided to stay close to that one just in case he keeled over. With a barked, "Let's move!" Rex, his troops, and the prisoners all jogged out of the base of the ewok's tree village, making for the main Rebel camp a quarter of a kilometre away through the dense forest. Rex was pleased to see the injured trooper held his own and maintained the jog without any further signs of weakness. Rex thought he'd make a good brother, for they were tough like that too.

As they passed the Princess and Solo, Rex heard her say, "Don't worry, everyone knows the Falcon is better than the Ghost." Rex chuckled a little to himself at her placating tone. Hera must have finally gotten Solo to say the words she'd been trying to wrangle out of the ex smuggler for years. The fun part was that there was not a single pilot in the Rebellion who'd pick the Falcon over the Ghost. Everyone knew which ship was actually better and more reliable. The Millennium Falcon
might possibly be faster, but it was just as likely to break down as get you anywhere.

Once they'd reached the bustling camp, somewhere near dinnertime (it was hard to believe they'd been on this moon for a whole cycle already), Rex sent the captured troopers to hang out with the rest who were under guard. Not that they looked like they were inclined to go anywhere. Their Imperial ships were all destroyed or had flown the area with their tails between their legs. Their Death Star was floating around in space in tiny pieces and bouncing off the hastily erected shields that the Rebels had cobbled together up in space to stop the fragments from falling to the surface of the moon. And their Emperor and his chief enforcer were dead. These stormtroopers had absolutely no good reason to try to run. Especially with the nasty little ewoks perfectly happy to turn them into dinner if they caught them. Rex figured the troopers felt safer right where they were. He would too, if he was them. With any luck, they might even get a few new recruits from their ranks, saving them the hassle of trying to imprison the whole lot.

Hera walked up to Rex pushing an antigrav crate with a datapad sitting on top of it. "Here, Rex. You might as well distribute the ration bars to the prisoners while you take down their IDs. Kallus wants them for the records. And if you can get any of them to change sides, go for it. The Rebellion might have won this one, but I can guarantee the battles aren't quite over yet. You'll want every soldier you can get your hands on."

"Got it, Hera. Already thought of that," Rex said as he took the crate with a smile.

Hera smiled warmly back. "Of course you have, Rex. I should know better by now that you've got more experience fighting real wars than most of us combined."

Rex snorted. "Don't worry about it. You're a General. It's your job to give orders."

Hera leaned against a tree and crossed her arms, suddenly feeling very tired. "Not for much longer, Rex. I don't know how you've done it all these years, but I'm going to recommend that they promote you to General to take my place when I leave."

Rex stared at Hera with wide eyes for a moment before remembering his manners. "Thank you, Hera. It's not necessary, but I wouldn't say no if High Command agreed. I would be the first ever clone General and that would really make my day and all of my deceased brothers' too."

Hera smiled sadly at the thought that the clones had never really gotten the recognition they deserved. "Well, you deserve the title, Rex. And when you've done with war, you know you have a home with Sabine and I on Lothal. Last time I talked to her, she said the house is almost finished and just needs everyone's personal touch to complete their spaces." Hera's wrist comm chose that moment to chime. She glanced down at it and smiled wider. "Speaking of... Sabine's calling. I'm sure she wants an update on how things went." She nodded towards the group of about fifty stormtroopers all huddled together. "Good luck with them."

Rex gave a jaunty salute and left Hera behind as she answered the comm, a happy, "Sabine! Good timing. I was just talking about you," coming from behind him as he walked away. Rex smiled to himself a little. He may not have any of his brothers anymore, but he did have a family. One he was truly content with and felt privileged to be a part of. It was way beyond good enough.

As Rex walked up to the prisoners, he called. "Okay troops! Line up! We've got rations and roll call. Nothing too exciting, but it'll keep you going. There's a stream just though the trees behind you for anyone who needs to fill up their canteen. Just indicate to one of the guards that you need water and they'll accompany you, but really, who would want to leave these wonderful accommodations?" Rex said with a laughing glance at the forest floor that was going to be almost everyone's beds for the second night in a row. Rex almost felt bad that he got to sleep in his nice
bunk in the Ghost. Almost. He got a few chuckles from the prisoners as they dutifully formed two orderly, long, as straight as possible lines around the trees. Rex continued with his little impromptu speech. "Now, I don't know if any of you actually liked serving the Empire, but as I see it, you are now on the losing side. Over here on the Rebel side, we don't make judgement calls on who you were or what your reasons were for being an Imp, or maybe you were forced to be one, but if you want to switch to the winning side, we'd be glad to take you. Otherwise, you'll be spending your days in a cell once we get off this moon. If you want to switch just let me know quietly when I take your ID and you won't be stuck in the prisoner section for too much longer. All you have to do is clear the debriefing and if you're seen as fit for active duty, you'll be assigned a new unit in the Rebellion." Rex met the helmeted eyes of every single man as he spoke, letting them know he was sincere. "And one last thing before we get started. Please feel free to take off your buckets. Here in Rebel land, soldiers are people, not droids. That's all."

Rex picked up the datapad and opened the lid of the crate, grabbing a handful of ration bars. The first soldier in line took a step forward and gave his ID number and took the ration bars and also nodded slightly, indicating he would be willing to change sides. Rex nodded in return with his eyes, letting the soldier know he got the message. Rex wanted to keep the ones who wanted to change sides on the downlow as much as possible so they didn't get any grief from the fellow troopers who weren't going to switch, as they would still be living together for another day or so until things got sorted out. The first soldier left the line and took a seat against a tree, taking off his helmet and opening a ration bar, eating hungrily.

Rex went through the whole line of troopers, almost half of them wanting to change sides, making him happy with the better than expected result, until there was only one left. The trooper with the dented helmet took the last step forward and Rex gave him a friendly smile. "You doin' alright?" he asked as he handed over some ration bars.

The trooper nodded, mumbling out a barely discernable, "Yah. Thanks."

Rex raised a brow, but let it slide. "ID?" he asked.

Inside his armour, Cody was basically trembling. He couldn't lie, but he didn't want to say it either. What if Rex wasn't happy to see him? What if Rex was disappointed that Cody hadn't removed his chip too and fell victim to the evil plot of Order 66? Cody had personally murdered twenty-seven Jedi because of that order, and his men even more. Cody could barely live with what he'd been forced to do, how could Rex ever forgive him for it?

Rex stared at the trooper when he didn't answer. "Do you need a medic? Can you not remember?" Rex knew head wounds could be nasty things, having seen more than his fair share amongst his brothers during the wars. Gregor had lost his memories for months because of one, and another explosion after that had left him a little bit 'special.'

Cody sucked in a breath for courage and finally spoke. "No, I remember. I'll never forget. It's currently CT-2224."

Rex stopped breathing and very nearly dropped the datapad. Despite being distorted by the bucket, he KNEW that voice. Knew it to his very bones. Because it was just like thousands of others, but distinct in its own way. And it was just like his. Rex finally sucked in air when his vision started to blur and he gasped out the original ID. "CC-2224?"

Cody nodded stiltedly, still not sure what to make of Rex's reaction. Then he was suddenly enveloped in a breath stealing hug.

"Cody!" Rex cried into his brother's shoulder. "Oh shabla, am I glad to see you're still alive. I
thought I was the last one."

Cody patted Rex on the back comfortingly, struggling to hold back the tears because Rex still didn't know, but he soaked in the affection while he could. "I'm glad to see you too, Rex," Cody said softly.

Rex pulled back and stared at Cody's bucket. "Please take it off."

Cody hesitantly reached up and pulled off his helmet, tucking it under his arm, to the sound of a few gasps and whispers of 'they're twins!' from some of the observers who'd noticed the spectacle the two brothers were making. Someone else corrected with, 'no, I think they're old clones. Those used to be a thing,'

Rex and Cody barely noticed the murmurs around them as they stared at each other in fascination. Cody had a white buzz cut and no facial hair, and Rex had the beard but no hair on his head. But their faces were still identical except for the scar by Cody's left eye, and their golden brown eyes were still the same.

Pushing the crate in front him, Rex grabbed Cody's free arm and dragged him towards the Ghost. "C'mon. We have some catching up to do and we don't need to do it in front of everybody."

Cody gave Rex a tight smile and gently pulled his arm free. "Sure, Rex. That sounds good." Rex led him past a beat up Corellian freighter and up the ramp of a well kept Corellian freighter of a different model. Cody wondered if these were the aforementioned Ghost and Falcon and which one was which. Rex left the crate in the cargo hold and they climbed a ladder into a bridge where the light green twi'lek Rex had been talking to earlier was talking animatedly to a hologram of a young hybrid boy, a pretty human female, and a lasat of all things.

Hera glanced up when Rex climbed the ladder then did a double take when a second Rex climbed the ladder. "Oh, Force, Rex, you found a brother!" she exclaimed, happy for him.

Rex nodded eagerly, his eyes alight with elation. "Not just any brother, Hera. This is Cody, my best brother. You might remember him as General Kenobi's Commander when they fought with your father on Ryloth."

Hera gasped. "I do remember Father mentioning a Commander Cody. He spoke highly of you." She beamed at Cody. "I'll have to tell him you're still alive. I'm sure he'll want to meet you and thank you personally for your efforts to help free my planet."

Cody glanced from Rex to the twi'lek, not quite following the conversation.

Rex sensed his confusion and cleared it up. "Hera is General Cham Syndulla's daughter. She's a General herself now."

Cody smiled as he made the connection. "I'd be pleased to see your father again. I remember the battles on Ryloth quite clearly and your father was a very brave leader. And I doubt you remember it, but I think I did meet you once, when you were little. Your father was carrying you and you were pretty much asleep. He should be proud of how you've grown up."

Hera smiled mistily at the painful memories of a life torn by war where food was scarce and everyone spent most of their time hiding in underground caves. If it hadn't been for the Republic sending help, a lot more of her people would have died and been taken as slaves.

Jacen did a great job of cheering up her mood when he jumped into the conversation. "Mama! You were little too?"
Hera laughed and looked back at the hologram of her son. "Yes, baby. I was. Everyone is little to start with."

Jacen glanced up at Zeb. "Even Uncle Zeb? Cause he's HUGE!"

The lasat chuckled and picked up the little boy, tossing him in the air once, to Jacen's enjoyment. "Yes, little J. I was a kit once too."

Jacen's eyes went super wide. "Whoa. I just can't picture it." He shrugged his little shoulders and jumped down from Zeb's arms effortlessly. "So when ARE you coming home, Mama?"

Rex and Cody quietly left the bridge as Hera became engrossed in her conversation again, Rex leading the way down the hallway to the common room. Just as they entered, a faintly glowing blue man came out of the galley carrying a steaming bowl of soup. The man was tall with piercing teal eyes, long, tied back auburn hair, and a goatee.

Rex smiled at the man. "Hey, Kanan. Hera forgetting to feed herself again?"

Kanan returned the smile, rolling his eyes slightly. "I swear that woman would starve if we didn't put food in front of her a few times a day, or only eat ration bars," he said making a comical grimace.

Rex chuckled. "Too true. Kanan, I'd like you to meet my brother Cody. I just found him with the other prisoners."

Kanan smiled and then something clicked in his memories. "THE Commander Cody? Master Kenobi's Commander Cody?"

Cody nodded, a little reluctantly, not sure where this was going. The fact that he was talking to an apparent ghost was something of a shock, but Rex acted like it was a normal thing, so Cody followed his lead.

Kanan almost dropped the bowl of soup, he was so surprised. "Kriff, man. You're a legend. I heard so many stories about you from my Master's clones when we were fighting the tail end of the war." Kanan's enthusiasm faded a bit as he remembered exactly what had happened with the clones at the end of it all.

Cody caught the change in expression, guessing where Kanan's mind had gone. He tried to stall for a minute, just wanting another moment of relative normal before the poodoo hit the fan. "Who was your Master?" he asked, correctly assuming that this man was a padawan during the war.

Kanan smiled tightly. "Depa Billaba. She worked with Master Kenobi a few times before I became her padawan. You would have met her then."

Cody nodded, relieved his distraction had worked for the moment. "Yes. I did meet her. She was a very nice Jedi. Nicer than most. And her clones had nothing but good things to say about her." Rex and Cody looked at each other as they remembered the times they'd encountered Jedi who treated their clones like nothing more than expendable battle droids.

Kanan's smile turned a little more real again. "My Master was the best," he said proudly. "And the clones were my friends. At least, they were until they turned on us." He pinned Cody in a somewhat accusing gaze, trying not to let all of his old resentment show. He'd worked things out with Rex years ago, and they'd become solid friends, but this man... Rex never said that Cody had removed his control chip, which meant that he was probably still a servant of the Empire.
Cody closed his eyes and bowed his head as shame filled him. He couldn't meet those teal eyes any more. He felt like they saw right through him to his very soul where all of the guilt resided. "Before you ask, yes I did execute Order 66," Cody said, finding the guts somewhere within him to look Kanan in the eyes. "I told my men to shoot down General Kenobi. He was my friend, almost a brother, and I told them to shoot him. And they listened. Every single one of us respected him and would have gladly died for him, but we shot at him in cold blood like he was just an object." Cody glanced at Rex as his brother gasped in dismay, his eyes full of pain for his brother's torment. "I should have listened to you when you told me to remove the chip in my head. It turned me into a machine. All of us were machines. Those shabla bedamned chips turned us into droids. I had no control of my actions, but they haunted me at night. They still haunt me. Every single night I see the faces of the Jedi that I hunted down across the galaxy. I hate myself because of it. I know I wasn't the only one either. Almost every brother I met after that had the same look of utter defeat that I felt. When we fought at the sides of our Generals, we thought we had our own minds, but it was just an illusion. We were bred to be killing machines, just like the droids. We were carefully monitored after that. Any clone showing signs of rebellion at becoming an Imperial drone was swiftly sent back to Kamino for decommissioning. So many times I thought about just throwing my life away and doing something that would get me sent back. I never could go past just being stupidly reckless in battle though. I got injured. A lot. But even that was never enough to send me back. All it ever did was get me demoted as someone else took over my positions of command. And now here I am, near the end of my lifespan, a stupid stormtrooper, wearing a bucket that I hate, but I still go on, because I always hoped I could at least say I was sorry." Cody looked from Rex to Kanan and back, both wearing stricken expressions. "Sorry that I didn't listen to you, Rex. And sorry to my General that I had my men shoot him down and that I didn't want to murder twenty-seven more Jedi. Ninety-eight, if you count the ones my men caught as well." Cody shuddered in a breath as tears freely fell from his eyes as he looked at Kanan. "Can you please tell him for me? Tell him I'm sorry? Since you're all... whatever?"

Kanan nodded mutely, stuck dumb at the other side of the story. All of his resentment and hate for Styles and Commander Grey that he'd been harbouring in a corner of his mind for years faded away. It wasn't their fault. It had never been their fault. The only one at fault had been the Emperor, and he was dead now. Kanan handed the not so hot bowl of soup to Rex. "Give this to Hera, please." He looked at the weeping clone. "Don't move. I'll be right back."

Cody nodded and did exactly as ordered, like he always had. He stood in his spot and watched wide eyed as Kanan disappeared. Rex clasped his shoulder comfortably for a moment, before walking out of the room with the soup. Cody wiped his tears away absently, feeling kind of empty, but at the same time, free. More free than he ever had in his life. The Emperor was dead and he was a Rebel now. He could finally get the chip removed from his head, even if it was just for the principle of the thing. He doubted there were too many Imperials left who actually cared what an old clone was doing.

Cody only had to wait a couple of minutes, during which time Rex came back, sans soup, lending his silent support as they both stood at parade rest, side by side, just like old times. It healed a little corner of his heart to have his brother stand beside him and not judge his past actions.

The Jedi ghost called Kanan reappeared, but this time he had another ghost at his side, looking at Kanan with mild bemusement. "What is it you wanted to show me, Kanan?"

Cody drank in the sight of his General, looking young and healthy, if a little glowy. Another piece of his heart healed to see it. Thank the Ashla, or the Force, or whatever, that the Jedi could continue their lives in some fashion after death. It helped a lot to see it.

Kanan nodded towards the clones and Obi-Wan followed his gaze with his own. Obi-Wan's eyes
widened in surprise. "Oh! Oh my. Now THAT I did not see coming." Obi-Wan smiled briefly in greeting to Rex, having already renewed their friendship a few years ago during another such surprise, but his eyes immediately fell back on Cody, who's eyes were tearing up again in a face showing clear signs of already crying. "Cody," he said before stepping forward, reading the man's fears and guilt easily. He clasped his shoulders and smiled at him. "It's okay, Cody. I don't blame you. I never have. And the others understand as well. You can let it all go now, Cody. Let it go."

Cody raised a trembling hand to clasp around Obi-Wan's arm, absently noting that he felt solid enough, for a vaguely transparent being. His eyes searched his General's, seeking the forgiveness he needed, but seeing just gentle acceptance and sympathy. "General," he whispered forlornly, still feeling all of the guilt piled on him. It had been there so long, he didn't know how to let it go.

Obi-Wan nodded slightly as if in understanding. He closed his eyes and moved one of his hands to the top of Cody's head. "Forgive yourself, Cody." he whispered.

Cody felt a wave of warmth sweep through him, taking all of his guilt with it, leaving him feeling cleansed and whole once more. He met Obi-Wan's eyes as they looked at him again, the same warmth in the Jedi's gaze. "Thank you, General. Thank you."

Obi-Wan gave the top of Cody's head a fond stroke, almost like a pat. "You're welcome, Cody." He drew back. "Now. I'm going to go back to spying on Anakin. His talk with Ahsoka is QUITE fascinating." Obi-Wan smirked slightly with a twinkle in his eyes as he disappeared.

Rex and Cody glanced at each other then looked at Kanan curiously, hoping for an explanation.

Kanan grinned a little, knowing he got to be the first to break the news to Rex. "Anakin Skywalker was redeemed when Darth Vader died. He's now in the process of begging his own forgiveness from everyone he wronged. I'm sure you'll see him sooner or later."

Rex gaped like a fish while his brain processed. Then he blurted out, "Darth Vader was Anakin?!" He staggered over to the couch and fell on it. "Holy mother of a kripping Hutt, my General turned into Darth Vader!" he whispered in shock to himself. He barely registered it as Cody was now the one to put a comforting hand on his brother's shoulder. Rex sat on the couch for a long time in stunned silence, unable to believe it.

Kanan wandered out of the common room and towards the bridge, chuckling like mad at the expression on Rex's face. He was going to savour that one for a very long time. It wasn't often he got to shock the old, been there, done that, got the scar to prove it, clone.
Anakin Visits Ahsoka

**Anakin Visits Ahsoka:**

*D200/4 ABY, Unknown (but slowly getting charted at a speed only a snail would envy) Space.*

Ahsoka was smiling in her sleep, draped over a man's chest, and held loosely in his arms when Anakin found her by following the faint hint of the bond he used to have with her.

The first thing Anakin wondered was what she was doing so far out in the middle of nowhere. The second thing he thought was that she looked incredibly happy and well cared for, which made him glad. Then he marvelled at how much she'd grown up, because that hadn't really registered when they were fighting on Malachor in his hate filled mind. The fourth thing he wondered was who this dude was that she was obviously having a relationship with. Anakin studied the man with narrowed eyes for a moment, thinking he couldn't possibly be good enough for his Snips, but then the older version of a young man's facial features clicked in his mind and Anakin couldn't help but grin. Of course it was Lux. Ahsoka had been so taken with the young Senator back then. Aside from a warning or two to make sure her missions came first, Anakin did nothing to discourage her attraction to Lux, because who was he to talk about breaking the code? Anakin broke it upside and down at a whim on a daily basis. He still thought that code was stupid and antiquated.

Anyway, back to his padawan. Using the Force, Anakin tugged the sheet over the pair a little higher so he wouldn't accidentally embarrass her, before he tried strengthening their old bond, hoping to wake her up quietly so as not to disturb Lux. This was between him and Ahsoka. Lux could sleep through it and she could tell him later if she wanted. Anakin figured it was working when her smile disappeared abruptly, turning into a confused frown.

While Ahsoka slept, somewhere in her subconscious she registered that the Force was practically celebrating, making her dream of the old days when she, Anakin, Rex, and the other clone brothers (sometimes joined by Obi-Wan, Cody, and his core group of brothers if they were present as well), would have a victory party after they won a battle. The brothers had made up a game of catch that they'd play with a battle droid's head, where the goal was to get the head past the other team's line of defence and into a crate. Ahsoka and Anakin weren't allowed to play with them because they cheated with the Force. Sometime's they'd play on their own, much to the amusement of the clones, since it would become almost a battle to the death with lots of leaping and Force pushes. And laughter. She missed the laughter. Ahsoka remembered how much fun they used to have. Obi-Wan (if he was there), would stand on the sidelines as well, always making some sarcastic comment about Anakin's unusual but possibly effective methods of training his padawan. Only once did they ever talk Obi-Wan into joining their game, where Anakin and Ahsoka had teamed up against her poor grandmaster and soundly beat him. He'd declined to play again, saying watching was much safer for his health.

As Ahsoka dreamed of Anakin, it almost felt like he has with her again. So much so that she began to wake up at her own wishful thinking, because she knew she was never getting HER Anakin back. He was lost. Lost to the Dark side. He'd turned into a monster and become someone she could never call hers again. But oh, how she'd wished and prayed that Anakin could come back.

No longer happy with the wandering path of her sleepy mind, Ahsoka shook her head a fraction, rubbing her cheek against Lux’s bare chest. Lux. Now there was a good thought. She cracked her
eyes open and looked up at the sleeping face of her husband. He was so handsome and relaxed looking in his sleep. Ahsoka smiled a little and pressed a kiss to his chest, before snuggling back down in the loose band of his arms, ready to catch another hour of sleep before the automatic pilot would need resetting in their tedious journey across a very large section of space that had too many obstacles in it to use the hyperdrive. Ahsoka had just about settled back into sleep again when she realized that she STILL felt Anakin's presence, and she most certainly wasn't dreaming anymore.

Ahsoka’s eyes snapped back open and she turned her head so she could see the open area beside the bunk. She very nearly screamed when she saw Anakin's blue glowing Force ghost grinning at her just like he used to. "Hi, Snips," she heard very distinctly in her mind. " Took you long enough to wake up."

Ahsoka gaped at him for at least a minute as her mind shut down, and then suddenly tried to think everything at once. Anakin was dead? Anakin was back! Anakin was talking in her mind! (Even when they were alive and their bond was at its strongest, they'd hardly ever gotten such distinct thoughts as that. More like general feelings, and sometimes, if the situation was dire enough, they'd get a few real words across, like 'HELP!') What happened to Darth Vader? Wait, was the Force happier? What was he doing here? Was this a trick? This could be a trick! Don't trust him. Don't trust him! DON'T TRUST HIM!

Ahsoka narrowed her eyes at her ex Master, even as his shoulders slumped a little and his face fell at her thoughts. She went to sit up, but then remembered she was butt naked. "Leave," she thought as distinctly as she could, using her chin to indicate the doorway. Snaking a hand out from under the sheet, she held up two fingers, indicating she'd be two minutes.

Anakin nodded and walked through the closed door into the hallway of the shuttle, internally sighing at how Ahsoka's thoughts had gone from happy to see him to outright malice. He meandered up the hallway, thinking this shuttle looked awfully familiar. As he wandered into the bridge area, he knew it was familiar. This was one of Padme's personal shuttles. One she used occasionally when running diplomatic missions. How Ahsoka ended up with it after all this time, Anakin didn't know, but it brought back a lot of memories. Good memories for the most part. Happy memories of when Padme and him would steal some time alone, and sometimes not so alone when Ahsoka would come along on the mission. But they'd been like a little family, the three of them, so he never could resent her presence interfering with his precious time spent with Padme. Anakin sat in the pilot chair and stared up at the ceiling, reliving some of his best days.

Ahsoka slipped off the bed soundlessly, so as not to disturb Lux's sleep, and hastily dressed, including her belt and lightsabres. Not that she could harm a ghost with a lightsabre, she didn't think, but their presence was a comfort that she needed right now. She also summoned her staff to her hand before walking through the door and making sure it closed behind her, so there would be less of a chance of Lux waking up from any unusual sounds that might occur shortly.

She stalked down the hallway, chin set in a determined line, following the sense of Anakin that she could feel distinctly. She didn't know why he was here, but whatever he wanted, she was ready for him. Ahsoka glided into the bridge on her toes, every muscle in her body ready to fight. It was kind of a letdown to find him sprawled in his favourite chair, arms crossed over his chest, legs crossed at the ankles, and staring up at the ceiling. That was about as far from a combat stance as you could get. And the memories of seeing him like that in that exact same spot made Ahsoka want to cry. He looked so much like his old self. More so, if that was even possible. Ahsoka came to a stop about a metre away and regarded his shimmering form suspiciously, her heart aching to see him. "Why are you here?"

Anakin had sensed her entrance of course, but he hadn't felt like moving just yet. Now he did. Only
turning his head, he remained sprawled in the chair to appear as unthreatening as possible, he soaked in her grown up appearance eagerly and proudly. She was covered in a light grey warrior's outfit from neck to knees, armour covering her chest, forearms, and shins, with tall black boots. Her usual belt and lightsabres adorned her middle, and in her hand was a tall staff with a circle on the top. Anakin studied the staff for a moment, surprised to feel the Kyber energy radiating from it. He'd never seen anything like it, but it looked cool, whatever it was. Anakin's eyes finished their journey of her new look with her face. He couldn't believe how much her lekku and montrals had grown, nor how tall she was, as she practically loomed over him in his seated position. Her big blue eyes were watching him warily, waiting for his reply, her white markings looking the same as he remembered on her pretty, mature, yet still young looking face, no lines yet to mark the passage of time. At the top of her forehead was a new headdress, made of silver and set with blue stones that matched her eyes. It was only a step short of a crown and marked her status as a married togrutan, which Anakin was glad to see. She deserved to be happy, and if Lux did that for her, then Anakin was happy with Lux too.

Ahsoka tapped her staff on the floor and growled out again, "Why. Are. You. Here?"

Opps. Anakin hid a wince. Apparently he'd been staring too long. "Ahsoka," he finally managed to breathe out. He couldn't bear to sit anymore, staring up at her, so he rose to his feet (his own feet!) and faced her, raising a brow to see that her eyes were almost level with his and the tops of her montrals had definitely reached his height now. Yeesh. He'd missed a lot of years. "I missed you," he blurted out.

Ahsoka raised a brow marking, not impressed, but a little place in her heart jumped for joy. She was ignoring that for the moment. "You missed me," she said dryly. "I think you can do better than that, Anakin," she said, with extra emphasis on his name. "If that's who you really are."

"It is me, Snips," he said eagerly, packing as much sincerity as he could into the words. "I came to apologize and to hopefully restore our friendship. I know it's a lot to ask, after everything I've done, but I MISS you. I'm sorry I tried to kill you on Malachor. I really am. And you saved me anyway. Weakening the floor with your sabres saved me from the explosion. In some ways, I wish you hadn't, as I was not worth saving, but thank you. If I was myself, you have to know I would never try to hurt you. Not in a million years. But I'm back now, thanks to my son. Have you met him? Oh, and Leia. You must know Leia. I hope you have met them. They're amazing. Leia's so much like Padme. And Luke... He wouldn't give up on me, Ahsoka. I did terrible things to him as Darth Vader, but he wouldn't give up. He just kept insisting that there was still good in me until he finally forced it to come back to the surface by letting himself be killed by Sidious. I saved him, Ahsoka! I saved my son! And I killed my Master. And I died. And now I'm finally free! And... yah." Anakin's words ran out as he realized he'd been babbling for who knows how long. He hung his head with a sigh and waited to see what Ahsoka would respond with.

Ahsoka stared at Anakin with increasingly wide eyes as words spilled from him. When he stopped, she didn't know what to say. He'd said so much that only raised more questions. But the most important was; did he want her to forgive him? And if so, could she?

"Bloody hell!" Lux said from the doorway in his cultured accent, making both Ahsoka and Anakin spin to see him wearing only his sleep pants. "YOU were Darth Vader?!"

Lux's grey eyes were wider than Ahsoka had ever seen them. She was so distracted by Anakin that she hadn't even felt Lux wake up and follow her. Her Master would be so disappointed. Speaking of...
Anakin shrugged bashfully at Lux. "Ummm, yes? Not my best years, really."

Ahsoka couldn't take it anymore. She burst into laughter, literally falling into a chair she was laughing so hard. After all this time, he just came traipsing back as if nothing was ever wrong, hoping she'd forgive him, acting so much like his old self. What was she supposed to do? Crack up like a kriffing lunatic, that's what.

Lux walked over and joined Anakin as they both stared down at the woman snorting and giggling uncontrollably in the chair behind the co-pilot seat. He glanced over at the Force ghost with a raised brow. "I think you broke her."

Anakin snorted. "Nah. She'll be okay." They waited a minute, but Ahsoka was still lost in her own world of mirth, so Anakin went for some polite small talk to pass the time. "Sooo. You married my Snips?"

Lux nodded, looking proud of himself as he crossed his arms over his bare chest. "Sure did. Many, many years later than I wanted to, but, enh, better than never." He glanced up and down Anakin's glowing blue form, looking almost exactly as he remembered him, down to the Jedi warrior outfit and everything. "Sooo. How's it like to be dead?"

Anakin shrugged and smiled a little. "Enh. Better than when I was alive for the last few decades. I really don't have much to go on yet though. I only just died a couple hours ago. I think."

"And seeing Ahsoka was the first thing on your list of 'things to do'?" Lux said incredulously, blinking at him.

Anakin grinned. "Second, actually. I already made up with Obi-Wan and the other Jedi. They took me back," he said in obvious disbelief that something so amazing could happen.

That caught Ahsoka's attention and she abruptly stopped giggling. "You saw Master Obi-Wan?" she said, standing back up and practically getting in Anakin's face eagerly, wanting to hear how her grandmaster was.

Anakin beamed. "Yes, I did. And he looks great, before you ask. Pretty much the same as when you first became my padawan. For that matter, all of the Masters looked younger than I've ever seen them. And now that I think about it, Yoda almost looked like a youngling, which makes sense considering his ridiculous sense of humour."

Ahsoka snorted a little. "He's the right size for one." She sighed and got serious again, closing her eyes for a moment as she thought, and then meeting her former Master's eyes in a searching gaze, seeing only sincerity and hope in his blue eyes. "Okay, Anakin. This is what I've decided. I'm going to forgive YOU for falling to the Dark side due to circumstances that you should never have been placed in. I, however, will never forgive Darth Vader for everything that he's done to the galaxy."

Anakin opened his mouth to protest or something, but Ahsoka cut him off quickly. "What I'm saying is that I don't see you and Vader as the same person and I haven't for a long time. Not after Vader killed Obi-Wan. In my heart, I know that YOU could never even so much as hurt him, never mind kill him, so that's how it's going to stay for me."

Anakin's mouth opened and closed a few times as he processed and tried to come up with a response. Eventually, he just sort of slumped and nodded. "Okay. Okay. I can live with that. And you're right. I never could hurt my real Master. My brother." He glanced up at her from under his eyelashes, a hint of pleading still apparent. "So, can I come and visit you every once in awhile? Because I do miss you, Snips." Anakin fidgeted with a fold in his tunic while he stared at the floor, waiting for her answer with bated breath.
Lux watched the interplay as well, curious to see what Ahsoka would say. He honestly was ambivalent right now. He'd never really been friends with the intimidating Jedi Knight, but he knew Ahsoka used to care about him a great deal.

Ahsoka raised a brow as she contemplated this version of Anakin, wondering when their roles had reversed. Anakin still acted like a twenty year old almost man and she felt like she'd lived a couple of lifetimes. She heaved a very exaggerated sigh. "I suppooooooooseee," she said, drawing out the word as long as possible. "That it would be alright if you visited every other day or so, Skyguy."

It took a moment for Anakin to register her words, but when he did, he looked up and whooped, grabbing Ahsoka in a bear hug and spinning around a couple times, making her laugh. "Oh, thank you, thank you, Snips. You just made me so happy. I feel like I'm getting a second chance at life right now." Anakin put her down and then looked at his own glowing hands ruefully. "Alright. A sort of new life. But whatever. It comes with all my limbs so I'll take it."

As Lux wrapped an arm around her waist, needlessly reminding everyone that Ahsoka was taken, Ahsoka smiled at Anakin, not even surprised that he'd managed to pick her up in his ghost form. If Kanan could figure something like that out, then there was no question in her mind that Anakin could do it as well. He'd always had such an instinctual knowledge of how to use the Force. So much so, that there'd always been the odd rumour in the halls of the Temple that the other Masters and Knights were kind of jealous of how fast he advanced in his Jedi skills.

Anakin glanced between Ahsoka and Lux. "So what now?" he asked. Because he honestly had no clue as to where to go from here and he didn't want it to get all awkward.

Ahsoka looked up at Lux, who was about the same height as Anakin now as well, and smiled at him sweetly. "Luxi, why don't you go get dressed and make us some breakfast? Anakin and I will talk for a bit, kay?"

Lux nodded and smiled, putting a finger under her chin to hold her still for a brief but possessive kiss, before he walked out of the bridge briskly, determined to get back as quickly as possible. The two Jedi might view each other as siblings or whatever but you never know when something like that could change. And Lux knew perfectly well that a Force ghost could have a physical relationship with a living person, cause he'd seen it with his own eyes from Kanan and Hera.

Ahsoka watched him leave with her heart in her eyes, love and amusement radiating from her, before she turned back to see Anakin grinning at her knowingly. "Don't even start," she warned with narrowed eyes.

Anakin raised his hands innocently, backing up and sitting back down in the pilot's chair. "Hey, I wasn't going to say anything. Out loud at least," he added quite clearly in her mind, earning him a semi fake scowl from the togrutan.

"Since when did you learn to do that, anyway?" Ahsoka asked, in regards to the mind talk, as she leaned her staff against a wall and sat beside him in the co-pilot chair.

Anakin shrugged, resuming his customary sprawl in the chair. "Don't know. The Father just mentioned that I can do anything I believe I can do, so I believed I could mind talk to you, and poof, it worked."

"Oh, boy," Ahsoka muttered, wondering what kind of trouble he could get into now that he had that kind of belief backing him up. Not that he wasn't already overly confident in himself before, but geez, the galaxy better watch out now.
"Hey!" Anakin protested her tone. "I think it's fun and I wish we could have done that years ago. It would have made some things a great deal more entertaining."

Ahsoka grinned at him. "You mean like those very boring war meetings? Or the even more boring Council meetings?"

Anakin nodded enthusiastically. "Yes! I knew we still thought along the same lines." He sighed in happy contentment. "It's nice to talk to you again, Ahsoka. Actually, it's nice to talk to ANYONE again. My life as Darth Vader was terribly lonely. And cold. And pain filled. And just flat out sucked to be honest." He glanced at Ahsoka and saw that she was starting to look uncomfortable again so he hastily changed the subject. Anakin waved a hand at the black expanse of space they were currently travelling through at something resembling turtle speed. "So, what ARE you doing out here anyway, in the middle of nowhere-ville?"

"Do you really want to know?" Ahsoka asked with a warning twinkle in her eyes.

"Yes, I do. I've actually been dying of curiosity for the past half hour," Anakin admitted.

"Alright. You asked for it," Ahsoka said with a teasing grin. "You want the long version or the short version?"

"Oh, the long, most definitely. I want to know everything you've been up to lately. And by lately, I mean since I last saw you when I was still myself," Anakin said with mixed emotions in his voice. Regret, longing, curiosity, and more all were conveyed through his tone and the emotions he was freely sharing through the bond that Ahsoka was slowly starting to let past her shields.

So Ahsoka told him everything. Maul and Mandalore. Order 66 and how she and Rex faked their deaths. Her time as Ashla on Thabeska and Raada. How she joined Bail Organa in his quest to start a Rebellion and her primary job as the Director of Intelligence under the codename Fulcrum. Her friendship with his daughter, Leia. How she eventually met a young twi'lek called Hera Syndulla, who in turn found Kanan Jarrus aka Calub Dume, who in turn found Ezra Bridger. She told Anakin about how Ezra had saved her from Vader by pulling her into the World Between Worlds which he exclaimed over, having never heard of such a place. How Ezra had saved Lothal with the assistance of his friendship with the purrgil, who weren't actually animals as everyone presumed.

Her last meeting with Obi-Wan. How Ezra was lost in Unknown Space somewhere and her promise to find him. She told him about the dying planet and the new knowledge about the Force she'd learnt and the Kyber staff she'd found. And finally, she told him about meeting Luke, and her abbreviated lessons she'd been able to teach him about the Force and lightsabre fighting on the few occasions they'd managed to be in the same place at the same time over the last four years.

At some point, Lux had come back in with a plate of breakfast for Ahsoka, which she ate while she talked. He'd also done the calculations and reset the auto pilot, after shooing Anakin out of the pilot's chair and into the one behind it, so as not to interfere in Ahsoka's life story too much. He'd heard almost all of this before of course, but he couldn't help but listen for any new tidbits that she might have missed out in previous talks they'd had over the years. And she was simply just fascinating to him anyway. He could listen to her voice all day and consider himself in heaven.

And as for Anakin? He was just flat out proud of his former padawan. She was so brave, and courageous, and mature, and giving, and a million other things he could think of. He tried to sum it all up when she finally finished and was looking at him expectantly to see his reaction. "Thank you, Ahsoka. Thank you for taking care of the galaxy when I didn't. Thank you for taking care of my children when you could. Thank you for being YOU. Taking you on as my padawan was one of the only good decisions I ever made and I'm forever grateful that you survived my insanity all of those years, both when I was myself and when I wasn't."
Ahsoka smiled somewhat mistily and simply said, "You're welcome, Master, and I missed you too. I'm sorry I ever left."

As Anakin chatted with Ahsoka and Lux about their future plans for after they found the missing Knight (a boy Anakin vaguely remembered as being courageous but seriously lacking in training for his age), he couldn't help but rejoice at how well this was going. He'd never expected it to be this easy. Yes, she hadn't trusted his intentions at first, which was understandable, but the longer they talked, the more it felt like they'd never parted. And her admission that she wished she'd never left him; that had struck him to the core, because he'd also wished with all his being that she would have stayed as well. Would it have made a difference in regards to the end result? Anakin didn't know. Maybe he would have confessed to Ahsoka about his terrible nightmares about Padme dying and she would have talked him into telling Obi-Wan. Would that have been enough to change everything?

Anakin's whole focus returned to the conversation when Ahsoka mentioned something about children. "Sorry, what?" he interrupted. "I didn't quite catch that."

Ahsoka gave him a faint eye roll from her position on Lux's lap, where she'd moved to at some point, sensing his mind had wandered. "I said; Lux and I were hoping to find an orphaned Force sensitive child to raise as our own after we settle down on Lothal. There has to be one out there somewhere. And if we stumble on a few who still have parents, we're going to try and convince them to move to Lothal as well so that Ezra and I can teach them. There's a serious lack of trained Force users in the galaxy right now. The Inquisitors did too good a job at finding them before I could. I do know where two younglings used to be. I hope they're still where I left them whenever we finally finish with our current mission."

"Are you planning to train them as Jedi?" Anakin asked curiously, knowing that she didn't much believe in the old Jedi code either.

Ahsoka shrugged slightly. "Ezra and I talked about that the last time I saw him and we've come up with a mostly Jedi like system that suits us both. In our opinion, the days of the old Jedi code are long gone and shouldn't be brought back. But there is a great deal about the system that did work. The connection to the Light side of the Force is a must. The ability to control your emotions is also going to have to be a major factor. We don't want to turn off emotions and attachments like you and I were taught, not that we were any good at it," Ahsoka said with a grin at her Master, which Anakin returned. "But Ezra, Kanan, I, and the whole planet of Cerulia have proved that you CAN love and have a real family and still maintain a solid connection to the Light side."

Anakin winced inwardly at the gentle rebuke from his grown up padawan. He hadn't been too good at that one, had he? "But what about the Dark side?" he asked. "You mentioned earlier that you've learnt how to find the balance between the two and use it to some extent. Are you going to teach that as well?"

Ahsoka absently played with Lux's hair while she contemplated that very important question. "I think I may. To the older one's perhaps. There is strength in the Dark side that you can't find in the Light."

Anakin hmmphed softly, as he knew that all too well.

Ahsoka gave him a look, and continued as if he hadn't interrupted. "But you have to be VERY strong in your connection to the Light to use the Dark without falling to it. It requires a great deal of discipline and mediation to balance the two."
Anakin humphed again, knowing that was a dig at this own lack of discipline and his loathing for meditation. Sitting still had never really been his forte.

Ahsoka gave him another look that made Anakin roll his eyes at her, which made Ahsoka wrinkle her nose at him with a teasing light in her eyes. "I know you hate meditation, but I've had plenty of time to work on it over the past few years." Ahsoka gave Lux an affectionate peck on the cheek. "Not that Luxi here hasn't done a marvellous job of keeping me from going stark raving mad from the monotony of our lives right now, but there's only so much time we can spend in bed, training, or playing card games. Somewhere in there, there's still too many hours left over for meditating," Ahsoka said with mock despair.

