The Princess, the Smuggler and the Sith Lord's Son

by Sassaphrass

Summary

Han Solo was trying to rescue her Royal Annoyingness from the Death Star when he runs smack into Vader's kid. Naturally he does the logical thing and takes him hostage. This is where the story starts.

OR

Luke just wanted to get some snacks when he ran into a Wookie, a Princess and a Space Pirate. The day's pretty much downhill from there.

Notes

*This fic was formerly known as Rapunzel in the Tower, and has been renamed to reflect the direction the story will take as a multichaptered fic.
NOTE: Luke and Leia are both still 19 years old at the beginning of this story. Han is in his late twenties/early thirties.

Chapter Notes

I have no idea whether or not this is even good but it's been bothering me for a month and I just needed to post it and get it done with.

I've seen a bunch of AU's of Luke being raised by Vader, but he always ends up kind of unrecognizable as a character (understandable because well, Vader), but I wanted to write a thing where Luke is raised by Vader but somehow still manages to remain the pure at heart cinnamon roll we all know and love. Also even Anakin before Vader would have probably been a trainwreck of a father, so.

Yeah, alternate title to this was 'Dad Vader' but I didn't think that was quite the correct tone.

Luke walks slowly down the corridor, eating his sweets as he goes and hoping to delay, however slightly, his return to his room.

He is not, strictly speaking, forbidden from leaving it, but it is strongly discouraged on his Father's part. At least the doors to these rooms, unlike his former quarters aboard the Star Destroyer, are not locked from the outside.

It felt like years since Luke had been anywhere except for his illicit trips to the replicator on the fourth level that managed somehow to produce superior Tatooine sweets (though actually it had only been a few weeks since he'd come to the Death Star from his Father's Star Destroyer). It was a fact his Father contested but he did not, apparently, have the heart to forbid Luke his occasional excursions throughout the space station- so long as he avoided the well frequented areas and remained as inconspicuous as possible.

It was better than being trapped in his rooms, without even the droids he'd had with him on the Star Destroyer for company.

After all, at this point, Luke could be trusted to remain inconspicuous.
There was some sort of disturbance in the station today which had taken most Stormtroopers to the detention levels. Luke had seized the opportunity to get out for a walk without meeting anyone.

He is out of practice when it comes to talking to anyone except his Father or the droids.

When they had lived on the *Executor* Luke had seen his Father often, his own small rooms having been part of his father's much larger quarters, tucked out of the way and accessible only through them.

Since their move to the Death Star Luke saw his father only once a day, if that. Luke's quarters were now even smaller than before and tucked near the stormtrooper living quarters in an out of the way hallway.


He misses a lot of things these days.

It's funny; when he'd been on Tatooine all he'd ever wanted was to get away- now he misses it with a deep and constant ache.

He misses Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen.

He misses the view of the Dune Sea from the moisture farm, and the sky that, as wide and as blue as it was on Tatooine, would never be able to fit all the things he dreamed of.

These days he'd settle for any sky at all, really.

He misses the twin suns and their scorching heat. He misses the sudden sharp cold of the night and the way the wind never stopped blowing even for minute.

In the space station his feet freeze on the cold floor and even with the hum of the generators and the engines the silence of the air still sometimes to hurts his ears.
Sometimes, on the worst days, he even misses the sand.

His comm buzzes and it takes some manoeuvring to answer it without dropping his plate or cup.

His father's breathing mask appears. “Luke, I regret to tell you I will be unable to-” he begins sounding as close as he gets to apologetic, but then he cuts himself off. “Luke.” he barks, this time sounding reproachful. “You are not in your quarters.”

Luke forces a smile and raises his plate. “I just went for snacks.” There's a pause where, Luke imagines, his father would have sighed if he were able to regulate his own breathing.

“There are dangerous criminals and fugitives loose on the ship. Return to your quarters immediately. It's not safe for you to be out.”


The holoprojection of his father disappears and Luke dunks one of the sweets into the sauce with a sigh.

He bites into it with a crunch, the spicy sweetness of home flooding his mouth.

Han and Chewie are dragging her Royal Pain in the Ass towards what they were pretty sure was the docking station after having climbed out of the trash compactor, when they rounded a corner and ran smack into a kid. Who gasps and drops his plate of sweets.

That brings them all up short.
The kid is young, younger probably than the princess even, with wide blue eyes and dark blonde hair, and he is barefoot wearing something suspiciously like...pyjamas?