Lux grinned at Anakin from where he had his chin resting on Ahsoka's shoulder, arms wrapped casually around her middle, when the Force ghost said with ALMOST real sincerity, "Oh, you poor thing. Your life is so miserable. How DO you stand it?"

Ahsoka replied with an equal amount of fake sincerity. "I really don't know. All that meditating should have turned me into Obi-Wan by now."

"Hey! Meditating is good for you," a slightly pouting Obi-Wan said as he appeared in the bridge as well. "I don't know how many hours I tried to teach you two that." He crossed his arms over his chest and gave an exaggerated sigh.

Ahsoka leapt from Lux's lap with a very undignified squeal. "Master Obi-Wan!" She threw herself in the slightly shorter man's arms, trusting he'd turn solid enough to catch her.

Obi-Wan chuckled softly and stroked a fond hand down the back of her head. "Hello, little one," he said, the irony of the old endearment not lost on either of them. "You're looking well."

Ahsoka pulled back and studied her grandmaster. "As are you, Master. It's good to see looking so..."

"Youthful?" Anakin said helpfully as he rose to stand beside them.

"That works," Ahsoka said with a smile in her eyes for her Masters.

Obi-Wan shrugged negligently. "Well, why look old if you don't have to? I do say that I'm enjoying the afterlife much more than my years on Tatooine." He gave Anakin a look of sympathy. "I take back all the times I teased you about grousing about sand. I completely understand your loathing for it now."

Ahsoka laughed while Anakin huffed out a, "Finally!"

Obi-Wan smiled in that knowing way he had for a moment before his expression changed to apologetic. "I do hate to break up your entertaining little reunion, but Anakin has a few more people to talk to. You two can chat some more another day."

"Yes, Master," Ahsoka and Anakin said in chorus obediently, making Lux crack a smile behind them. They really were a lot alike, underneath Ahsoka's veil of maturity.

Obi-Wan beamed at his padawans, proud of both of them at that moment. "Oh, and Ahsoka, I have something for you to think about," he said, the glint of mischief in his eyes making the blue / grey orbs lean towards silver. "Did you ever wonder how the humans on Cerulia had families with the amphibious humanoid natives? And I doubt anyone ever told you this, but Anakin doesn't have a biological father."
Ahsoka's eyes widened and she stared at her grandmaster and Master in shock. Anakin shrugged and nodded, confirming what Obi-Wan had said. "I'll come back in a few days," Anakin said in parting, just before he and Obi-Wan disappeared. Ahsoka turned slowly, mind whirling, as she took a step and kind of fell back into Lux's lap.

Lux caught her, his stormcloud coloured eyes curious. "What? What did he mean by that?"

Ahsoka looked at her husband, her eyes still wide, but now with dawning wonder. "He meant that amphibious humanoids and humans aren't naturally compatible for reproduction, which I can't believe I never clued in on cause I knew that, and if Anakin doesn't have a father, he was made by the Force."

Lux raised a brow. "And this means...?"

Ahsoka leaned closer, smiling widely and cupping his face in her hands. "It means, my sweet Luxi, that they used the Force to change things just enough so that it COULD work and that the Force can make things at will if it wants to."

Lux was starting to get the idea, a thrill of hopeful anticipation shooting through him. "And you could do the same?"

Ahsoka swivelled around so she was straddling Lux's lap fully, pressing tighter against him, smiling softly. "I think I can, yes. We'll find out for sure in about a month when I'm cycling again."

"Soka," Lux breathed reverently. "If we could have our own..."

"I know," she answered, just before closing the last fraction of distance between their mouths for a kiss filled with hope and desire.

As Anakin and Obi-Wan travelled through the Force back to Endor, they had a bit of a conversation in their minds about Ahsoka's current views on her use of the Force.

"Did you hear Ahsoka's plans for teaching younglings?" Anakin asked, wanting to know what his by-the-books Master thought of it all.

"Yes, I did," Obi-Wan replied without any inflection to his tone on purpose, knowing it would frustrate Anakin.

"And what about me?" Anakin's mental voice was tentative, almost a whisper. "Are you okay if I don't consider myself to be a Jedi either?"

Obi-Wan paused in his flight, his Force essence brushing against Anakin's soothingly. "Anakin. I'm okay with practically anything you want to be, as long as it's yourself. I'm just happy to have you back. I wish I was a better Master for you, and that I could have guided you better. I wish I had the knowledge that would have let you be the balancing force in the galaxy like you should have been, but all I knew was how to follow the old Code to the letter, so that's how I tried to train you as well. I'm sorry I failed you."

"Oh, no, Master!" Anakin cried. "I failed you! Not the other way around. I was consumed by my
fears and turned to the wrong person for help. That will always be my biggest regret."

Obi-Wan grazed his essence against Anakin's again, sending reassuring feelings through their bond. "We both have regrets, Anakin. Many of them. All we can do now is go on. There is much that is good left still, and spending all of our thoughts on regrets will leave no room for other things, better things."

"Like my children?" Anakin said with a hint of fatherly pride in his hopeful tone.

"Yes, Anakin. Like your amazing children. Luke had more faith in you than I did, and that is yet another of my regrets." Obi-Wan sighed at his own lack of trust in the Force. It always had a plan, and in this instance, he hadn't seen it until long after Luke had.

"It's okay, Master," Anakin said as he started zooming towards Endor again, suddenly really eager to see his children as himself and not the monster they knew. "Not even I had any hope in Luke's faith in me. I don't know how he saw the Light side buried amidst so much Dark."

Obi-Wan followed after Anakin, thinking that Luke wasn't the only one who'd had unwavering faith in Anakin. There was one more who'd never given up on him, and she had been waiting a very long time for her Ani to return.
Anakin's Forgiving Son:

*D200/4 ABY, Endor Moon.*

When Anakin and Obi-Wan arrived on Endor a few moments later, Anakin followed the sense of his son to the surface of the forest moon.

Where he found Luke standing vigil over Darth Vader's burning body.

"Well, that's rather disturbing," Anakin said wryly.

"Is it?" Obi-Wan replied teasingly, as Luke whirled around at the sound of their voices.

"It brings back a bit of unwanted déjà vu," Anakin said dryly, unable to take his eyes off the flames sending sparks into the dark of the night like fireflies.

"I suppose it does," Obi-Wan admitted. "But there is some sort of poetic closure too, don't you think? Darth Vader was created in flames, and now Darth Vader is ended in flames."

Anakin rolled his eyes at his Master. "Only you would find this poetic. I see only the burning symbol of my epic failure as a human being. You'd think it would make me feel better, but it just reminds me of everything I despise about myself," he said bitterly.

Obi-Wan sighed. "Anakin... Didn't we just have this conversation? You need to move past your history."

Anakin heaved his own exaggerated sigh and said, "Yes, Master," in a resigned tone that sounded like he wasn't going to be able to do that anytime in the next century.

As they spoke, Luke looked back and forth between the two unfamiliar Force ghosts, feeling very confused. He could swear that one sounded like Obi-Wan, but he sure didn't look the same. But there was something... He FELT right and the closer he looked, the more he found his mentor and friend in the copper bearded face of someone who barely looked thirty. And as for the other, even younger looking man... Luke's face slowly transformed into a beaming smile as he made all the connections with their conversation and what he was feeling in the Force from him. He KNEW that Force signature. He'd only felt it like that for five minutes, but he KNEW it. And now Luke had the almost ridiculous urge to jump up and down like a little kid, screaming 'Dad!' He went for something a little more dignified instead.

"Father!" Luke cried, walking the small distance between them and stopping right in front of the taller man, studying him intently. He looked, if anything, even younger than Luke did, which felt weird, but Luke shrugged it off. What made Luke really happy was to see almost identical blue eyes to his own looking back down at him with warmth and love. Their faces were similar enough too, but what Luke was really wondering was how come he and Leia ended up so SHORT? His father was taller than him by more than a head. Not fair! Luke huffed a mental sigh and shrugged that away as well. "You look amazing, Father," Luke said, smiling warmly at him.

Anakin grinned down at Luke. "Thanks." He reached out and grasped Luke's shoulders, making his son gasp in surprise. "You don't have to worry about never leaving me now. I'll always be here for you instead, like I should have been from the start. I know I didn't deserve your faith in me, but if it weren't for you, I'd still be the worst possible version of myself. I hope you can forgive me for all
the wrongs I did to you." Anakin gazed down at Luke hopefully, a tinge of fear radiating from him that Luke would remember how truly evil he had been and turn from him now.

After Luke got over the shock that a ghost could feel real, he replayed his father's words in his mind. He shook his head emphatically, before more or less throwing himself forward and hugging his father tight. "No, Father. I won't forgive you, because I know you weren't yourself and that the Emperor had you under his control. I'm just happy to have you now."

Anakin stared down at the top of Luke's head in astonishment and then closed his arms around his back in grateful awe, tears coming to his eyes. He didn't deserve such an amazing son, but he wouldn't give him up for anything. He met Obi-Wan's warm gaze as he pressed his cheek to Luke's hair before closing his eyes, tears rolling down his cheek and falling onto the dark blond locks in little shimmers of light. "Luke," he whispered, all he could say.

Luke savoured the feeling of being held by his father for the first time in his life. How he'd dreamed of this moment since he was old enough to know he didn't have a father. This moment made every hour he spent wishing for a real father fade away into the past, because he could feel how much Anakin truly wanted to be a father to him. The tentative bond they'd started on the Death Star blossoming into reality as they held each other in a tight hug.

Obi-Wan couldn't help but feel a few tears of his own moisten his eyes as he observed the touching scene. This was so long overdue, and everything he'd wished for Anakin in a tiny part of him that hadn't quite been able to forget the person Anakin used to be before falling to the Dark. He let them hug for a minute before moving beside them and putting a hand on each of their shoulders, getting their attention.

Luke pulled back from the hug and looked up at Obi-Wan with a misty smile. "I almost didn't recognize you. You certainly don't look like old Ben Kenobi anymore. That's going to take some getting used to."

Obi-Wan chuckled. "I can fix it if you want." He closed his eyes and imagined himself old and grey, his form shimmering as he changed back into the person that Luke knew.

Luke raised a brow in surprise as the old Master returned and then nodded appreciatively. "Yep. That's more like it. I just can't picture you the other way."

Obi-Wan shrugged. "I can appear however you want me to, young Luke. I don't mind."

"Well, I do," Anakin said with laughter and a bit of a fake whine in his voice. "I much prefer you looking like my brother and not my grandfather. It feels all kinds of wrong."

"Live with it," both Obi-Wan and Luke said at the exact same time, making them look at each other and laugh.

Anakin laughed with them, shaking his head at the two. Obi-Wan had been in his son's life so much longer than he had, but Anakin couldn't resent him for it. Instead, he was grateful that Luke hadn't been alone. Anakin glanced at his old body still burning merrily away and suppressed a shudder. "I'm going to find your sister. You two can stay here and watch THAT burn if you want. I don't think I can look at it anymore."

Luke and Obi-Wan barely had time to nod and say 'okay,' before Anakin disappeared. Luke shrugged. "I guess I wouldn't want to watch my body burn either."

Obi-Wan rested a hand on Luke's shoulder as they stared at the flames in contemplation. "His life
was never easy, but that suit holds the worst memories you could possibly imagine. The worst thing I ever had to do was defeat him when he first fell. I thought he was done for when I left him on Mustafar, burning, so I could save your mother, and thus yourself and your sister. I imagine that Palpatine saved him, but I know there couldn't have been much of him left to save. He lived the last twenty some years of his life in extreme pain, ninety percent of him just a robotic suit that kept him alive whether he liked it or not. Anakin should never have had to live like that, and it's my fault for not making sure he was truly dead before I left him. I've had to live with the fact that so much of what has happened in the last couple decades was MY fault."

Luke stared up at Obi-Wan, sympathy shining in the reflection of flames in his blue eyes. "I think my father isn't the only one who needs to move past his history."

Obi-Wan looked away from the flames and smiled wryly. "So wise, for one so young. How about a happier subject? Is there anything you'd like to know, now that I'm free to talk about the past?"

Luke nodded eagerly. "Yes. Can you please tell me about my mother? I don't even know her name."

Obi-Wan stared at Luke in shock. "Oh dear. Now that won't do. Your mother was Senator Padme Amidala of Naboo, but was born the princess of Theed, and later was elected the Queen of Naboo at the age of fourteen. She was a queen when I first met her, but excelled at running around and getting into trouble while pretending to be one of her own handmaidens. She was a beautiful person both inside and out, and a great leader. She was one of the few voices of reason during the war between the Republic and the Separatists. Everyone who knew her loved her, Anakin most of all, obviously. They married in secret when he was just nineteen and she was twenty-four. I'm still not sure how he won her heart, bratty padawan that he was, but he did. He changed after that, maturing quickly. I'm sure Padme had a lot to do with it, but I thought at the time that he'd finally just grown up. I didn't even know they were married until after I died and heard it from your mother herself. I did know that they loved each other though. Despite all my warnings about attachments, Anakin was spending as much time as possible with her and not doing a particularly good job of hiding his feelings when I saw them together. I wish I hadn't turned a blind eye, but talked to him about it instead. But I was being my own version of the child with his head buried in the sand, denying what I didn't want to deal with." Obi-Wan sighed. "So many regrets. A lifetime of them." He glanced at Luke again. "Don't let regrets ruin your life. And ignore that old 'no attachments' rule too, while you're at it. That was a load of bantha poodoo that very few Jedi actually followed. Almost every single one of us grew attached to our Padawans. And while I doubt that many actually defied convention as far as Anakin, I can guarantee I wasn't the only one who fell in love and regretted never being able to do anything about it."

Luke basically just stared at Obi-Wan with wide eyes through his speech. He was the son of a queen? WHAT? He got stuck on that thought for a while, and then the rest caught up to his stunned brain. His father married an older woman? Obi-Wan was telling him to ignore the code? Obi-Wan loved someone? Holy stars, was all he could think. "You loved someone?" he blurted out.

Obi-Wan smiled dreamily. "Yes. Yes, I do." He looked over the flames without seeing them, instead a picture of his Duchess at the forefront of his mind. "Satine," he said, almost to himself.

Luke didn't miss the change of tense and tilted his head in curiosity. "Can you tell me about her too?"

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. "Yes. Satine was the Duchess of Mandalore in a time of galactic upheaval. I would have left the Order for her if she'd but asked, at least before I met your father anyway, after that... I don't know. Anakin needed me and Satine was incredibly self sufficient and
strong. It would have torn me apart to choose one over the other, and I think she knew that, because even when she needed me the most, she never asked me to leave the Order for her. Never even hinted. She just kept trucking on in that determined way she had, following her beliefs, until the day finally came when the war and my enemies caught up to her. She died in my arms, declaring her love for me. My heart broke that day. And all I could think was that we'd never even had the chance to love each other properly because of who we were, and how WRONG that was."

Luke put his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder comfortingly. He'd had a couple of serious crushes over the years, but he had yet to experience the real love that he could feel radiating from his old friend, making him realize his crushes had been juvenile in comparison. "Something tells me that you and Satine are together now, aren't you?" Luke said softly.

The dreamy smile returned to Obi-Wan's face. "Yes. We are."
Anakin's Unforgiving Daughter

Anakin's Unforgiving Daughter:

D200/4 ABY, Endor Moon

With night taking hold of the village and everyone winding up to do some serious celebrating, Leia made her way to the tree hut that she'd been given last night. She quickly changed out of her soldier gear and back into last night's dress, loving the soft feel of the light fabric. As she reached up to pull out the pins in her hair, she felt another set of hands beat her to it. Leia smiled and leaned back against Han's chest while he removed all the pins holding in her braids.

Han ran his fingers through her hair, savouring the silk strands as he brushed it out. He pushed some of the flowery smelling stuff to the side and pressed a soft kiss to her neck, wrapping his arms around her from behind. "Someone promised to make something up to me earlier," he whispered suggestively. "I'm calling that in."

Leia turned around in his arms and raised her hands to wrap one arm behind his neck and play with his hair with the other, an eyebrow raised teasingly. "Oh? Who was this someone?"

Han's ever changeable hazel eyes leaned towards a deep shade of green as one of his hands came around and traced the line of her cheek softly, a teasing smirk playing with his lips. "It was a girl. Perhaps the most beautiful girl I ever saw. She had these amazing chocolate eyes, and a smile that stopped my breath. I think I might have to go find her, because she stole my heart and I doubt I could live without her."

Leia gripped him tighter and giggled as he made to pull away from her, looking towards the doorway with a longing glance. "Silly man," she chided laughingly. "I'm right here. I'll always be right here."

Han looked back at Leia, eyes going soft and heavy lidded. "I know." He leaned down and kissed a path from her forehead to her lips, stopping there and pressing soft kisses to her mouth until she opened with a pleased hum, fingers tightening in his hair, and kissed him back hungrily.

Han gathered her even closer, lifting her a little to get a deeper angle into their kiss, lost in the sweetness of her mouth. Neither of them noticed the Force ghost who appeared behind Han in the doorway to the small hut. They did hear the rather loud clearing of a throat though, making them pull apart fractionally and stare in befuddlement at the strange young man interrupting them.

Anakin glared at the man embracing his daughter. The much older man. "I could swear I saw you frozen in carbonite and sent to Jabba the Hutt. It wasn't exactly a mistake that I orchestrated that," he more or less snarled at the smuggler.

The couple pulled apart and blinked gape mouthed at the ghost. Han was the first to recall his senses. "Who the kriff are you?"

Anakin crossed his arms over his chest and kept up his glower. "I'm her father, you nerfherding sleemo scumbag."

Han glanced at Leia to see if she could confirm what the ghost was saying, but she was staring wide eyed at the young looking man like she'd never seen him before, and had, haha, literally seen a ghost. So Han rolled with it on his own. "Well, I know where she gets her insulting genes from at
least," he joked without humour. He crossed his own arms and glared back at the ghost. "What's your problem with me anyway? I don't recall ever even meeting you before."

Anakin let his image flicker to that of Darth Vader, which got a gasp from Leia, and raised brow and a snorted, "I should have known," from the piece of poodoo scoundrel who was clearly having relations with his daughter.

Somehow Anakin wasn't surprised that the pilot wasn't impressed with who he'd been. The man was frustratingly resilient. He never even broke under torture at Cloud City. A small part of Anakin was grudgingly impressed with his daughter's choice of man, but he didn't have to show it. "My problem with you, Solo, is that you've got your hands all over my daughter, and she's much too young for you."

Han looked taken aback. "What? What do you mean?" He looked down at Leia. "Tell that galaxy destroying, glowing excuse for a man that you're not too young for me. How old are you anyway?" he asked at the end, almost as an afterthought, because he honestly didn't know. Because of her position of power and her maturity level, Han had always assumed Leia was in her mid twenties when they met, putting her about five years his junior, which was close enough in his mind.

Leia glanced up at Han with a wince. "Twenty-three," she mumbled.

Han did a double take, sure he'd misheard. "Say what?"

Leia sighed and opened her mouth to speak again, but the image of her... biological father spoke first.

"She's twenty-three, you idiot," Anakin said in exasperation. "How did you not know that?"

Han hung his head in embarrassment. "I have no idea. It never came up I guess?"

Leia finally got her act together and stormed forward, getting in her so-called-father's personal space. "It doesn't matter. Han is the man I love. I don't care that he's thirteen years older. And what say do you have in it anyway? You're not my father. Not really. You helped murder my real father. You tortured me. You tortured Han. You took him away from me. You tried to turn Luke to the Dark side. You tormented him. Cut off his hand. Caused him endless sleepless nights because he BELIEVED in you. And what for? You're a spineless, murdering, poor excuse for a human being who doesn't deserve the title of being my father. There's only one man who I will ever call that, and he's dead. And so are you, apparently, and I'm GLAD!"

As his daughter ranted at him in a magnificent fury, Anakin backed away one step at a time until he was all the way down to the middle of one of the countless bridges connecting the tree huts. Maybe coming to see her so soon was a mistake? "I take it that Luke hasn't told you yet that I told him to tell you that he was right?" Anakin said tentatively as Leia stood huffing in front of him, looking about ready to push him right off the bridge.

That caught her attention enough to settle her down a smidgeon. Anakin couldn't believe how much she was like Padme. Padme had ranted at him once or twice exactly like that. And her eyes were exactly the same. How he hadn't noticed that Leia was his daughter when they first met was beyond him. And now that he concentrated on her, with her natural shields lowered a bit, he could feel her strong presence in the Force, feeling so much like a mix of Padme and Luke. Leia could be a Force user too if she wanted. Easily. Despite her rage at him, Anakin couldn't help but be incredibly proud of her. She'd accomplished so much in her life already, and she was so strong. It put him to shame, really. Because she'd lost so much. Just as much as he ever had, if not more, and look at her. Still standing there, a beacon of the Light side, even with her anger, proving you could
be mad and not fall. You could despair and not fall. You could lose an entire planet and not fall.
Leia and Luke were the epitome of everything he should have been. The prophesy about the
Chosen One had only gotten it sort of right. He might BE the Chosen One in terms of power, but
his children...? They were the chosen ones in terms of right. They were saving the galaxy while he
was destroying it. The irony wasn't lost on him, that's for sure.

As Leia's temper ran out, since the father imposter wasn't exactly giving her any more fuel to rage
at with his silence, she stared at him intently as her breathing finally calmed down. Narrowing her
eyes at him, she wondered what he was thinking as many expressions crossed his face that looked
too much like Luke's the more she looked at him, which she found painfully disconcerting in her
current mood. Even though she wasn't trying to feel him, like she could Luke, who she just knew
was now on the moon somewhere doing who knows what, Leia was starting to get glimmers of
impressions of feelings from the young looking ghost. Not that she wanted them, but she got them
anyway. Leia sighed and relaxed some of the tension that had been holding her frame rigid. She
wasn't sure, but it felt an awful lot like this man who called himself her father felt PROUD of her.
She raged and ranted, and he felt proud. That certainly put a crimp in any further plans she had at
ranting some more. You just can't rant at someone who thinks you're great. "Why are you here?"
she asked, as calmly as she could manage.

Wow. Anakin flashed back to a couple hours ago when Ahsoka had asked the exact same question
in the exact same tone. He figured he better answer before he got the one word at a time version. "I
came to see you, and to apologize profusely for all the wrongs I did you," he answered with as
much sincerity as he could pack into his tone, expression, and feelings, hoping she'd pick up on at
least some of it.

While Leia was trying to decide how to respond to that, Han walked up beside her and wrapped an
arm around her waist in support. He gave the ghost his best version of his grumpy glower. "I don't
think she wants your apologies, Vader. And I doubt she wants to see you either."

Leia elbowed Han slightly. "Don't put words in my mouth, hotshot."

Han just shrugged and tilted his head towards the ghost. "I'm not wrong, am I?"

"You're not wrong," both Leia and Anakin said at the same time.

Leia narrowed her eyes at Anakin again. He shrugged too. "Hey. It's what you're feeling. The Force
around you is practically screaming how much you don't want me here. I can take a hint. You
won't see me again until you're ready to. I hope you can forgive me one day." Anakin turned his
focus on Han. "And as for you. My name's Anakin Skywalker, NOT Vader. That part of me is
dead. Just do one thing for me. It's obvious that she's made her choice, so I won't bug you anymore,
but you could at least marry her. That would help my peace of mind a lot."

Han met the ghost's eyes steadily, feeling far too old in comparison to the young looking ghost and
his equally young love. "I don't care about your peace of mind, VADER," he said pointedly. "But I
do care about your daughter. I was going to ask her to marry me anyway, I just haven't had the
chance yet. I just woke up from that carbonite freezing a couple days ago. Things have been kind of
hectic since. So you can go toddle off somewhere and leave us alone while I ask the beautiful
princess if she'd be willing to marry an old scrumrat like me. Thanks ever so much for ruining the
surprise."

Anakin waved a hand magnanimously. "You're welcome. I wish you luck. Sort of. But I doubt you
were actually going to ask her right this minute."

Han dug a hand in a pocket and pulled out a silver engagement ring, holding it up triumphantly.
"Actually, I was. I got Lando to find one for me on Cloud City. It's been in my pocket ever since. This thing's been frozen in carbonite, just like me. That's got to make it worth more. And hey! I just realized something. If I was frozen for almost a year, that means I'm one less year older than Leia. So there." Han had to resist the childish urge to stick his tongue out at the ghost, not even realizing that Leia was staring at him with open adoration for sticking it to her biological father and for having a ring in his pocket.

Leia jumped up at Han, wrapping her arms around his neck and pressing many kisses all over his startled face. "Yes, yes, yes!" she cried.

Han completely forgot about their unwanted audience and twirled her around once, beaming like a Tatooine sun, before getting lost in a passionate kiss.

"Well, that's got to be the galaxy's most unorthodox wedding proposal ever made," a familiar voice said from beside the hut Leia had been in.

Anakin looked up past the lost-in-their-own-world couple and broke out into a massive grin at the sight of two old clones standing at the top of the bridge, wearing identical green camouflage uniforms. He flashed to just in front of them. "REX! And Cody!" He somehow managed to pick up both of them in an exuberant quick hug, before putting the startled brothers down and grinning at them some more. "It's so good to see you! Does Obi-Wan know you're here? How have you been? I didn't know you were still alive, but I'm really glad you are. Have you seen Ahsoka lately? Hasn't she grown up spectacularly?" Anakin looked from one brother to the other, waiting for answers.

Cody had a slight smirk on his face and Rex just looked flabbergasted.

Cody picked up the slack, since Rex was still speechless. He'd barely recovered from his first shock of finding out that Anakin was Darth Vader. And now the person in question was bouncing questions at them like he'd only been gone on a vacation or something. Typical Skywalker. It made Cody's heart glad to see it. He certainly hadn't been himself when he was Darth Vader. Now THAT was a person you did not want to piss off. This one... This one was more like a brother than an evil Force wielding psychopath. This one he could deal with. "General Kenobi does know. I've already seen him," Cody said, like he was giving a report. "I've been okay. Thank you for asking. I'm glad to be alive too, now that I've found Rex again. Life was pretty bleak for a while there. I haven't seen Ahsoka, but Rex said he sees her about twice a year." Having run out of questions to answer, Cody stopped speaking, not knowing what else to say, but then something popped into his mind. "It's good to see you too, General. You're looking much better than the last time I saw you."

Anakin winced as a memory flashed into his mind of the last time he saw Commander Cody. They were on a planet, he didn't remember which one, since it was about twenty years ago and they all blurred, he'd been on so many. The mission was to search out pockets of anti-Imperial resistance. They'd come across an entire army. Vader and the 501st had dealt with them handily enough, but Cody had managed to charge right into an enemy canon blast. Anakin remembered seeing the white armour with the orange markings (he'd refused to change his colours to 501st blue, saying that only Rex deserved to wear the blue markings of a Commander for the 501st ) go flying through the air a good twenty metres. Vader had been surrounded by the downed bodies of the enemy at the time and covered in mud (because of course it was a muddy planet) and there were more charging at him. Even in his rage fuelled mind, Vader had spared a thought of concern for the Commander. By the time he'd made his way over to where Cody had landed, he was already gone, medvac'd out. He'd later seen a report about Cody being too injured to be an effective leader until he healed from the minor spinal injury and broken legs. He vaguely remembered approving the transfer of another commander to take over the 501st until Cody could come back, but he never saw Cody again and the new Commander had become a permanent resident. The fate of Cody had eventually slipped his mind as the constant pain and other matters took precedence. He knew that
if he'd been in his right mind, he would have gone searching for Cody until he found him and brought him back to the 501st as its rightful Commander. Little did he know that Cody had been in the 501st for a couple more years, but further down the chain of command.

Anakin gave Cody the best apologetic look he had. "I'm sorry, Cody. The last time I saw you was in battle and I never went to the med facility afterwards to see if you were okay. I'm glad to see that you made it."

Cody shook his head with a slight smile. "Don't worry about it, General. I know you weren't yourself. I'm just happy you seem to be finding some sort of strange closure. Although I'm not sure why you're interested in Generals Organa and Solo." He raised a brow as the two in question (who he knew because Rex had given him a quick briefing on the inner workings of the Rebellion), were still making out like they were the last people in the galaxy, chuckling lightly at the sight.

Anakin looked behind him and then quickly turned back. He REALLY didn't need to see that. He cleared his throat in discomfort. "Right. Umm. Yah. Leia's my daughter."

That brought Rex back to life. "Well, kriff, I didn't see that coming either. Does anyone have any other shocks they'd like to lay on me tonight? Because I think I might just be old enough to succumb to a shabla heartattack," he said, only slightly joking.

Anakin pretended to think seriously for a moment, counting points on his fingers. "Let's see. You know about Leia. I'm assuming you know about Luke." He raised a brow at Rex in question and got a quick nod in response. "You know about Ahsoka. You've already seen Obi-Wan and I in our shimmery forms. I don't think there's anything else I can shock you with, Rex. You should be safe."

Anakin smiled at his old friend happily. Aside from the minor hiccups with Ahsoka and Leia, he thought this whole reunion thing was going pretty well. It might even be turning into one of the best days of his life. "How about you two go join the party I can hear getting revved up from here. I'm sure whatever you were going to tell Leia can wait."

Rex glanced past Anakin and smirked. "It can definitely wait. No way am I interrupting that. You should have seen those two fighting liking mookas for four years. I much prefer this. And you know, I think I might have just won a bet that I made with Ahsoka years ago. She thought they'd never get together. I said they would." Rex grinned to himself, pleased at the hundred credits coming his way someday.

Anakin scoffed and rolled his eyes. "I think I prefer the fighting. No man wants to see his daughter making out with anybody. It's flat out disturbing."

Cody and Rex guffawed as they turned towards another bridge and started walking away. With nowhere else to go for the moment, Anakin followed the laughing fools but went invisible. No point scaring the little natives after all.

As they approached the edge of the party a few bridges later, Anakin heard a familiar whiny droid voice.

"This is so undignified. Why am I the one always being carried around everywhere?" Threepio bemoaned from where he was strapped to Chewie's back as the wookiee climbed a ladder up into the trees.

Rex, Cody, and Anakin peered over the edge of the bridge to see the moaning gold protocol droid being packed up a ladder, the clones chuckling at the sight before moving on.

Flying beside Chewie was a blue and silver astromech that Anakin almost cried to see. "Suck it
"up," Artoo beeped at his friend. "At least you're not in pieces this time."

Chewie laughed a deep rumble in agreement.

Anakin solidified his form and called, "Artoo!" excitedly, catching the droid's attention.

Artoo swivelled his dome, spotting the shimmering form of his old master. He gave an equally excited beep and flew over to where Anakin stood and then knelt in front of him as he landed.

"How have you been, buddy?" Anakin asked.

"I'm good," Artoo beeped. "Been taking care of your offspring. They're really good at getting in trouble, just like you."

Anakin chuckled, laying a hand on his dome. "Thanks, Artoo. I've missed you. Even when I wasn't really myself, I still missed you. There's not another droid in the whole galaxy as good as you."

Artoo twittered out a few pleased beeps. "Just doing my job."

Anakin petted the droid fondly. "I know, buddy. And you're amazing at it. I'm happy you're looking after the kids. It makes me feel a lot better."

"Master Skywalker!" Threepio called from a few meters away, hurrying over now that he was on his own feet again. "I never thought I'd see you again as yourself. It warms my circuits to see."

Anakin stood and faced Padme's protocol droid. "Thanks, Threepio," he said dryly. "Come on, guys. Let's get you to the party before someone misses you." Anakin walked down the rest of the bridge and came to face to chest with a subtly growling wookiee whose arms were crossed over his chest, that he'd met a few times before in both versions of himself. Anakin looked up at the displeased expression on the wookiee's face. "Hi," he said, wondering what he could have done to earn this. Then again... What hadn't he done?

"You tortured my friend," Chewie growled out.

Anakin winced, as that could apply to a LOT of people, but he assumed the wookiee was talking about the man exchanging saliva with his daughter right now. "Yah, well, he was the enemy and had designs on my daughter. I considered that fair enough at the time."

Chewie's scowl slowly transformed into a grin and he began laughing with big, booming guffaws. "I would do the same," he finally admitted between chuckles. "Just don't do it again," he warned, serious all of a sudden, then turned on his heel and marched towards the party.

Anakin stared after the wookiee with wide eyes. Wow, he was glad he was already dead. He'd heard wookiees liked to rip the arms off their enemies. Something told him that Chewbacca would have happily removed one of his arms if he had the chance and probably laugh while doing so. And HOW did Chewie know who he was?

"He's really just a big softy at heart," Artoo beeped from beside him.

Anakin glanced down at his droid. "I'll take your word for it."
Rebellion Celebration

D200/4 ABY, Endor Moon.

With Vader's body now just a pile of smouldering coals, Luke felt like his vigil was complete. Obi-Wan had left him a few minutes ago to do whatever ghosts do, so Luke hiked through the forest on his own towards the distant ewok village that he couldn't see yet, but the faint echoes of a party were already ringing through the air, serving as a decent guide. Not that he needed it. All he had to do was follow his bond with Leia to find her, and thus, the village.

His bond to Leia made so much more sense now that he knew they were twins. He'd always been drawn to her, ever since he met her. He didn't know if he'd ever get over how WRONG it was that he used to wish they could form a romantic attachment as well, and the few times that she'd kissed him hadn't helped, but he was firmly putting that in a box in the back of his mind and burying it. He wasn't ever going to tell his father either. He didn't ever want to hear what kind of scolding he'd get for it. Thank the Force she'd chosen Han and not him, because that would have been a DISASTER. And speaking of disasters or more specifically the ability to avert them, Luke just realized that Obi-Wan had known all the time who Leia was and it took him YEARS to tell him. What was up with that? Like seriously, Obi-Wan could have saved him a whole lot of embarrassment right now.

Luke shook his head in disbelief as he walked, deciding to just let that one slide. Getting into it with Obi-Wan might bring up the embarrassing parts, so that just wasn't worth it. Luke rolled his eyes at himself and glanced up at the many platforms full of celebrating people, honing in on Leia's presence. Smiling as he spotted the right one, Luke jogged over to a bridge near it and then pushed off the ground with a Force jump, landing on the bridge, forgoing the many ladders that led up into the trees. He smirked a little at his success. Not even two years ago he couldn't have pulled that off. Between Yoda, Ahsoka, and Obi-Wan, he finally felt like he'd reached something resembling his potential as a Jedi and it felt really good.

As he strode along the bridge towards the large platform built high up in the trees, Luke saw Leia already looking his way. He increased his pace a little and they met at the edge of the platform in an enthusiastic hug and exchanged reassurances through their bond that they were both alright, not having seen each other since he left the night before to go try and turn Darth Vader back to the Light side. Again.

Then Luke found all of his friends on the crowded platform and hugged them all. It took awhile. There was Han, Wedge, Lando, Chewie, Hera, Rex and the introduction to Cody, his recently acquired friend, Zander, who had a blond girl attached to his arm who he could swear was wearing a black Imperial uniform, but Luke just shrugged that one off as a 'who knows?' taking a wacky guess that this might possibly be the much lauded over Becky and finding out he was right. And finally Luke got to see his droids, Artoo and Threepio, kneeling in front of the little astromech and telling him he'd done a good job, as usual.

After that, Luke spent a lot of time just watching everyone have fun, not exactly feeling left out, but not having a partner either. Han and Leia were practically attached to each other. Zander and Becky were making out against a tree trunk in the shadows. Wedge was dancing with Kordi, and the way they were looking at each other, it made Luke think they'd end up sharing a pillow sometime in the very near future. Hera was dancing to the music in a frankly mesmerizing fashion that made Luke
downright uncomfortable to watch, so he didn't, apparently just for herself to the common observer, but Luke could sense the presence of Kanan, so he knew Hera was teasing her Jedi on purpose. Lando was in the process of attempted to woo Lieutenant Valeria yet again. She'd been brushing him off for months, being much too smart for his smooth talking ways. Luke wondered how long it would be until one or the other finally gave up.

Luke had a grin on his face as he was watching Artoo and Chopper getting mauled by a couple of enthusiastic ewoks each as they tried to get them to dance properly, when he felt a tug on his sleeve. Luke glanced down to see Rowan, surprised to see the almost teenager, wondering where he'd been hiding for the last half hour. "Hey, Rowan," Luke said with a smile.

Rowan looked up at his hero with hopeful eyes. "Master Luke? There's something I've been meaning to show you, but have never had the chance." Rowan sucked in a breath, having a hard time believing the moment he'd been trying to make happen for months had finally shown up. After dropping most of his shields so Luke could feel what he was doing, he glanced around, looking for something appropriate to demonstrate with. There wasn't a whole lot to work with, but Rowan finally spotted a table full of food. Rowan floated the table up into the air, removing the plates of food and floating them around as well. Then he imagined the table coming apart at every joint, separating it into many pieces. He studied the pieces he'd made for a moment, deciding what it could be reshaped into. A slight smile quirked his mouth as a picture of a throne popped into his mind. So that's what he made out of the wooden table, before setting it gently back on the ground and placing the plates of food all around it. Then, just for the fun of it, Rowan grabbed Roger with the Force and floated his droid over and deposited the temporarily surprised droid in the chair.

Roger looked at where he'd ended up then exclaimed, "Finally! The respect I deserve!"

Luke still had his jaw on the floor, along with almost everyone else who didn't know Rowan's secret as the party on their platform had come to a screeching halt at the demonstration. This was basically everyone but his siblings, Quarry, and Hera. Many knew that Rowan was the main designer of the Arrowhead, but the fact that he was a Force user just wasn't common knowledge.

"That is one special kid!" Wedge said loud enough for everyone to hear.

Kordi smiled up at Wedge and glanced at Zander who'd come to stand beside her with Becky still plastered to his side. "THAT'S our little brother," she said with clear pride in her voice.

Luke finally got over the worst of his shock and closed his mouth with a snap. "Rowan! How did you do that?"

Rowan shrugged negligently. "I don't know. I just do. Quarry says I'm a Force Builder. I can see things, and then I can build things. Simple."

Luke suppressed the urge to snort loudly. Simple? Ha. He'd had to fight to get strong enough to lift a couple of rocks with the Force and this kid thinks what he just did was simple? Yeesh. And how did he not notice before that Rowan practically vibrated with Force energy? It was unmistakable now. "Is there anything else you can do that I should know about?" he asked, hoping it wasn't too much more.

Rowan pulled a lightsabre out from under the back of his jacket. "I'm pretty good with this, I guess."

Luke wasn't even going to try and imagine where the boy had gotten a lightsabre. "Really?" he said dryly. Figuring at this point that Rowan was probably more than pretty good.
Rowan nodded a little, the sarcasm lost on him. "I trained a little with my first Master, who turned out to be a Darksider, and then I studied all the old Masters' moves from Roger's memories, and I've also been training with Master Kanan."

"Show us!" Lando called from the crowd, which started a chant of, "Show us! Show us!" By this point, the other platforms within hearing distance had also come to a stop and people were crowded on the edges, watching curiously.

Obi-Wan and Anakin had been watching as well, from the edges of the crowd in invisible mode. "Did you know about this kid?" Anakin asked his Master silently during the initial demonstration.

Obi-Wan shrugged. "Vaguely? I've mostly been watching you and Luke, and Rowan's never done anything exciting around Luke before. He didn't come to my attention until you captured him a couple days ago. I had no idea he was that advanced in the Force though."

"I did," another voice said in both their minds gleefully as Master Yoda appeared beside them. "Watching this one, I have been. Strong, he is. A proper Master he requires, but Luke it is not. Not ready to train a padawan, is he."

Anakin had to reluctantly agree with that assessment, even though he wished his son had had proper training from a young age. He could be great at this point in his life instead of someone an average padawan from a few decades ago could make mincemeat of. Not once had Anakin ever used even a tenth of his skills in his battles with his son, not really able to kill him. "Then who will be his Master?" Anakin asked. "A young teenage boy can't just run around the galaxy assuming he knows everything."

"Like you tried to do?" Obi-Wan said teasingly.

Anakin rolled his eyes at him and declined to answer.

"Show up soon, his true Master will," Yoda said. "Until then, train him, I will."

With the crowd's chant ringing in his ears, Rowan decided to meet the demands of the people. "Okay, okay," he called, and ignited his blue lightsabre, causing an instant hush.

The people of the Rebellion had heard so many stories and rumours of their Jedi warriors (the alive, dead, or missing), but rarely did anyone ever see one in action. This was truly exciting for them. Except for Hera, the only ones with any real knowledge of what Jedi could do were Rex and Cody, and they were curious to see how the boy and Luke Skywalker compared to their memories. Although Rex had been in a few battles with Luke before and once with Rowan, he'd never seen either fight another Force wielder.

Feeling like he had no other choice, Luke pulled his lightsabre off his belt as well. Only to have it pulled from his hand by an invisible force and into the hands of Master Yoda, looking almost as ancient as Luke remembered him, but not quite, even with the shimmery blue light, kind of see-through thing he had going on. "Master Yoda!" Luke exclaimed happily along with a gasp in chorus from the assembled at seeing a real ghost. He hadn't seen him since he'd disappeared into the Force a few days ago. It was nice to know that the old Master had transitioned well into his new life like Obi-Wan.

Luke narrowed his eyes at Yoda and thought back, "Thanks," drier than the sands of Tatooine, earning him a fiendish chuckle in his mind.

Rowan was staring, transfixed, at the tiny, wizened, green creature who also just happened to be glowing with a faint blue light in the semi dark of the roaring fires, his lightsabre kind of listing out of almost slack fingers to equal his slack jaw. "Uhhhh," he said. "Who are you?"

"Grand Master Yoda, I am," he said warmly. "Trained thousands of younglings in the Jedi way, I have. Teach you too, I will, for now."

Rowan's fingers remembered he was holding something and finally tightened up as he blinked at the little ghost, processing his backward words. "Cooooolll," he finally said, deciding he'd be stupid to say no to that.

Yoda grinned at the boy. "Good. See what Forms you know, we shall start with." Yoda moved into the ready stance of Form I and was pleased when Rowan copied him. "Good."

And they were off. Blue lightsabres dancing as the tiny ghost and the half sized human boy parried back and forth around the platform in the open spaces left for them from the crowd.

Luke watched the show with a little bit of envy and admiration. He wished he'd had a teacher when he was still a boy too. Rowan sparred with Yoda like he did it every day, proving he was in fact 'pretty good.' As Yoda made his attack gradually more difficult, adding jumps and flips, Rowan kept up easily, a grin on his face. Luke had to admit, the boy definitely would have given him a run for his credits. Perhaps it WAS a good thing that Yoda decided to take over.

Admiral Ackbar made his way over from a neighbouring platform and stopped at the side of General Syndulla where they both watched the Jedi display for a minute without speaking after she nodded a greeting. "Adding the Freemakers to the Rebellion is turning into one of the best decisions we ever made," he finally said.

Hera nodded in agreement. "Definitely. The three of them are all incredible assets to the team. It makes my decision to leave even easier, I think. Between them, Solo, Leia, Luke, Calrissian, Rex, and now Cody too, you'll have plenty of leaders capable of finishing this war with you."

"We'll be fine, Hera," Ackbar said reassuringly. "You can leave first thing in the morning if you want."

"There's just one thing," Hera said, apology already in her voice. "I'm taking Kallus with me, but he doesn't know it yet. I'm not sure if he'll be coming back."

Ackbar gawked at Hera. "What?"

Hera hastily explained about Zeb and Lira San. Now that the Empire was in the process of falling, the lasats had decided it was safe enough to tell the rest of the galaxy that they weren't basically extinct. But the exact location of the planet would still be kept a secret for now. It wasn't easy to get to anyway.

Ackbar nodded in understanding at the end of Hera's little speech. He'd seen Director Kallus and Hera's lasat together. Kallus was a different person with Orrelios. A happier person. Ackbar couldn't begrudge the ex-Imperial a shot at a real life away from war, anymore than he could Hera. They'd both done more than their fair share for the Rebel cause. "That's fine, Hera. Pick him up from Home One before you go. We'll find someone else to run the intelligence division. I'm sure there's someone eager enough to want the responsibility."
Hera laughed at that. "Good luck."

Rowan and Yoda wrapped up their practice demonstration to the sound of much applause and cheers, the boy beaming at all the attention.

Yoda smacked him in the leg with Luke's unlit lightsaber. "Humble, a Jedi is."

Rowan rubbed the sore spot on his thigh, eyes downcast in apology. "Yes, Master."

Yoda nodded. "Good. A Jedi you may yet be." He tossed the lightsaber over his shoulder without even looking, who barely caught it, not expecting it to come sailing at his face. Yoda smirked like he had eyes in the back of his head and Rowan giggled, making Yoda wink at him. "Find you every day, I shall, and train some more, we will."

"Sweet," Rowan breathed as he tucked his own lightsaber back in his jacket as the ghost disappeared.

Seeing that the show was over, Han focused on the crowd again, his arm still wrapped around Leia's shoulders, holding her sweet presence close to his side. When he spotted Admiral Ackbar, Han got an idea. Squeezing Leia slightly to get her attention, he said, "I'm going to see the Admiral for a minute."

Leia nodded. "Alright."

Han kissed her cheek, making her smile at him, before he strode across the platform to ask the Admiral if he'd be willing to marry him and Leia tonight. He'd waited long enough to make her his. He wanted it official as soon as possible before something else happened to interfere with his love life.

Two minutes later, it was all arranged, and Han strode back to Leia with a big grin covering his face that he couldn't help. He took her little hands in both of his much bigger ones. "Sweetheart, I know we haven't had a chance to talk about it, but would you do me the honour of marrying me right now?"

"Now?!!" Leia said in astonishment.

"Now," Han said. "The Admiral will do it for us."

Leia glanced around Han's shoulder to see the Admiral in question give her an encouraging nod. She glanced to the side to see what Luke thought. He nodded too with a smile and happiness for her radiating through their bond. Leia looked back at Han's hopeful, pleading, puppy eyes and smiled too. "Yes. Now works for me."

Han whooped and pulled her over to the Admiral, catching the attention of the crowd once more.

Leia couldn't believe she was getting married on a whim, but as she looked around, she realized the timing actually couldn't be much better. She was actually in a dress and her hair was pretty. All of her friends were here to see. There was no imminent emergency pulling her attention away. And everyone was already in celebration mode. Perfect.

Leia got lost in Han's eyes as the simple marriage ceremony was performed. She vaguely remembering saying all the right words in all the right places, but all she was sure she would remember of the moment was how much love she could see in Han's eyes and feel coming from him. That was the moment when she realized she could feel a bond with Han through the Force and it would forever be imprinted on her mind as one of the most special moments of her life.
As the Admiral said, "You may now kiss the bride," Han did just that, cupping Leia's beautiful face in his hands and pressing his mouth to hers in the sweetest, most loving kiss he'd ever given anyone. The sound of cheers was just a faint background noise in his ears as his whole focus was on the woman who completed him and made him a better person. His wife.

Anakin was grumbling to himself through the whole ceremony, which Obi-Wan found quite entertaining. He'd pretty much predicted this reaction from Anakin when Obi-Wan first realized who Leia was falling for years ago. It was fun knowing he was right.

As the couple sealed their union with a long kiss, Anakin looked away. "I'm stuck with him now. And my daughter seriously dislikes me. Just wonderful."

"At least Luke likes you," Obi-Wan said consolingly, hiding a grin. "Look, he's even coming over now."

Luke left the celebrating couple, feeling ridiculously wistful for his own love to appear in his life. There must be a girl out there somewhere that was meant for him. He wandered towards where he could feel Obi-Wan, Yoda, and his father's presences in the Force, taking comfort in the fact that they were still here. He supposed with everything that had happened tonight, it made sense for them to stick around. As he leaned against a tree, Obi-Wan and Yoda appeared in a visible form, at least to him, since he didn't hear any change in the laughter and conversation behind him indicating that they'd been noticed by others. His father's form appeared a second later too, amusement in his expression and Luke wondered why.

"I was just teasing Obi-Wan and Yoda about looking all ancient again for you. I promise you, they don't look old any other time," Luke heard his father's voice say in his head.

Luke smiled with a slight shake of his head. "Well, I appreciate it," he thought back towards all three of them.

"Just don't expect me to do the same," Anakin said laughingly. "My old form is too creepy looking and there's seriously not much of it left. I like this look much better."

"It's fine with me," Luke thought just he sensed Leia walk up behind him and put her arms around him in a half hug.

"Hey. You're missing all the fun over here all by yourself," Leia said to her twin. "Come party with us."

"Sure, Leia," Luke said obligingly. As she led him away, he looked back over his shoulder one more time for a last look at the Jedi Masters who'd made such an impact on his life, and a final smile for his father, who he'd fought so hard to redeem. Luke felt almost complete in that moment. There was just one thing missing...
Luke's Missing Piece:

D201/4 ABY, Endor Moon.

A half hour later, his missing piece flew into his life. Literally.

Luke extracted himself from the party as quietly as possible, the long, action packed adventure of the last four days finally catching up to him. He jumped down to the forest floor and aimed for the Lambda class shuttle he'd appropriated off the Death Star, that he'd left in the forest a ways away, wanting some peace and quiet so he could sleep uninterrupted by music and the Force presence of so many people. He also wanted a little distance between him and Leia and Han, who were radiating enough sappy love vibes to make him downright depressed. As he walked, Luke put a shield up between him and Leia so he didn't have to be subjected to their wedding night bliss, because that would just be WRONG.

He was only steps from the shuttle when a Headhunter class fighter zoomed right at him through a gap in the trees, making him drop to the ground to avoid losing the top half of his body. Luke sprang back up to his feet, feeling the rage coming at him in waves through the Force, and drew his lightsabre, ready to fight whoever came out of that ship.

Mara Jade, favoured of the Emperor's Hands (aka Force trained assassin / spy) landed her fighter beside the Lambda shuttle, with only one thought swirling through her mind in the Emperor's voice. The same one that had bombarded her for the last six hours during the entire flight to Endor; "Kill Luke Skywalker! He's on Endor. Kill Luke Skywalker! He's on Endor." Accompanying the thought was a picture of a man in his early twenties with blond hair and the prettiest blue eyes Jade had ever seen on a man, which confused her, because it was a contradictory thought to the first. The first thought, she had no control over. It simply wouldn't go away, no matter how much she tried to think of something else or even meditate. It was like she was programmed. So she went with it, since it was the only option that seemed like it would shut off the Emperor's voice.

Jade had been a servant to the Emperor for almost her entire life. He'd raised her, in a fashion, and taught her everything she needed to know to kill an enemy of the Empire in a thousand different ways. But he was dead now. She'd felt it. The Force bond he'd established with her was gone, making her feel free for the first time in as long as she could remember. Except for one thing. The Emperor's last command.

She wasn't getting away from that, so she flew as fast as she could to Endor, or more specifically, a moon orbiting Endor. Finding Luke Skywalker hadn't been hard. The Emperor had sent her such a good impression of what Luke felt like in the Force, she was immediately drawn right to him.

Jade smacked the button to release the transparisteel shield over the cockpit and leapt up out of her chair and down to the forest floor, already igniting her purple lightsabre. She landed right in front of Skywalker, letting the Emperor's rage flow through her, figuring she might as well use it to make this quick. She had a whole life of freedom ahead of her to look forward to, and she wanted to get to it.

Luke's eyes near popped out of his head as the young woman dropped down in front of him. In the glow of their lightsabres, it looked like her long curls were a brilliant shade of red. And her eyes gleamed like emeralds in the most exquisitely beautiful face he'd ever seen. Her strong, lean, yet
killer curvy body was covered in form fitting black synth leather with a belt around her hips holding a holstered blaster. If a person could fall in love at first sight, that's what Luke did. He didn't care that she was obviously here to kill him. He didn't care that she felt cold like she was channelling the Dark side. He didn't even care that they hadn't even spoken a single word yet. Somehow, he just KNEW she was the one he'd been waiting for. Luke fell and he fell hard. She was PERFECT.

Jade studied her opponent for a minute, since he wasn't making any moves to defend himself or attack. It looked like he'd been frozen to the spot, actually, which she found amusing. He was cute too. Really cute. Like your typical boy next door cute that you couldn't help but love. There was this adorable cleft in his chin that she had the urge to kiss. And those eyes. They were even prettier in real life than the image in her mind. Yeesh. Guys shouldn't have pretty eyes like that. It just made him harder to kill. Oh well. She'd let her training take over. Once he was dead, then this stupid, "Kill Luke Skywalker! He's on Endor. Kill Luke Skywalker! He's on Endor," message would stop driving her insane. No man was worth living with that for the rest of her life. No matter how cute he was or whether he deserved to die or not.

Jade had had enough of the long drawn out exchange of stares. She tightened her fingers on the grip of her lightsabre. "Sorry, Skywalker, but Master wants you dead, so it's lights out I'm afraid."

That was the only warning he got before the girl leapt at him. Her voice was so low and sultry that Luke almost took too long to process what she'd actually said. He raised his lightsabre just in time to avoid being beheaded on the first swing. Then it took every ounce of his training to keep up with her as she attacked him and they danced around the small clearing in the trees in a battle to the death.

Anakin stayed at the party for as long as his children did, reluctant to stop watching them. He'd missed so MUCH of their lives that he almost couldn't bear to miss another instant. Obi-Wan and Yoda kept him company for the entertainment value. At the moment, Rex, Cody, Lando, and Chewie were having a drinking competition with native ewok liquor. Apparently the little teddy bears could really hold their drink and made some very potent stuff, because the three humans were so drunk they could barely sit upright and were cracking the most hilariously slurred jokes. And Chewie, despite his large size was canting to the side alarmingly. Obi-Wan was pretty sure one more drink would do him in.

After Luke left, Leia dragged Han away as well with a look in their eyes that Anakin didn't even want to think about. "Okay, time to go," he thought abruptly to the Masters, making them shake their heads and laugh at him. It was at that moment when they all felt a change in the Force and some very confusing emotions coming from Luke. Exchanging a look of alarm, they flashed to Luke's location and found him fighting for his life against a red-headed girl. Normally, they'd be tempted to let Luke deal with it, since he could use the training, but the girl was clearly better than him and she radiated a Force signature that felt way too much like Darth Sidious.

Anakin rushed forward and stopped the girl in her tracks with the Force, grabbing her by the neck and holding her up in the air. "Mara Jade," he growled with narrowed eyes. "Why are you trying to kill my son?"

Jade glared down at the Force ghost that she didn't recognize, staying calm despite the lack of new air coming in. This wasn't the first time she'd been held up like this by a long shot. "Orders," she gasped out through her constricted throat. And then she narrowed her eyes right back. "Who. Kriff. You?" she snarled.

Anakin flashed his image to that of Darth Vader, making her eyes widen in fear. She immediately
went limp in his hold and Anakin set her down, knowing she wouldn't be a problem anymore.

Jade knelt in front of the ghost of the man she didn't know had perished as well, with her head bowed and breathed in precious air for a moment before speaking. "I'm sorry, my Lord. I didn't know he was your son. I wouldn't have gone near him, even with the stupid voice stuck in my head, if I had."


Luke was staring between his father and the girl kneeling at his feet. "You know her?" he asked stupidly.

Anakin smiled slightly. "Yes. She's one of many Force sensitives Sidious trained to do his bidding. Rowan's first Master, Naare, was also one. This one, though, while the best of the lot, was never exactly in love with her job. But we kept that a secret, didn't we, Mara Jade?"

Jade rose to her feet and crossed her arms over her chest, smiling slightly at Anakin. "Yes, we did. But I still have HIS voice in my head. And it won't stop. I'm afraid it won't go away until that one," she said with a nod of her chin at Luke, "is deceased."

"Help with that, I may," Yoda said, surprising Jade as she registered the presence of two more Force ghosts.

She tilted her head slightly and raised a brow at the tiny green creature. "I would appreciate it very much if you could. HIS voice is quite annoying."

Anakin snorted out a laugh. "I always thought so too."

Yoda chortled. "Kneel, young one," he said to Jade.

Jade did as requested, kneeling in front of the green Jedi, putting her slightly above level with his standing height. She felt little hands touch the top of her head. The VERY recently retired assassin closed her eyes and dropped her shields, letting the Jedi Master into her thoughts, desperate for any help she could get.

Jade sighed in relief as the command quieted and then disappeared entirely, leaving her thoughts her own again. The cold of the Emperor's dying presence also left her, chased away by the Light of Yoda's will. Jade basked in feeling clean on the inside for the first time in too many years to remember. Her access to the Light side of the Force increased dramatically as well, without the Emperor blocking her from it. Jade opened her eyes and smiled gratefully at the old ghost. "Thank you, Master Jedi. Thank you very much."

Yoda smiled warmly. "Welcome you are, young one." He glanced towards Luke and added quietly in her mind. "Enamoured with you, 'that one' is. Amiss that path would not be."

Jade raised a brow and glanced at Luke again contemplatively. "Perhaps," she thought back. She rose to her feet gracefully. "Assuming that his father doesn't kill me for it."

Anakin walked forward a step and winked at her. "Go get him," he also said in her mind. "Poor kid's lonely."

Now both Jade's eyebrows rose, but she said nothing more to the ghosts. Instead, she walked over to Luke and held out a hand to shake. "Hi, I'm Jade, and I'm sorry I tried to kill you."
Luke stared at the hand offered and had a mini panic attack. Oh poodoo, he didn't know what to do. He really didn't want to mess this up and scare her away. In that millisecond of panic, the soothing voice of Obi-Wan filled his mind. "You're the son of a queen. Act like it."

Luke blinked and smiled softly. Of course. He gently grasped the somehow delicate AND strong looking hand offered and raised it to his lips, placing a kiss on the top of her hand, startling her. "I'm Luke," he said, eyes meeting hers. "And you can try to kill me anytime you want."

Jade felt a little thrill go through her, starting from their joined hands, since he hadn't let hers go yet, his thumb caressing her softly. Holy nerfherders, was he ever smooth. How was he single? She glanced over her shoulder at the ghosts with wide eyes, but they just grinned at her and disappeared. Okay then. Just her and Luke, in the dark, alone. She could deal. "Sooo, you're the son of Darth Vader, hunh? How did that happen?"

Luke smiled down at the warrior girl who was only slightly shorter than him, and led her by their joined hands towards his shuttle, starting the story that Obi-Wan had told him not even two hours ago. "Once upon a time, there was a young slave boy on Tatooine who met a beautiful Queen..."

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Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade had nothing in common.

He was born to a galaxy filled with pain. His father was a Fallen hero. His mother, heartbroken royalty.

She was born on a world almost untouched by the war that had ended a little more than two years before. Her father was a scholar. Her mother, an artist.

He was accepted by relatives-in-law that refused to let him be trained to his potential.

She was loved by parents who adored her.

He was raised in a harsh land ruled by Hutts, crime, and the lack of water.

She spent the first three years of her life surrounded by lush rainforests and gleaming oceans, and then was taken to a planet comprised of one massive city that circled the globe in countless levels of corruption, wealth, and poverty.

He didn't even know what the Force was until he was almost nineteen.

She was taught the ways of the Force from the age of three onwards.

He was Light and good and the epitome of hope.

She was Dark and deadly and despised her life.

Luke Skywalker and Mara Jade had nothing in common. Except one thing:

Darth Vader.

Who'd have believed that the galaxy's worst fear would bring them together?

Certainly not Obi-Wan, as he watched Luke look at the girl (who'd just tried to kill him) like he'd just found his own version of heaven, and the girl gaze back at him in return with blossoming awareness.

This really had been an incredible day of redemption.
Luke and Jade had talked all night long. And he didn't even realize it until a glimmer of real light made its way into the cushy living area of Vader's personal shuttle. Jade now knew his entire life story and he hers. They'd raided the small galley for snacks and then settled into what had to be the softest couch Luke had ever sat on, each at opposite ends facing each other. Over the course of the night, they'd moved a little bit closer with every mundane shift or trip for another drink or visit to the state of the art refresher.

Now, by whatever miracle Luke had been graced with, Jade was sleeping quietly against his shoulder, having nodded off while he was talking about the goals of the Rebellion. Luke hadn't dared move, lest he wake her and lose this precious moment to just study the exquisite lines of her face. The red gold eyelashes that lay like the softest of fans on her cheeks. Her adorable little nose. Her lush pink lips that tempted him to taste, but he would never dare. He'd learned his lesson long ago to let the girl make the first move in regards to kissing. It was much safer that way. The long strawberry blond curls lay wild around her head and clung to his black tunic, also tempting him to see if they felt as soft as they looked. He hoped to find out one day, but for now, he just remained still, hands carefully tucked under his crossed arms to keep them under control, and let his eyes do all the caressing he didn't dare put into action. Not yet.

Luke marvelled at the wondrous creature that had appeared in his life just when he was feeling the most lonely, despite all the friends and family he had. Jade was so strong to have survived everything she had at the hands of the Emperor. Her training to be an assassin had been brutal, Sidious' one goal to remove all that which was inherently soft and light from her very being. She'd been put to work by the time she was ten, as no one would suspect a child of being a killer.

When not on missions, Jade had lived her life in the Emperor's palace in the guise of a servant when she was younger and then as a dancing girl as she matured into a teenager. Now, at the age of twenty-one, Jade had more life experience in one year than Luke had in his whole life. She'd seen and done things he wished he could remove from her past because he could feel how they haunted her. She'd had to fight off countless slavering men who desired her body, despite the Emperor's orders that she was only there to be seen and not touched when he entertained guests. She'd killed hundreds at the order of the Emperor, not able to do anything but his biding due to the enforced bond he'd kept in her mind.

Most would have just turned fully Dark and not cared an iota about anything anymore under such circumstances. But not Jade. She'd clung to the fragment of the Light side that she could still feel underneath the Emperor's conditioning. Clung to her humanity. Clung to the vague memories of loving parents that she sometimes saw in her dreams, reminding her that life wasn't always torture and hate. Oddly enough, it was Darth Vader who had encouraged her to keep fighting to maintain her own identity. He'd vowed that one day she'd be free of the Emperor's durasteel rule, and now she was.

Luke's first goal in his quest to see her have the life she deserved was to find out if her parents were still alive. Someone in the intelligence division should be able to find them, although he didn't have much for them to work with. She remembered the name of her home planet and her parents' first names, but that was it, being torn from them when she was only three.

Despite his desire to never stop looking at her, Luke's eyes eventually fell closed and stayed that way as his head sank deeper into the cushion behind him. After being awake for more than two days, Luke's body finally put him to sleep whether he liked it or not.

When her pillow listed slightly to the side, Jade startled awake, surprised that she'd even been asleep. That wasn't like her at all. She never let her defences down like that. But there was
something about Luke that made her feel safer than she ever had. Jade peered up at Luke as he tilted slightly further, his body going boneless the deeper into sleep he fell. She smiled a little as a soft snore escaped him.

Jade sat up fully as Luke fell the rest of the way over onto the couch. She pulled a pillow under his head with the Force just in time to cushion his fall. Not that he really needed it, the couch was so soft, but it would be more comfortable in terms of position and save him from waking up with a crick in his neck.

Rising to her feet silently, she knelt by his head and brushed a stray lock of dark gold hair away from his eyes, marvelling at how soft it was. "Sleep well, farmboy," she whispered before crossing to the other side of the room and curling up in a equally soft chair. Resting her head on another large pillow that she hugged tightly, Jade shuddered in a soft sigh. She watched Luke sleep until her eyes once again closed of their own accord, a sweet smile playing across her lips. For the first time in her life since she'd been stolen by the Emperor, Jade felt safe. And there was a new bond tugging at the back of her mind which felt like warmth and home instead of the ice, fear, and hate she'd grown accustomed to living with from the Emperor.

If you had asked her even a day ago, she would have said she never wanted to be bonded to someone again, but now, after talking to the Jedi Knight all night long, she thought she just might be alright with it. He was adorable and sweet and humble; the exact opposite of her Master. He'd grown up in near poverty, and discovering he was actually descended from royalty hadn't changed his outlook on life at all. All Luke wanted to do was right the wrongs of the galaxy as best as he could. He didn't have a power hungry, hateful, or ambitious bone in his body, which made her like him all the more. Talking to him had been so easy, and the longer they talked, the clearer his emotions and thoughts were to her. Without even trying, they bonded over their life stories. Literally. And now she was in the process of falling in love with him. It was kind of overwhelming, but felt really really nice at the same time.

Against all odds, Jade had found where she belonged. Who knew it would be with the son of a man who had been capable of amazing heroics and heinous crimes? A man who was both the most famous Jedi AND the most famous Sith. The Force really did work in mysterious ways.
Hanleia's Wedding Night

A/N: I know this is super short. I do intend to add a long and romantic lemon to it eventually, but this is all that's already been written for the moment.

Hanleia's Wedding Night:

D201/4 ABY, Endor Moon

p>Leia led Han by the hand across the series of bridges to their borrowed hut. For his part, Han had a grin on his face that you couldn't wipe off short of another Death Star showing up, and even then, he'd probably tell the Imperials to hold that thought until morning. Or perhaps two mornings from now. Han had no intentions of letting Leia out of his arms until he absolutely had to.

As Leia approached the little doorway to their equally little hut, she turned around and looked up at Han, the sweetest smile on her face and desire shining in her eyes. They hadn't been truly intimate since before Cloud City and she'd missed Han desperately over the last year. After rescuing him from Jabba, they'd immediately flown to join the fleet, which gave them time to snuggle in bed for a few hours, but Han still hadn't been well after being frozen for so long, so snuggle was all they did. Last night she'd been so upset over finding out Darth Vader was her father and that Luke was going to face him again, she'd spent the whole night lying sleepless in Han's arms, not even remotely in the mood for loving, but his comforting presence was enough to keep her from spending the whole night crying in a curled up mess, which just made her love him more. Han had clearly been confused and miserable over her out of character depression, but he'd never pushed for more explanations or tried to get frisky, even though he had been feeling much better.

Now Leia was definitely in the mood for celebrating and showing Han how much she loved him in the most physical way possible. Grabbing his other hand too, she walked backwards through the leather curtain doorway, smiling at how Han had to duck to avoid beaming himself on the doorframe. They came to a stop inside the small space, staring into each other's eyes like twitterpated fools, not saying a word, because they didn't need them.

Han pulled her close with their joined hands, placing them behind his neck before letting hers go and stroking a gentle knuckle across her satin soft cheek, flushed red with excitement. His other hand trailed down her slender back and lifted her up by the waist, bringing their faces closer together so he could kiss the breath right out of her.

Leia moaned softly into her husband's mouth as their tongues duelled passionately. She'd honestly never been happier than in that moment, wrapped in his arms, feeling like she'd finally found home again. It didn't matter where they ended up in the war or afterwards. It didn't matter if they lived in his junk heap of a ship or in a palace. Her place would always be with Han.

Han pulled back after a few minutes and looked down at the tiny bed they'd crammed themselves into last night and groaned. "Hell no," he muttered out.

"What?" Leia asked in confusion.

"Grab your things, sweetheart," Han said. "I am not spending my wedding night on that. We're going back to the Falcon."

Leia glanced at the bed and giggled before picking up her other outfit. Han grabbed her by the
hand and they were off once again, but now it was Han leading and her with the grin you couldn't wipe off.
Anakin's Best Reunions

A/N: I'll Add a lemon to this eventually. :D

Anakin's Best Reunions:

D201/4 ABY, The Afterlife

After leaving Luke with Mara Jade to get acquainted without any interfering old people looking on, Anakin followed Obi-Wan back to the indistinct, misty place he’d first woken up in. "So now what?" he asked. "Aside from spying on people, what do we do with ourselves?"

Obi-Wan smirked as he nodded to a swirling portal that magically appeared beside Anakin. "Now, my impatient padawan, we go home."

Anakin blinked at the portal. "Home?"

Obi-Wan walked through the portal, followed by Anakin, and it closed behind them. They gazed over the idyllic landscape reminiscent of Naboo with green meadows and shining blue lakes interspaced with glowing white buildings. "Home," Obi-Wan said in contentment, glancing at Anakin's awestruck expression with a chuckle. "What? You thought we actually spent eternity living in the Inbetween?"

Anakin nodded mutely, amazed that he got to spend the rest of his existence in such a beautiful place. Anakin wouldn't have been surprised if he'd been sent to a place of lava and fire to spend his time in eternal torment. Instead, he got this? How? Why?

Obi-Wan shook his head at Anakin fondly. "Don't question it, just enjoy." He started walking across the meadow towards a small palace. "I have one more surprise for you," he called over his shoulder when Anakin didn't immediately follow him, inspiring the younger man to bound quickly to catch up.

"What is it?" Anakin asked eagerly, almost skipping in his happiness with how things were turning out.

Obi-Wan sent a mental call to Satine to let her know they had arrived, then grinned at Anakin. "Let's just say that everyone is part of the Force, and when they die, they all come here. Or at least to some part of here that suits them. The Afterlife is vast and has many different locations, but this one is my favourite. Only the Force sensitive have the ability to travel to the Inbetween, and the strongest, like you and I and Yoda, can go all the way back to the real world, but that doesn't mean that the rest of the souls are left out."

Anakin turned to look at the palace as the dawning realization of what Obi-Wan hinted at hit him. Just then a figure in a rainbow coloured gown came running out of the palace, lustrous brown curls streaming behind her. She beelined for Anakin as he came to a stunned halt, crying, "Ani!" in a choked up voice, tears glistening in her chocolate eyes.

Anakin finally moved after feeling like time had slowed to a crawl for an instant of incredulous joy. He literally leapt the remaining distance between them and scooped Padme up into his arms, twirling around in circles as he laughed and she plastered kisses to his face. As the enormity of having his wife in his arms again hit him, Anakin came to an abrupt stop, gazing down into her
loving eyes with tears stinging his vision. "How?" he whispered. "How could you forgive me for what I did to you? I killed you." As the tears escaped, his eyes closed and he bowed his head, ashamed to the core.

Padme burrowed her fingers into his dark gold curls, tilting his head back up so he would see how much she still loved him. "I could forgive you anything, Ani," she whispered back. "Anything." She pressed her lips to his in a quick kiss before meeting his eyes again. "And you didn't kill me. Obi-Wan said you were dead so I lost the will to live without you for a little bit, but then I saw our beautiful children and I knew I had something worth living for, fighting for. But even as I tried to stay alive, it felt like something was drowning me. The air was gone from my body and everything went black. Obi-Wan thinks Sidious killed me, because he needed you to believe that YOU had. He knew I would have found out eventually that you were still alive. He knew I could have brought you back to the Light. I like to think that we could have been a proper family like we were meant to."

Anakin gathered her just a little closer to his chest, resting his cheek on top of her head. "Oh, Padme. My light. My angel. I'm so sorry I didn't protect you better; from myself and from Sidious. I'm sorry I let my fears get to my head. I promise it won't ever happen again."

Padme forced him to look at her again and stop hiding in her hair. "And I'm holding you to that promise, Anakin Skywalker. But I want to make one thing perfectly clear; I don't blame you for your fall to the Dark Side and I never will and I never have. I lay all of the blame at Palpatine's feet, where it belongs. He was working on you for years and none of us saw it. Realistically, we're all to blame; Obi-Wan, the Council, and me. We let a Sith Lord have access to an impressionable boy's mind. We let him plant the seeds of doubt in you. I see, now, that Palpatine was orchestrating events from the very beginning. So I repeat; I don't blame you at all and I never will. You could have murdered the entire galaxy and I'd still love you unconditionally, my precious Ani."

Anakin was speechless as he stared into her beautiful, shimmering eyes. He'd always thought, that of all the people he'd wronged, Padme would be the hardest to win back. He couldn't be more grateful for being wrong. "Stars, I love you, angel. I don't deserve you and I doubt I ever have." He tilted his head down and captured her mouth in a gentle kiss again before moving to catch a tear trailing down her cheek with his lips. Pulling back, he smiled a little ruefully. "It's probably a good thing it all worked out the way it did. I wasn't much of a man left for you to love. I literally couldn't breathe without my suit and I was basically a burnt, shrivelled up, overcooked potato."

Padme blinked at that image and then giggled with her bell-like laughter that Anakin loved. "Oh, Ani. You know I wouldn't have cared."

He wiggled his eyebrows at her lasciviously. "Trust me, sweetheart, you would have cared."

Padme wiggled her eyebrows back. "Oh, I'm sure we would have figured something out."

Anakin boomed out a laugh and then dropped to his knees in the grass, pressing kisses all over her beloved face. Their lips met and they got lost in their own world of love and long awaited passion.

Obi-Wan and Satine watched the younger couple for a minute with their arms wrapped around each other's waists from the doorway of their home, smiling mistily at the bittersweet reunion. When it looked like the two were going to stay outside kissing for an indefinite amount of time, Obi-Wan raised a brow at his golden haired love. "Perhaps we should go inside and leave them to it, my dear."

Satine pressed a kiss to Obi's cheek, lingering as she breathed in his wonderful scent. "You've been
away for hours, Obi. I missed you," she said with a gleam of mischief in her turquoise eyes.

Obi-Wan raised a brow teasingly. "Oh? Can't live without me either, my beautiful darling?" Not giving her a chance to answer, he tucked a hand under her knees and behind her delicate back, lifting her up against his chest, whispering naughty suggestions in her ear as she wrapped her arms around his neck. Carrying her effortlessly, he strode into the rather large home that Satine and Padme had insisted on, both of them used to opulence, and aimed for their suite for what was guaranteed to be another long love session. The advantage to being deceased was the lack of bodily needs. If they didn't want to, they didn't need to breathe, eat, sleep, or anything else you could think of that a living being required to survive. It was fantastic.

As they passed the open doorway of the main living room, Obi-Wan paused and looked at the two couples snuggling on couches with a grin. "You guys might as well go find something to occupy yourselves for awhile. Anakin and Padme aren't coming in for a while."

"I'd say a VERY long while," Satine added from her position in Obi's arms as her eyes gleamed with amusement at the disappointed look on Shmi's face, before Anakin's mother bravely changed it to a smile. Satine returned her attention to her soulmate, running a playful hand through his beard, tickling him gently. "Obi," she said, letting her eyes say everything she was feeling.


"Hey!" the older couples heard from an indignant Satine followed by Obi-Wan's teasing laughter.

Qui-Gon raised a brow and chuckled at his padawan's dry wit. Shmi and Cliegg rose from their couch and left the room hand in hand, saying something about walking the gardens. That left Qui-Gon alone in the room with his wife. He turned his attention to the woman he'd loved since they were younglings together in the Temple. Since dignity could be thrown to the wayside for the moment, he gathered her up into his lap and started scattering kisses all over the dark honey skin of her perfectly sculpted face. "If the kids are all having fun," he murmured between kisses, "I don't see why we can't either."

Tahl smiled sweetly, gold and green striped eyes glowing with untold mysteries as she ran her fingers through his long, soft brown hair. "Every moment spent with you is fun, my love," she murmured before holding his face still so she could capture his mouth in a loving kiss.

An hour or two later, a grass stained and very rumpled looking Anakin and Padme walked into the palace, eyes locked on each other in utter adoration. A couple walked out of a room and stopped in front of them, the brown haired woman looking at Anakin with watery eyes and a shaky smile.

Anakin stared at her for a moment and then rushed forward, wrapping her in his arms. He cried on her hair and she on his chest.

The only word spoken for the longest time was a sobbed out, "Mom."
Zeb's Surprise

Zeb's Surprise:

D201/4 ABY, Endor Moon

Hera was probably one of the very few people who woke up at the crack of dawn. Except for the soldiers on guard duty, almost everyone else had stayed up late partying, but she had left right after Leia and Han's ceremony. The only person she had cared to celebrate with at that moment was Kanan, and boy did they ever. They were the only ones on the ship and took full advantage of that fact. Now she was eager to get on with her life and see her son again. As of midnight last night, she was officially no longer a General of the Rebel Alliance. She was still undecided about how she felt about that, but the sense of being free was definitely near the top of the list.

Before leaving, she did a thorough check to make sure she didn't have any unwanted passengers on the Ghost except for her astromech, who was charging. Chopper had made more than a few friends about his size and she didn't trust any of them not to sneak on board or for Chopper to help hide them. Gratefully not finding any stowaways, Hera flew her ship up into space and towards Home One, orbiting the moon not too far way.

After landing in her usual hangar, Hera woke up Chopper and told him go to Kallus' quarters and pack all his things, which Hera knew for a fact wasn't much. A few changes of clothes and a small collection of datapads with downloaded books was about all Kallus called his own. His two prize possessions, the meteorite from the ice moon orbiting Geonosis and his bo-rifle, had been left behind when he escaped the Empire, and may have been blown up when they destroyed the Dome on Lothal, but no one knew for sure. Ever since then, he hadn't bothered to get attached to anything else.

As Hera strode through the busy corridors of the Rebel command ship that never really went to sleep, she thought about the years since Kallus had joined their family. One of the first things Zeb had managed to extract from the weary ex Imperial was his first name, because Hera hadn't wanted to call him by his last name all the time if he was going to be part of the family. Turns out Kallus hated his first name of Alexsand, as it was his grandfather's name on his mother's side as well, and they never got along. So Kallus it was, or Kal, if the mood was right, or your name was Zeb or Jacen.

His metamorphosis from stuffy Imperial to sort of laid back Rebel was gradual but if you thought about it from one year to the next, it was there. They'd gone on countless missions together before he took over the job of Director, and Hera had found his ability to actually follow a plan refreshing. (Not that the seat of the pants version of the rest of her family wasn't entertaining, but it sure gave her a few heart attacks over the years.) They'd done everything from steal supplies, to full on attacks, to undercover spy missions. Once, they'd even acted as couple, because Kanan couldn't exactly pull that off as a ghost, and while somewhat awkward, the laughs everyone had gotten out of it later at Kanan's grumbling had so been worth it.

Hera arrived at the busy office area that housed the Intelligence Division. A dozen harried looking slicers sat at computer terminals, hacking into Imperial secrets and comm channels. They didn't even spare her a glance as she passed by, except for one. Tseebo glanced up and then managed a quick smile. "Morning, General."

Hera smiled warmly at the neon yellow rodian. "Morning, Tseebo," she said before walking on.
She knocked once on the open doorframe of Kallus' semi private office before striding in and placing her hands on his desk, displeased with his appearance. If she had to guess, he hadn't gone to sleep since before the battle yesterday. His eyes were red rimmed, his hair stood on end, the lines in his face were glaringly obvious, and he looked much paler than normal. When he only glanced up at her with a half hearted raised brow in greeting, too absorbed in the stacks of datapads in front of him to do much else, Hera huffed. "KALLUS!" she said in her best General's voice, then smirked a little when he actually jumped a fraction.

Kallus focused bleary eyes on the light green twi'lek. "Yes, Hera?"

"Get up," she said commandingly. "You're coming with me."

"But the reports are flying in," Kallus protested. "I'm putting together a list of important Imperial locations to hit as soon as possible. Time is of the essence if we want to take advantage of the Emperor's demise. There's enough of a structure in place that the Imperial Army, at least, won't be leaderless for long."

Hera paused in her mission. That actually did sound rather important. "Is there anyone else who can do this?"

Kallus scrunched up his face, obviously reluctant to give up his project, but he nodded slowly. "Tseebo can. With his data implant, he's might even be faster at it."

Hers smiled a slow tooka smile. "Excellent. Now get up."

"But..."

Hera raised a brow.

Kallus gave her puppy eyes.

Hera crossed her arms and narrowed her eyes back.

Kallus sighed and stood up, huffing out a stunted, "Fine."

Hera gave him her sweetest smile. "Thank you." She turned and led the way out of the office and back into the organized chaos of computer land. Hera stopped by Tseebo's station and gave Kallus a nod in the slicer's direction.

Kallus just managed to stifle another sigh. "Tseebo?"

Tseebo looked up curiously. "Yes, boss?"

"You're in charge of THE LIST project until I get back."

Tseebo's already large eyes widened impossibly further and he blinked a couple times before a smile spread across his face. "Yes, sir! Ummm. How long will you be gone?"

Kallus raised a brow at Hera.

She smiled wider. "At least a week."

Kallus gave her a look that she ignored and Tseebo looked downright excited to be in charge for that long. If he did a good job over the next week, perhaps the Admiral would promote Tseebo to Director if Kallus didn't come back. But that was all up in the air at the moment. Kallus might not even want to stay with Zeb on a planet full of lasats. She certainly wouldn't blame him. (Just think
of the smell.)

"No problem. Tseebo will take care of everything," the rodian said confidently.

"Excellent," Hera replied and started walking out of the big room. "Come on, Kallus," she called over her shoulder when he didn't immediately follow her.

Kallus slumped a little and followed Hera, shaking his head at himself for being such a pushover. But what was he to do? Hera was essentially the head of their family unit and he'd been conditioned to follow orders from a very young age. He couldn't find it in him to tell her no. And if he was honest with himself, he looked forward to whatever holiday or mission or whatever that she had in mind. There were only so many reports you could look at before all the words started to look the same; one big blur.

Kallus caught up to her in the hallway by lengthening his strides. "Are you at least going to let me pack my things?"

Hera shook her head. "Chopper already did that for you. He should be back on the Ghost by now."

Kallus opened his mouth to protest the breach of privacy then thought better of it. It's not like he had anything exciting or confidential to pack anyway. "Thanks," was what he eventually mumbled.

Hera grinned at him, having seen the expressions crossing his face as they walked. "You're welcome. You can sleep all the way to Lothal if you want. You're officially on vacation now. Permission granted and everything."

The thought of lying horizontal for eight hours did sound amazing. "Thank you," he said, much more sincerely this time.

Hera just smiled.

Kallus was roused from his deep slumber when the Ghost dropped out of hyperspace, the shift in momentum and the change in the sound of the engines enough to trigger an instinctual wakeup call. He blinked his sleepy eyes a couple of times until they stayed open. As his brain finally caught up to the reason why he woke up, Kallus felt a surge of energy course through him. He was on vacation! And he got to spend it with most of his family! He couldn't think of a better thought to wake up to.