He stares at them with wide impossibly blue eyes, hands frozen into half formed fists as he'd dropped his plate, eyes flicking between the Princess, the Wookie, and Han.

Han has the blaster up before he can think. The kid's hands shoot up over his head immediately. This reaction at least makes sense. What doesn't make sense is the kid being here at all. He's a little short to be a Stormtrooper sneaking out of the barracks for a snack, too dishevelled to be a ship's officer, and too calm to be a prisoner.

"You're the 'dangerous escaped criminals' aren't you?" the boy asks, making air-quotes even with his hands in the air.

"What's it to you?!" Chewbacca howls back. The kid raises his eyebrows in obvious incomprehension and then glances back down the corridor. Han doesn't bother to translate.

"If you want to get out of here I can show you how." The kid suddenly, and unexpectedly suggests.

That gives them pause. They all know they're turned around and the Stormtroopers will have them any second now, but they're all streetwise enough to know this could be a trap.

A very very strange trap, admittedly.

"What have we got to loose?" Chewbacca asks him.

"Chewie's right. Things can't get too much worse. Show us the way kid."

The kid slowly lowers his arms and then beckons them to follow him, padding silently on bare feet back the way he'd come.

He then begins tapping on the wall panels.
“What in all nine Corellian Hells are you doing kid?” Han asks incredulously.

The kid looks over his shoulder and grins. “Looking for the stairs.” he replies mildly as though it’s the most obvious thing in the world.

Han gapes at him. Chewie grumbles something about blaming Han for picking up delusional children. Leia just watches the boy in silent consideration.

Suddenly with a triumphant ‘Ah ha!!’ and a sickeningly adorable grin, the kid finds a switch that opens up a hidden panel in the wall to reveal...stairs?

Han has literally never seen a space station with access stairs before.

The kid grins at Han's surprise. “My father insisted on including them.” He explains proudly. “He said that in the Clone Wars people often ended up pinned down or trapped on levels because the enemy had targeted the lifts and could pick them off that way.”

He waves them past him, holding the door open. “Where to?”

“The Hangar.” Her haughtiness replies. “Your father designed this place?” the princess asks, cooly interested.

“No, he just had some input-” the kid starts to reply when his comm goes off and he all but throws himself out of the stair way in a desperate bid to answer it.

“Father-!” he cries in a patently terrible attempt at sounding innocent.

“Luke.” the unmistakable voice and mask of Vader chides reproachfully, his hissing respirator echoing eerily in the empty hallway. “You are not yet returned to your chambers.”

Han hears Leia stifle a gasp. He'd probably gasp too if he could breathe.

“I know. I'm on my way I swear, but there were Stormtroopers on my usual route and I took a
detour to avoid them and now I'm all turned around.” the kid whines.

"Return to your chambers immediately, and as quickly as possible! The criminals are still at large. If you must cross paths with Stormtroopers- so be it. I will deal with them later if it is necessary.”

The kid nods. “Don't worry. I'm practically there already.”

“Be safe my son.” Vader says before ending the call.

The three of them stare at Luke open mouthed. He looks at them sheepishly. “You're heading to the Hangar?” he asks.

They nod silently. He brushes past them heading down the stairs obviously knowing what has them gaping and hoping to bluster past it. “These stairs go up or down long enough you can get anywhere, and half the 'troopers forget they're here...”

They don't need to confer. It's obvious what's to be done if this...child is who he appears to be.

They all have their weapons out, and armed and pointed before they exchange a silent look, and the decision is made without words. Silently Chewie shuffles to the front and grabs the kid, throwing him over his shoulder and stifling his scream.

The boy- Luke, a voice reminds Han, he's a person, he has a name;it's Luke- struggles fruitlessly against Chewie's grip.

Han taps him on the forehead with the barrel of the blaster. “These stairs go all the way up and all the way down don't they?”


“Is the Hangar up or down?”

Luke jerks his head downward.
“Okay then.”

With his help they'd probably have gotten out okay.

With him as a hostage they definitely will.

Ben Kenobi sees the thrashing body slung over Chewbacca's shoulder and his heart sinks. *What fresh hell is this?*

They manhandle him onto his feet, and then something amazing happens. Obi-Wan meets the boys eyes and he *knows* him.


Luke Skywalker who he'd believed lost to the Sandpeople, or Tusken Raiders, or Imperial Troopers but all the same: dead and gone, another corpse, another failure.