Kallus surged off the top bunk in his and Zeb's cabin and sped through his morning routine, not even sure what time it was on Lothal yet, but it was morning to him. He arrived in the bridge just as Hera was landing the Ghost beside the barely recognizable comm tower that contained some of his most stressful memories as Fulcrum. He was wearing his most casual outfit and the leather jacket Zeb had given him as a 'welcome to the Rebellion' present years ago and carrying his bag over his shoulder. Rumour had it there was a room with his name on it in the mansion Sabine was building, or built, whatever. Kallus was just excited to have a real room in a real house again. He'd been eight the last time he saw a room in a house he could call his own. Then he was raised in boarding schools and Army barracks. Comparing life from before to life now just hurt, so he tried not to, but it crept past his defences anyway sometimes.

Hera rose from her chair after shutting down the Ghost and smiled at Kallus. "You look much better."

Kallus raised a brow and smiled back. "I have a vague memory of my face in the mirror before falling asleep. I have to agree with you on your assessment. I think I may be getting too old to pull
all nighters two nights in a row," he said with a self deprecating shake of his head.

Hera laughed as she started climbing down the ladder to the cargo hold. "Well, the good news is that you don't look your age when you get enough sleep. You can still pass as thirty if you try," she teased as Kallus followed her down the ladder and laughed too.

"Thanks a lot, Hera. Good to know I can shave off almost twenty years just by getting a solid nap," Kallus said with a slight roll of his eyes as they walked down the ramp.

Hera grinned at him and they walked down the new path to the mansion behind the tower. Both came to a halt when the full splendour of the house was visible.

"Whoa," Kallus breathed. "Now that's a house."

Hera nodded mutely, stunned that Sabine had built something so beautiful and LARGE for them to all live in. She'd seen it in the construction stages, but it hadn't really registered just how big it was when it was just a framework of durasteel and lumber.

Inside the house, in the main living room, Jacen suddenly looked up from the board game he and Sabine were playing on the lush carpeted floor. "Mama!" he cried and bolted onto his feet and out the sliding glass doors to the courtyard in an instant with a tiny black kitten streaking in his wake.

Sabine blinked after the pair, a smile taking over her face. Hera could never surprise her son, no matter how she tried, because he always knew where she was, the same way Kanan and Ezra had always known where their family members were, back in the day. That had only disconcerted her for a month or two when Ezra had always been able to find her, back when they were little more than just tentative friends.

Sabine rose to her feet and jogged over to the big dining room where Zeb and the other lasats where gathered, playing sabacc of all things. Who knew lasats as a whole liked the game? "They're here," she said, sticking just her head in the doorway. The flurry of chaos and 'Karabasts' that ensued made her grin as she made her way back from where she came and followed the path Jacen had taken.

Jacen ran as fast as his little legs could go to his mother, who'd knelt to the ground and opened her arms as soon as she saw him. "Mama! Mama!" he called as he ran right into her arms.

Hera closed her arms around her son and hugged him tight. "Hi, baby." She rested her cheek on his soft green hair and just soaked in his little boy essence. From the energy that vibrated through him, to his familiar scent, to the warmth of his body, she would always know the feel of her son.

Jacen hugged his mama back, basking in the love that radiated from her. Eventually Jacen pulled away and turned his beaming face up to Kallus. "Uncle Kal!" he said as he jumped straight up into the man's arms.

Kallus laughed and hugged the leach that had attached itself to him before ruffling his hair. "Hey, little J. I think you grew again in the last few days. You just keep getting bigger."

Jacen grinned happily. "Great! Bigger is good. I don't like being little."

Kallus ruffled his hair again before putting him down. "Fact of life, kid. We all start out little."

Jacen pouted adorably. "Yah. I found that out." A tiny chirrup from behind Jacen made him whirl
around and held out his cupped hands. Spacey immediately jumped up into the offered platform and gave Jacen a look that clearly said he didn't appreciate being ignored. Jacen raised the kitten to his face and rubbed cheeks with him. "Sorry, buddy. But it's my mama and my uncle," he whispered to the kitten. "I missed them."

Spacey blinked, and thought acceptance through their quickly developing bond.

Jacen turned around again and held the kitten up proudly for the people in question to look at. "This is Spacey. He's VERY smart."

Hera and Kallus were in the process of appropriately admiring the black and white lothcat kitten with the ethereal silver eyes when it clearly nodded twice in response to Jacen's statement. She blinked at it and then looked at Kallus. "Did you see that?"

Kallus nodded slowly, eyes wide. "Yes. I did. First the lothwolves and now a sentient lothcat. This planet is NOT normal."

Sabine joined them at that point, overhearing Kallus' statement. "No. It's not. But it's home."

Hera smiled at Sabine in greeting. "Yes, it is." She wrapped an arm around Jacen's shoulders and hugged him into her side. The kitten jumped up onto her flight suit and climbed up to her shoulder and started purring. Hera looked sideways at the kitten in surprise and then felt the most soothing wave of peace and acceptance flow through her. With her other hand, she stroked a tentative finger over its little body and it purred louder and the sense of peace increased. Okay. There was no question about it now. The kitten was definitely part of her family now. She looked down at Jacen and said the words she never thought she would. "I like him too."

Then Hera looked back at Sabine and did a double take at the lime green hair, not having seen the real colour through a hologram over the last few comm calls. "Change it," was all but growled with a disapproving frown. It was enough to make Sabine, Jacen, and a just arriving Zeb crack up into peals of laughter.

Kallus grinned a greeting at Zeb when he stopped chuckling. Zeb clapped him on the back in their standard macho welcome. Then without a word of explanation from his friend, he found himself pushed right through what looked like a very nice house all the way to the back courtyard and past that to another ship of a design that he didn't recognize. The rest of his family trailed behind with grins on their faces that Kallus absolutely did not like the looks of. He planted his feet and stopped the forward momentum. "Alright, Garazeb," he said in a warning tone. "Explain."

Zeb started pushing Kallus again, his boots sort of skidding on the grass. "We're going on a vacation. Just you and me."

Kallus was all right with that, but he didn't like the subterfuge. "Where?" he demanded as his boots hit the edge of the ramp, giving him enough grip to stop the forward movement again.

Zeb rubbed the back of his head and looked at the ground. He really sucked at lying and Kallus could always tell when he did, so that wasn't an option. Zeb went for the truth as best as he could. "I can't tell you, Kal. It's a surprise."

Kallus studied his friend, noting the laid down ears and the pleading in his big lime green eyes. He didn't have the heart to tell him no. "Alright, Zeb. Let's go to your surprise location."

Zeb lit up immediately and jumped past Kallus to a higher point on the ramp, almost vibrating with excitement. "Great! Let's go!"
Kallus looked back at Hera, Sabine, and Jacen, who still had dopey smirks on their faces. "Aren't you going to say goodbye to the others?"

"Oh, right!" Zeb exclaimed, before jumping back down.

Zeb grabbed all three in a massive hug, lifting all their feet off the ground for a minute. "I'll miss you guys," he whispered so Kallus couldn't hear.

When Hera had her feet back on the ground, she cupped Zeb's face in her hands. "You promise to come visit, alright?" she whispered back, staring directly into his eyes.

Zeb nodded, then cleared his throat to fight back the sudden onslaught of emotion. "I'll comm you after we get there," he said in a normal voice. Zeb exchanged one last look with the suddenly sad eyes of his Ghost family before he turned and plastered a happy smile back on his face for Kallus' benefit. "Right. Goodbyes done. Now let's go."

Kallus gave Zeb an odd look for the overly emotional looking goodbye for a simple week long vacation but decided not to comment. Kallus waved goodbye to the Spectres staying behind and walked up the ramp of the strange ship behind Zeb.

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The flight through hyperspace to wherever they were going took about six hours, during which time Kallus and Zeb played dejarik and sabacc and watched one of their favourite holomovies for the eleventh time. After Kallus told Zeb about the space battle over Endor and how many TIEs he'd taken out, they just spent the time talking about everything and nothing, all the while, Kallus was trying to subtly get Zeb to say something about where they were going. But Zeb was being amazingly clever and didn't let a single hint drop, which Kallus found somewhat frustrating. He also tried to extract where Zeb had gotten the new ship from, but the lasat was being tightlipped about that as well.

Thankfully, the journey came to an end so Kallus could finally get some answers.

Zeb was sitting in the pilot's chair when the ship dropped out of hyperspace in front of a very familiar imploded star cluster.

Kallus gawked at the equivalent of space suicide as Zeb pointed their ship directly towards it and typed in some more coordinates into the nav computer. "Zeeeeeeb. Why are we here?"

Zeb grinned as the lasat crafted ship jumped into hyperspace right into the imploding stars, the special shields crackling around the hull and keeping them from blowing up. "You remember when you chased us into here?"

Kallus glanced at Zeb then went back to staring at the rainbow view. He suddenly realized he'd seen something just like this in a more than one of Sabine's paintings. Now he knew where she got the inspiration. "What did you find?"

Zeb glanced at the nav computer readout. "I'll tell you in seven minutes."
Kallus glared at Zeb but just got an obstinate look back, so he sighed and slouched in his chair, copying Zeb's cross-armed stance and watched the view some more in sulking silence. He was pretty sure he could get hypnotized if he watched it long enough.

Just before the seven minutes were up, Zeb addressed his friend. "Kal, can you go stand facing away from the windows and close your eyes?"

"Seriously?" Kallus asked incredulously.

"Please?" Zeb pleaded. He'd had this moment planned in his mind for what felt like eons. He wanted it to be perfect.

Kallus huffed out an, "Alright," and did as asked, not believing he was actually facing the back wall with his eyes closed. He felt ridiculous.

Zeb pressed a button on his commlink, letting Zek know it was time. He dropped the ship out of hyperspace at the far edge of the star cluster where one healthy star shone brightly and a single planet orbited it faithfully, despite the odds against it. He stopped the ship with the sun and the planet in perfect view and stood up. Walking tentatively over to Kallus, he touched him on the shoulder. "Kal? We're here." He put his paw over Kallus' eyes and turned him around so the view was just right. Zeb sucked in a big breath for courage and took his hand off Kallus' eyes. "This is Lira San, the homeworld of the lasat."

Kallus stared at the planet in disbelief that it could exist inside a star cluster, before he registered what Zeb said. He looked at his friend in shock. "You mean...?" he could barely speak.

Zeb nodded. "Yes, Kal. A whole planet of lasats. You didn't wipe us all out."

Kallus felt like he might actually cry. He blinked rapidly to stave off the onslaught. And then the bridge door opened and he saw four more lasats. Two, he recognized as the ones the Ghost crew had rescued on that fateful day so many years ago, but the other two... why did one of them look just like Zeb?

The other lasats came into the bridge as well and Zeb introduced Kallus to everyone. "Kallus, this is Chava, our wise woman, or resident Force user to put it in terms you're familiar with, and this is Gron, a retired Honor Guardsman turned scholar." He pointed to the beige and brown striped one next. "This is Rolanej Zanolios, the last surviving member of the royal family from Lasan. His personal Guardsman evacuated him from the planet at the first sign of Imperial hostility. He was just a kit then."

Nej grinned and shook the hand of the stunned Kallus.

Zeb continued on, saving the best for last. "And this... This is my little brother, Frezek, or Zek for short. Chava just found Nej and Zek on an isolated planet, hiding from the Empire, and now we're all going home."

Kallus barely registered shaking the hand of Zeb's brother, because he was still shocked at the resemblance between the two. Then he whipped his head to the side to look at Zeb. "What a minute. What do you mean WE are all going home?"

Zeb looked at Kallus with almost desperate hope in his eyes. "I'm moving to Lira San to be with my brother."

Kallus kind of sagged at the news. "I see."
"But," Zeb continued. "I was hoping you would move with me."

Kallus stopped breathing for a moment as he looked from one lasat face to another, all of whom were looking at him expectantly, with zero accusation for who he was or used to be. They were just patiently waiting to see his response. As air returned to his lungs, he felt like his whole soul had just expanded and his heart filled with joy. "Yes, Zeb. Yes."
Ahsoka's Revelations

A/N: I'll probably add a lemon to this someday when I feel inclined to do so. :P

Ahsoka's Revelations:

D228/4 ABY, Still flying around somewhere.

Ahsoka had waited very patiently (for the most part) for her fertility cycle to circle back around. This morning she'd woken up to the familiar mating urge that had once been annoying when she was single, and a downright nightmare when she was a Jedi teenager and was nowhere near Lux while fighting a needless war. Now that she had Lux back, the mating urge just made things more fun for a couple days.

They'd spent the whole day going at it like bunnies, like usual during this time. Now Lux was passed out on the bed, looking adorable in his sleep. Ahsoka was using his chest as a pillow and all the real pillows were under her rear end, keeping her hips tilted upwards so Lux's precious essence would stay where she needed it, deep inside. Ahsoka's eyes were closed, and to the casual observer, she looked just as asleep as Lux, but in reality, she was inside herself with the Force, taking her healing skills to a whole new level as she convinced one of her eggs to accept the foreign sperm. Before the egg would even consider it, Ahsoka had to change the DNA within to something that more closely resembled Lux's human DNA. It only required a tiny tweak or two, but it was a very exacting process. She didn't want her baby to turn out to be all human if she could help it. She still had an image of a little girl with her montrals and lekku and Lux's eyes and skin in her mind that she'd kind of set her heart on.

She was grateful for the hours she'd spent over the last month studying human and togrutan DNA on the computer. They'd flown back to known space to download the data she'd needed and had also visited Lothal long enough to find out that Jacen was a Force Finder and that he'd confirmed they were searching in the right direction, making both Ahsoka and Lux very happy they hadn't been wasting their time going the wrong way. Hera hadn't exactly been excited to find out that her son would have the ability to find more Force sensitives when he got stronger, but Ahsoka, Kanan, and Ezra thought it was great. Finders used to travel the galaxy for the Jedi Council, seeking out new Force sensitive infants and adding them to the list of Jedi candidates.

Jacen loved the idea of flying around the galaxy very much and begged his mother to please please please let them do so. Ahsoka had smirked ever so slightly as Hera had come around to the idea when the wheels started turning in her mind. After only two days of being 'retired' Hera was already getting restless. She'd quickly come up with the idea of running freight as a cover, since she did own a freighter. The idea had taken off and SynSon Shipping was born.

Ahsoka got her mind back on topic and nudged a frantically swimming around sperm in the direction of her modified egg and mentally grinned in triumph when the egg accepted the little swimmer. She stayed in her meditative state, carefully watching the egg for a couple of hours in amazement as instant changes could be seen on the molecular level.

Reassured that everything seemed to be working the way it should, Ahsoka finally moved. She turned over and pressed a soft kiss to Lux's mouth, making him smile in his sleep, before she got up and made for the refresher, excitement bubbling through her.
Lux rolled over in his sleep, arm reaching for Ahsoka's warm body, wanting to pull her close, but came up empty. Squinting his eyes open, he peered around the bed and found no gorgeous togruta in sight. Groaning slightly in disappointment, he heaved himself off the bed and made for the refresher, hearing the shower running. Lux grinned a little to himself and entered the refresher. He made use of the facilities and then opened the shower door and joined his wife.

Ahsoka turned around when she felt Lux enter the shower and more or less jumped on him with a happy squeal. "It worked, Luxi! It worked!" she said, plastering her wet body to his temporarily dry one and wrapping her arms around his neck.

Lux blinked at Ahsoka for a couple seconds before her words registered. Lux whooped and wrapped his arms around her tightly before fusing their mouths together in a long passionate kiss.

Pulling back a fraction, they stared into each other's eyes in amazed wonder. Something they never thought would happen was actually a reality now. They were going to be parents.

The next morning Ahsoka was meditating on the floor of the bridge while Lux was piloting the shuttle. Her eyes opened in surprise and she stared down at her stomach in shock at the suddenly distinct new life Force she felt coming from within her. A little gasp escaped her and she put a hand on her stomach in amazement. She'd been sure yesterday but now... Now she was just in awe.

"Lux," she said softly to the man who'd already turned around curiously at her gasp. "I can feel her, Lux."

Lux evacuated his chair in an instant and knelt beside her on the mat, placing his hand over hers. Ahsoka looked into his misty grey eyes and they pressed their foreheads together, the silence speaking everything that didn't really need to be said.

Ahsoka closed her eyes as they held the back of each other's heads with trembling hands, her eyes stinging at the beautiful wonder of it. And then her mind started thinking a hundred lightyears a second. First of all, she was ecstatically happy. There was just one tiny problem: If she didn't find Ezra within the next ten or so months, she was going to have to give up. Ahsoka refused to raise her baby on a small shuttle searching endlessly for Ezra. It was time for a new approach to the finding Ezra problem and she was determined to think it through logically until the answer finally came to her.

She thought about asking Anakin or Obi-Wan for help, but decided against it, thinking that if they could have helped her, surely they would have by now? She thought about borrowing Kanan, since he had a connection to Ezra, but she just couldn't do that to Hera. She cringed as she thought about hijacking Jacen. With his Finder talent, he could get them to Ezra in the fastest time possible, but again, couldn't do that to Hera. He was too young for that kind of responsibility anyway. Who else could possibly find Ezra faster than what she was doing right now?

Ahsoka mentally face palmed when the answer came to her. She cursed herself upside and down for not thinking of this years ago; everyone would have been so much happier if she had.

Heaving a sigh, Ahsoka opened her eyes. Lux's eyes popped open as well and he looked at her scrunch up face in consternation. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Ahsoka leaned back a little. "I'm such an idiot. Turn this shuttle around, babe. We're going to get Sabine to find Ezra."

Lux raised his brows in surprise. "And this change of plan occurred because...?"
Ahsoka smiled slightly and kissed him. "Because we are going to be parents and I want off this ship."

Lux laughed and kissed her again. "You won't get any argument from me on that one, my love."

The moment their ship was within comm range, Ahsoka called Sabine and told her to be ready for a pickup. Sabine was understandably confused until Ahsoka outlined her plan and then Sabine did her own face palm for not thinking of this herself. She just knew that Ezra was going to be the worst of them as soon he realized how simple this could have been. So many years wasted. Oh well, there was nothing they could do now but move on.
Ezrabine's Reunion: 

D230/4 ABY, Lothal

Sabine only had a few hours to prepare for Ahsoka's arrival. The togrutan was apparently in a hurry, and didn't want to linger on Lothal any longer than necessary, but wouldn't say why. There wasn't anyone here for her and Lux to visit right now anyway. Hera and Jacen were off on their first official shipping run, making real credits. Zeb and Kallus were still on Lira San, but promised to come back as soon as she knew exactly when she was getting home with Ezra. And Rex was still with the Rebellion, enjoying his recent promotion to General.

With instructions to meet her in the city, Sabine closed up the Tower and Spectre House after packing a small bag for herself. She commed everyone who needed to know that she was going to be gone for an unknown amount of time, then she ran into the city to do some quick shopping. When she was finished, she glanced at the time and snorted at herself. Turns out she was too quick at shopping and had another hour to spare before Ahsoka would get here.

She was sitting in Kanan's Park, sipping a cup of chococaf, when she realized she forgot to pack Ezra's lightsabre. How, she didn't know. She took it with her automatically whenever she went off planet because she just couldn't bear to be parted from it. Muttering swear words at herself in various languages, Sabine made the trip back to the tower on her speeder bike, packages tucked under the seat.

She jumped off the bike and unlocked the door, zipping up to the apartment in the elevator. Walking briskly to the bedroom, she grabbed the lightsabre off the bedside table and put it in her bag with an eye roll at herself. She checked the time again on her mini wrist computer and saw she still had twenty minutes so she went out to the balcony.

Sabine rested her chin on her crossed arms on the railing of Ezra's tower, her home for the last four years. Her gaze looked towards the now beautiful, and much expanded, Capital City of Lothal, but she wasn't really seeing it. Instead her mind replayed for the millionth time some of the last memories she had of Ezra as something other than a spirit projection. Memories of the last time she held him. The last time she saw the brilliant gem blue of his eyes in perfect clarity.

It had been more than five years since he left her behind. Five incredibly long years. Sometimes it was hard to believe that he'd been gone longer than he'd been a part of the Ghost crew. The Spectres were currently scattered all over the galaxy, but not for long. Soon, they would all be gathered back on Lothal where they belonged. Back where they had first met the boy who had changed all of their lives. But hers most of all. Not that he could be considered a boy anymore. He'd grown into the perfect man. Strong and sweet. Honourable and kind. Gorgeous and giving, almost to a fault. And best of all; hers.

Sabine needed him back more than she would admit, but for now she made do with her memories, even if they were the worst kind of bittersweet.

Ten minutes later, she was drawn from her memories by a familiar ship flying overhead slightly earlier than predicted. Her heart gave a little stutter of excitement. It was time. Time to go find Ezra. She ran into the tower and grabbed her bag, before dashing down the stairs. She jumped on her air bike and raced towards the city with a couple of lothwolves bounding playfully behind her. Her faithful guardians.
Arriving in the city, she made for where she had painted her mural of her Ghost family. With a wistful goodbye to the mural, she touched Ezra's painted face. 'I'm coming for you, Ez'ika, wherever you are,' she thought. The flame of hope that had burned in her heart for years grew just a little bigger.

With a last glance at her Ghost family, she turned to where Ahsoka was standing, waiting for her, and walked towards her destiny.

Ahsoka and Lux restocked and refuelled the shuttle as soon as they landed on Lothal, and then went to get Sabine. They found her communing with the mural of the Ghost family Sabine had painted that made Ahsoka get a little misty eyed every time she saw it. The girls boarded the shuttle and they flew up into space, immediately jumping into lightspeed.

Ezra appeared beside Sabine at his usual time about an hour later, only mildly surprised at the new location, until he glanced out the window and saw they were moving at a very rapid pace. He wrapped an arm around Sabine's shoulders and kissed her cheek in greeting, then looked at Ahsoka and Lux with curiosity. "This is a pleasant surprise. Where are we going?"

Ahsoka and Lux grinned. "We're coming to get you," Ahsoka said.

Ezra blinked at them then looked at Sabine. She nodded with an equally large grin and shining eyes, confirming the statement. "What? How?" he asked in shock.

Ahsoka explained. "We're going to use your bond with Sabine and your bond to your own body as a compass. I'm tired of wandering back and forth across space. It's time to get a lot more focused in our search. And I'm going to be a mother, so my patience for this search just ran incredibly thin."

Ezra and Sabine gawked at Ahsoka for the little bomb at the end of her speech, quickly giving her hugs and congratulations and a back slap and a friendly punch for a dorkily grinning Lux, but Ezra's mind quickly went back to the beginning of what she said. Use him as a compass? Why hadn't he thought of that sooner? Like, years sooner? Ezra groaned and buried his face in his hands as he tried to hide the mortification at his own stupidity.

Sabine rubbed his back soothingly, long used to the tingly feeling that came with touching him, but still enjoying it. "It's okay, babe. None of us thought of it until Ahsoka did yesterday. It's all of our faults. You can't blame yourself for this."

Ezra looked up and sighed. "Yes, I can, but if you guys want to share the blame, I won't stop you," he said with a hint of his usual good humour. He looked back at Ahsoka. "Thank you for searching for so long, and coming up with a perfect solution. I think I'm as ready as the rest of you for this to finally be over."

In the end, it took two weeks before Ahsoka's shuttle finally made it to Cerulia. They hyperspaced as far as Ahsoka had charted, which took twenty hours to get to and then Ezra guided them from there during the two hours that he spent projecting his form twice a day. Hyperspace wise, Ahsoka had actually been only four more hours away. Travelling in fits and bursts, it took the better part of twenty days. Still, everyone considered it a win when the blue planet finally appeared in their sight.

Ezra guided them down to the beach below his village and then disappeared with one last knowing look exchanged with Sabine. The second he was back in his body, grateful it was the morning cycle and not the night cycle, he dashed up and ran out of the house, followed by an almost as
The ramp lowered and Sabine was the first one to come out at a run. She borrowed a move from Jacen and launched herself at the dark blue haired man running towards her. Ezra caught her easily as she wrapped her legs around his waist, wanting to hold his REAL form with everything she had. She even got her fingers buried in his soft long hair and held his head in fear that he might disappear again. Ezra held her back just as hard, arms almost crushing the air out of her, but neither cared. Their mouths crashed together, kissing frantically, not caring about the gathering audience at all.

Ezra almost felt faint with how much the tactile reality of touching Sabine made him feel. It had been so LONG. Her taste was amazing. Her scent was wondrous. Her body felt like heaven in his arms. And somehow, as he pulled back and drank in her features, she was even more beautiful.

Ezra ran her fingers all over Ezra's face, taking in how much he'd changed in the last five years. Yes, she'd been living with his projection, but a person's mental image of themselves is never the same as reality. In her opinion, Ezra hadn't done himself justice. He was even more handsome then he'd been showing her. And his eyes... The electric royal blue colour just wasn't the same in a projection as real life. She'd missed those eyes. So much. "Ezra," she breathed.

And then they were lost in kisses again.

On the Chimaera, Eli walked into Thrawn's office after knocking once, not worried about whether he'd be welcome or not after so many years together.

Thrawn glanced up from the datapad he was studying of the enemy's attack patterns. "Yes, Eli?"

Eli stopped in front of Thrawn's desk with his hands placed neatly behind his back. "We've just received a report that a ship has passed near a sensor placed about two hours from here. From the readouts, it's a normal ship and not one of the Yuuzhan Vong's biological ships. Do you want to send someone to investigate?"

Thrawn looked thoughtful for a moment. "Which sensor was it exactly and its location?" Eli rattled off the details and Thrawn settled back into his chair with a smile playing across his lips. By his calculations, that sensor was in the approximate vicinity of where Bridger had left him in hyperspace. He met Eli's curious eyes with triumph in his own. "Set a course for that sensor. We're going to check out that area ourselves."

"Consider it done," Eli said before leaving the office and aiming for the bridge at a brisk walk.

Thrawn steepled his fingers and stared out into space through the transparisteel window until the streaks of hyperspace took over the view. He had some unfinished business with Bridger that he'd been waiting years to conclude. With any luck at all, this would pan out the way he hoped.

Ahsoka and Lux exited their shuttle at a much more sedate pace, both of them grinning fondly at the display that Ezra and Sabine were putting on. Ahsoka reached for Lux's hand as they came to a stop on the fine sand of the beach, giving him a loving look as their fingers intertwined. She couldn't imagine living the same half marriage with Lux that the younger couple had been doing for five years. The fortitude the two had shown to stick with it so long was admirable.

One of the cerulians who had followed Ezra walked up to Ahsoka and Lux, sticking out a hand for shaking. "Hi. You must be Ahsoka and Lux," the hybrid said cheerfully. "I'm Link."
Ahsoka smiled at the man with the spiky tentacles and the human eyes warmly, grasping the offered hand and feeling how the Force hummed in him. "I guessed as much. Ezra's told us everything about all of you, many times. He's going to miss seeing you all every day."

Link glanced at the locked together couple with a smirk. "I don't think he's going to miss us too much."

Ahsoka and Lux laughed, as did most of the other people who were gathering on the beach.

While Sabine and Ezra were otherwise occupied, getting amused looks from everyone who saw them, Ahsoka and Lux were surrounded by people eager to meet Ezra's friends. And more arrived out of the ocean every minute until the whole beach was covered in ceruliens, some with Kyber swords strapped to their backs. Ahsoka happily tried to remember all of their names but gave up after awhile, overwhelmed by the sheer number of Force sensitives in one place, all more or less trained as Jedi. The sheer presence of the Force on this planet was mind boggling, both in its people and in the very being of the planet itself. It felt amazing to be surrounded by it.

Two sets of couples hung back from the swarm, waiting for Ezra to surface from the wonder of his wife, so that they could meet and talk to the otherworlders with Ezra present. After a good ten minutes had passed and Ezra was still lip locked to Sabine, Wayve rolled his eyes and gave Ezra a mental nudge. And then a not so subtle nudge when he was ignored. "Ezra! You can enjoy yourself later. You're making a spectacle of yourself!"

Ezra pulled back from Sabine's sweet mouth with a gasp and looked around at the hundreds of people around them. "Kriff," he muttered between panting breaths, face turning bright red in embarrassment. "Sorry, Wayve," he thought, receiving an amused chuckle in his mind.

Sabine sucked in air, kind of shocked that she'd gotten so lost in passion. But it felt so amazing, she just couldn't help herself. Ezra held her easily and kissed like a dream. Real kisses were so much better than what they'd been doing, it didn't even compare. It was wetter, hotter, sweeter, and a whole lot more er's she couldn't even think of right now. When a female cerulian standing near them chuckled and gave her a wink, Sabine blinked in confusion and then blushed beet red, remembering that Ezra said these people were extremely telepathic. She mentally swore at herself and put up the mental shields that Ezra had been teaching her over the years, knowing she'd inevitably meet a cerulian one day. Neither of them had thought it would be what looked like the whole planet at once though. The beach was full and there was even more people standing in the shallow water of the ocean.

She sighed and met Ezra's eyes as they exchanged a rueful glance. He kissed her on the forehead and let her slide down to the sand, but not taking his hands off her waist. She left her hands on his chest too, not wanting to lose contact with him. Once she'd regained the ability to stand on her own, Sabine looked up at Ezra and blinked a couple times. "Babe, you've been holding out on me."

Ezra tilted his head to the side curiously, hands caressing her sides like he couldn't help himself. "What?"

"You're taller in real life than you've been showing me," Sabine said, half teasing and half accusing.

Ezra glanced down at himself in surprise and then registered that the top of her head only came up to his collar bone now. "Holy Force! I had no idea!" he exclaimed, setting Sabine and the whole beach into laughter.

Sabine eventually stopped giggling and looked up at him. "Well, I hope you're done. You get any
taller and I'm going to need a ladder to kiss you.”

Ezra bent down, and kissed her quickly to demonstrate that ladders weren't necessary, much to the crowd's amusement.

"Don't get started again," Raign's wry voice said in both their minds.

Sabine looked around in surprise. "Which one of you said that?"

Raign raised a guilty hand with a grin as he walked up beside Ezra and Sabine with Krystal at his side, carrying Skye, and his grandparents right behind. "I did," he thought. He grasped Sabine's hand gently with his free hand and raised it to his lips. "Prince Raign, at your service, my Lady."

Sabine shot a look at Ezra. "Your best friend is rather smooth, Ez'ika. I think I know where you've been taking your romance lessons from," she teased.

Ezra grinned. "I hope it was worth it."

Sabine grinned back. "You know it was."

Ahsoka, Lux, and Link walked through the crowd and joined the core group. Ezra made all of the necessary introductions, Ahsoka and Lux appropriately respectful of the ruling couple, King Wayve and Master Tia.

Ahsoka studied the old, but didn't look it, nautolan Jedi Master, a sense of familiarity setting off chimes in her mind. "Wait. Did you say your name was Tia Fisto?"

Master Tia nodded. "Yes. Why?"

"I knew a Kit Fisto once. He was a great Jedi Master and a very skilled fighter," Ahsoka said, voice wistful for the old days.

Tia looked surprised and then smiled sadly. "I had a little brother whose name was Kit. He had just arrived at the Temple for training when my Master and I embarked on our mission. I never saw him as more than a three year old toddler."

"Oh, that's sad," Ahsoka said.

Wayve stepped forward. "If I may, I can show my wife your memories of her brother," he thought to Ahsoka.

Ahsoka nodded in agreement and opened her mind, thinking of every time she'd seen Master Fisto as a youngling and a padawan that she could remember. These included council meetings, battles, lessons, and even just meeting in the halls of the Temple and saying good morning.

Tia smiled sweetly, tears coming to her big eyes as the memories were transferred to her. She looked at Ahsoka gratefully when it was done. "Thank you very much," she said softly. Tia visibly pulled herself together and smiled brightly. "Right. We've been preparing a lovely breakfast for your arrival. Do come with us and enjoy our humble feast." She gestured in the direction of the village.

Ahsoka bowed slightly. "We would love to. Thank you."

As the small group walked towards the large circular building, the majority of the rest of the crowd dispersed to go back about their daily lives, only a few dozen more joining the party. Link fell in
beside Ezra, his eyes twinkling as he said, "You didn't tell me togrutans were so beautiful. You're mental image of Ahsoka doesn't do her justice. I might just have to go find one of my own now." he joked.

Ahsoka felt her face heat at the praise while Lux glared warningly at Link, only slightly joking.

Ezra looked over at Ahsoka and grinned. "I suppose she is gorgeous, I just never studied her that closely. She's like an older sister or an aunt or something to me." He changed his gaze to Link. "If you ever do leave the planet and find yourself a togrutan, you'll have to consider yourself blessed. The togrutan and the twi'lek females are considered to be the two most desirable races in the galaxy."

"Hey," Sabine said in joking offence. "What am I?"

Ezra looked at her adoringly. "Perfection."

Sabine beamed at him and rose on her tip toes to kiss his cheek in appreciation as they walked. "You have somehow learnt how to say all the right things, Ezra Wren-Bridger."

Ezra shrugged and grinned good naturedly. "As Kanan once said, I can be taught." Ezra's eyes turned wistful. "I wish he could be here too, but he spends all of his time with Hera and Jacen whenever he's not in the Force Afterlife. I doubt very much he'd come to see me home."

"Have you such little faith in me then, my Padawan who's really not a padawan anymore?" Kanan's voice said laughingly behind Ezra.

Ezra spun and threw his arms around Kanan, now on the other side of the credit and feeling how strange it was to hug someone who wasn't one hundred percent there. "Kanan! You're the best!"

Kanan held Ezra's broad shoulders for a moment and grinned at him. "Of course I am. I couldn't miss this moment."

Sabine and Ahsoka gave equal sighs of pleasure at the sight of the two men reunited. Ezra was all grown up and only a centimetre or so shorter than Kanan now, and Kanan looked as young and perfect as he used to before Malachor. They actually appeared to be similar in age now as opposed to young teenager and a twenty something man they used to be when Ahsoka first met them. They'd had so many years of preserved food that kept well for a long time that fresh stuff like this was definitely a treat.

The group filed into the village community hall where tables were laden with huge bowls of sliced fruit, meats, nuts, berries, and platters of smoked fish. Lux looked around in awe at all the fresh food, mouth watering. "You weren't kidding when you said it was a feast," he said to no one in particular.

Master Tia chuckled lightly. "Help yourself, Lux."

Lux rushed to a table and picked up an empty plate from a stack. "Don't mind if I do."

Ahsoka laughed at her husband's eagerness but she wasn't far behind him and grabbing her own plate, just in a slightly more dignified manner. They'd had so many years of preserved food that kept well for a long time that fresh stuff like this was definitely a treat.

Ezra and Sabine filled plates for themselves and found an empty space at a table and sat as close to each other as they could manage without her actually sitting in his lap. Kanan parked himself on the other side of Ezra and the rest of Ezra's friends filled the rest of the table.
Ahsoka ended up sitting beside Krystal, who had Skye in her lap and was feeding the baby tiny bites off her own plate as she ate. Ahsoka closed her eyes for a moment and felt the connection she had with her own baby growing inside her, a sweet smile crossing her face.

Krystal smiled at her knowingly. "How far are you?"

Ahsoka looked at her, surprised, then realized she really shouldn't be. The people on this planet were the most connected to each other and the Force you could possibly get. "Less than a month." She admired the red haired baby, thinking it was absolutely adorable. "How old is Skye?"

Krystal looked at her baby proudly. "Eight months." The equally red haired young woman looked at Ahsoka with a raised brow. "You want to hold her?"

Ahsoka nodded eagerly and held out her arms. A warm bundle of baby was placed in them carefully and she cuddled her close, getting lost in the large black eyes as they stared at each other curiously. Ahsoka blinked and breathed out a startled, "Oh!" as a connection was made between them from the Force. It felt like... It felt...

Lux looked over at Ahsoka and smiled to see her looking so perfect with a baby in her arms, impatient to see her holding their own. Then he noticed the stunned expression on Ahsoka's face. "What is it, Soka?" he asked in concern.

Ahsoka looked up at Lux and then over at Krystal and Raign, who were both looking at her with concerned expressions as well. "I think she's meant to be my padawan," she said softly, a little in awe at the prospect. "I feel a connection to her, just like the one I have with my Master. It's beautiful."

Raign and Krystal looked at each other and then beamed a smile at Ahsoka. "That's wonderful!" Krystal gushed. "A true padawan bond is so rare. We're very happy that Skye will have a real Master and not just a teacher like most of us get. I was lucky and formed a bond with Master Tia, and now I have my own padawan too, but Raign has never met a youngling that felt right, so he's never taught a padawan, which is the case for most of us."

"But I can't just leave her now," Ahsoka said, almost desperately. "Especially with one so young. She'd never understand why I live so far away."

"Then we'll stay here," Lux said suddenly.

Ahsoka looked at him with wide eyes, still holding the baby tenderly. "What?"

Lux smiled softly. "If your padawan is here, then we'll stay here. I don't mind. You said you wanted to train younglings in the way of the Force. What better location than an entire planet of Force sensitives?" He shrugged slightly and grinned. "Besides, I like it here, and we haven't built a house on Lothal yet. There's nothing stopping us from making Cerulia our home base. It's not that far from the rest of the galaxy that we can't travel back and forth."

Ahsoka handed Krystal her child back and threw her arms around Lux, kissing his cheek with enthusiasm. "I love you, Luxi."

Lux captured her chin with a finger and kissed her softly, grey eyes smiling into sky blue. "Love you too, Soka."

Ahsoka smiled into his loving eyes for a minute before realizing they were getting awfully presumptuous. She turned to the cerulians with an apologetic look. "Forgive us for not even asking first. Do you even want us here?"
Krystal, Raign, Wayve, and Tia all nodded with wide smiles. "Of course you're welcome to live here. The Master of my great-grandchild will always have a home with us," Wayve thought so the whole circle could hear.

Ahsoka looked at Ezra. "Are you okay with this?"

Ezra looked a little sad, but smiled nonetheless. "Of course I am, Ahsoka. I would never ask you to stay on Lothal if you'd rather be somewhere else."

Raign cut into the conversation. "Actually, Ezra. Krystal and I had already talked about it and were going to surprised you. We hated the idea of only seeing you once or twice a year from now on, so we thought we could perhaps live on your planet half the year and our planet half the year, switching every three months or so. Ahsoka and Lux could follow the same pattern if they wished," he thought at everyone relevant hopefully.

Ezra beamed at his second best friend. "That sounds perfect, Raign." He looked at Ahsoka and Lux with a raised brow. "What do you think?"

Ahsoka and Lux looked at each other, having an instant silent conversation even without the ability to mind speak, and grinned at everyone. "We think it's perfect too," Ahsoka said.


The group chuckled and did as ordered, while the rest of the people in the room smiled at each other over the quickly spreading news that the newcomers would be staying half the year. There was a quiet murmur in the room, but most of the communicating was done mentally.

As Ezra was finishing his breakfast, he realized he was finally going home. He sighed at the thought. Lothal. Home. He'd be home in another day or so. It was hard to believe.

Sabine somehow snuggled a little closer to Ezra's side, seeing the nostalgia on his face. He looked down at her and smiled in appreciation, kissing her nose affectionately as he wrapped an arm around her shoulders. He picked up the perfect red berry he'd saved for her, that was his favourite from this planet, and offered it to her.

Sabine took the berry from his fingers delicately, touching the tip of her tongue to his thumb on purpose. She was rewarding by the dilating of his pupils and the look of utter desire he gave her.

"Soon, cyar'ika," he whispered in her ear as his finger traced the line of her jaw. "Very soon."

Sabine swallowed the sweet berry with a gulp and smiled in anticipation.

After everyone finished their feast of a breakfast, they sat around talking for a while, figuring things out. Skye spent at least half of that time in Ahsoka's arms because the infant kept asking to go see her with outstretched arms, clearly fascinated by the new person in her life that just felt right. She seemed to love her lekku too, little fingers unable to leave the white and blue stripped head tails alone. Ahsoka just smiled in equal infatuation with the little girl, still amazed that she was destined to be this ones Master.

Based on this alone, it was decided that Ahsoka and Lux would stay on Cerulia right away. Ezra and Sabine would take the shuttle back to the Lothal, round up Hera, Jacen, and anyone else who wanted to see Cerulia, and bring back a loaded Ghost full of supplies so Ahsoka and Lux could build their own home here. Whenever they were on Lothal, Ahsoka, Lux, and Raign's family
would stay in Spectre House or the Tower, whatever worked at the time. Sabine had built a massive house, and there weren't actually a whole lot of people who were going to be living in it anymore on a regular basis. At least not yet.

The core group rose and made for the beach again. They paused at Ezra and Link's quaint metal home so Ezra could gather up his few possessions. Sabine and Ezra went inside while everyone else waited outside.

Link glanced at the people around him with a twinkle in his eyes. "Anyone care to take any bets on how long it will take for them to come back out?"

The group laughed as a whole and the timeframes started flying. There were suggestions of everything from five minutes to an hour from Lux, which caused even more laughter.

Ezra's lips quirked up in a smile as he tossed the last few things he hadn't already packed into a bag while Sabine sat on his bed just watching him with hungry eyes.

"What's funny?" she asked.

Ezra picked up a large amber coloured sword, that she couldn't help but notice was the same colour as her eyes, and settled it into the sheath across his back. "Kanan just told me they're taking bets on how long it will take us to come back out." He stalked towards her with a gleam in his blue eyes. "You want to help Kanan win the bet? We have three minutes left to kill."

Sabine could only nod once before he was on her, mouth fused to hers and arms caging her body as they kissed like they were starving for each other. Sabine grabbed handfuls of his shaggy midnight blue hair and held on for dear life, instantly lost in the passion.

Ezra pulled back with a groan of mortification when he heard a very distinct rumble of laughter from multiple sources in his mind. Kriff. He'd forgotten his shields like a youngling. He slammed his shields closed and kissed his wife again, but this time slow and sweet, then he pulled her up onto her feet. "Come on, cyar'ika. We better go before we never do."

Sabine gave the bed a longing glance. "Right now, babe, I don't think I'd mind that."

Ezra pulled her from the room with their intertwined fingers, carrying his bag in the other. "Trust me, Sabine. You'd mind. They all know exactly what we were doing."

Sabine blushed a little but then decided she didn't care. It's not like they hadn't already seen them making out for a good ten or fifteen minutes earlier.

Ezra and Sabine walked out of the house exactly five minutes after they went in, winning the bet for Kanan. Ezra grinned at his Master when the others groaned at owing the ghost a favour each. Not that Kanan would ever call it in, but it was still the principle of the thing.
Wayve and Tia trailed behind the young people and the Force Ghost, her hand tucked into the crook of his arm and his hand over hers. He couldn’t help but smile at the playful teasing that Link and Raign subjected Ezra to over his inability to keep his hands and lips off of his stunningly beautiful purple haired mate, but his sorrow at the boy’s departure was still dominant.

Tia glanced up at her husband and saw the subtle expression of grief under the smile. She squeezed his forearm soothingly. “I’ll miss him too,” she thought.

Wayve glanced down at his wife of more than two and a half centuries and gave her a sad smile as they walked towards the beach and the red and white ship that would take Ezra away. “I know. It was inevitable from the day he arrived, but in just five years, he’s become such a fixture in our lives. Like another son.”

“At least he’s bound to come back and visit frequently now that the togrutan and her mate are going to be settling here part time.”

“There is that.” Wayve hid a sigh as he continued with, “It just won’t be the same around here without him. And he’s taking our grandson with him.”

“Only for half a year at a time.”

“It’s still too long,” Wayve grumbled.

Tia nudged his shoulder with hers playfully as the group came to a stop at the base of the ramp of Ahsoka’s shuttle. “Careful, love, or I might mistake you for one of the younglings in need of a lesson on patience.”

Wayve slanted his eyes down to her as he snorted mentally in her mind. “I think I’m far too old looking to be mistaken for a youngling, my cheeky Mate.”

Tia looked her husband up and down with a frankly approving glance. From his chiseled facial features to his thickly muscled form to his elegantly webbed feet, he still made her wet with desire. “We may be getting up in years, love, but you look just as scrumptious as ever.”

Wayve nearly made a rumble of desire in his chest before he remembered they weren’t alone. But his liquid obsidian eyes pinned her big brown ones with a pointed gaze. “We’ll finish that thought later,” he promised.

Tia purred her approval into his mind as she leaned a little bit more into his side. He squeezed her hand gently.

And then he returned his focus to the mixed group of much younger beings, only to find them all locked in an awkward silence. It only took Wayve a moment to figure out that no one knew quite how to handle a goodbye that wasn’t even vaguely permanent. He was just about to make a comment along the lines of ‘hurry back’ when the Force Ghost took command of the situation.

Kanan clapped Ezra on the back and squeezed Sabine’s shoulder gently. "You kids can travel the
old fashioned way. I'm going by Force Express back to Hera. I'll see you on Lothal in a day or
two." Then he ruffled Ezra's hair in parting like he was still a young teenager. Ezra wrinkled his
nose at his Master and got a smirk in return before the ghost disappeared.

Wayve chuckled along with the others.

That set the tone of a good natured parting and there was a flurry of see you soons and travel safes.
Ezra had just finished thanking Ahsoka and Lux yet again for looking for him for so long when the
Force suddenly rang a warning of something incoming.

Instantly tensing, Wayve swept his senses out and found a very large object approaching his planet
at a high speed. It felt like it had a purpose but not with malice. It only took him a moment to send a
warning call to his entire population of citizens.

Tia, Ahsoka, Raign, and Ezra hadn’t needed the warning because they felt and found the possible
threat on their own, their eyes already showing wary caution and their muscles were tense.

The hair on the back of Sabine's neck rose in warning at the sudden tension of her companions and
she followed where they were looking, but seeing nothing but a pretty blue sky with some fluffy
clouds floating by. "What is it?" she asked, glancing at her husband.

"I don't know yet," Ezra said quietly.

The beach behind them was quickly filling with cerulians who had been nearby, all on high alert.
Wayve sent a call out to the rest of his people still under the oceans to be ready for anything.

They didn't have to wait long, maybe another minute, before the distinct triangular shape of a Star
Destroyer filled the sky above them, hovering just above the atmosphere so as to be visible but not
waste fuel fighting with gravity.

Wayve had never seen a Star Destroyer in person, but he knew what they looked like from Tia's
and Ezra’s memories. He quickly decided that the memories had not done the sheer enormity of
the spaceship justice. It was easily twice as big as the one Tia had arrived in.

"There's no way that could be Thrawn, could it?" Sabine asked in shock.

"I think it is," Ezra said grimly. "Who else would care enough to find this planet, or more
specifically, me?"

Upon hearing this, Wayve amped up his warning of danger from possible to probable because
according to Ezra, the one known as Thrawn was a formidable opponent and was not to be trusted
or underestimated.

Most of the gathering crowd behind him immediately dispersed back towards the village or into
the ocean to get their swords, since few actually wore them around all day long. (Unlike the elegant
lightsabre, their Kyber swords were massive and not exactly user friendly when it came to sitting
down or playing.)

Wayve also summoned his retinue of body guards / relatives to his side. (They’d been acting as
regular villagers for the morning.) He gladly accepted the sword and sheath that was handed to him
by Coran; his second having worn two swords across his back. Wayve felt a little pulse of joy from
the emerald green sword at being returned to his possession and returned the sentiment. He slid the
leather strap over his head and across his chest, the hilt of the sword sticking up over his right
shoulder.
Meanwhile, Sabine exchanged a look with Ezra, took his bag from his hand, and then ran into the ship, followed by Ahsoka and Lux. She emerged a minute later wearing her helmet and blasters, and she tossed Ezra his lightsabre. He caught it with a grim smile, closing his eyes for a moment as he reconnected with his Kyber crystal. It was suddenly like the lightsabre had never left his side, feeling like a missing limb had returned to him.

Ahsoka and Lux came back out as well, she carrying a staff that radiated Kyber energy, and he with his blaster belted on. (She’d already been wearing twin lightsabres on her belt that Wayve was very curious to see her use. None of their training from Zen, Tia, or Ezra had included using two sabres at once.)

The warriors of Cerulia reconvened on the beach quickly. Krystal was minus her daughter, having left Skye with one of the older younglings back at the communal hall, as she stopped beside Raign, who was already back beside Ezra.

“What now?” Wayve thought to Ezra but broadcast the thought to all present so they knew that a conversation was happening.

Ezra shrugged. “I have no idea what’s about to happen, but I figure if Thrawn had wanted us dead, he would have blasted us with an orbital attack by now.”

“I see. Then we shall simply have to be patient to learn the answer.” Wayve shot a quick smirk in Tia’s direction as he made a not so subtle jab at her earlier teasing.

His mate rolled her eyes at him even as she stroked the lightsabre hanging off her belt in a gesture of unconscious comfort and her tentacles waved around her head and shoulders in barely visible agitation. Wayve reached over and laced his fingers with hers and drew her closer back to his side.

Tia smiled up at him gratefully. For a Jedi Master, she’d temporarily forgotten her training in the face of such a great unknown. Aside from the descendants of the crashed 'Seeker', Ezra, and the recently arrived Sabine, Ahsoka, and Lux, she hadn’t seen anyone from the remnants of the Republic for centuries. The Star Destroyer above her wasn’t exactly the same design as the ones the Republic used to employ, but it was close enough to give her chills of remembrance. It represented where she came from in a roundabout way, and there was a part of her that was terrified of the admittedly miniscule possibility that she’d be forced to go back.

“I would never let that happen,” Wayve said as he squeezed her fingers tighter, having unabashedly eavesdropped on her thoughts to find out why she was showing signs of upset. “You’re my Queen and always will be.”

Tia closed her eyes for a moment as she leaned into him. “I love you.”

He kissed her forehead gently as she looked up at him. “To my never-ending relief and joy.”

After that, the waiting for something to happen was disconcerting, but no one moved or made a sound as the well trained army stood patiently.

When a single, tiny dot appeared from the underside of the Star Destroyer and quickly became recognizable as a Lambda class shuttle, the beach as a whole seemed to exhale in surprise and a little relief.

War was not imminent then.

As one, they drew or ignited their swords anyway.
Thrawn strode to his shuttle with Rulla and Eli on either side and a small contingent of handpicked troopers following behind in formation.

Upon arriving at the sensor, they'd made for the only planet in the vicinity that could support life. It was an ocean planet, but there were enough islands that even someone like Bridger could survive. Scans had confirmed that there were vast numbers of life forms on the planet. There was also an island that had a large amount of durasteel on it. Thrawn found this interesting, curious to know where all the metal had come from. He had a theory, but wasn't about to voice it just yet.

The pilots flew Thrawn and his team to the surface of the planet, landing the Lambda shuttle beside a red and white T-6 that used to be popular with the Jedi about thirty years ago. It was still a beautiful design in Thrawn's opinion and sadly forgotten by most.

They descended the ramp and came to a stop in front of a veritable army of glowing sword wielding amphibian humanoids wearing a minimal amount of clothing, a healthy number of humans, and human hybrids. At least the humans were mostly covered from the neck down. Thrawn didn’t have a problem with a culture that clearly swims a lot not wearing much in the way of clothes, but the sheer number of muscle bound males in varying shades of grey to vibrant blue with a few green or aqua shaded ones thrown in the mix made his hackles rise because Rulla could see them. Even he had to admit they were attractive and he had no inclinations towards the opposite sex. Thrawn glanced at his wife, tamping down on his jealousy before she noticed him almost snarling and was gratified to see that she wasn’t checking out the males. Instead, her eyes were drawn to the village of mismatched buildings beyond the beach and the children and teenagers that were peeking out from windows and around corners.

Thrawn smiled to himself. She always did have a soft spot for children. Theirs, especially.

Feeling better, he focused on the group in front of him again.

At the front of the pack stood a dark blue haired man that could only be a grown up version of Ezra Bridger dressed in the plain beige tunic and trousers that appeared to be the outfit of choice for the humans here. He was flanked by the unmistakable, overly colourful Mandalorian, Sabine Wren on one side and a dark red sword wielding young amphibian man that looked very fierce on the other. Spread out from there were more amphibians of unknown name, a female nautolan wielding a lightsabre, a man who Thrawn was fairly certain was Lux Bonteri, the Senator of Onderon, and a togrutan female Thrawn had never met but he'd seen holos of when he was researching the Jedi Order. Despite being older, the distinctive facial markings couldn't lie, stating that this was Ahsoka Tano, the padawan of Anakin Skywalker turned Darth Vader. And if he was correct, also the original Fulcrum. She'd disappeared, presumed dead by Darth Vader, just before Thrawn had started hunting the Lothal Rebels, but he wasn't at all surprised to see her back; Jedi / Force Users were constantly doing the unexpected, and thus, in his mind, everything and anything was now to be assumed normal in regards to them.

Ezra stepped forward, green lightsabre ignited in his left hand, his right ready to call his sword off his back if he needed it. "This is unexpected," he said in cautionary greeting. He'd already taken in the average looking human male standing on Thrawn's right and the blue skinned and red eyed female on his left, both wearing high ranking Imperial like uniforms, but not quite exactly as he remembered them. Thrawn also had a dozen dark grey armoured men behind him, all somehow looking much more competent than stormtroopers used to, even just standing still. Thrawn himself was still wearing the uniform of an Imperial Admiral, but again, with a few subtle differences that indicated some sort of change in how they saw themselves. What surprised Ezra the most was the lack of hostility coming from Thrawn's emotions. Yes, the man was exceptionally well skilled at
shielding, but today he wasn't bothering, actually radiating a sense of curiosity and closure.

Thrawn nodded ever so slightly at the young man who was definitely not a boy anymore. "Bridger."

"Thrawn." Ezra looked as if he was trying to read the older man’s soul with his piercing gem blue eyes.

Thrawn was secretly amused. He glanced at Ezra's lightsabre. "You won't need that."

Ezra raised a brow and turned it off, but kept it in his hand nonetheless. The rest of the warriors stood down as well, but were clearly ready to jump into action at a moment’s notice. "Why'd you track me down?" he asked, trying to keep his tone neutral. "That's what you're here for, isn't it?"

Thrawn inclined his head slightly again, hands still resting in the small of his back, stance confident. "I did in fact come here to find you. Believe it or not, Bridger, I have come to thank you. If you hadn't done what you had to my fleet, I would not have found my wife." He glanced fondly at the woman on his left and received a wink before he looked back at Bridger, smiling on the inside to see the wide eyes of the young man who was once his enemy. "Nor would my people exist anymore, as my entire homeworld would have been wiped out by now from an enemy that does not come from this galaxy. We are still fighting them, and may end up doing so for the rest of my life at this rate."

Ezra wasn't the only one gawking and blinking at the blue skinned Chiss at this pronouncement. If you had asked him the very last thing Thrawn would ever say to him, Ezra would have to say, 'Thank You.' And then to top it all off with the bombshells that Thrawn actually seemed to be capable of loving someone and that there was another enemy attacking the galaxy was just a little more than his brain could process at the moment.

Sensing that the stunned silence was going to get awkward, Wayve stepped forward, walking so he was just in front of Thrawn. He sensed a fellow leader in this man and knew that they had similar goals in the safekeeping of their people. "I am Wayve, King of this planet we call Cerulia," he said in Thrawn's mind, getting only a flicker of a raised eyebrow at the intrusion. Someone had apparently encountered telepaths before. "With your permission, I would like to see this enemy for myself."

Thrawn gazed into the large black eyes of the taller being in front of him, sensing his suppressed power. This was not a man to mess with. He also saw a steady bearing of command that came with experience and confidence that could not be faked. He nodded. "I agree," Thrawn thought back.

"Please just think of them," Wayve thought.

So Thrawn did. He thought of the countless battles with the Yuuzhan Vong over the years, how they attacked without mercy on any planet they took a liking to, wiping out the population and taking over the planet for themselves and changing it to suit their needs. He thought of how their biological ships were constantly evolving and changing so that Thrawn's fleet was slowly but surely losing the war as they couldn't keep up with the evolution. He thought of the pure hatred they had for anything mechanical. He thought of how the battles had been creeping ever closer to 'known space' and how the last one hadn't been all that far from here, hyperspace wise.

Wayve narrowed his eyes in steely eyed determination. This new enemy would not come close to his home planet if he had anything to say about it. He now understood why the Force had sent him Ezra. The boy was the catalyst needed to change his people into a fighting force that could help deal with this new threat, and not the Empire, which was being dealt with by others. Wayve sent
the images of the new enemy to his entire people in one blast of talent. Within moments a roar of mental readiness flooded his mind and he smiled grimly in satisfaction. "We will help," he thought to Thrawn.

Thrawn raised a brow. "How can you help?" he said aloud, having had enough of the mental speak.

Wayve smirked slightly. "Aside from the fact that most of my people are well trained in hand to hand combat, there's this." Wayve didn't even have to look at his warriors on the beach, he just sent a mental, "Now!" and their strength in the Force was added to his own as they concentrated on the Star Destroyer in orbit. With a mental shove, they pushed the city sized ship so far out into space that it wasn't even in sight anymore.

Thrawn waited for something to happen when he saw the king’s expression momentarily go blank with concentration "There's what?" he asked dryly after half a minute and there was no visible change in anything that surrounded them.

Ezra smirked and flicked his eyes up to the sky. "Look up, Thrawn. You might notice something rather large is missing," he said with laughter in his voice.

So Thrawn did, along with his companions. Ezra and everyone else on the beach burst into guffaws at the dumbfounded looks on their faces when they didn't see their precious Chimaera.

Thrawn pulled himself together and closed his mouth with a snap. He pulled his commlink off his belt and barked, "Status!" into it.

It took a couple moments, but someone finally answered. "We seem to be about five hundred kilometres away from our last position, Sir, and no one knows how we got here. All systems are normal."

Thrawn suppressed his surprise. He stared at the king with a coolly raised brow. There's this, indeed. King Wayve smirked, crossing his arms over his all but bare chest. Thrawn almost smiled at being played so handily. He respected others who could one up him. "Fly back," he ordered. "I'll be returning shortly with some guests."

"Yes, Sir," the male voice answered crisply.

Thrawn put his commlink away and glanced at Rulla, lips quirking slightly to see her smiling at him. She was happy with his decision. Good. He met the eyes of the king again. "I think we have much to discuss, Wayve, King of Cerulia." He glanced at Eli and nodded, listening to his footsteps as his friend jogged up into the shuttle. Thrawn looked at Ezra. "I'm assuming, since your friends are here, that you'll be heading back to known space?"

Ezra nodded warily, wondering where Thrawn was going with this.

"As a symbol of my gratitude, I have something that belongs to one of your compatriots."

Ezra looked at Thrawn like he'd lost his mind. First a thank you and now he was giving up something he probably thought of as a treasure? Marriage had certainly mellowed the man. "Okaaaayyy?" he said in confusion.

Eli came back down the ramp carrying a large wrapped bundle and handed it to Ezra. Ezra looked at Thrawn for explanation.

The Chiss smiled ever so slightly. "These belong to Agent Kallus. Tell him he was a worthy adversary and I hope he never regrets the decision he made to change sides. Tell him that I know
exactly what it was like to be undercover in an Imperial world.

Ezra gawked at the package in his arms, having a really good idea of what was in it, then at Thrawn. He nodded slowly, his respect for the Admiral growing as he understood what Thrawn was saying; Thrawn had been playing the Emperor the entire time he’d worked for him. Now that took some serious guts. "I will."

Thrawn turned his attention back to the tallest male on the beach. "Would you like a tour of my ship? And perhaps a meal while we discuss the particulars of the war?"

Wayve nodded regally. "I would like that." He summoned Tia and his usual escort to accompany him. (Not that he generally needed actual guards, but the people insisted, and sometimes it was fun to appear important.) He nodded to Tia as she took her place by his side. "This is my Queen, Jedi Master Tia Fisto." He then nodded at the aqua skinned man on his right that bore Tia’s long tentacles as opposed to Wayve’s short spiky ones. "And this is our eldest son and my second in command, Coran."

Thrawn exchanged nods with the two people indicated, hiding his surprise at the name of the beautiful lime green skinned nautolan female; the looks and surname of Fisto could not be a coincidence. He wasn’t surprised by her title, though. (The blue lightsabre was pretty much a dead giveaway.) He was curious to know how two beings that didn’t look much older than forty had a full grown son who looked about thirty. (That would be a question for later.) "For the sake of proper introductions, my name is Mitth'raw'nuruodo, not Thrawn as Bridger believes, but you may call me that if you wish." Thrawn ignored the surprised glance Bridger exchanged with Wren. He nodded to his left. "This is my wife, General Rulla’aski’nuruodo. Or Rulla for short.” He then nodded to his right. "And this is my second in command, General Eli Vanto."

More nods were exchanged, the females eyeballing each other before smiling warmly in welcome. The men were a little more reserved, but Wayve had a feeling that he would get on just fine with Thrawn and his people.

Which was a good thing, if they were to win a war together against the enemy that was decimating their corner of the galaxy.
Ezra's Homecoming:

D251/4 ABY, Cerulia

Ezra and Sabine were finally in Ahsoka's shuttle and headed home. After the very unexpected delay and then another round of see you soons, they'd eventually made their way into the shuttle and taken off. Sabine had them in hyperspace within only minutes and then quickly stood from her chair.

Ezra hugged Sabine to him and breathed in her perfect scent. As a spirit projection, he hadn't been able to smell anything, and he'd missed her smell of flowery soap with a strong hint of paint. "I love you, Sabine," he whispered into her hair. "Thank you for everything you've done and being so patient."

Sabine hugged her husband back, resting her forehead on his strong chest. She sighed in contentment to finally be holding him for real. "I love you too, Ezra. I'd do it all again if I had to, but you better not make me or I'll make a rancor look like a pet tooka."

Ezra chuckled into her purple hair. "There's my fierce Mando girl. I've missed you more than you can imagine."

"Oh, I can imagine, alright," Sabine grumbled. "I don't ever want to be parted from you again."

"Neither do I, cyar'ika. Neither do I." Ezra's electric blue eyes were fierce as they stared at her in utter adoration.

Sabine smiled sweetly and grabbed Ezra's hand, leading him towards her little cabin. It was time to give Ezra the loving he'd earned over the years, doing such a good job taking care of her needs without much in the way of relief for himself other than by his own hand.

After stripping his weapons and the their straps from him, as well as his boots and socks, she pushed him down on the bed, amber eyes shining with love and desire, and then started to strip off her armour in the most erotic show she could manage. She wasn't the galaxy's curviest girl by any stretch of the imagination, but Sabine worked what she had. And judging by the impressive tent forming at the front of Ezra's bland grey pants, it was good enough for him.

Ezra leaned back on his elbows and tried not to pant too much as Sabine slowly bared her gorgeous body one article of clothing at a time. He'd seen her naked countless times already, but he'd never get tired of the sight. She was exquisite to him, her slender strength the epitome of feminine perfection in his eyes. He loved her from top to bottom and wouldn't change a single thing about her.

Now naked, Sabine ran her hands down her body teasingly, Ezra's eyes following the movement and dilating wider with desire so that the blue was just a thin circle around the black pupils. Smiling to herself, Sabine walked forward and straddled his hips, settling her core over his straining hardness. She ran her hands under his tunic and pushed it up and over his head with his help. Then she just looked at the male perfection she'd uncovered in awe.

So. Many. Muscles.

It made her practically drool in want. And it was all hers. She got to touch him whenever she
wanted to now. Love him. Worship him. Paint him even. Sabine couldn't be happier. She put her hands on his hard pectoral muscles and leaned forward. "You are so hot," she whispered against his mouth before licking into his mouth with a series of scorching hot kisses that made her wetter and needier.

Ezra had one hand on her slender back and the other cupping her perfect rear end as they shared a very wet and dirty kiss. When they parted to gasp for air, he crinkled his eyes at her and caressed his hand up and down her back. "You're hotter," he breathed out and then pulled her mouth back down to his.

When Sabine felt his fingers start to delve into her wet core, she sat up with a shake of her head. "Un uh. This one's for you, babe." She pulled his hands off her and kissed them both before placing them behind his head. "Leave them there," she said warily. "Or I'll have to tie you up."

Ezra's cock twitched in excitement at her dominating side, and Sabine felt it. She smirked at him and ground her hips enticingly into his hardness, soaking his pants in her moisture. Ezra smirked right back and tweaked her perfect little nipples with the Force, making her squeak.

"Ezra!" She said accusingly with laughter hiding in there somewhere. "No cheating!"

Ezra grinned and locked his fingers together behind his head tighter, making the muscles in his arms contract. He couldn't help but notice how Sabine's eyes noticed and how she licked her lips in desire, so he did it again.

Sabine shook her head at him. "That's cheating too."

Ezra wiggled his eyebrows at her. "Is it?"

She narrowed her eyes him. "Yes. Now be good and don't move. Don't use the Force on me either. It's my turn to make you scream, Ezra Wren-Bridger, so you better let me."

Ezra settled a little deeper into the bed, consciously relaxing his muscles. "I would let you do anything to me, Sabine. And you know it," he said with utter sincerity.

Sabine leaned forward again and pressed a sweet kiss to his lips. She smiled into his eyes and brushed a strand of silky midnight blue hair to the side, fingers lingering on the line of his handsome face and finding their way to the faded scars on his cheek. "I do know it, Ezra. I love you too. And now I'm going to show you just how much."

Sabine pressed little kisses to his clean-shaven jaw, happy he'd never tried to grow any facial hair. She liked seeing all of his face. Her kisses moved up to his ear where she nipped it lightly, making him inhale sharply, and then she moved down his strong, muscle corded neck. She pressed her lips to his overly fast pulse and lingered, pleased with the effect she was having on him. It was so nice to finally be the one giving all the pleasure. As a Mando, she should have been the one who dominated their relationship in bed for the most part over the last five years. Not that she was complaining about being Ezra's sole focus for so long, but it never felt right to her that she couldn't at least return the favour. Sabine was now a very happy girl.

Her kisses continued, across his broad shoulder, down the line of his collar bone, onto his pecs, stopping at his nipples and swirling her tongue around them before nipping each, making the little nubs stand at attention. Sabine smiled up at Ezra, who was visibly trying to control his breathing, as she then moved further down, worshiping his washboard abs and his cute little belly button. Her hands were trailing the path of her mouth, basking in how soft his copper skin felt on top of rock hard muscle. The contrast was just as fascinating as when they were teenagers and made her heart
pound in want.

Ezra was in literal heaven as he watched Sabine kiss him everywhere. His skin was tingling unmercifully in all the spots she'd touched him and he loved it. She was flat out gorgeous to look at and her Force signature shone so brightly with love it almost brought tears to his eyes. She finally reached the top of his pants and looked up at him with a sexy curl to her lips that made him just grin back at her like a dork. Fortunately for him, Sabine liked his dorkiness.

Sabine moved to kneel beside Ezra and whisked his pants and underwear off in one swift move, allowing the throbbing length she'd been grinding herself against to spring upwards in all its happy glory. Sabine spared a glance at Ezra's long muscled legs and cute big feet, which had grown since she'd seen them last in person, but her eyes were immediately drawn back to the main event which had also grown. She bit her bottom lip in anticipation at FINALLY getting to taste him after so long. Sabine flicked her eyes back up to see Ezra staring at her with hope in his, but no actual command. He was leaving it up to her to do as much or as little as she wanted. Sabine moved up and kissed him, tangling their tongues for a moment before moving to his ear. "It's screaming time, Bridger," she whispered naughtily.

Then she swung back around and gently grabbed the towering length and started experimenting with various tensions and speeds as she worked her hands up and down his cock, all the while watching Ezra's face and breathing closely to see whether her old moves were still his favourites.

Despite his determination to watch every single moment of his heavenly torture, Ezra's eyes closed and he got lost in the sensations of exquisite pleasure Sabine was giving him. After what he swore was an eternity, but was probably more like ten minutes, his eyes flew open again when he felt her lips kiss his tip and then run up and down his length in teasing little kisses and licks. Oh Force, she was licking him like a lollipop. He'd forgotten how good that actually felt. Ezra's eyes were now glued to the sight, it was so erotic.

And then, then she took the head into her mouth and sucked. Ezra's body almost jumped off the bed, that felt so good. His eyes closed again and moans and groans escaped him, despite his determination to not scream like she said he was going to. He wondered if groaning really loud counted? As her hot, wet mouth engulfed more and more of him, Ezra had to start channelling his meditation training to not explode then and there.

He had plenty of experience with self control when it came to mental lovemaking, but this physical stuff was on a whole new level for him after not feeling for so long. Ezra LOVED it. Even if she was drawing it out for what felt like a year.

Sabine swallowed around the throbbing cock she'd forced to the back of her throat and swirled her tongue around the underside, hands holding his base and balls lovingly, wanting to hear the high pitched moan again he'd made the last time she did that. She was rewarded with something even better. Ezra started begging.


Sabine pulled back and swallowed all the accumulated saliva, licking the head again. "Please what, Ezra?" she said looking up at him with big innocent eyes that he really wasn't buying.

Ezra panted some more. "Please let me come. Inside you. In your mouth. Kriff, even in your hand. I don't care. But I'm going insane here."

Sabine smiled in satisfaction and then swallowed him again.
Ezra might as well have screamed he groaned so loud when the pressure that had been building inside him forever was finally released deep into her throat.

Sabine swallowed the creamy liquid that flooded her in waves, amazed at how much there was. When it stopped and the cock that had gotten even bigger just before coming softened a little, Sabine pulled back, licking her lips and looked up at Ezra. She had to smile. He looked like he'd died. His eyes were closed and he was breathing like he'd just run a marathon. He was covered in glistening sweat and his arms were splayed out on either side of him, the crumpled covers indicating he'd grabbed them in his fists at some point. He looked perfect.

Sabine crawled up his body and straddled his waist again, pressing her breasts to his chest and feeling his pounding heartbeat. She laid her head on his shoulder and smiled to herself, closing her eyes while she waited for him to recover. Her own core was sopping and pulsing with need, but she ignored it for now. Her turn would come soon enough.

Ezra was pretty sure this was the highlight of his life. This very moment with Sabine snuggled all over him and the aftershocks of pleasure still zipping through his body. He mustered up the strength from somewhere to wrap his arms around her, imprinting this feeling in his mind forever.

It took him a few minutes but he eventually started registering other things, like the fact that Sabine was still throbbing with need through their bond. Now that just wouldn't do. He let her need feed his own and instantly felt himself stirring against her round, perfect ass.

Sabine looked up with a satisfied smile. "Someone's eager."

Ezra grinned down at her and tilted his head to kiss her thoroughly. "Cyar'ika, when it comes to you, I can be ready in two seconds flat, anytime, anywhere, and you know it."

Sabine blushed lightly at the praise as she grinned widely. He nudged her backward a fraction and she rose a little. They both groaned in ecstasy when he sank inside her to the hilt. Their mouths met again in timeless passion as their hips moved in sync, lost in the paradise found in each other's arms.

When she felt his cock getting thicker inside her some long time later, she stared down at him seriously. "Don't you dare pull out."

Ezra looked up at her in confusion for a moment and then a grin spread across his face. She was saying that she was ready to have children. They'd talked about it of course, but the reality was just so much better. "Never, Sabine," he breathed and then clutched her tight as the coming explosion built within him.

They stayed in bed for hours, not even budging when the ship dropped out of hyperspace, waiting for someone to put in the next set of coordinates. (It wasn't exactly a straight line to home, with a spacial obstacle or ten in the way.) Sabine eventually groaned and forced her exhausted body off the bed when her bladder insisted it was time for a trip to the refresher. Not that she regretted a minute of the sex marathon. She'd do it all again in an instant if he wanted to. Which... she was almost one hundred percent certain he would. She smiled at the thought.

When she came back, she found Ezra sitting on the edge of the bed, still gloriously naked, and looking at her with a hopeful smile. She came to a stop in front of him and tilted her head to the side in curiosity.

Ezra held a closed hand up, waiting for her to cup her hands. "I made you something, Sabine. Kind
of a very belated wedding present. I hope you like it."

Sabine looked down at the thing he'd dropped into her hands and gasped. A glowing orange Kyber crystal in the shape of her phoenix symbol was held in the gentle grasp of a gold coloured metal and hanging off a choker length gold chain. The crystal pulsed and gleamed proudly, giving the impression that the phoenix was alive. It even felt warm and alive in her hand. It was amazing.

She looked at Ezra with tears stinging her eyes and bit her lip to keep from crying. "Oh, Ezra. It's beautiful! I love it."

Ezra smiled in relief. He'd never seen her wear jewellery, so he'd been afraid he was making a mistake when he first decided to put the crystal on a chain. But he couldn't think of any other way to make it so that she could keep it on her person all the time that wouldn't be either annoying or possibly get lost. This way, it was short enough it wouldn't bounce, and long enough that it would be tucked safely under her bodysuit. "I'm glad you like it, cyar'ika. I spent a week with that crystal while it was forming so it would grow just right. That was four years ago. I've been waiting so long to give it to you."

Sabine beamed at Ezra and threw herself in his arms, kissing him lovingly. She pulled back and stared into his beautiful blue eyes that she'd never get tired of looking at. "Will you put it on for me?"

Ezra nodded mutely and took the necklace from her hand and then clasped it on around her long slender neck when she turned around. He kissed her shoulder and hugged her from behind, resting his chin on her shoulder. "I can't tell you how happy I am right now, Sabine," he said softly.

Sabine looked over her shoulder and smiled sweetly. "I think I know." She pulled from his arms and walked to a small cupboard, coming back with the packages she'd purchased on Lothal in her arms, and set them on the bed beside him. "This could never be mistaken for a wedding present, but I hope these make you even happier."

Ezra blinked his brain back into functioning after it temporarily shut down from watching her walk around naked, and looked at the bags beside him. "You got me presents?"

Sabine nodded and jumped onto the bed, sitting on her legs, eagerly nodding at the bags. "Open them!"

Ezra turned and sat cross legged in front of her and then grabbed a bag. The first thing he pulled out was an orange t-shirt. He held it up and damn near cried. He'd been wearing grey for almost five years, ever since he didn't fit into his old shirt and jacket anymore. He couldn't even express how happy he was to see the colour orange on an article of clothing.

"Try it on," Sabine said eagerly. She really hoped she'd purchased the right sizes for him. He was definitely bigger than he'd been showing her, but that was mostly leg length. The shirts should fit. She hoped.

Ezra put his hands in the sleeve holes and pulled the t-shirt over his head. It felt a bit tight, but he didn't care. It was orange and Sabine had bought it for him. He'd wear it till it gave up and fell apart.

Sabine stared at the sight with her mouth practically drooling. The t-shirt was a hair too tight on his muscled form, but it showcased every single muscle he had perfectly. She vowed then and there that no other woman was ever going to see him looking like that, even if it meant moving to Krownest so he'd have to stay covered up in multiple layers. She knew she was being silly, but
that's how she felt in the moment.

Ezra leaned forward and kissed his wonderful wife briefly before digging back into the bag. He came up with a white zippered jacket that had orange trim. It felt amazingly soft and comfortable. "Wow, Sabine. Just wow."

Ezra put the jacket on too, pleased with how perfectly it fit.

Sabine sighed in pleasure. Just as she remembered, he looked amazing in white, the colour contrasting perfectly with his copper skin tone and making his eyes look impossibly bluer.

Ezra opened the next bag and found black pants and a bundle of black undershorts and socks. The next bag contained boots. Big black boots with an orange fastener. Ezra couldn't even speak as he stood and finished getting dressed, he was so overwhelmed to have real clothes again. And not just any clothes; clothes Sabine had purchased for him in the perfect colours. He dug in his own bag and pulled out the belt he'd been wearing five years ago and added that to the ensemble, pleased that it still fit, although on a looser hole. He clipped his lightsabre on it and sighed in happiness. The only thing missing was his old blaster.

Sabine sighed in relief when the pants fit. She'd been afraid that they wouldn't be long enough, but with the ankle high boots, they worked well enough. Taking in the whole picture of her gorgeous husband, she smiled. She'd finally got to dress him and she couldn't be happier with the result. Yes, it wasn't the blue highlights she'd rather see, but the orange made him so happy, she wouldn't change her choices for anything. She jumped off the bed and grabbed one more bag when he pulled out his old belt.

Ezra looked up when another bag appeared in his line of vision, Sabine holding it out to him with a grin and a twinkle in her eyes. Ezra opened the bag and found a perfect replica of his DL-44 blaster pistol.

"You didn't think I'd forget the weapons, did you?" she said cheekily.

Ezra chuckled and holstered the blaster. "You? Never." He pulled her close and kissed her cute nose then went to find a mirror.

Sabine tossed on a loose purple shirt and a pair of black shorts and then followed Ezra in the direction of the refresher. He emerged a minute later, positively beaming. He hugged her tight and twirled her around and then kissed her enthusiastically. "Thank you, Sabine. Just... thank you."

She cupped his face in her hands tenderly. "You're welcome, Ez'ika."

They did eventually manage to get all the way home to Lothal whenever they remembered that the ship wasn't actually going to do all the work by itself. They spent a total of twenty-four hours in hyperspace, a return trip that had taken twice as long as what the purrgil had done. (Just another marvel about the purrgil to think about at some other time.)

Sabine flew them over the gleaming Capital City, giving Ezra a new view of it, saying she'd give him a tour of all of her favourite spots later. She paused over Kanan's Park, whose trees were now just thick enough to show the vague outline of the Jedi symbol. The last thing they passed was the orphanage that had happy children playing outside in the grass with dozens of lothcats.

Sabine landed near the permanent landing pad by Ezra's refurbished tower and he admired that too since it somehow looked even better than it did when he was in spirit form. On the landing pad and scattered beyond it, since it wasn't big enough, was the Ghost, the Lothhawk, the Jai'galaar, the
Millennium Falcon, the ArrowScavenger, Zeb and Kallus' new ship called the Meteorite, the Broken Horn, a perfect saucer of a ship that just had to belong to Hondo, a few X-Wings, a couple more unidentified ships, and countless speeders and bikes.

Ezra and Sabine walked off the shuttle and he stared at all the ships and speeders in awe, not recognizing even a quarter of them. "What in the galaxy is this?"

Sabine tucked her arm into his and bumped her hip against him playfully. "I may have been delaying our trip home on purpose."

Ezra raised a brow and then burst into laughter. "You planned a party, didn't you?"

She nodded and started walking down the path towards the big house. "Of course I did. I was expecting Ahsoka and Lux to be here too, but I'm sure they're okay with missing out. She seemed rather taken with Cerulia and Skye. All those Force users and more Force powers to learn."

Ezra laughed and kissed her cheek. "I think you're right."

They passed the back of the tower and were greeted by the sight of an adorable, green haired boy with a kitten chasing after him. He ran straight to Ezra and launched himself at him with one of his famous Force aided jumps, calling, "Ezie! Ezie!"

Ezra grinned and plucked the boy from the air, hugging him tight. The kitten launched into the air as well and landed on Ezra's shoulder with an impressive show of agility. Ezra laughed and wrinkled his nose at the kitten, sending it a mental hello, before addressing Jacen. "Hey, little brother. Have you been taking good care of your mother while we were gone?"

Jacen nodded eagerly, arms holding Ezra's neck tightly. "Yep. We've been waiting for you. Daddy said you were coming home today and here you are! There's so many people here! I have so much to show you! I got to practice with the lightsabre for real yesterday! Which almost gave Momma a heart attack," he added in a conspiratorial whisper, then continued on with his excited lightyear a minute speech. "Momma let me steer the Phantom 2 this morning too and I LOVE flying! I have the best parents and the best big brother and sister. Did you like flying all the way home? Was it fun? Hyperspace is fun isn't it?"

Ezra tried to keep his focus on Jacen's endless questions and chatter but his eyes looked up and saw Hera standing in front of them, a shaky smile on her face and tears running down her cheeks. He held out an arm and she ran into his side so he could hug her too. They didn't say anything, just letting Jacen's excited voice fill the air, but it was enough. Sabine snuggled into Ezra's other side and Kanan appeared, putting a hand on Ezra's shoulder. Zeb ran over too, followed closely by Kallus, whooping to see Ezra in his real form. Even Chopper rolled over and beeped a greeting. As Zeb made an attempt to hug all of them at once, Ezra felt complete for the first time in five years. He was finally back with his family where he belonged.

Sabine smiled a greeting at Kallus and then remembered his parcel from Thrawn. (Which she may have deliberately forgotten.) She whispered to Ezra that she was running back to the shuttle for a minute and he nodded absentley, trying to pay attention to everyone at once as they all chattered hellos and news of things he'd missed. She slid out of the group with a secretive smile and took off, telling Kallus to follow her with a gesture. She dashed into the shuttle and came back out carrying his still wrapped bo-rifle. "This is from Thrawn," she said in a rush, thrusting the package into his arms.

Kallus gawked at the package. "What?"
"I'll explain later, or Ezra will," she called over her shoulder as she ran up to the tower door.

Kallus opened the package with trembling hands, already knowing what he'd find. He sniffed back a tear as his fingers caressed his bo-rifle reverently. As he pulled the wrapping off, a large rock fell out of the package and onto his foot. Kallus looked down and saw the meteorite. Now he didn't know which to cry over more. Carrying his things with them held tight to his chest, Kallus walked back towards Zeb, feeling kind of shell-shocked.

Ezra was escorted toward the rest of the party that had been set up in the back courtyard. There was a cheer from the hundreds assembled when he was spotted and Ezra came to a halt and just gawked at all the people. "Holy kriff! All these people are here for me?"

Hera hugged Ezra again with one arm, the other around Kanan's waist. "Yes, they are. You're the Liberator of Lothal after all, and are legendary in the Rebellion. There's a lot of people here who want to meet you. And a whole bunch more who just want to see you again in real form."

Ezra walked into the midst of the party in a daze and the flurry of introductions and hellos began. He didn't remember them all, but there were some that stood out for sure. He did know that he heard about how much he'd grown at least a dozen times, but it was probably a lot more.

He remembered Luke from before, because he would never forget the other man who tried to make a move on his Sabine. Ezra was happy to see that Luke had finally found his own girl, another Force user called Mara Jade. He also gave Leia a quick hug, telling her she looked great, and met her husband, Han Solo. And then there was Chewie, who said that Wullffwarro and his son, Kitwarr, said hello and regretted not being able to make the party. The fly in the soup of that little group was Lando, of course. Ezra greeted him with a very resigned, "Lando."

Lando grinned like there was nothing wrong with being Lando. "Bridger. You're looking much more mature. Finally worthy of that beautiful girl of yours."

Ezra just gave him a look that should have turned him to dust.

Visago and Hondo both greeted him fondly, overflowing plates of food in their hands while they introduced their crews, whom Ezra didn't even try to remember the names of. Except Melch. He remembered him, of course. He was amazed the ugnaut was still alive under Hondo's oh so careful care. "Did Sabine actually invite you two here?" Ezra asked them.

Visago grinned and Hondo shook his head in sad disbelief. "Of course not. I don't know why though, I'm such a nice person. We found out through the grapevine. And, well, here we are."

Ezra laughed and clapped his old friends on the back before he was tugged away to another group. This one contained Ryder, Ketsu, Joshua, and their two children, R.J. and an infant girl called Lailu.

Before he knew it, Ezra was tugged away again, this time by Sabine's parents and brother and his wife. Alrich gave Ezra a warm hug and called him 'son,' which he'd being doing for a while now, whenever they met in the past. Tristan greeted Ezra with a friendly back slap, looking even bigger than Ezra remembered. They'd both grown more, leaving Ezra still feeling small compared to the younger man who clearly took after Ursa's side of the family. The Countess still made Ezra go to run and hide, but as usual he schooled his expression into something pleasant and pretended he wasn't petrified of his mother-in-law while they all made small talk. Ezra glanced around for Sabine to come rescue him, but he didn't see her, making him wonder where she was.

Kanan, thankfully, extracted him from that group and moved him on to the edge of the courtyard.
where three more ghosts stood against a wall, chatting amongst themselves, in a form only a Force sensitive would see. Ezra froze as he recognized one. "Master Skywalker! And Master Yoda! And Master Kenobi!" Yoda's and Kenobi's younger looking forms were a surprise, but Ezra recognized them instantly anyway. The three ghosts greeted the young Jedi knight with smiles.

That was all the time he got to spend with them until much later, for the next thing he knew, Jacen was tugging on his sleeve. "Ezie! Have you met my friend Rowan yet?"

Ezra shook his head and let himself be pulled in another direction, shooting a helpless glance over his shoulder at Kanan and the other ghosts, receiving chuckles and shrugs in response. Jacen turned briefly and waved at the ghosts merrily before marching across the courtyard with Ezra in tow. Literally, as Jacen had his hand and was pulling him.

Jacen brought Ezra to a group that contained Wedge and three other young adults that Ezra didn't know, and a light brown haired boy that looked about twelve or thirteen. Ezra and Wedge barely had time to grin greetings at each other when Jacen parked Ezra right in front of the boy.

"Ezie, this is Rowan. Rowan, this is my big brother, Ezra," Jacen said proudly, looking between the two of them expectantly.

Ezra smiled and held out his hand to shake with the boy, going for the grown up approach. "Nice to meet you, Rowan."

Rowan shook his hand enthusiastically, on the verge of vibrating with the energy contained within him. "You too, Master Ezra. Jacen's told me all about... you." Rowan slowed down as he felt something different in the Force. He looked up at Ezra curiously and found the man blinking at him in astonishment. "Do you feel that?" Rowan asked.

Ezra withdrew his hand and rubbed the back of his neck as he processed what he was feeling from the boy. He was incredibly powerful with the Force, which wasn't surprising, based on what Ezra had heard his abilities were. What was surprising was the instant connection he felt to him. He hadn't felt like this with another Force user since he first met Kanan, and back then, he hadn't understood what it meant. Now he did, and he nodded slowly in response to Rowan's question. "Yes, I do, Rowan." A slow smile spread across his face as he looked down at the boy. "It means that you're meant to be my padawan."

Rowan's eyes went super wide and he froze.

Jacen, on the other hand, jumped up and down excitedly. "I knew it! I just knew it! I saw it in a dream."

Rowan unfroze and lurched forward, wrapping his arms around Ezra's waist in a tight hug for a moment before remembering his decorum. He backed up a step and bowed respectfully. "I would be proud to be your padawan, Master Ezra."

Ezra bowed back, trying not to grin too widely to ruin the formality of the moment. "It would be my honour to teach you, Padawan Rowan." Then he let the grin out and ruffled the fluffy brown hair. "And that's about as formal as we ever need to get. Just Ezra is fine with me."

Rowan grinned back up at his new Master. "Okay, Ezra." He turned to his older siblings excitedly. "I have a Master! A real one!"

Kordi and Zander hugged and congratulated their little brother and then introduced themselves and Zander's fiancé, Becky, to Ezra.
On the far side of the courtyard, Yoda smirked to himself. He liked when he was right.

Ezra was still talking with the Freemakers, making arrangements for Rowan to stay with him while the older siblings returned to the Rebellion, when a hush went over the crowd. He looked around to see what had changed the atmosphere and didn't see anything at first, not until the crowd started to part, making a path between Ezra and Sabine.

Ezra's heart near stopped when he saw her.

She looked exactly like he imagined a warrior goddess of old would. As she walked confidently towards him, Ezra soaked in her appearance. She'd changed her hair so it was royal blue with frosted orange and gold tips, reminiscent of how she looked when he first met her, but shorter. She'd put on a bit of actual makeup, with blue eye shadow and eyeliner, making her big eyes look even bigger and more luminous in their amber colour. The phoenix necklace shone and twinkled from the hollow of her throat. Her body was covered in a white gown that left her shoulders and upper arms bare and hugged her curves in all the right places, ending just above the knees. She had gold sandals on that crisscrossed in straps all the way up her calves. Her blasters were belted on around her hips and she'd appropriated his amber Kyber sword and strapped that to her back, the hilt sticking up above her left shoulder.

She looked perfect. Not particularly safe to send into a battle, but perfect.

The crowd thought so too, as they smiled and cheered and clapped. But Ezra didn't notice. His whole world had narrowed down to her and her alone.

Ezra ran the last few steps between them and picked her up by the waist, bringing their eyes level. "I love you, my warrior goddess," he breathed, heart hammering in his chest.

"I know," Sabine replied, wrapping her arms and legs around him and then they once again made a spectacle of themselves as they became lost to the passion that blazed between them.
Ezra's Forewarning

A/N: I'll be expanding this section eventually.

Ezra's Forewarning:

D255/4 ABY, Lothal

Two nights later, Ezra startled awake when he felt a not so subtle nudge from the Force. He rose silently from the bed and slipped on a sweater, slacks, and his belt with the lightsabre and blaster on it, then went outside to the balcony, following the call inside his mind. He looked down at the white lothwolf standing far below him in the waving grass.

"Come," rang through his mind in the deep voice of the wolf.

"Alright," Ezra thought back. "One moment," he added as he felt Sabine wake up and come looking for him.

Sabine opened the glass door to the balcony and walked up to Ezra, wrapping her arms around his waist. "Why are you out here in the middle of the night?"

Ezra nodded down at the lothwolf who sat on his haunches, waiting patiently. "I'm supposed to go with him. I don't know how long I'll be gone, so you shouldn't wait up."

Sabine glanced down at the wolf and then snuggled back into Ezra's warmth, shivering a little in the cool night breeze. "Be careful."

Ezra tilted her head up with a finger under her chin and kissed her briefly. "I will be," he promised. "I have a lot to come back home to," he said, pointedly glancing at her stomach.

Sabine smiled softly, placing a hand over the baby Ezra had felt for the first time the night before. That had been quite a memorable moment of celebration, to say the least. "Yes, you do, Ez'ika, so don't you go disappearing for another five years," she only half joked.

Ezra kissed her again, touched foreheads for a few precious seconds, and then jumped over the side of the balcony railing.

Sabine rushed forward in time to see him land easily on the grass in a crouch. He waved up at her with a cheeky grin and then climbed onto the back of the waiting lothwolf. The wolf jumped up into a gallop and then soon disappeared long before they should have under the bright light of the full moon. Sabine sighed and went back inside before she got too chilled and climbed under the warm blankets. She already missed having Ezra in the bed to cuddle with, but the white and orange lothcats that had shown up right after Ezra came home purred from the places they'd taken in Ezra's spot and soothed her back to sleep in no time.

The lothwolf travelled through his own time and space corridor, taking Ezra to where the Force directed him to. Ezra had to close his eyes during the sickening trip, but he managed to maintain consciousness out of sheer determination. When everything settled back down to a standstill, Ezra opened his eyes to darkness.

He closed them again, and sent out his Force senses, 'seeing' the way Kanan had taught him. Ezra
sensed he was in a big chamber, probably underground based on how thick the ceiling felt above him. There was no one here but him and the wolf, which was reassuring in a way. Wherever he was, it was very strong in the Force. It actually felt like the Jedi Temple, if he had to compare it to anything.

Ezra slid off the wolf and ignited his lightsaber, using it as a light. On the wall in front of him were two openings into hallways, but none of them called to him, so he turned in a half circle and looked at the wall on the far side of the lothwolf. Ezra had to smile and shake his head. He was right. This was the Jedi Temple. As he'd suspected, it hadn't destroyed itself, but had simply taken itself away from the reach of anyone who wasn't acceptable. Ezra suspected the only way to get into the temple now was by lothwolf transport, and no Darksider in the galaxy would ever be able to convince a lothwolf to give them a ride.

Ezra walked around the wolf and up to the mural of the Father, Son, and Daughter, the Force calling him to it. He reached up and touched the Daughter's hand in the open signal, sending a burst of Force into it. Just like before, the painted wolves ran to the side and created a portal for him. Ezra glanced back at the white lothwolf, seeing him lying on the floor and looking at him with knowing eyes. He would wait for him. Reassured, Ezra stepped through the portal.

Once in the World Between Worlds, Ezra put his lightsaber back on his belt, not needing it in the magically lit endless space. He wondered why he'd been brought here this time. Last time, he'd been shown many pieces of the past, much of them not making any sense at all. He'd also been shown a brief glimpse of the future. It had shocked him, but had given him time to prepare and plan. Ezra had seen the purrgil taking the 7th Fleet away. He'd seen the Dome exploding in the sky. And he'd also seen Sabine and Hera sitting together in his tower, looking wrecked. The last had been really really hard to look at. And then he'd rescued Ahsoka and the rest was history.

Now Ezra was back and staring into another portal. He watched it for the better part of five hours, eventually sitting in a cross legged position for the sake of comfort. What he saw was perhaps the most depressing thing he'd ever seen and brought tears to his eyes on more than one occasion.

When the portal went black, Ezra rose on shaking legs and made his way back into the Temple, closing the portal with a touch to the Son's hand and another burst of the Force.

Ezra walked back to the lothwolf and climbed back on with a durasteel resolve growing in his heart. The Force had shown him a future that would happen if something wasn't done about it. If the Force wanted it to happen, it wouldn't have brought Ezra to see. He was sure he'd been tasked with making sure that it never did. Ezra knew what he had to do.

First, he had to make sure that Luke never tried to re-establish the old Jedi Order. It would drive Mara Jade away and just be a disaster in the long run.

Second, he was going to make sure that Jacen 'found' the girl called Rey on Jakku before she could be sold to Unkar Plutt, and see if he could finagle it that the she be adopted as a Solo or Skywalker. The girl and Ben Solo were destined to be together and it might be the catalyst that kept that family together.

Third, he was going to do everything in his power to find the one called Snoke before he could turn Ben Solo to the Dark Side and establish the First Order.

It was a lot to do, but Ezra had a huge circle of friends and acquaintances who would help. It would all work out.

Ten minutes later, Ezra shooed the lothcats out of his spot and slid into bed beside Sabine,
wrapping himself around her. He breathed in her sweet scent as she hummed happily in her sleep, kissed her neck lovingly, and then closed his eyes. Ezra had a long-term mission to fulfill and plenty to keep him occupied on a daily basis. He had the girl of his dreams in his arms and his child humming quietly in the Force from within her.

Ezra was home. Forever.
Sabezra's 9th-12th Anniversaries

A/N: These scenes are part of a MUCH longer one shot story called 'Adventures of the First Kiss Anniversary' and can be found in a story called 'Rebellious One Shots'. I haven't decided yet if I'm going to expand on any of these scenes or not, but for now, they make a nice little chapter. :D

Sabezra's 9th-12th Anniversaries:

D2/5 ABY, Lothal

Sabine woke up deliciously warm, comfortable, content, and feeling safe all wrapped up in Ezra’s arms as he spooned her now much smaller form from behind. Not opening her eyes yet, she absently stroked her hand over the forearm that was resting across her abdomen, loving the hard strength in the veins and muscles. Her head was resting on the bicep of his other arm, but he’d still managed to bend it back enough to cup a breast in his sleep.

As she petted his arm, he responded by stroking his thumb over her nipple.

“Mmmmmm.”

“Mmmmmm, to you too,” he mumbled against her neck, the whispering caresses of his lips making her shiver pleasantly.

Sabine responded by wriggling backwards a bit more so she could rub enticingly against the hard length nestled against her buttocks.

Ezra gave a rather muffled groan as he started nibbling and sucking on her succulent neck.

She wriggled a little more and he moved back just enough so that his hot and ready cock could slip into her equally ready and wet heat.

They both groaned.

Ezra started thrusting at a perfect angle that had the head of his very-happy-with-its-location cock bumping into her g-spot with every movement of his hips.

She turned her head and kissed his flexing bicep as he rubbed her breasts in turn. “Now THIS is the perfect way to wake up to our ninth anniversary,” Sabine said breathlessly.

“I totally, one hundred percent…”

Swoosh!

They froze and looked up as their bedroom door opened to reveal a bright green haired five year old boy, grinning at them in triumph and excitement. “Sabie! Ezzie! Uncle Zeb and Uncle Kal have come back for a visit!” And then the boy took off, disappearing from view.

Ezra groaned and Sabine buried her face in his arm. At least we were covered by the blankets. He waved a hand and the door closed and locked again.

“Stars, how does that boy keep learning new tricks when no one is teaching them to him?” Ezra
complained.

“I don’t know, babe, but remind me again why we thought that moving from the Tower and into Spectre House was a good idea?”

Ezra cupped the bump growing in her abdomen and started up a gentle thrusting motion again. “Because you didn’t want to wait until you were the size of a bantha.”

Sabine swatted his arm. “Hey!”

He nipped her neck. “Hey back. I’m just quoting your own words, cyar’ika.”

She pushed her round bottom into him further, demanding more depth and enthusiasm. “Only I’m allowed to call myself a bantha.”

He chuckled against her soft skin. “Whatever you say, my warrior goddess.”

“I do say. Now get a move on. We have ‘guests’.”

_Zeb and Kallus do not qualify as guests. More like the weird uncles that dropped by just because they could._ Ezra laughed and thrust harder, one hand trailing down to strum her clit. “As you wish.”

_D2/6 ABY, Lothal, 4 A.M._

Sabine crawled back into bed after putting Caleb back in his crib after his fifth crying session of the night, flopping her exhausted head onto Ezra’s chest with a solid and very intentional thump.

His response was to pull her closer and tug the blankets around them better with a sleepy, “Cold.”

She deliberately stuck her ice cold feet on his legs.

Ezra sucked in a breath and peered down at her in the muted light of their room. “All right, all right. I’m awake, woman. What is it?”

She propped her chin on his chest and gave him a nasty squinty eyed look. “Remind me again why we thought having a child was a good idea?”

“Ohhhhhhhhh.”

“That’s what I thought.”

“But we love him.”

“Of course we do. But I miss being able to sleep. I miss long lovemaking sessions. I miss the quiet.”

“Wahhhhhhhhhhh! Wahhhhhhhhhhh! Wahhhhhhhhhhh!”

Sabine rolled her eyes. “Case in point.” She pushed her husband off the bed with a hard shove. “It’s your turn.”

Ezra stumbled to his feet, rubbing a tired hand over his eyes. “Yep.”

Sabine snuggled into the warm spot he’d been forcibly evacuated from and called out, “Happy tenth anniversary, babe.”
Ezra bent over the crib and picked up his bawling son in careful hands. “Yep.”

D2/7 ABY, Cerulia

The beach was filled with young laughter as the children of the ever growing Jedi family took a much needed vacation from politics and various businesses.

Ben, Minxha, and Caleb were building sand castles under the watchful (mostly) and amused eyes of their parents. (The Force gifted toddlers weren’t using shovels and buckets to put it bluntly.)

Skye and a few other Cerulian/human hybrids of a similar age were chasing the herd of lothcats that had somehow managed to migrate to the planet that many of the Jedi now called their home away from home. They absolutely adored the new animals on their world, not having a pet type species in their lives before.

Jacen, Rowan, and the four Force sensitive children Jacen had led Hera to on their travels were swimming like fish in the ocean, having made instant friends with about twenty other young Jedi Cerulians also between the ages of five and fifteen.

Sabine watched her son move sand around with his mind (with some assistance from his hands because getting dirty was still fun) and couldn’t have felt more proud if she’d tried. He was adorable and precious and perfect. He had Ezra’s gorgeous blue eyes and her dark chocolate brown hair. She found the colour boring on herself (which was why she was always dying it) but on Caleb, it was perfect. In the sunlight it had the faintest sheen of deep purple to it, which Ezra thought might have come from his mother, who’d had lavender hair.

Ahsoka’s daughter, born only a day after Caleb due to longer Togrutan pregnancies, was completely inseparable from her son (they finally figured out that that was the reason he used to cry so much) and was the cutest thing ever. She had Ahsoka’s blue and white lekku and montrals, but in a much shorter version at the moment, and Lux’s human skin tone and grey eyes.

And there was little Ben who had somehow managed to look nothing like his father. But Han was pleased as could be with the boy, saying to anyone who cared to hear that the boy was the spitting image of his little brother, whom he’d lost to plague when he was only six. Ben also looked like Han’s father, but Han and his brother had been abandoned by the man when money became too tight to feed them, so Han didn’t talk about him much. Ben did have Leia’s eyes, though, and they were just as warm and brown as the recently elected Queen of New Alderaan. (She’d been the easy favourite and had won the vote by a landslide.)

Sabine’s eyes were drawn to Skye as she went streaking past, her brilliant red hair streaming behind her and her massive Nautolan black eyes alight with glee. The girl and her companions came to a sudden stop and looked at her parents, seated together next to Ezra and Sabine. Sabine guessed that either Raign or Krystal had mentally told the children to leave the lothcats alone for a bit, which was probably for the best; they’d been running all over the beach for the past fifteen minutes. The two year old girl nodded reluctantly and then turned to the ocean, splashing into the waves and swimming over to Jacen like she’d been born in the water. (For all Sabine knew, she had.)

The green haired, half twi’lek boy welcomed the girl with a huge smile that Sabine could see even from as far away as she was. I can definitely see how they’re bonding the way Ezra says they are. The same way practically everyone here has. The same way Ezra and I have. I just wish I could feel it. It would be nice to read Ezra’s thoughts instead of only hearing the one’s he purposely plants in my head. Sabine felt a little left out when it came to her group of friends and their amazing Force
powers, but she’d long ago come to terms with it. It helped a little that she’d been raised to despise
Jedi and all that they could do. She couldn’t imagine being someone who’d admired them from a
young age and having to live with the same limitations.

Someone like Hera.

Sabine turned her eyes to her second mother, who was stretched out on a towel face-down, gleefully
sunbathing in a skimpy two piece swimsuit like she’d never get to do so again. Her face was turned
to the side and she was smiling at a transparent Kanan, who was lying beside her on the sand with
his chin on his folded arms, as they talked in hushed whispers about only they knew what.

Hera didn’t seem to mind that she missed the majority of the conversations going on around her
because they were all done mentally, but Sabine found it frustrating. Resigned to it, but frustrating
nonetheless. After being talked to in her mind by so many telepaths who didn’t talk vocally for a
month or so after first finding Ezra, Sabine had finally told Ezra that he could talk in her mind too,
if he wanted. It had seemed wrong to let strangers do so and not her bonded soulmate. And when
Ezra had beamed at her like she’d just given him the moon and proceeded to kiss her breathless in
gratitude, it had made Sabine regret not giving him permission to do so years sooner, not realizing
how much he’d felt closed off from her.

Beside Hera and Kanan, Leia and Han were in a similar position, but they had their mouths locked
together as opposed to using them to talk. Leia’s waist length brown hair masked some of their
activity, including a roaming hand or two, to the casual eye, but not very well.

The Solos weren’t alone in their amorous adventures by any stretch of the imagination, though.

Beyond them, Leia’s twin and his wife were sharing a towel with her propped up between his
spread legs. Luke appeared to be nibbling on Mara Jade’s neck as he rubbed his hands over her
massive stomach that housed the next Skywalker hellion to terrorize the galaxy.

Or save it. It was all in the perspective, as Anakin the Transparent was fond of saying to whoever
would listen. If Obi-Wan the Transparent was also around when Anakin said it (which he usually
was because they kind of followed each other around just for the sake of bugging the other) he
usually rolled his eyes nearly out of his ghostly head. Sabine was grateful those two rarely showed
themselves to non Force users; she had enough comedy in her life without them adding to it.
Apparently Anakin also never showed up when Leia was around because she hadn’t forgiven him
yet for torturing her before he knew who she was to him. She also had a not so small issue with the
fact that he’d let Tarkin blow up Alderaan. Sabine didn’t blame her one bit.

On Sabine’s other side, Ahsoka and Lux were sitting so close together on their towel they might as
well be surgically joined at the hip. Their arms were wrapped around each other’s waists and hands
were definitely trailing over the bare skin exposed by their swimsuits. And Ahsoka appeared to be
mapping Lux’s jawline with her lips.

Even Raign and Krystal were now also blatantly making out, apparently not worried about their
daughter out in the ocean at all. I suppose telepathic amphibians have that luxury. Could never do
that with a fully human toddler, that’s for kriffing sure. Although, the way we’re spending what is
amounting to half our lives on this planet, our non amphibian children are going to be half fish
anyway if Jacen and Rowan are any indication.

Ezra sure benefited from spending so much time swimming, gotta give him that; his shoulders,
arms, and chest are BUILT. Swinging a huge Kyber sword around doesn’t hurt the situation any
either.
Keeping Caleb and the other toddlers in her peripheral vision, Sabine turned most of her focus to the object of her latest musings and did some hand trailing over bare skin of her own. Ezra’s muscles were very fine indeed and deserved her attention.

And now we see if my riddur is actually paying attention to the female draped across his lap...

“Ezra?” she thought clearly. (And loud enough for every Cerulian in a ten kilometre radius to hear her, but she didn’t know that and no one had the heart to tell her that she was basically shouting when she tried to communicate to Ezra telepathically. It wasn’t her fault that she wasn’t a natural sender.)

His eyes immediately left the ocean where he’d been watching his little brother and his Padawan play and met hers. He raised a brow. “Yes, my goddess?”

Bonus points to the man I sleep with every night. Sabine smiled her sweetest smile and curled a lock of his long midnight blue hair around her finger. “I was thinking we should give Caleb a sibling before he gets too much older. What do you think?”

Ezra’s eyes widened as the vast majority of the beings on the beach paused whatever they were doing for half a second and then continued on as if they’d heard nothing. But most were smiling just a little bit bigger than before. Ezra’s smile went from curious to beaming brighter than the sun above their heads. “YES!” (Ezra’s telepathic call of triumphant acceptance was loud enough to be heard all the way to IncandesCity, as Wayve would inform him later.)

She beamed back and was still smiling as he kissed her like there was no tomorrow. A good five minutes later both of them were quite oblivious to the laughter and smirks they were receiving as they all but recreated their real life reunion after being physically separated for almost five years.

Eventually Sabine needed to take a real breath, so she pulled back a fraction and rested her forehead against his. “Happy eleventh anniversary, Ez’ika.”

He stroked a thumb over her cheek. “It most certainly is.”

“I hate to break up the moment,” Kanan’s dry voice said in their minds, “But my namesake appears to be floating himself.”

“What?!” Sabine and Ezra’s voices rang out together as they tore their eyes from each other to see that Caleb was indeed floating a good half metre off the sand and was waving his arms and legs as if he was swimming.

“Fragging hell,” Ezra breathed. “Kanan, is that normal?” he managed to squeak out.

Sabine was too shocked yet to do anything other than gape like a landed fish.

Kanan shrugged. “I don’t think so. But the Force is so strong on this planet that someone who has no concept of what should be possible and what actually is possible can possibly manipulate the Force as they wish. Caleb apparently wishes to swim.”

Not to be outdone, Minxha and Ben started ‘swimming’ too, little frowns of determination on their faces until they’d managed to accomplish what their playmate had.

Han’s resigned, “He is definitely your son, Princess,” inspired a chorus of chuckles as Leia scrambled up onto her feet with wide eyes.

At the same time, Lux was staggering into a standing position with a loudly exclaimed, “Bloody
hell!” in his cultured accent.

Sabine finally found her voice. “I take it back, Ezra. I don’t think I’m ready for a second Force using child.” Then she was up and off his lap and dashing across the sand to go catch her son before Caleb actually managed to ‘swim’ all the way to the ocean.

Nearly the whole beach laughed uproariously at Ezra’s very disappointed sounding, “Karabast.”

And so did the Force, in its quiet, mischievous way.

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D2/8 ABY, Lothal

Ezra somehow managed not to wince as Sabine literally crushed the bones of his hand that she was clutching as she bore down with a groan.

“One more big push,” the med droid said perkily. “You’re doing great.”

Sabine gave the oblivious droid a death glare that should have fried its circuits on the spot. “I’ll give you a big push into the nearest garbage chute you fragging….
Arrrrrrreeeeegghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Ezra couldn’t decide between watching with horrified fascination as new life emerged from between his wife’s legs or closing his eyes and concentrating on helping her with the Force as much as possible, even if it was just to siphon off a little of her pain.

Sabine eased off again for a second and she panted heavily, drenched in sweat and looking rather red and exhausted after seven hours of labour, but Ezra still thought her the most beautiful warrior goddess ever.

Said warrior goddess looked at him sideways with a nearly identical glare to the one that she’d given the droid. “This is definitely the last one, Ezra Bridger, unless you want to carry and birth them yourself,” she grit out through clenched teeth.

Thank the stars no one’s figured out how to make that possible yet. He didn’t know what to say in response to her declaration that wouldn’t get his head removed from his body, so he was extremely grateful when the droid said, “One last push please. I can see the head.”

And so Sabine did, and Ezra actually heard a bone in his hand snap from the pressure. He sort of floated past the flash of white hot pain though, because his daughter had finally emerged fully into the world and Sabine was sort of crying with relief and his daughter was definitely crying at what she deemed the clear abuse to her person. Her mental voice, which he’d been hearing for months already, literally cried into the Force, “Cold, cold, cold! Put me back! Mama! Daddy! Why?!?”

While the droids took care of the final aspects of birth and cleaning up his daughter, Ezra soothed her as best as he could while keeping half his attention on Sabine, stroking her damp hair lovingly off her glistening forehead. “It’s all right, my little angel, everything’s okay. Mama and Daddy are here. Just one more minute and you’ll be back with Mama. You’ll like her arms better, I promise.”

Mira whimpered but quieted her mental and physical crying. “Daddy.”

And to Sabine, he murmured. “You did great, cyar’ika. Really, really great. And yes, I promise this is the last one if that’s what you want.” But I won’t object if you change your mind someday.

Sabine leaned into his touch with an exhausted sigh. “Good.”
She perked up a minute later when the droid brought their daughter back, scooching a little more upright with a grimace. The little bundle made up of a pink blanket and an infant was placed carefully in Sabine’s arms and Ezra finally got his hand back. (She’d been holding and/or crushing it for at least an hour straight.) He absently sent some Force energy to the throbbing appendage while watching mother and daughter look at each other in awe.

“Hello, little angel,” Sabine said reverently, admiring the shock of dark blue curls on top of her head. “Ezra, she’s perfect.”

He leaned closer to Sabine, brushing her flushed cheek in a loving kiss. “Of course she is, she came from you.”

Sabine snuggled the baby closer to her face. “And you, Ez. Thank you for our beautiful Mira.”

“Mama!”

Sabine’s eyes widened. “I heard that! Oh, stars, Ez.”

He could only hug his beautiful girls as Sabine cried happy tears. “She’s very strong in the Force, already, if she can make you hear her,” he explained in a wonder filled murmur. He kissed Sabine’s hair lingeringly as she did the same to Mira.

“Well, of course she is,” Sabine said after a moment, glancing up at him. “No Wren girl is ever going to let her brother outdo her.”

Ezra chuckled in wry amusement. “Tristan would probably say otherwise.”

“Shush.”

Ezra gave her his trademark smirk as he crawled into the hospital bed beside his wife now that the droids had cleared out and left them a little privacy before the flood of well wishers were allowed in to see the newest Wren-Bridger. Ezra could practically feel their impatience from a nearby waiting room, and most especially from Caleb. Ezra sent his son a quick message of, “Just a few more minutes and then you can come see your little sister. Mommy needs a little more time.”

“Kay, Daddy. Practicing patience.”

“That’s my boy.”

Sabine cuddled into his side, holding her daughter who was already starting to squirm in her arms.

“Hungry!”

Mira’s parents laughed as Sabine offered a breast for the questing mouth.

Sabine let out a little gasp and then sighed in contentment, everything feeling absolutely perfect in her world in that moment.

Ezra echoed her sentiment exactly, sensing how she was feeling. Tilting her chin up for a second with a finger, he kissed her lips softly and then met her shimmery amber gaze. “Happy twelfth anniversary of our first kiss, cyar’ika.”

And that was the last time they celebrated that particular anniversary because it became Mira’s birthday, and that was ever so much more important.
The Mandalorian Finds His Cyar'ika

A/N: Please keep in mind that this is very much an A.U. just like the rest of this universe. I also know that there are already many similar stories about these two, and it probably qualifies as unlikely, OOC, and romantic drivel, but I don't care. I hope you enjoy it anyway. :D

You can safely assume that all events from Chapters 1-3 in season one of 'The Mandalorian' series also took place here. I'm not going to rehash them at this time so I hope you watched them first. As for Chapter 4, I'm taking liberties with it and changing things up to suit me, but the main events, like the battle with the AT-ST, are going to be exactly the same and I won't be describing it much. Chapter 5 and onwards will also take place exactly as they happened. At the moment, Omera doesn't come with a last name, so I have invented a fun one for her that would make sense to Twilight fans. I'll change it if she ever receives a real one.

The Mandalorian Finds His Cyar'ika:

D114/9 ABY, Sorgan

The first time Omera Blackwolf saw the armoured Mandalorian, she had all of the village children gathered around her as she taught them their daily lessons. His arrival understandably caused instant chaos.

They all jumped to their feet with cries of joy at the excuse to abandon their schooling for the day as the village astromech brought the community speeder sled to a halt in the middle of the village. She opened her mouth to admonish their bad manners but all sound died on her lips as she got her first good look at the people in the sled. The children immediately swarmed around the newcomers while Omera stood frozen, several feet away, and gazed at only one of the three strangers Stoke and Caben had brought back. Her eyes were wide and unblinking, and she was barely breathing as her heart pounded in her chest.

It was the faceless man from her dreaming fantasies.

The man who loved her until she woke up shaking with the memory of sweet orgasms and crying because there was never anyone there when she opened her eyes in the dark of her hut.

She didn't know how she knew it was the one who had visited her like a phantasm for the last two years, considering the lover in her dreams most certainly wasn't armoured in them, but she did. And she didn't even think to question her instinct.

He hopped off the speeder sled with agile ease, helmeted head slowly turning from left to right and back again as he looked at their quaint village. Despite not being able to see his face, she didn't sense any disdain from him at their lack of grandeur and that made her like him right from the start.

He wasn't the tallest man she'd ever seen, but he was big in his silver armour. She also happened to know that he would be big without it as well, having run her mental fingers over every one of his mouthwatering muscles a hundred times or more. The armour reflected the sunlight and sent glinting reflections all around him. The stunned widow breathed in a sigh of relieved awe. He's like
a knight in shining armour come to save us. All that's missing is a proud steed.

But the Mandalorian didn't have a steed.

What he did have was a big gun, a tough looking but very beautiful female companion in teal blue and black leather and armour who introduced herself as Cara Dune, a sled full of containers, and a tiny green toddler of unknown species that her daughter, Winta, was absolutely in love with after about point zero five seconds.

Somehow, Omera shook herself out of her shock and stepped forward, only registering the other people around them in a vague fashion as her heart beat frantically in her chest and thundered in her ears. *It's him. It's him. It's him. It's him,* her heart seemed to say with every ker-thump. She walked up to him on trembling legs and came to a stop directly in front of him in what could only be called his personal space because it took that long to get her legs to stop moving.

Her first instinct was to throw her arms around him and rest her head on his chest while blabbering about how happy she was to finally see him in real life even though she knew that was a ridiculous idea. Her arms rose slightly anyway, so she commanded them to do something else slightly less stupid. Nervously playing with a lock of her waist length, dark chocolate coloured hair was the best she could come up with.

His helmeted head lowered and she stared up into the black visor that only showed her a reflection of her own face. "Can I help you?" he rumbled out in a slightly mechanical voice that was still deep and sexy and turned her stomach to instant butterflies as she recognized the voice from her dreams despite the fact that it came from the speakers of his helmet. *Oh stars, it IS him!*

Her mouth opened to answer him, but nothing came out for the longest time. Only her fluttering fingers on her hair gave proof to the fact that she was still a (barely) functioning human being. *Kriff! I must look like a simpering idiot. Shut your mouth, let go of your hair, and answer the man, you pathetic, lovestruck, flitterhead. That other woman is probably his lover or wife and you're making a fool of yourself!*

She dropped her hands, snapped her jaw shut, and took a deep breath. And then she gave him a pathetic version of her best smile. "Sorry. It's just… well… just." *Get it together, girl!* "Thank you for coming," she gushed out. "My name's Omera and I occasionally pass for the leader of our little village when one is needed. If you want to come with me, I can show you were you can put your things." Relieved to have said what was needed without stuttering further, she turned towards the old barn that suddenly didn't seem like a worthy enough place for him to stay.

Din Djarin looked around the little village that he hoped would become a long-term sanctuary for The Child and himself and found it to be just about perfect. There were other children who already seemed enamored with The Child and the little green womp rat seemed just as excited to see them. The huts were simple but looked like better shelter than many of the places he'd spent the night. The people were all dressed in grey and teal clothes of a comfortable looking linen-like cloth. And best of all, they were surrounded by beautiful green forests and tranquil ponds with a meandering river nearby that looked perfect for swimming. *Not a bad place to stop for a while at all.*

And then his eyes settled on The Woman.

The woman who was staring at him with big eyes and a hand to her chest as if to hold in her heart.

She was beautiful in a simple, earthy way that far exceeded the overly painted woman of the upper classes of planets like Coruscant and Hosnian Prime. Her hair was long and brown and wavy and
fell down to a narrow waist that flared out to nicely rounded hips. Her equally attractive looking chest heaved under her hand as she sucked in a breath. She had a beautiful mouth that looked made for kissing. An adorable nose. Elegant cheekbones. Stunning slanted dark brown eyes.

He knew those eyes.

He knew that figure.

The rest of her face was new, but he'd seen her eyes in his dreams. He'd seen her beautiful naked body in his arms and underneath him. He'd heard echoes of her cries of completion in his mind every time he woke up for the last two years. He knew how she felt on the inside.

Incredible. Perfect. The Woman was everything.

She was the reason he hadn't sought out another female to ease his needs for years; because he had no urge left to do so after his dreams left him feeling satisfied and complete (if a bit messy). The only downside was that they came with an aftertaste of feeling depressingly lonely.

Thanks to The Child, he wasn't lonely anymore, but in that case, he hadn't been entirely convinced that was a good thing. He'd already blown his standing with the Guild for the green menace that had somehow attached himself to his heart, and now he was forced to hide for who knows how long to keep his self-inflicted charge safe.

As Din laid eyes on The Woman, he finally made up his mind about whether or not The Child's needy companionship was worth it.

It was.

For The Child had brought him to the woman of his dreams.

Thank the Manda.

(Two seconds of deep thought later.)

Or not.

How he was going to make a relationship with her work while still keeping his helmet on was another matter entirely.

For what woman in their right mind would want to love a man that she could never see or even touch the face of?

In the past, there'd always been women who'd gotten off on the idea of having a Mandalorian warrior frag them senseless, not caring that he didn't bother to do more than move the necessary clothing aside. But for this woman, Din didn't want that. He wanted what they had in his dreams. What he'd ONLY ever experienced in his dreams.

Naked, sweaty, long, hard, sweet, and absolutely perfect lovemaking. Lovemaking that included delicious kisses all over her delicious body.

But that meant giving up the only way of life he knew, and he wasn't sure if he could do that.

Not even for her.

So Din shoved his emotions back into the box in his mind where he usually kept them and did his best to seem indifferent as The Woman walked up to him. She couldn't know it was him. She
couldn't possibly share the sex dreams too, could she?

The way she walked right into his space and proceeded to lose all semblance of intelligence as she stared up at him with wonder in her eyes tore his emotions right back out of their box and sent his wishful thinking right down the garbage chute.

*Play it cool, Din. She can’t know that you know that she knows.*

*Shabla, that was convoluted.*

*Just pretend she's just another annoying being to deal with. You can do it. You do it all the time.*

"Can I help you?"

*Yeah. That was good. Impersonal. Not too nerfherderish.*

The Woman opened her mouth to answer but nothing came out.

He knew exactly how she felt.

He waited patiently for her to pull herself together, happily drinking in her beautiful features, grateful that his helmet hid the melting look his face must be wearing. The Child was also good at inspiring the same look of utter devotion. But The Child also inspired just as many looks of complete exasperation. *I hope this woman doesn't also. I might go mad.*

She finally got her act together enough to talk but he missed nearly all of it because his brain had become otherwise occupied while he was waiting for her. His eyes had been drawn back down to those soft looking lips that were parted just so and he'd started imagining how it felt to kiss them. He just caught the name Omera, and his mind got stuck on that next.


He missed the rest of her words, but something in her body language indicated he was supposed to follow her, so he did. (After checking that The Child was all right with his ring of young admirers.) His heart (and manhood) jumped around happily as he followed her gently swaying hair and hips, exclaiming that he should always follow her anywhere she wished to go. A step later, as he nearly tripped on a wooden stair into the building she was leading him into, his mind finally kicked back into logical mode and he told his heart (and manhood) to shush.* The Woman is not for us. She doesn't need a broken man with a bounty on his head taking up space in her life. Besides... What if she's already married? A beautiful woman like that? Surely someone has already claimed her?*

He wasn't sure if wanted to know the answer to that question. On the one hand, if she wasn't taken, he'd have to live with a fight between his conscience and his heart (and his frisky manhood) that might tear him in two. But if she WAS taken, he'd have to suffer with knowing that someone else was sharing a bed with the one woman he instinctively knew was his stars given cyar'ika.

A beloved soulmate was not easy to find and his was standing right in front of him but was also completely inaccessible.

*No matter how I look at it, this situation sucks nerf balls. Great, big, disgusting, hairy ones.*

The Woman... *Omera, her name is Omera...* had led him into a largish hut only a few metres from the speeder.

"I'm sorry this is the best we can offer you. It used to be a livestock barn, but no one's had anything alive in it for years. Now it's just a storage space and a place to brew the spotchka. I hope this is all
Din had been looking around the space at the dusty crates, the big tubs, the basically see-through walls made of closely placed sticks, and the hard plank floor when her words registered. He spun around and was quick to shake his head. "They're not my family. I just met Ms. Dune yesterday in town and hired her to help with your raider problem." The look of relief on her face made him ridiculously happy. "And the little green child... thing, well, I picked it up as a job and somehow it stuck."

Omera smiled sweetly, laughing like a bell. "I can see that. He is adorable."

Din glanced out the doorway at said child thing and saw him looking a little overwhelmed. Cara seemed to be having her own problems as she was surrounded by a small horde of men, from teens to mature adults who seemed to find her badass figure fascinating. "Speaking of The Child, I think he could use a little quiet time after such a long ride. I'll just..."

He didn't bother explaining himself in further words as he left the barn and strode over to the speeder. The children naturally parted for him, in awe of his large and intimidating form. Din picked up The Child from the container he was sitting on, receiving a relieved coo as thanks. The Child snuggled into his side as he cradled him in an arm. "It's not a toy," he told the children firmly. Their faces fell, but they didn't offer further protest, which he was glad for.

Seeing that he'd caught the attention of everyone else present, Din stared coldly at the men surrounding Cara. "My comrade is not a toy either."

The men groaned.

Cara laughed. "They're just curious, Mando. Don't get your panties in a twist."

Din glared, wishing she could see through his helmet at that instant.

"Besides," she continued, planting a fist on a hip. "I can handle myself." All eyes shot to her thick, tattooed bicep clearly on display and Din could just see the men mentally measuring it against their own and watched their faces freeze as they realized she was most definitely stronger than the entire lot of them. One or two got past the crushing blow to their male pride and gave her looks of adoration that just inspired the buff woman to smile sweetly at them in return. I'll eat my boot if even a single one of these wimps wins their way into her bed while we're here.

Leaving Cara to take care of herself and entertain the villagers with her war stories, Din scooped up his bag that contained his and The Child's personal effects with his free hand and then headed back into the barn. There, he found Omera had pulled a cradle out of somewhere and was dusting it off with a corner of her apron. She turned her head and smiled as he entered. He found himself smiling in return, but she would never see it under his helmet.

"I hope this is acceptable for the little one," she said softly, eyes falling to the child in question before digging out a blue blanket from a crate and folding it carefully into the cradle.

"That will be fine, I'm sure." Din put The Child in the cradle and watched as it took in its new surroundings with those irresistible big eyes. The Child then looked back up at him and smiled, cooing happily. "It has spoken; the cradle is fine. Thank you, Kuill. Now you have me saying it.

Omera laughed her bell-like laugh again, reaching out a finger for The Child to grab with his tiny, three fingered hands. "What is it?"

"I don't know. But an Imperial seemed to know well enough to want it very badly. It must be very
"I meant is it male or female," she said, turning her head and laughing up at him.

"Oh. It is male."

"If you know that, then why do you call him an it?" Her face only showed curiosity and no judgment, which he was more than grateful for, since he suddenly felt like an insensitive lout.

"I… I did not want to get attached to it… him."

"It didn't work, did it?"

"No."

"Does he have a name?"

"No. I call it The Child in my head. That's seems stupid now that I think about it, but I don't feel like I have the right to name it." She gave him a look. "Him. Sorry. Habit."

Omera smiled with warm approval, which sent his heart into palpitations. "Then you should start thinking of names for him. He's clearly your boy now. You should give him a name."

Din's emotions recoiled in fear at being permanently responsible for something so small and helpless. Fear that his affection for The Child would get them both killed. "I'll think about it." He sighed audibly as The Child looked up at him with those eyes as if he knew what they were saying and eagerly approved of the idea. Din hadn't seen any proof that The Child understood Basic, though, since he had yet to obey a single one of his orders. "It seems strange to be naming him, though. According to the Imperial client, this child is fifty standard years old. He's older than me by more than a decade. He must have a name already. Wouldn't you think?"

Omera raised a surprised brow at that, but then shrugged. "The galaxy is a massive place with many unknowns still; a species that ages slower than molasses isn't that weird, all things considered. And if he has a name, it's been lost. Something tells me he would love to be named by you. He clearly loves you."

Din nearly squirmed with unease at her words, reinforced by The Child's big eyes that watched him endlessly.

"I suppose I can think about it." The unease settled a little at his concession and he breathed easier as if he'd just allowed himself to think of The Child as his. Din contemplated the gurgling toddler. "What do you think, womp rat? Should I come up with a name for you?"

The Child cooed happily and then jumped right out of the cradle and into his hastily raised arms in a move that had nearly started the osik out of him a week ago the first time he'd done it.

"I'll take that as a yes," Din said dryly even as he cuddled The Child to his chest armour. I haven't got the foggiest idea what to call you, though, my little womp rat.

I suppose Wompie would be a bad idea.

"Speaking of names…" Omera said as she pulled a window shutter open by a string. Din grimaced at where this was going before she even finished her sentence. "…You haven't told me yours."

He stifled the urge to sigh as he cuddled The Child a little tighter for comfort. "That's because I can't tell you. Most people call me Mando. You can also, if you wish."
Omera was now the one grimacing. "That's so… impersonal."

"It's meant to be."

"Can you at least take your helmet off?"

"No." He felt terrible as her expression dropped from hopeful to disappointed with only one curt word from him.

"I see."

This time, he let the sigh out. Din put The Child back in the old wooden cradle and stepped over to Omera, who'd turned her back to him, fussing needlessly with the knot in the window string. Knowing he shouldn't, he touched her shoulder lightly. "I'm sorry. I can't go against my beliefs, not even for you."

She turned around, looking into his visor as if reading his eyes, a glimmer of hope appearing in hers again. "You say 'not even for me'. What do you mean be that?"

He shook his head slowly. "I can't…"

A sound at the doorway had him spinning, blaster palmed and pointed at the threat in less than an instant.

Omera gasped behind him, and the young girl in the doorway ducked back out of sight. Omera rushed past him and held out her hand for the girl. Mortified that he'd pointed a blaster at a child, he holstered it and vowed to himself to look before he pointed while he was here; this peaceful place was a far cry from the usual dives he inhabited and needed to be treated as such.

The woman gently pulled the child into his line of sight again and the little girl who looked about eight years old wrapped her arms around Omera's waist and peaked at him shyly. The girl's facial features were a little different from Omera's but she had the same slanted brown eyes and the same skin tone and hair. With a sinking feeling, he knew what Omera was going to say before she said it. "This is my daughter Winta. We don't get a lot of visitors around here. She's not used to strangers."

With those words, his heart finished its drop down to the region of his stomach. Of course she's married. Didn't I already assume so? Why do I care so much? I can't pursue a relationship with her anyway.

Omera continued on, oblivious to his pain as she addressed her daughter. "This nice man is going to protect us from the bad ones."

Winta squeaked out a, "Thank you," as she looked at him from the safety of her mother's arms.

All he could manage was a simple nod as he replayed Omera's words in his mind. Nice man. No one's ever called me a nice man before. Bastard and scumbag are much more common.

Omera smiled that soft smile at him that never failed to melt his insides and then she looked down at her daughter with the same expression. "Come on Winta, let's give our guest some room."

As they walked away, every atom in his body begged him to call for her to come back.

He didn't.
A/N: If you're curious, yes this storyline will tie into the Spectres' storyline. :P And yes, I promise to keep writing new chapters for this storyline every month or so and not abandon it after one chapter like I've done with so many other storylines I've started for this universe (my bad). Just like the rest of planet Earth, I am VERY much googoo gagaing over Baby Yoda, and thus, Din and Omera are coming along for the ride as I write a HEA for the three of them that I can almost guarantee Disney is NOT going to give us.
Ben's Announcement

Leia Organa-Solo dismissed her escort of guards at the front door of her glass and white painted durasteel home with a tired smile and told the two Mandalorian warriors to enjoy their weekend off. The men nodded their helmeted heads at her and walked up the street towards the centre of the city, an extra bounce in their step that wasn’t there before, undoubtedly aiming for their favourite pub.

She opened the door to her home and was greeted by the heart-warming sight of her black haired son bounding towards her like a giant gangly puppy.

“Mom!” Ben said, beaming as he ran into the foyer. He’d sensed her presence arriving while hanging out with his dad in the family room three floors up, playing the new game Han had brought home as a present.

Leia dropped her bag and opened her arms and he hurtled into them as she braced herself for the impact. “Hi, baby.” She wrapped his bony frame in a tight hug and laughed as she realized she couldn’t rest her cheek on top of his soft and wildly wavy hair anymore. She pulled back and met the eyes that looked just like hers and were now at the same level as her own. “I go to Hosnian Prime for two weeks and come back to find you’ve grown even more. I think your father was right when he guessed you were going to end up taller than him.”

Ben grinned and hugged his mom again for a moment, ecstatic to have her home finally. “Aren’t genetics wonderful? My grandpas are the best!”

Leia laughed softly and stroked a gentle hand over his hair, trying to tame it into something resembling order. “I don’t know... You’re grandfather on Han’s side must have had some crazy wild hair if this mess is anything to go by.”

Ben giggled and shook off her hand, tossing his mane around. “I like it. It covers up my ears.”

Leia tsked as she bent down and grabbed her bag again and started walking towards the living section of the small palace. “There’s nothing wrong with your ears. I think they’re adorable.”

Ben gave his mother an appropriately remorseful look and made a note to self to save the cool swear words to conversations with his friends in the future. “Sorry, Mom. And you were thinking that you wanted the best protection possible for our new planet. I remember you saying that six years ago when we first moved here.”

“Hey! Language!” Leia shot her son a chiding look. “The palace guards are obviously a bad influence if they’re teaching you swear words. I don’t know what I was thinking when I let Sabine talk me into hiring Mandalos for the New Alderaanian Security Force.”

Ben gave his mother an appropriately remoroseful look and made a note to self to save the cool swear words to conversations with his friends in the future. “Sorry, Mom. And you were thinking that you wanted the best protection possible for our new planet. I remember you saying that six years ago when we first moved here.”

Leia raised a brow as she started climbing stairs. “That’s right. I did say that. But you were only four when I had that discussion with the Council and I could have sworn you were asleep at the time. Your memory is amazing.”
Ben beamed at the praise. “I remember everything you say, Mom.”

“It’s true. He does.” Han said from the second floor landing, leaning casually against the wall, like seeing his wife for the first time in a month was no big deal. “Our kid quotes you on a regular basis.”

Leia stopped halfway up the stairs and looked from her husband to her son and back again. “Really? I didn’t know.”

Ben shrugged ruefully, face flushing slightly. “I think you’re very smart, Mom.”

Leia just had to hug her son again for that. She held him close with one arm and kissed his forehead. “I have the best son ever.” She held out her bag to Ben. “Can you take this to my room? I want to say hello to your father.”

Ben grabbed the bag and groaned as loudly as possible, knowing from experience what she meant. “Just try not to get too carried away and embarrass my nanny again, okay?”

Leia blushed as Han laughed.

Ben bounded up the rest of the stairs, paused at his dad long enough to exchange manly winks and receive a hair ruffle, and then kept right on going up to the third floor to tell the cook that his mom was home and to start supper. (Ben was hungry, as usual.)

Leia walked up the grand staircase in a more dignified fashion, a secret smile playing on her lips as she approached her husband with an extra sway to her steps. “When did you get home, flyboy?”

“About an hour ago,” Han said, still leaning on the wall and eagerly soaking in the beautiful sight of her. Her hair was braided in a complicated fashion that he couldn’t wait to undo and her curvy little frame was covered in something gold, flowy, and made her look like the royalty she was. He looked forward to taking that off, too. He opened his arms for her as she took the last two steps towards him and enfolded her in a nearly desperate embrace. “Kriff, I missed you, sweetheart,” he whispered into her hair, breathing in her flowery scent like it was necessary for his survival.

Leia wrapped her arms around his neck and looked up at him with soft doe eyes. “I missed you two, hotshot.”

A groan escaped him as he leaned down and captured her mouth with his own and they proceeded to kiss each other breathless for the next ten minutes or so.

When they pulled back a fraction to stare into each other’s eyes lovingly, Leia found herself pressed between the wall and Han’s hard frame, his hands holding her up by her rear end, and her feet were nowhere near the floor. She smiled at Han and stroked her fingers through his hair while rubbing her stomach against the hard length between them. “Perhaps we should move to our room?”

Han grinned and changed his hold on her so he had an arm under her shoulders and another under her knees. “Gladly, Your Highness. You always have the best ideas,” he said as he carried her up the next two flights of stairs.

“Wow. Fifteen years later, he finally admits it,” Leia teased as she pressed kisses to his stubble covered jaw.

He guffawed and nuzzled his nose against hers with twinkling hazel eyes.
Han walked through the door to their suite that encompassed the entire fourth floor of the palace and had a balcony big enough to park a fleet of X-Wings on. He chuckled as Leia actually used the Force to trigger the door to close with a wave of her hand. “Now I know you missed me,” he managed to get out before their mouths were plastered together once more.

Leia tore her mouth from Han’s for a moment and she shifted around in his arms so she could wrap her legs around his waist. “Just make love to me already. We can do the slow version later after Ben goes to bed.”

Han smirked as he tumbled them down onto the huge bed covered in pillows and soft blankets. With Leia now on top of him and her delicate fingers attacking the buttons of his uniform jacket, Han ran his hands up the length of her legs to gather the voluminous fabric of her dress up to her waist. “As I was saying; you have the best ideas.”

Leia smirked right back. “I know.”

Ben blocked the sense of his parents from his mind, old enough now to understand what they were up to and REALLY not wanting to think about it.

Instead, he concentrated on the new game, picking up where he’d left off earlier and happily shooting old school TIEs as fast as they showed up on the holoscreen from the interior of his virtual reality TIE Defender. He used to think the X-Wing was the coolest fighter until Uncle Luke and Aunt Sabine had a race in their respective favourite ships. Sabine won, and she didn’t have the Force to help her reflexes. That instantly made her ship the best in Ben’s mind.

“You know, I never got to fly a Defender,” a wry voice said from beside Ben. “That is always going to annoy me.”

Ben pressed the pause button on his controller and jumped out of his chair to run over and hug the glowing newcomer. “Grandpa!”

Anakin ruffled Ben’s hair fondly and hugged him back. “Hey, my little man. How’s life these days?”

Ben flopped his eyes in the direction of the ceiling. “Mom and Dad are finally back and they’re saying ‘hello’ again.”

Anakin grimaced. “Yeah, I’d rather not think about that one. Anything else new happen since I saw you last?”

Ben flopped back into his gaming chair and swivelled it back and forth. “I passed my exams at school, got dissed yet again for being freaky looking by the nerfherders who have nothing better to do than put people down, accidentally floated all the desks when I got mad, and... there’s a new voice in my head who encouraged my anger. Am I going insane?”

Anakin sighed, slumping a little, before he took a couple of steps and settled into a kneeling position in front of Ben’s chair. He put a hand on the boy’s knee. “No, you’re not going insane. There’s something I need to tell you, but I was hoping we had more time before this happened.”

Ben took in the resigned expression on his grandfather’s young face and leaned forward eagerly, sensing he was going to hear a very interesting secret. “Before what happened?”

“Years ago, Ezra was shown a vision of a possible future. In that future, you were lured to the Dark side by a man named Snoke and a bunch of other horrible things happen, like the entire Hosnian
system was obliterated by a weaponized planet called Starkiller and your Uncle Luke turns away from the Force and hermits himself on an island for years.”

“Whoa,” Ben breathed. “I bet Auntie Jade didn’t like that very much.”

Anakin chuckled. “Jade wasn’t in the vision, so we’re assuming she left him for being an idiot or she was killed or something. Anyways... Back to this guy called Snoke. The reason your father is always gone is because he’s looking for him.”

“Really?”

Anakin nodded solemnly.

“I wish I’d known that. I feel bad now for resenting Dad for being gone all the time.” Ben’s lower lip trembled as sorrow filled him for all the disparaging thoughts he’d had about his dad when his father had only been trying to help him.

Anakin sent him a wave of sympathy, knowing what it felt like to be wrong about someone. “Give the sadness to the Force just like your mom taught you,” he murmured. “It really does help. And you can make it up to your dad by being extra helpful or something.”

“Ohkay. I’ll do that. Thanks, Grandpa.” Ben smiled bravely as he imagined releasing the sorrow into the Force around him and immediately felt better.

Anakin gave his grandson an approving smile. “You’re much better at that than I was at your age. I swear Obi-Wan thought I was hopeless for a while.”

Ben giggled as Obi-Wan himself appeared behind Anakin for a second and nodded like a possessed bobblehead before disappearing again.

Anakin spun around and glared at the spot his Master had been in only a moment before. “I swear he follows me everywhere,” Anakin huffed.

“It’s not my fault you happen to have very entertaining relationships with those still in the living realm,” Obi-Wan’s disembodied voice whispered on the air.

Anakin growled in a mock fashion while he rolled his eyes down at a still giggling Ben. “Don’t ever become the scourge of the galaxy, Little Ben. You’ll regret it later when the entire dead Jedi community watches everything you do afterwards like you’re better than holomovies.”

Ben sobered as he remembered that there was a possible future where he did just that. “I don’t wanna be an evil Darksider, but this Snoke guy keeps talking to me and making me feel cold. And sometimes, the things he says make sense.”

Anakin resumed his kneeling position in front of Ben and looked at him with knowing eyes. “I understand, believe me, do I ever understand. Just keep thinking of everything that is good in your life and you’ll be able to fight him off. I have faith in you.”

“So do I,” Obi-Wan’s voice said in the air again.

Ben smiled bravely.

“Just hang in there, kid. Your dad’s determined to find Snoke before anything bad happens. And he’s not the only one. In fact, a lot of people are looking for him because Snoke starts something called the First Order and starts a war with the New Republic and he wins. And you’re at his side
when he does it.”

“Double whoa,” Ben said, eyes super wide. “I know I lose control of the Force sometimes, but I swear I’ll never go fully Dark. Mom would have a nerf if I did! Not to mention disappointing a ton of other people like Auntie Soka.”

Anakin grinned. “Nope, you most definitely wouldn’t want to do that. At least you’re allowed to be familiar with the Dark side now, unlike when I was a youngling. Ahsoka’s new Order is a million times better than the one I was raised in.” Anakin gave a ‘what can you do?’ shrug, “Anyways, if Snoke has found you and is talking in your head, we’re going to have to step up your training. I know your mother wants you to live with her, but I think you need to go to Lothal and train in the Jedi school properly. It’s the only way you’re going to be able to block Snoke from your mind.”

Ben slumped in his chair, sadness filling him again. “It’s going to hurt Mom and Dad very much if I leave.”

Anakin squeezed his knee. “I know. But they can still come visit you on Lothal when they have time. I doubt it will be much different from how much you get to see them now. They might love you to bits, but as parental units, you gotta admit they leave something to be desired.”

Ben snorted. “Now there’s an understatement.” He sighed and propped his chin on his fist, staring blankly as he thought things though. “I’ve always wanted to train more as a Jedi, and I KNOW my cousins have way more fun than I do.” He focused on his grandfather again as a thought occurred to him. “Why don’t you teach me so I don’t have to leave? I’ve always wondered why you’ve never taught me anything. What I do know comes from my mom or Uncle Luke or my cousins.”

Anakin heaved a mournful sigh. “You remember how I told you you could never tell your mom that I visit you?”

Ben nodded, wide eyed.

“Well, you see, what happened was that she caught me coming to see you when you were a baby and she had a fit. She still hasn’t forgiven me for torturing your father or murdering too many people to count when I was Darth Vader and she forbade me from seeing you. I’m afraid if I teach you anything, she’ll figure out that it was me who taught you and she’ll hate me even more. Sooooo, I haven’t.”

“Mom does have a rather spectacular temper,” Ben said with a smile. “I get mine from her, but she’ll never admit it.”

“And she got it from me,” Anakin said with a rueful twist of his mouth. “I don’t know how many times Padme and Obi-Wan scolded me for losing it.”

“Four hundred and sixty-two,” Obi-Wan said, momentarily appearing behind Anakin again and winking at Ben.

“Now you’re just exaggerating, Master,” Anakin said, not even bothering to turn around. “I hope,” he mouthed to Ben.

Ben giggled at Anakin’s woebegone expression before he got serious again, resuming his thinking pose. “I guess that means I have to tell my parents that I need to leave without giving anything away?”

“That’s what it means. Your mom can’t know it was my idea. You could probably tell them about Snoke, though. They both know about him and the impact he might have on your future. Although,
I have faith we’ve already prevented almost all of the bad future from happening.”

“That’s good. But I don’t think I’ll tell them about Snoke being in my head; I wouldn’t want to worry them since they have enough to deal with.”

Anakin ruffled Ben’s hair one more time as he rose to his feet. “You’re a good kid, Little Ben. We’re all very proud of you, don’t ever doubt that.”

Ben wrapped his arms around Anakin’s waist one more time, sensing an end to their time together. “Thanks, Grandpa Ani.”

“Anytime, kid.” He hugged the boy back and then disappeared, zooming towards Lothal to tell Ahsoka and Ezra about the new development.

Ben fell back in his chair and closed his eyes as his mind came up with some reasonable arguments to give to his parents.

Half an hour later, Ben’s little family was sitting down to dinner in the informal dining room. The serving droid brought in their starter salads of fresh greens and berries in a light vinaigrette.

Ben picked up his fork but couldn’t make himself take a bite since his stomach was doing cartwheels from how nervous he was. Instead, he pushed the leaves and berries around his plate, making patterns and designs that Auntie Sabine would surely approve of.

His parents didn’t notice, too wrapped up in their conversation.

“I received Ben’s yearend report card from his school yesterday,” Leia said.

“Mmmmmmm?” Han replied, mouth full of salad.

Leia stabbed a leaf with more vigour than was absolutely necessary. “His grades were excellent, as usual; top of the class again.”

“Great job, Ben,” Han said, shooting his son an approving smile without actually focusing on him.

“But his teachers are concerned about him,” Leia continued. “They say he continues to have problems making friends within the school, which is odd, since I know he has many friends amongst his ‘cousins’.”

Ben wanted to protest that it wasn’t his fault. He’d tried to make friends but he just didn’t fit in with ‘normal’ kids.

“They also say the other children appear to be afraid of him, probably due to the fact that Ben continues to ‘show off’ his Force talent.”

“I don’t!” Ben protested.

Leia smiled at him swiftly. “We know, honey. I’ve tried to tell the school that you’re simply experiencing surges of uncontrolled talent, but the teachers and administrators appear to be just as close-minded as your fellow students.”

Han sighed, slumping. “I’m really starting to think we should be home schooling Ben. But neither of us are home often enough to make that work.”

“We could hire a tutor,” Leia said thoughtfully. “Would you like that, baby?”
As his parents finally focused on him, Ben decided it was now or never. He sucked in big breath and then blurted out, “I want to go live on Lothal with Uncle Luke.”

Ben gulped as the Queen of New Alderaan and Admiral Solo of the New Republic military blinked at him like he’d just sprouted a second head and started dancing on the table. Ben ducked his head down and studied his salad as the seconds ticked by and neither said a word while he FELT them stare at him. Ben squirmed in his chair, wishing he didn’t have to do this.

Han smacked his hand down on the table beside his plate, making Ben and the cutlery jump and water tremble in the fine glassware. “Absolutely not!” he exclaimed, face flushing red. “Your home is with us; your parents!”

Ben flinched as his dad’s anger hit him in a wave through the Force. ‘But they’re hardly ever home to BE your parents,’ the chilling male voice that he now knew belonged to Snoke whispered insidiously in his mind. It was all Ben could do to hide the flinch.

Leia calmly put her fork down on her plate without taking the bite of lettuce that was on it and touched Han’s arm in a calming fashion. “Before you say something you’ll regret, perhaps we should ask our son WHY he wants to move away.”

Han sucked in a breath and released it slowly, covering Leia’s hand with his own. “You’re right, sweetheart, as always.”

Leia smiled sweetly. “Of course I am.” She patted Han’s cheek gently before turning her warm brown eyes on her son and raising a finely shaped eyebrow curiously. “Would you care to explain yourself, Ben-Wan Organa Solo?”

Ben twisted his hands together in his lap, clenching away the fine tremors of anxiety. ‘Be strong. You don’t need them,’ the voice whispered yet again, leaving Ben feeling colder than ever. But it was enough to bolster his confidence and give him the nudge necessary to start speaking, even if he didn’t want to agree with anything the bad man had to say. He put up the strongest block he could come up with, but he doubted it was enough.

Ben sat up as straight as possible and squared his shoulders as he met his parents’ eyes. And like the politician’s son that he was, he stated his case clearly and concisely. “My reasons for wanting to move to Lothal are very logical. First, it would save you from having to pay nannies OR tutors to look after me when you’re not home.” He refrained from adding ‘which is almost always,’ not wanting to say anything that would sound as bitter as he occasionally felt. “Second, I have cousins and friends who are more advanced in their training in the Force than I am and they are almost all younger than me. I want to train at the Jedi school like they do. And third, I am lonely here. All of my friends are on Lothal, or at least visit Lothal on a regular basis.”

‘Well done,’ the voice congratulated. Ben ignored it as best as possible. He didn’t feel like he deserved congratulations for the hurt he could now feel coming from his parents. And he most definitely didn’t want to be congratulated by SNOKE. He didn’t really want to leave them, but he also wanted to be a Jedi, and he’d never learn how if he stayed home. He’d also never get Snoke’s voice out of his head if he stayed home and that just might drive him insane for real. His mother had taught him enough to control his talent most of the time, and he’d learned some tricks from his relatives whenever he got to visit them, but Ben knew he’d never learn more than that the way things were going.

“But you’re only ten years old!” Han said, clearly trying to keep his temper. “That’s much too young to move away from home!”
“People send their children to boarding schools all the time,” Ben said in his defence. “How is this any different? Plus, the Jedi used to take toddlers away from their parents to train them, so I’m already way beyond that. Annnnd I’d be staying with Uncle Luke; it’s not like you are sending me to a stranger. Please, Dad, at least consider it.”

Han adopted his stubborn look, leaning back in his chair and crossing his arms over his casual white shirt. “I don’t like it. You’re our son and you should be raised by US.”

There was so much Ben could say in response to that; mainly things along the lines of how he’d actually been raised by nannies and droids more than by them, but he kept that in, knowing it would just make the situation worse. He didn’t blame them. His mother was incredibly busy ruling New Alderaan and being a member of the New Republic High Council. And now that he knew his father had a legitimate reason for staying with the military when it seemed like they were living in a prosperous time of peace, Ben really couldn’t say anything against him either.

Leia squeezed Han’s arm until he looked at her. “Han, I hate to say this, but I think Ben has presented a compelling case. Think about it; all of his troubles at school would no longer exist if he went to a school where he fit in with the other children. And he really does need someone more experienced than I to help him learn to control his powers. You know I only ever learnt enough to do a few tricks. I’m in no way qualified to help him any further. And he’s just going to get even stronger in the Force as he grows older. He needs help, Han. Are we being selfish keeping him with us?”

Ben looked from his dad to his mom and back again, waiting to see what he’d say with baited breath.

Han looked from his wife’s imploring chocolate eyes to his son’s identical ones. His mouth twitched in the barest hint of a smile as he noticed the matching expressions. Despite how much Ben already resembled Han’s father, he was Leia’s son through and through. How he loved them. He was also completely powerless against those eyes, no matter which one it was that turned that look on him. And when they both did... Well, he was officially putty in their hands.

Han heaved an exaggerated sigh. “I suppooooooose it wouldn’t be the end of the galaxy if Ben went to that Jedi school.” He pinned Ben with a dad look. “But... We’re coming to visit you whenever we can and you come home for holidays.”

Ben grinned, finally relaxing. “Sure, Dad. That sounds perfect.”

Han nodded once. “Good,” he said gruffly. He glared at Ben’s plate, just noticing that there was no food missing from it. “Now eat your salad, your mother says it’s good for you.”

Leia laughed softly and kissed Han’s cheek again as Ben nodded quickly and picked up his fork again.

“Yes, Dad.” Ben ate eagerly now, content with how things had worked out. The discussion had gone better than he’d expected and the longer the idea percolated, the more he looked forward to going to the Jedi school.

The only downside was the sense of satisfaction he was getting from the presence in his mind that was not himself. Why would Snoke be happy that he was going to train to be a Jedi?
Hera's Been Stolen!

Hera's Been Stolen:

D134/20 ABY, Rim 3

Hera wandered the marketplace of the spaceport while she waited for her client to come pick up his shipment from the Ghost. She'd arrived an hour before he was scheduled to meet her, so she was killing time window shopping while Chopper guarded the shipment. If she happened to see anything that would make a good present for any of the grandkids, well, all the better.

Flying around the galaxy delivering freight was a decent enough way to make credits and indulge her love of flying, but now that Jacen had better things to do than keep his mother company, Hera thought it might be time to move on to something new. Perhaps teaching flying lessons like she'd originally thought of doing? She wasn't sure yet, but she did know that she wanted to stay home more. She'd already cut back on the number of shipping runs she did to spend more time with her family, and now she was seriously thinking about running her last few scheduled shipments and then letting the other freighters in her small fleet do the all the work from now on.

Hera thought of her rather large and extended family with a wistful smile as she wandered down yet another row of wares and produce for sale.

Jacen was more than halfway through his twentieth year, and aside from his colouring and somewhat pointy ears, he was now the spitting image of Kanan when she first met him. He was just as tall, just as strong, and every bit as handsome. Girls had been sighing after him for the last five years or so, but Jacen only had eyes for Skye. He'd been waiting very patiently for the younger girl to grow up enough so they could be more than just friends. He still had two more years to go before she turned eighteen, but he said the bond they had in the Force was enough for him for now.

Jacen never did run into an older Jedi that felt like a bonded Master, but he'd easily made the title of Jedi Knight nonetheless under the tutelage of Kanan, Ezra, Ahsoka, and Skye's parents. Over the course of the years, Jacen had found over two hundred Force sensitive children, most of which had moved to Lothal with their families to be trained as Jedi at the school Ezra had built next to the orphanage. Ezra and Ahsoka had jokingly dubbed themselves the Silver Jedi and the name had stuck. Hera thought it fitting, given that they were sill essentially Light Side Force users, but dabbled in just enough of the Dark to use it if they had to.

Luke and Mara Jade had also moved to Lothal to teach at the school. They had two children of their own, both very strong in the Force, called Anika and Padmer in honour of his parents. They'd also adopted the girl called Rey that Jacen had found on Jakku last month.

Ben Solo, the only child of Leia and Han, had moved into Spectre House long ago. Hera's family had done everything they could to make the young teenage boy feel welcome, but he hadn't really started to look happy until Rey had arrived. Ben adored the girl, despite the ten year age difference. He'd made it his mission in life to make sure the half starved waif had every little thing she could possibly desire. The grownups had a good chuckle over his frustration at her not wanting any presents. Rey was literally ecstatic to have regular food and clothes to wear; she thought anything beyond that was frivolous.

Despite being only five, Rey had a stoic view of life that was kind of depressing when you thought about it. Her real parents had been too eager to give her up, not having the money to feed her anyway. They'd been offered a place and steady work on Lothal, but they had declined. Hera just
couldn't understand their thinking on that one. At least Rey would grow up in a stable environment now. And apparently with a future mate too. Ben was going to have to wait a very long time for her to be old enough that their age difference wasn't a problem anymore, but based on how his demeanour had brightened so drastically, he wouldn't mind.

Ezra and Sabine’s first child had been named Caleb, in honour of Kanan, and was born a prompt nine months after Ezra returned home. Ahsoka and Lux’s girl, Minxha, had been born only a day later, since togrutans carried longer. The two children had immediately bonded to each other and where inseparable whenever they were on the same planet. They were both almost fifteen now, and were making out more often than not, much to their parents’ amusement and dismay. Aside from that, they were both thoroughly dedicated to their Jedi training and loved their life.

Ezra’s second child, Mira, on the other hand, who was just turning thirteen, had decided she was taking after her mother. Despite being Force sensitive, Mira was determined she was going to be the best Mandalorian fighter there ever was. Mira adored her maternal grandparents and spent as much time on Krownest as she could wheedle out of Sabine. She also had a penchant for dying her hair with streaks of colour. Sabine had enough of a say in the matter that at least half of the long curls stayed the original midnight blue, but who knew how long that would last? Hera thought, in the long run, that Mira was going to be a serious force to be reckoned with, more so than any of the other children who just wanted to be Jedi. With her training in both the Jedi and the Mando worlds, the girl was probably going to be unbeatable.

Surprisingly enough, in a world where the kids were all pairing off early, as they met each other and formed Force bonds, Mira had yet to show any indication that she’d bonded to anyone except her parents. No Masters, no boys, not even a BFF. Hera had a feeling that whoever Mira eventually did bond with wouldn’t come from the Jedi world.

At least the children had had a safe world to grow up in.

The Rebellion had officially defeated the Empire in a massive battle on and above Jakku almost a year to the day after Endor. The threat in the Unknown Regions (which most people didn't know about), had finally been driven out of the galaxy five years ago, thanks to the cerulians and Thrawn's appropriated 'Imperial' fleet. Thrawn had let whichever humans that wanted to go back to their homeworlds, but a surprising number had stayed, either out of loyalty or from having formed attachments to the Chiss members of the ISD crews. Now Thrawn was using his fleet to seek out any remnants of the Imperial military that had fled the known parts of the galaxy. Ezra had told a select few about the First Order and how it would be even worse than the Empire. No one wanted to see that happen, so the said select few were doing what they could to prevent it. No one had found Snoke or the Knights of Ren yet, though.

The battle of Jakku was the last time Rex and Cody saw action, and even then, they never should have stayed in service that long. They’d both died in their sleep only a couple months after that due to extremely rapid old aging, only a week apart from each other, but at least it was at home on Lothal. Both of the clones had died happy men, knowing that they had made a difference for a cause that actually mattered.

Zeb and Kallus were still living on Lira San but came to visit at least three or four times a year. Zeb now held a position as second in command in the original Honour Guard. Kallus had been appointed the Senator of Lira San, representing the lasat people in the New Republic, and he’d never been happier.

After their unconventional start, Ezra and Sabine had what could only be called a fairytale marriage. To this day, they still looked at each other like newlyweds and were told more often than
not to ‘GET A ROOM!’ by all and sundry. Hera was a little jealous of their relatively perfect life, but only a little. She'd never begrudge her children anything, she just wished she could have had the same idyllic life with Kanan. Not that she was complaining about what time she did get with Kanan, but she knew it could have been so much better.

On the other hand, it could have been so much worse as well. Aside from the worst case scenario of never seeing Kanan again in any form, there was an excellent example of a not so perfect married life in Leia and Han. She knew they loved each other fiercely, but for some reason, they just couldn't seem to figure out how to live in the same place and make it work. Leia had once told her that her love life was like a hurricane. It rolled in off the ocean in a blast of passion that left them exhausted and then they went their separate ways again until the next time they happened to share space. All she knew for sure was that despite the crazy way they lived, Han had always been true to her and she'd never looked at another man either. It made absolutely no sense to anyone but them. Too bad their son only received the aftermath of the storms in scattered affection from them.

At least she and Kanan had provided a stable enough life for their son, even if his father was a ghost. Kanan stayed with them as much as he could and had been the best loving husband and father Hera could have asked for. She only wished she could hold him longer, see him more, love him harder, and so on and so forth. In short, she wanted what Ezra and Sabine had.

Hera shook off the somewhat less than positive thoughts and told herself to stop whining. The last time she'd gotten lost in wishful thinking, Kanan had caught her, and her ghost husband had been miserable for days because he thought that she thought he wasn't enough for her. Which wasn't true at all, but it took her awhile to convince him. Hera would rather have whatever it was she and Kanan had over any other living man as a mate. No one could ever compare to him anyway. He was the most loving, caring, thoughtful, reliable, handsome man in the galaxy. He even started thinking of himself with a grey hair or two so Hera wouldn't feel like a cougar. How sweet was that?

Hera paused in her window shopping when she saw a display of fresh meilooruns. Not able to resist, she purchased one and then headed back to the Ghost. There was only ten minutes left before the client was supposed to show up anyway.

Hera walked up the ramp and patted Chopper on the dome in greeting, receiving a cheerful beep for her effort. "Anyone try to bother you?"

Chopper beeped out a negative.

"That's good." Hera climbed up the ladder and put her fruit in the galley then came back down to the cargo hold and sat on the top of the ramp to wait.

Jykto, Master of the Knights of Ren, studied the green twi'lek female carefully from afar with the zoom option in his helmet. A wisp of satisfaction curled through him. The trap they'd been setting for the head of SynSon Shipping had finally paid off with the founder herself. They'd shipped freight through her company on three previous occasions, only to get an employee. Now he finally had his Master's prize in his sights and her only companion was an ancient astromech droid. This was almost too easy.

Master Snoke was very displeased with the growing Jedi presence in the galaxy and had sent spies into their midst to discover everything he could about them. Master had found the weak link that he thought would be enough of a catalyst to at least send the lip curling 'Silver Jedi' into chaos; Hera Syndulla. Despite not being a Force user, the twi'lek appeared to be the central hub around which
the leaders of the new Order orbited. One of them, the Finder, was apparently her son. Snoke's plan was to capture the female, therefore luring the strongest of the new Jedi to come rescue her, and eliminate them. If possible, he also wanted to capture the young Finder and perhaps convert him to the Dark Side. He'd made an attempt at getting into the mind of Darth Vader's grandson, but that one had firmly shut him out recently, so Snoke was now after a different target. He hadn't been able to invade the mind of the Finder, but perhaps he could break him in a more physical way.

Jykto removed his helmet and placed it onto the passenger seat of the speeder, and then drove into the landing bay the twi'lek's freighter was parked in.

Hera rose to her feet when the speeder entered her landing bay. A human man with rugged good looks and short blond hair dressed all in black jumped out of the speeder, smiling jovially in her direction.

Hera raised a brow and smiled back. It was nice to see happy customers. "R. Nocturne?"

The man smiled wider. "That's me."

Hera gestured him up into her ship, speaking over her shoulder as she walked towards the first crate and the datapad sitting on top of it. "At this rate, you'll qualify for our frequent customer discount. I believe this is your fourth shipment with us in a month."

The man chuckled from behind her. "That would be nice. I didn't know your company offered that. I was just happy with the reliable service."

Hera reached for the datapad. "All you have to do is sign..." Her eyes went wide for a moment as she felt an uncomfortable pressure in her mind and then she slumped to the floor as the world went black.

Jykto dropped the mask of civility and sneered at the crumpled twi'lek on the floor at his feet. As he said; too easy. She hadn't been shielding at all (if she even knew how), and it had been easy to delve into her mind and send her into happy night night land.

Her droid screeched binary curses at him and rushed him with an electric shocker extended.

Jykto raised a brow in sardonic amusement and threw the pesky thing out of the ship with the Force, not even bothering to see where it landed, only hearing the crash of metal against metal as it smashed into a wall.

For amusement's sake, Jykto signed the fallen datapad with his fake signature and tossed it back on the floor. After pulling off the woman's wrist comm and blaster and crushing them with the Force, he opened a crate and dumped the unconscious twi'lek into the empty space at the top. He closed the lid and activated the antigrav, pushing the crate down the ramp and loading it onto the back of his speeder. Jykto loaded up the other two crates as well, since they actually did contain supplies destined for his Master's command ship, and he was off, driving to the other side of the spaceport where his own shuttle awaited him.

Chopper fumed while he dragged his somewhat smashed frame off the ground, just catching sight of the speeder driving away. His first thought was to chase after it, but one of his struts was broken and he could barely move faster than a crawl. So he crawled back to the Ghost.

Chopper started by comming Sabine as he moved. As the smartest organic in their family, she was
the most likely to come up with a feasible plan to get his Hera back.

Chopper gave the equivalent of a sigh of relief when he heard Sabine's voice in his comm unit.

"Yes, Chopper?"

"Hera!" he beeped frantically and as clearly as possible. "Hera stolen!"

Sabine shut off the gasp that almost escaped and instantly went into warrior mode. "Where are you?"

"Rim 3"

"What happened?" she asked as she ran out of her art studio and down the hall to her bedroom to change into her armour.

"Human man. Used the Force. Made her sleep. Threw me out of the ship. Meatbag took her. Broke me," Chopper said as he used his sputtering thrusters to get up the ramp.

Sabine breathed in deeply and held it for a few moments to suppress her outrage. "Okay, Chop. It'll be okay. Is she still wearing her wrist comm?"

Chopper looked down at the mangled wrist comm and beeped a sad sounding negative.

Sabine closed her eyes, forcing herself to keep it together. The worry and rage was really making it hard for her to think properly right now. "Okay. Don't worry. We'll find her. Kanan will find her."

Sabine wasn't sure who she was trying to reassure more; herself or Chopper. "Can you fly the Ghost?"

Chopper did a quick systems check and found himself operational enough. "Yes," he beeped.

"As soon as I know where she is, I'll send you coordinates," Sabine said quickly. "I gotta go now, Chop," she said as Kanan appeared in front of her. Sabine gave a quick thank you to whomever that she'd already finished putting on her black bodysuit.

"What's wrong, Sabine?" Kanan asked. "Ezra said your emotions are going nuts right now, and your comm was busy, so he sent me to see if you were okay."

Sabine repeated the conversation with Chopper for Kanan in the fewest possible words, watching in sympathy as the ghost somehow managed to get paler.

"Kriffing, karking, fraging hell," Kanan muttered, running a shaking hand through his hair. "Why didn't I feel that happening?"

Sabine shook her head. "I don't know, Kanan, but can you still feel her at all? Is she still alive?"

Kanan nodded slowly, gaze turning inwards. "She feels like she's asleep. Not something that would normally send a warning through our bond."

"That's good, Kanan. It means she's still all right. I need you to go find her and then tell us where she is. I'll comm Ezra next and we'll fly to Rim 3 and go from there, okay?"

Kanan nodded once, eyes looking haunted, before he disappeared.

Sabine immediately commed Ezra, who was teaching at the Jedi school right now.
"Sabine," Ezra's voice said in relief. "What's wrong? And don't tell me nothing. I can feel you." He was out in a hallway, having excused himself from his class for the moment.

Sabine once again repeated the conversation with Chopper as she attached her armour to her suit.

Ezra was silent for a minute and then a rather impressive collection of curses escaped him, quite a few in Mando'a that he'd picked up from her over the years.

"Why would someone steal Hera?" Sabine asked when he wound down.

Ezra slumped against the wall, wishing he'd received a vision or something about this so he could have prevented it. "I don't know, Sabine. Wait. Chopper said the man used the Force? What was his name?"

"Hang on," Sabine said as she accessed SynSon records on her wrist computer. Thirty seconds later, she had it. "It was an R. Nocturne, why?"

Ezra smacked his head against the wall. "She walked into a trap, that's why. Nocturne. Night. Knight. R. Knight. Knight of Ren. If a Dark Side Knight has her, that means she's meant as bait. It means we might finally meet Snoke. It means we're in big trouble."

Sabine was wearing a scary looking smile by now. "Snoke has no idea who he's messing with, babe. We'll get Hera back and take care of him once and for all. Meet me at the Lothhawk. You bring everyone old enough, and by that I mean NOT the kids, and I'll notify the rest to be ready for war."

Ezra stood taller as his warrior goddess did her thing, filling him with confidence through their bond. He settled himself within the Force as he nodded to no one. "Right. We'll be there in five."

Ezra sent a mental blast to everyone relevant then stuck his head back in his classroom and addressed his assistant. "Mira, you're in charge of the younglings for the rest of the afternoon class. You're mother and I have to go somewhere for a while. Hopefully we'll be back within a day or so. Tell your brother to behave himself while we're gone."

Mira nodded solemnly, sensing her father's concerned emotions. Something big was going on, and of course, she wouldn't hear about it until after the fact, as usual. "Sure, Dad. Don't worry about us."

Ezra smiled tightly at his precious daughter. "Thanks, sweetie." He sent her a burst of love and gratitude through their bond and then left, walking swiftly down the hallways towards the front door of the school.

Mira turned to the class of five, six, and seven year old younglings and smiled brightly. "Who wants to learn some hand to hand combat today?" A dozen training sabres were deactivated and a dozen little hands went up enthusiastically. Mira mentally rubbed her hands together in glee.

Ezra was the first to arrive, but he was swiftly joined by Ahsoka, Raign, Krystal, Luke, Mara Jade, and Rowan, who had all been in the school somewhere, either teaching, or making use of the big training gym. Ezra quickly explained the situation as they all left the school at a jog and jumped on their bikes to get to the tower off in the distance. As they drove, the Jedi commed their children and spouses that didn't already know that they were going to be gone for a while.
practice and jogged over to the other side of the gym where Skye was staring at the door her Master had disappeared through with a perplexed frown on her exotically beautiful face.

"What's happening?" Jacen asked as he arrived at her side.

Skye turned to look at her future boyfriend, mate, whatever, red eyebrows still drawn together in concentration as she spied on the thoughts of half a dozen people at once. "It's your mother," she said after a minute. "You better go. Don't let them leave without you."

Jacen's demeanour immediately went from curious to deeply concerned. He brushed a knuckle over her cheek quickly in affectionate thanks and then took off.

Skye snorted at herself, as she was now staring at the doorway in disgust at being left behind again. When Jacen thought yelled at her a few seconds later, "My class! I forgot them!" she mentally rolled her eyes at him and sent him a reassurance that she'd take care of the younglings.

Jacen raced after the bikes he could see ahead of him on his own, dread filling him as he imagined everything that could possibly be wrong with, or could have happened to, his mother. He jumped off his bike and launched himself through the air just in time to catch the edge of the rising ramp of the Lothhawk, slithering through just before it closed with a snap. He stormed to the bridge area and glared at everyone who turned and gawked at his entrance.

"Jacen," at least half of them gasped with a wince.

Jacen crossed his arms over his chest and glared some more. "I can't believe you were going to leave me behind." He let the people he looked up to more than anything feel how hurt he was at the betrayal.

Ezra bowed his head in remorse for a second and then stepped forward and squeezed his shoulder gently. "I'm sorry, Jacen. I just... Sabine said no kids, and well, habit, you know?"

Jacen relaxed his tense stance just a fraction, already forgiving his brother. He scoffed lightly. "When are you going to see me as more than a child?" he said to all of them. "You know well enough that I'm twenty years old. So well, in fact, that I'm reminded almost daily by at least one of you that I'm still too old for Skye, and yet you persist in not treating me like a grownup in every other aspect of our lives. It's very frustrating."

Jacen received a whole lot of, 'I'm sorrys' and 'I swear I'll try to do betters.'

He relaxed a little more and smiled mischievously at all the grownups. "Do or do not, there is no try."

Let's just say there was a whole lot of groaning.

Jacen returned to being serious as he took a seat. "Now someone please tell me what's wrong with Mom."
Hera’s Daring Sacrifice

A/N: Okay everyone. Please don't hate me for what you're about to read. I got the idea based on a CANON comment made by Leia in 34 ABY when the Rebel Files were recovered. Leia says, "The Hera Syndulla? If only they had known where she'd end up." No matter how much I tried, I couldn't stop thinking of the following. So I wrote it. And now I'm posting with a cringe on my face.

I'm so very sorry. (You might want to get a box of Kleenex.)

Hera’s Daring Sacrifice:

D134/20 ABY, Space

Kanan followed his sense of Hera to a shuttle zipping through hyperspace. He found her stuffed in a crate unceremoniously, still unconscious, but otherwise unhurt. He was just about to lift her out of the crate when a warning from the Force made him whirl around instead. A black clad man with a helmet covering his entire head faced him, radiating the Dark Side. The cold hate hit Kanan in a wave, almost knocking him back a step.

Jykto sneered under his helmet at the ghost. "I've been waiting for you to show up. We know you protect this female, but this time, I think you might just want to leave her where she is." He held up a detonator for the ghost to see. "If you move her, I'll blow this shuttle up and she'll die. So will I, but hey, it's worth the gamble and to see the expression on your face right now."

Kanan was almost shaking with the rage that swept through him before he gave it to the Force and made himself calm down. He schooled his expression into a neutral one. "Fine, I won't move her, but you can't make me leave her. Eventually you'll arrive at wherever you're going and I doubt you'll leave her in a crate in this shuttle indefinitely. I can wait."

Jykto laughed coldly. "You'll wait in vain, Jedi. My Master has plans and that doesn't include your interference." He turned on his heel with a swirl of his ankle length duster and went back to the cockpit of the small shuttle, showing how much he didn't care about the presence of a ghost. "Oh, and don't try to wake her up either," he called across the short distance. "That would make my thumb very twitchy."

Kanan glared at the back of the man's helmet, being very un Jedi for the moment and wishing he'd drop dead. With a sigh, he turned back to Hera's prone form and arranged her limbs into a more comfortable position and then whispered a hand down one of her lekku in apology for not being able to rescue her then and there. He just couldn't risk her life in case the man wasn't bluffing about blowing up the shuttle. Closing his eyes, he settled into a meditation pose on the floor beside the crate and prepared to outwait the other man.

Three hours after departing Lothal, the Mandalorian ship full of Jedi arrived at Rim 3. Kanan hadn't come back yet, which they had various theories about, but because of Jacen, it didn't matter. (And they almost left him behind! ) Chopper met them with the Ghost up in space and Jacen pointed the way towards his mother, concentrating on a star map and pointing to coordinates about a half hour jump from Rim 3.

Sabine called the reinforcements waiting for word from her, most of which were already well on
their way to Rim 3, and gave them the new coordinates. With a lot of comming between various factions, they got everyone's estimated time of arrival and coordinated a joint attack on the enemy for two hours from now. Anyone who wasn't going to make it by then could just join in whenever they arrived. (It never hurt to have reinforcements arrive later.) In the meantime, Sabine's little group of Jedi were going to go rescue Hera.

Jykto had arrived at Snoke's command ship, the Supremacy, more than two and half hours ago, but he waited patiently just outside the mega class Star Dreadnaught, just for the fun of confounding the Jedi ghost. He also kept the twi'lek asleep, because he really didn't want to hear any sort of sappy conversation between the two.

Jykto had already informed his Master that the trap had been successful and that the ghost had shown up as expected. Now they were waiting for the inevitable rescue party to arrive. Snoke was confident the infamous Finder would have no problem locating his mother.

Now the Darksider sat, basically slumped in his chair, figuratively twiddling his thumbs and staring out the window absently at the fleet of more than fifty Star Destroyers or ships of a similar size that Snoke had accumulated over the last hundred years while he waited patiently for the right time to take over the galaxy.

He sat up abruptly when a Kom'rk class Mando ship appeared out of hyperspace, followed a second later by the twi'lek's freighter. No one shot at them as they were under orders for them to be allowed through. Snoke wanted to personally see whoever had come for the twi'lek and he didn't want the Finder harmed in a senseless space battle.

Kanan opened his eyes when the Darksider muttered, "Show time," and the shuttle moved again, aiming for a hangar. He rose to his feet and glanced at Hera, reassured to see her still sleeping peacefully. Kanan had felt Ezra, Jacen, and the others arrive. Now he just needed to protect Hera until they could come and get her. If Kanan could, he'd zip her through space the same way he did, but he couldn't. Sigh.

Jykto turned his head and smirked under his helmet at the ghost. "Tell your friends to come on in, if they dare. But you're not welcome."

"What?" Kanan exclaimed just before the shuttle flew into the hangar. His eyes widened in surprise and then fear as he felt an impenetrable shield of Dark energy surrounding the dreadnaught. Before he even really had a chance to react, as the shuttle passed through the Dark Force made shield, Kanan was shoved out of the shuttle and left floating in space, muttering curses to himself. Now he knew why they hadn't entered the ship until Ezra had arrived. That shield would have taken a great deal of power to put up, and they wouldn't have wanted to do it any earlier than necessary.

Kanan turned and zipped into the Lothhawk, where the other Jedi and Sabine were having a rather heated discussion about what to do now. Despite having the vague idea that Snoke would have a fleet, they hadn't really expected to see so many enemy ships. They also didn't know what to make of the fact that the enemy was just letting them sit there without firing at them.

"Enough!" Kanan said loudly. He didn't have much patience right now, with Hera in danger and him not able to do anything about it.

The group turned to Kanan, looks of relief crossing many of their faces to see him. He was bombarded by questions, but Jacen's, "Is Mom okay?" was the only one he bothered to answer.
Kanan put a comforting hand on his son's shoulder. "She's fine. For now." He looked everyone in the eyes seriously. From Ezra, to Sabine, to Ahsoka, to Rowan, to Raign, to Krystal, to Mara Jade, and finally, Luke. "I don't know what's waiting for you on that ship, but I'm sure it's not good. They're expecting you to just fly in there and surrender yourselves or something. That's an awful lot to ask, and I can't help you. There's some sort of shield that won't let me through. I don't know where Snoke learned how to do that or even how he knows that I exist, but he's well prepared." Kanan sighed as he looked at Sabine again. "I know I can't stop you, but I don't think you should go in there."

Sabine sucked in a breath, feeling hurt, before Ezra touched her back in comfort.

Kanan continued, sorrow in his eyes for everything that was happening. "I know you're the best hand to hand fighter we have, Sabine, but you don't stand a chance against Darksiders. These people are VERY strong and I'm sure they won't hesitate to choke you to death before you could even fire off a few shots."

Sabine shook her head in denial at having to stay behind, but she knew Kanan was right. She turned woebegone eyes up at Ezra and got a hug to comfort her.

"He's right, cyar'ika," Ezra whispered into her hair. "Just think of the kids at the very least. If something happens to me, they won't be left alone."

Sabine exhaled shakily as she came to terms with that scary possibility and gripped Ezra's shirt tightly. She rested her forehead on his chest for a moment, eyes closed as she got control of her emotions. She heaved a sigh and looked up, "Okay, I'll transfer over to the Ghost." She stared at her husband with an almost glaring look. "But you better come back to me, you hear me?"

Ezra nodded solemnly once, royal blue eyes just as miserable as hers. "I promise to do everything I can to see you again at the end of this."

Sabine pulled his head down for a mouth smashing kiss and then jammed her helmet on her head and marched out of the bridge, heading for the escape pod.

Ezra stared after her retreating form with his heart in his eyes for a moment before visibly shaking himself back into fight mode. "Right. Let's go get Hera." He moved to take the pilot's chair, but was stopped by Rowan and Jacen.

"Wait." Jacen said. "I'm tracking where they're taking her." His lips curled up in humourless smile. "I say we surprise them by not flying right into a hangar where they're expecting us to go."

Rowan smiled grimly too. "We'll make our own hangar."

Ezra looked from his knighted padawan to his little brother and a real smile started to form on his face. "You two are amazing, you know that?"

The two youngest Jedi grinned back. "We know," they said in unison.

Jykto tossed the twi'lek over his shoulder and strode out of the shuttle. He passed a dozen Knights of Ren and a couple hundred troopers before he even left the hangar. The Jedi scum were in for a nasty surprise when they landed. The Knights and the troopers had orders to capture the green haired Finder and to kill the others on sight.

The Master of the Knights strode through hallways, effortlessly carrying his burden, aiming for his Master's throne room. Striding in confidently, Jykto dumped the sleeping twi'lek on the floor in
front of his Master and let go of his hold on her mind, allowing her to wake up. He knelt down in front of Snoke, who reclined on his throne negligently. "Your prize, My Lord."

Snoke sat up slightly and twitched his missshapen face into something that might be called a smile if you were very generous. "Very good, Apprentice. Everything is going exactly as I have foreseen."

Hera moaned and rubbed her temple where a pounding headache was making itself known. She sat up and looked around her, trying to figure out where she was and what had happened. She saw a vast open room surrounded by a lot of windows and imposing looking men dressed in red ringing the edges of the room. Hera turned around a little and saw the man in black, causing her memories to rush back. She gasped and glared. "What did you do to me?" she accused the man, who was now wearing a helmet, but she recognized the clothes. "And where am I?"

"You are my guest," a raspy voice said behind her mockingly.

Hera whirled around and rose to her feet at the same time, reaching for her nonexistent blaster as chills swept through her. She took in the horrible looking man with the chilling ice blue eyes and sucked in a breath of pure fear. There was something about him that made her break out in gooseflesh and her lekku practically cringed right off her head. She backed away a few steps until an invisible hand grabbed her and held her still. "You must be Snoke," she choked out through her fear constricted throat.

Snoke inclined his head regally. "You would be correct, but I would prefer that you address me as Supreme Leader. We wouldn't want to be disrespectful, now would we?"

Hera felt her head being turned for her in a negative shake, and that almost completely freaked her out. She understood in that moment that she was just a doll to these people. They could snap her in two at any moment if they wanted to, so why hadn't they?

And then she understood, as a familiar silver, orange, and blue ship appeared at the window in her peripheral vision.

She was bait. For her son. For her family.

Kriff.

And a whole lot more swear words that she may have picked up over the years but was too ladylike to say out loud.

"Excellent," Snoke purred chillingly. "The rest of the party has arrived. Although I'm not sure what they think they're going to do from there."

Hera raised a brow and smirked knowingly. Snoke had underestimated her family if he didn't understand what was about to happen. She most certainly wasn't going to enlighten him.

Ezra parked the Lothhawk just outside the transparisteel windows of the throne room, having a perfect view of Hera standing tensely in front of an ancient and grotesque looking man on the throne. He sighed in relief to see her unhurt still.

Rowan immediately went to work, closing his eyes as he got a feeling for the massive ship in front of them. Before he started moving things around, he triggered the emergency shield in the event of a broken window. Rowan smirked a little as he did a little more than break a window. He literally dismantled the window frames and tossed the transparisteel sections and the durasteel frames out
into space, leaving a more than large enough hole for Ezra to fly the Lothhawk through.

Ahsoka, Jacen, and the rest were already standing at the top of the ramp, waiting for them to land and the ramp to descend, ready to fight.

Kanan was once again pushed out of a ship as it passed through the anti ghost shield that was still as strong as ever. He cursed and waited, pressing himself as close to the shield as he could stand. It had to drop eventually. A shield like this just took too much power. All he needed was the maker of the shield to be distracted for a moment.

Ezra landed the ship and then he and Rowan dashed out of the bridge.

When Jykto saw the ship at the window, he immediately summoned the rest of the Knights of Ren to the throne room. He spared a moment to give the Jedi credit for doing the unexpected. He even raised a brow in surprise when the windows were literally dismantled as opposed to the shots he would have anticipated. Shots would have just bounced off the shields, but there was nothing to stop a slow moving ship from flying right through an empty space. Clever.

Snoke watched dispassionately as seven Jedi ignored the long ramp of their ship and jumped down to the floor, lightsabres and Kyberswords drawn. The staff in the togrutan's hand was a surprise, but he dismissed it as inconsequential. He'd already heard about the swords via his spies. Snoke increased his hold on the twi'lek and lifted her high off the floor, gently squeezing her slender throat. "Stop," he commanded. "Or she dies."

Ezra, Jacen, and the others froze, eyes darting from Hera's gasping form to Snoke.

Kriff that, Ahsoka thought. She concentrated the Force through her staff and shot a bolt of white energy at the Dark Side monster.

Snoke just barely threw himself out of the path of the energy bolt that shattered his throne into thousands of pieces, in the process letting go of the twi'lek to save himself.

As Hera fell back to the floor with a strangled cry, all hell broke loose.

The Red Guards rushed forward to attack the Jedi. Jykto leapt at the group, red lightsabre brandished high. The Knights of Ren rushed into the room and joined the quickly spreading battle. Lightsabres, swords, light staff, force pikes, vibro-voulges, electro-bisentos, and Bilari electro-chain whips flashed and swung and smashed against each other in a cacophony of noise and movement. It was seven Jedi against eight Elite Praetorian guards and thirteen Knights of Ren.

Theoretically, Snoke's people should have won rather easily. But as Snoke watched from where he'd thrown himself behind the dais, it just wasn't so. The guards fell first, one after another, as the Jedi picked off his elite, but not Force sensitive, guard. Then Knights started falling as well. It was almost inconceivable. Somewhere in his stunned brain, Snoke remembered to keep up his anti ghost shield. His spies had seen more than one ghost mingling with this group of Jedi, and Snoke knew very well how powerful a ghost had to be to manifest in the land of the living. He didn't want any of them to mess this up any worse, so he drew even more energy from his Apprentices and even tapped into the life forces of the thousands of officers and soldiers that lived on the ship to make his shield even stronger.

Ignored by the combatants, Hera crept across the floor on her stomach, clenching her teeth against the pain of the broken ankle she'd gotten from the fall, her eyes fixated on her new mission in life. Her gaze shifted from the fallen lightsabre to Snoke, who was cowering behind his ruined throne.
and back again. She very carefully kept her mind blank and her shields slammed closed, having learned her lesson the hard way.

She rolled to the side as she almost got stepped on and then continued onwards, getting ever closer to her goal. She smiled grimly in triumph when her fingers wrapped around the hilt of the lightsabre, ignoring the fallen body of a black clad man that lay beside it. Now all she had to do was get to her target.

She continued sliding, still unobserved, around the other the side of the raised dais the ruined throne sat on, carefully pushing debris out of her path. And then, for the first time in her life, Hera turned on a lightsabre. She plunged the glowing red blade through the side of the, (sneer), Supreme Leader, just as he registered her presence. A lightsabre she hadn't even known he had appeared in his hand from inside his sleeve and plunged into Hera's chest in return.

They stared at each other in equal amounts of shock and hate as it registered that they'd killed each other. Hera's wrist tilted, cutting Snoke in half and she dropped the lightsabre before she too slumped to the ground.

Kanan could only watch as his beautiful, courageous, STUPID Hera surprised the enemy and paid for it with her life. He'd thrown himself against the shield repeatedly until he hurt. He'd screamed at her, both out loud and in her mind, but she'd shut him out. She'd shut everyone out. On purpose. So no one would realize her intention and stop her. As her appropriated lightsabre pierced Snoke, the shield FINALLY fell and Kanan rushed to Hera's side.

As soon as Sabine docked the escape pod with the Ghost, she dashed into the bridge and gave Chopper a quick once over, taking in the broken strut and the somewhat crushed in casing. She patted his dome fondly as he beeped forlornly at her. "You're okay, Chop. We'll get you fixed up in no time when we get home."

Sabine moved to the pilot's chair and took over flying the ship, manoeuvring it so that it was as close to the new hangar that Rowan had made as she dared. She'd grinned when Ezra had commed her with their plan. Now, except for where the Lothhawk blocked her view, she got to watch all the action happen through her trusty helmet. As enemy after enemy fell to the weapons of her family and friends, Sabine's smirk grew. Try and steal their Hera, would they? Hah!

It took her a few minutes to notice that Hera was moving across the floor slowly but surely. At first Sabine thought Hera was just trying to get out of the way of the fighting, but then she saw her pick up a lightsabre. Sabine's heart near stopped as she figured out what Hera was doing.

"Kriffidy, kriff kriff," she muttered. She didn't dare call to Ezra or any of the others because they were all in the midst of intense one on one battles right now and they did NOT need to be distracted. Quickly manoeuvring the Ghost so that the empty docking door was just inside the large hole made by Rowan, Sabine yelled at Chopper to keep the Ghost there while she ran out of the bridge and down the hallway. She skidded around the corner and down the sloping hall to the docking door and smacked the button, cursing at the door when it didn't open fast enough. She slipped through the opening as soon it was wide enough and jumped down to the floor of the throne room.

Sabine choked on a sob as she saw that she was already too late.

Hera was draped over Kanan's arms and everyone was flocking around them. Sabine just knew that Hera wasn't going to make it. As she ran up to the kneeling figures, throwing herself down beside
Ezra, she tossed off her helmet and angrily swiped at the tears that were blinding her.

Hera stared out the window into empty space, unable to move. The hole through her chest had severed her spine, burnt through the tops of both her lungs, and seared her now struggling heart. Oddly enough, it didn't hurt. But the echoing screams of, "MOM!" and "HERA!" that rang through her ears did.

As tears fell from her eyes, Kanan appeared beside her and gathered her up into his arms so she could look on his beloved, anguished face. He had silver ghost tears streaming down his cheeks as he cupped her face. "Hera. Oh Force. Hera. Why did you do it?" he sobbed.

Jacen literally ran away from the knight he'd been fighting, not caring about him anymore as he felt the bond with his mother start to flutter. He'd looked over and seen her lying on the floor behind the dais, the cut in half body of Snoke lying beside her. Jacen had screamed in agony and now he was kneeling beside her and his father, tears falling unheeded on her still form that seemed to drape over Kanan's lap bonelessly. "Mom. Why?" he barely choked out.

Hera's eyes flicked over the nearly identical faces of her two beautiful men and she mustered a shaky smile as her breath stuttered in and out and her fluttering heartbeat pounded like a dying echo in her ears. "To keep you safe," she whispered as she focused on her beloved son. "To keep the galaxy safe." Hera turned her eyes to her husband and she smiled just a little wider. "Now I can always be with you, love."

Kanan nodded and smiled through his tears, putting on a brave face as their eyes locked. He barely registered the presence of the rest of his family arriving and kneeling beside him as the light in her beautiful emerald eyes faded away and her heart gave up the fight. Kanan gulped back another sob and gently handed her body to his son. He touched his head gently until Jacen met his eyes. "It's okay," Kanan said softly. "She's going to a really nice place now. I think she might even love it."

Jacen nodded mutely, unable to speak through the tears lodged in his throat.

Kanan gave him a shaky smile. "I'll come see you tomorrow. I'm sorry." With one last loving touch to Jacen's green hair, Kanan disappeared.

Jacen choked on a sob and kissed his mother's forehead and closed her sightless eyes, then hugged her body to his chest as the arms of his family surrounded him in support, the echoes of sorrow resounding through the Force.

Jykto gaped in astonishment when the Finder abandoned their fight and literally screamed as he ran across the room. Then he felt the bond with his Master snap and shatter. Jykto staggered and stared wide eyed at the two halves of his Master's body and the people gathering around the fallen twi'lek that had apparently killed his Master.

Recovering his composure out of sheer determination, he glanced around and saw that he was the last Knight standing as the last of his brothers fell to the fiercely glowing dark red sword of an amphibian Jedi. Knowing this was probably his only chance to escape, he ignored the pain in his leg that had a hole burnt through the thigh and dashed across the room almost faster than the eye could see to the hidden door that led to Snoke's personal shuttle.

Thirty seconds later, he was swiftly starting the Lambda shuttle with his remaining left hand. He flew out of the dreadnaught and punched in the coordinates for his hideout. Jykto slumped into the pilot's chair as the shuttle jumped into hyperspace. He glanced over at his right shoulder that no
longer had an arm attached to it dispassionately. He'd always thought a prosthetic limb was a cool look for a Darksider. Now he'd have an excellent reason to sport one. Jykto snorted at himself for his somewhat delirious thinking and closed his eyes as he leaned his head back.

Only one thought was clear in his mind; the Jedi would pay for what they had done to his Master and his brothers.

Ahsoka was the first to move past the grief as she'd had the most experience by far with dealing with loss. (Countless clone brothers and fellow Jedi, her Master, her Grandmaster, her Order, basically her entire way of life.) She sniffed as she rose to her feet and touched the shoulders of Rowan, Luke, Mara Jade, Raign, and Krystal. When they looked up at her with grief stricken eyes, she nodded off to the side, indicating they should join her. She left Ezra and Sabine to comfort Jacen for now. He needed them.

As the others all joined her on the other side of the room, Ahsoka looked at them very seriously. "We're taking this ship. I don't know about you, but I feel the need to do something productive while we wait another hour for the majority of our allies to arrive." She smiled grimly when the others nodded eagerly.


So she did.

Ahsoka and Rowan took command of the bridge. Luke and Mara Jade took control of the engine and weapons sections. And Raign and Krystal protected the massive shield generators. Any troopers or officers that protested the takeover found themselves quickly knocked out or executed, no match for six pissed off Jedi who weren't afraid to channel just a hint of the Dark Side when the need arose.

Sabine and Ezra followed Jacen in solemn silence as he carried Hera's body to her room on the Ghost and laid her down gently, arranging her limbs carefully so she looked like she was sleeping peacefully with her hands folded over the hole in her chest.

Ezra wrapped Sabine in his arms and rested his chin on her head as she buried her face in his jacket and fought back even more tears as Chopper limped into the room and wailed, doing everything but crying real tears as he got as close to Hera's bunk as he could and touched her body with a tentative manipulator.

Jacen hugged the droid, wishing Spacey was here to hug too. But he'd left in such a rush, the big lothcat hadn't even had a chance to follow him. Jacen's tears slowed and his breathing steadied just a little as he felt the comforting brush of Skye's mind against his, lending her support as best as she could from so far away. It felt like her arms had wrapped around him, and that helped immeasurably.

Ezra put a hand on Jacen's shoulder for a minute and then led Sabine out of the cabin. They still had a mission to complete and Hera would be terribly mad at them if they didn't get their heads back in the game. He paused after Hera's door closed behind them and held Sabine by the shoulders for a moment as they looked at each other in complete understanding of their shared grief. Ezra smiled a watery, shaky smile and wiped the tear tracks off of Sabine's cheeks. "You okay?"

Sabine nodded bravely. "You?"
Ezra nodded just as bravely.

They both knew they were lying.

Sabine heaved a sigh and glanced at Hera's door once more. "Okay. Let's go see what Ahsoka's been up to. If I know her, she's done all the fun stuff already."

Ezra laughed darkly once, because Sabine was right, and they made their way back into the throne room. Sabine detoured to pick up her helmet and then they went looking for their fearless leader.

They found her in the bridge just starting a broadcast to Snoke's entire fleet. The bridge was littered with bodies and a few smart souls who'd immediately surrendered, and where now basically cowering against a wall. (None of them were high ranking officers.)

"This is Ahsoka Tano, Grand Master of the Silver Jedi Order. We have taken control of your command ship and your leaders are all deceased. This will be your only warning to surrender or we will destroy you. You have five minutes to decide and send you surrender notifications to me. Any ships that have not done so within that timeframe will wish they had." Ahsoka smiled in a chilling fashion as hundreds of ships appeared out of hyperspace, surrounding the enemy fleet. "If you were thinking about running for it, look out your windows. Our allies have arrived and are eager for a fight. If you're wondering, you're looking at the New Republic's 2nd fleet under the command of Admiral Solo. The Chiss fleet, under the command of Grand Admiral Thrawn. The Mandalorian fleet, under the command of the Mand'alor, Bo-Katan Kryze. And finally, the infamous Lothal Defenders, under the command of Admiral Ketsu Onyo, guaranteed to wipe the floor with your small fighters. And, just for the fun of it, the New Republic's 1st fleet is on its way as well. Your five minutes starts now."

They didn't have to wait five minutes for every single ship in Snoke's fleet to surrender. And Sabine had been looking forward to seeing some of them explode too.

Lothrats.

Hera opened her eyes to find herself lying on her bunk in the Ghost. She turned her head and smiled at Kanan, who lay beside her, looking at her with a much too serious and sad face. She cupped his face in her hands, thrilling at how real he felt now, and kissed him soft and sweet until he responded and opened with a groan, the kiss turning passionate and almost desperate in seconds.

They pulled back a few life reaffirming minutes later, and pressed their foreheads together as they gazed into each other's eyes lovingly. She breathed in deeply and pulled back, looking around at her cabin curiously. "Why does this look like the Ghost?"

Kanan smiled and kissed the top of her head, hugging her close in unimaginable joy. "Because it is, darling. The Afterlife can be whatever you want it to be, look however you want it to look. I thought you might like to live on a copy of our home and fly around through space. If not, just tell me and we can think up something else together."

Hera shook her head quickly and buried her fingers in his hair. "No. No. It's perfect. You always did know me so well." She kissed a path along his jaw and stopped at his mouth, whispering against his lips. "You're perfect. I love you, Kanan."

Kanan grinned and rolled her underneath of him, bracing his hands on either side of her head. "I love you too, Hera," he whispered back.

Then he proceeded to show her how very very much that was.
Miroe Find Kamino

Miroe Find Kamino:

D15/28 ABY, Kamino

“You think we finally found him?”

The scepticism in Poe’s voice was painfully obvious. Not that Mira could blame him; it had been two years since they started searching for the one known as ‘The Last Knight’. With nothing but rumours to guide their journey back and forth across the galaxy, they’d finally ended up at Kamino, a world not even actually IN their galaxy.

Mira stared at the blue world almost completely covered over with clouds and nodded slowly. “Actually, love, I think we have, if the sense of intense cold I feel radiating off this planet in the Force is anything to go by.”

Poe shot his wife a concerned look. “Maybe we should call in some reinforcements before we go down there? I know you’re the galaxy’s most badass Mandalorian Jedi ever to live and I’m not exactly helpless, but I don’t fancy the idea of dying just yet; I happen to be enjoying married life, thank you very much.”

Mira snorted at her darkly handsome husband, taking her focus off the planet below them to look at him with amused amber eyes. “You have been wearing a rather satisfied expression for the past couple of months,” she teased. “I’m not sure why though; our lifestyle and activities haven’t really changed with my new last name.”

Poe quirked a dark brow at her. “You just answered your own question, sweetheart; you’re officially mine now. You know how many scoundrels and nerfherders I had to fight off when they thought you were free for the winning?”

Mira smirked and tossed her long, multicoloured hair cheekily, holding back the urge to giggle at his indignant expression. “A couple?” she said just to see him get riled up. She had, in fact, witnessed most of those scoundrels and nerfherders getting their asses handed to them (which had turned her on more than a little), and there was even more that Poe didn’t know about that she’d had to tell ever so nicely to leave her the kriff alone or they’d be carrying their favourite appendage home in a jar. (It wasn’t easy being a good looking female in a galaxy of morons.)

Poe gawked at her for half a moment before he surged up from the pilot’s chair to place his hands on either side of her head and loom over her. “A couple?! A COUPLE?!?” He shook her chair a few times to emphasize his point while she gazed up at him with wide, super innocent eyes. “Mira, have you seen yourself lately? You’re the hottest girl this side of the Unknown Regions!”

Poe finally let the giggle out as she grabbed fistfuls of his brown leather jacket and tugged him closer. “Force, I adore teasing you, but thank you for the compliment, love.” She pressed a sassy kiss to his mouth, nipping his lower lip before letting him go and pushing him away. “Now be a good pilot and fly us down to that planet; we have a Darksider to eliminate. The Last Knight has taken his last potshot at my family.”

Poe shook his head at her, not surprised that he’d fallen for her teasing yet again or that she was forging ahead with her mission despite the possible danger. “Fine,” he said as he settled back into his chair and gripped the controls. “But at least tell someone where we are so they know where to
come look for our bodies.”

Mira rolled her eyes at his frowning face while he reluctantly started flying their ship, but complied enough to reach for the long range comm. “I’m surprised at your lack of enthusiasm, Poe. You knew what you signed up for and I thought you were just as eager as I am to stop this guy.”

“It’s not that,” he said, his frown deepening as he glanced at her. “It’s what you said when we first came out of hyperspace. You said the PLANET felt cold in the Force. From what I’ve learned about this Force stuff, isn’t that a little extreme for just one Darksider?”

Now Mira returned his frown because he was right and she’d let her own overconfidence blind her to her own words. “It is extreme, actually. Maybe the planet itself is a Dark planet. Maybe that’s why he likes it here.”

“Assuming the Last Knight is actually down there.”

“It does fit all of the clues we’ve scrounged up so far,” Mira pointed out needlessly, since they’d already had that discussion before jumping to Kamino.

Poe glanced at her again and caught her nibbling on her lower lip in thought. “Do you still want to go down there? Cause I’m all for waiting a couple days for reinforcements to arrive. We can watch movies and catch up on sleep and... other things.”

Mira shook her head at him, a smile curling her lips up, as the comm chimed and Chopper’s familiar beeps filled the cockpit of the Lothjaig. “Insatiable,” she mouthed.

He winked as he eased up on the Kom’rk’s throttle.

“You rang, Spectre 9?”

Mira tore her focus off her smirking husband and answered the family droid. “Can you patch me through to Daddy please, Chopper?”

“Sure,” he beeped. “But it’s the middle of the night here,” he added.

“Then just give him a mess...”

The comm chimed again, indicating Chopper had already made the connection. Mira grimaced, afraid she’d now woken up her parents.

“Hello?” her father’s somewhat out of breath sounding voice said a few moments later.

“Hi, Daddy,” Mira said. “I forgot to check the time. I’m sorry to wake you.”

“Oh, he wasn’t asleep,” her mother’s voice said, sounding very amused.

Mira and Poe exchanged identical looks of horror at what Sabine had just implied.

“Oh, Force, Mom. I’d say get a room, but you’re undoubtedly already in it.”

“Actually...” Sabine and Ezra said together.

“Don’t even!” Mira cut them off quickly. “I don’t want to know!”

Her parents chuckled at the familiar response to their love life. “What did you need, sweetie?” Ezra asked after taking a few seconds to wind down.
“I’m just letting you know that Poe and I may have found our enemy’s lair. The planet matches all of the clues and it is definitely strong in the Dark side. Very very strong, actually,” she admitted.

“Where are you?” Sabine asked curiously while Ezra frowned in concern.

“Kamino.”

Millions of kilometres away, Ezra and Sabine looked at each other in shock. “Kamino?!” they repeated together.

“Yes, Kamino,” Mira said, rolling her eyes up and shaking her head minutely at their dramatics for Poe’s benefit. “I know it’s where the clones were bred. You don’t have to get all excited about it. Anyway, Poe just wanted me to tell you where we were in case you need to come rescue our bodies.”

“Hey!” Poe exclaimed. “Don’t make me sound wimpy to your parents!” he hissed.

Mira and Sabine snorted in an identical fashion.

Ezra, being able to sympathize with the other male when faced with badass Mandalorian wives said, “Don’t worry, Poe, I don’t think you’re wimpy. You’ve already more than proved yourself to be tough enough to withstand a pissed off Mando, so I think you’re good. Don’t let the girls get to you.”

“Thanks,” Poe said dryly.

“Now, as far as this mission is concerned, Mira,” Ezra said pointedly. “You can proceed, but do so very carefully. Listen to the Force. If you feel like you need to retreat, then do so. Comm me and the whole lot of us will come rushing as fast as we can and we’ll deal with the Last Knight together. Who knows if he’s amassed a secret army or something over the years that we don’t know about.”

“Yes, Dad,” Mira said in anything but an obedient tone.

“Mira...” Sabine said warningly.

“Fine,” she huffed. “I’ll be careful. I’ll even leave my wrist comm on and Chopper can monitor our progress if you want.”

“I want,” Ezra said firmly.

“Alright,” Mira sighed dramatically. “You two can now go back to whatever you were doing in whatever cringe worthy location you were doing it in.”

Poe snorted with laughter, his shoulders shaking as he tried to keep quiet.

“I’m not sure I’m still in the mood,” Ezra muttered just loud enough to be heard over the comm. That was quickly followed by an, “Owwwww, Sabine!”

Poe laughed harder while Mira literally tried to disappear into her chair.

“I guess I’m still in the mood,” Ezra said resignedly. "My little girl's walking into danger, but that's not enough to stop me."

“I should hope not, lothrat,” Sabine said warningly on a very clear undertone of laughter. “You were just getting to the good parts.”
“Gaahhhhh! I don’t want to hear this!” Mira exclaimed. “I’ll call you later and tell you how it went,” she said quickly before pushing the button to end the call and then slumping back into her seat.

Poe was still chuckling as he resumed his flight down to the planet and activated the cloaking device and the signal scrambler. “You do realize that we are almost identical to your parents in every way except I’m not a Jedi and you are?”

Mira huffed and crossed her arms over her armour covered chest. “I figured that out long ago. I think that’s why we work so well, but jeez, Poe, don’t tell them!”

He grinned at her fleetingly before concentrating on his flight through the atmospheric clouds. “I wasn’t planning on it. You’re mother already gives me a very scary glare every time she sees me so much as hug you.”

Her wrist comm beeped, making her jump a little before she pushed the button to answer it. “Yes?” she asked tentatively, afraid it was her parents about to yell at her for hanging up on them.

“It’s just me,” Chopper beeped.

“Oh, thank the Force,” she muttered. “All right, Chop, you can listen, but don’t make any noise that might give us away.”

“Got it.”

“Thanks, Chopper.”

Poe brought their ship to a hover in the last layer of rain clouds, the ocean just barely visible below. “Okay, my Jedi wife, where to from here?”

That was a really good question that Mira hadn’t thought of yet. She sat up straighter in her chair and closed her eyes. “Just give me a minute to see if I can sense him.”

She stretched her Force senses out, feeling like she was struggling through clouds of Dark side energy. She’d never felt this much Dark energy concentrated in one place before and it was starting to worry her just a little. She pushed the little niggle of doubt to the back of her mind and concentrated harder, trying to find where the Dark energy was coming from.

She was just starting to think that they’d have to call in Jacen to come ‘find’ her quarry when she suddenly had a feeling about which way to go.

Opening her eyes, she nodded to the right. “Go west.”

Poe turned the ship and started flying, sticking to the clouds as extra protection against detection from the natives. “How far?”

Mira frowned, eyes closing again. “I don’t know yet. Just keep flying until I say stop.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” he snarked.

Mira cracked an eye and shot him a look that he ignored. Laughing softly, she closed her eye again and got back to concentrating, seeking out the strongest source of the Dark side.

It took about fifteen minutes, and they were practically on the other side of the planet before she told Poe to stop.
He lowered them into the dark night, rain hitting the transparisteel like blaster shots, and they both got their first look at the massive circular buildings perched over the crashing ocean waves. Most of the buildings were dark, but one was well lit, both inside and out.

“Why do I get the feeling that we’re being set up?” Poe said as he crept their ship forwards despite the instinct that was telling him to RUN.

“Probably because we are,” Mira admitted. “I’ve always thought that some of the clues to this location were just a little too easy to find.”

“Then why are we doing this?” Poe said, looking at her with his eyes even darker than normal from worry.

“Because someone has to,” she answered, durasteel resolve in her voice. “This sleemo has been attacking my family and the Jedi school for years and we haven’t managed to catch him yet. This can’t go on any longer, Poe. Eventually, he’s going to get lucky and actually kill someone and I just can’t let that happen.”

Poe hung his head for a moment as he reminded himself that he’d promised to follow her to the ends of the galaxy and beyond if that’s what she wanted. Well, they were definitely beyond, and he was still here. He looked up again and gave her his best kick ass look. “All right, sweetheart. Let’s do this.”

Mira beamed at him as he found a landing pad to aim for and she stood. She double checked her blaster and lightsabre before pulling a hair tie off her wrist and swirling the long mass into a quick bun at the back of her neck. As Poe touched the ship down to the landing pad with a gentle bump, she scooped her helmet off the floor and then leaned over and kissed his cheek. “I love you, babe.”

As he smiled at her in clear adoration, his fingers automatically going through the shut down sequence, she palmed her blaster and stunned him. Twice. Just to make sure he stayed out for at least a couple hours.

For half a second, he looked at her in shock and then he slumped forward in his chair. Mira caught him and settled him back, gloved fingers brushing the dark curls off his forehead lovingly. “I’m sorry, my love,” she whispered to his sleeping form. “But I can’t be worrying about you right now. This fight is no place for a non Force user.”

Taking a deep breath, she pushed her helmet down on her head and walked out of the cockpit, ready to deal with whatever traps the Last Knight had up his proverbial sleeve.

A/N: Hehehehehe. I'm soooooooo sort of sorry about this cliffhanger of a start to Miroe's story, but I couldn't help myself. And... it might be a looooonnnng time before I actually get back to this arc, but hey, if it get's your attention, then I did my job. :D

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