More remarkable even than that is that Luke recognizes *him* in turn. He starts in shock and then knocks the princess to the floor as he throws himself into the arms of the last person alive who he's known since childhood.

Ben is surprised and pleased, he hadn't been too close with the boy.

“Luke, I thought you were dead.” He murmurs into the boys hair.

There's a mute shake of his head.
Ben looks up to scowl at the others. Han is helping Leia off the floor with barely concealed amusement and Chewbacca has his head tilted and is giving the pair of them serious consideration.

Ben takes a step towards the Falcon but Luke clutches as him.

“No, Ben, you have to leave me here.” his voice is desperate.


Luke shakes his head frantically. “No, he'll kill you all to get me back.” he bites his lip and looks away. “He killed a man on Coruscant because he knocked my down by accident. You have to understand-”

Ben puts a hand on the boys shoulder silencing him. “I understand what your father is capable of. You needn't worry. This is worth the risk.”

But, Luke has set his face and won't budge. “He needs me Ben! You don't understand- I won't leave.”

Ben gives the Wookie a silent nod of permission, and Chewbacca grabs the boy, forces his hands into a pair of wrist binders and drags him aboard the Millenium Falcon.

And then they're gone.

Luke has set his jaw and silently stews as the stars blur to nothing.

Obi-Wan watches him, and as ever, keeps his own counsel.

They're all tense. They've done more than they set out to. The Princess is rescued, the plans recovered. And an innocent has been taken hostage.

It weighs heavy on them.
And then Luke's comm rings.

Vader's entire day has been an exercise in the worst kind of frustration.

Luke's little rebellion in venturing beyond his room which was normally the sort of childish lark that has Vader nearly smiling behind his mask today has him clenching his fists and trying to find calm in the Force for the first time in years.

Because, his son is a secret that Vader has scrupulously kept. Only his Master even knows of the boy's existence.

Luke, if discovered by either side, will almost certainly be killed for the crime of being the son of Darth Vader, that is if they did not first prefer to use him as a chess piece in a game played against his will (not mention how much displeasure it would provoke from his master who had allowed him to keep the boy on the condition of Vader being discrete when it came to the child's parentage).

It made Vader's stomach roil just thinking of it. His son is too kind and too gentle for such ill use. He was too delicate to last long in either scenario.

It had been easy to keep him safe on Coruscant. He'd simply left him sequestered in a very large private apartment with droids for company while Vader had come and gone between it and the Palace and Senate on whatever petty Imperial errands his master had set before him.

Once he had been promoted to Commander of the Imperial fleet, things had become more difficult. Vader wanted his son with him. He could not abide the thought of being half a galaxy away from the boy. Luke would be helpless on his own. Vulnerable.
Not to mention that Vader harboured no illusions as to the extent of which the Emperor respects his privacy, or the extent to which the Emperor can be trusted.

His son is strong in the Force and while, thus far, the Emperor has allowed Vader the luxury of protecting the boy from the vile dogma that had so poisoned his own life, but he knew the old man would take Vader's first inattention as an excuse to test the limits of the boy's abilities and Vader would not allow the Emperor near his son if he could help it.

It would have been dangerous to leave him on Coruscant.

Or so he had told himself when he's disguised his 16 year old son as a Stormtrooper (though he was and is a little short for one, but no one was about to remark on such a thing in front of the dreaded Darth Vader) to smuggle him aboard the Executor and install him in a pair of rooms in Vader's command suite that the boy hadn't ended up leaving for more than two years.

Not that Vader had intended that.

But it was just so much easier to keep him safe when he wasn't allowed to wander off. There just hadn't seemed to be an alternative to the situation, and it wasn't as though he hadn't done his utmost to keep his son occupied and happy. He'd brought datapads and holocroms, games and mechanical parts to be dissembled and rebuilt. He'd even taught the boy something of the Force that, in a better galaxy, would have been his birth right. Luke had grown accept the situation, eventually.

It was why Vader felt secure enough in secreting the boy onto the Death Star. Even with a door that didn't lock Luke avoided people and rarely left his rooms.

Not rarely enough, apparently. Vader considers in deep annoyance as he remembers the comm call. Of all the days for Luke to go traipsing about, he has to do it on the day a band of traitors and criminals runs rampant on the space station.

If nothing else it certainly confirms the boy is the spawn of Anakin Skywalker.

Once the traitors have been allowed to escape, Vader strides into Luke's room in a towering rage, ready to vent his frustration on the his disobedient son, but pulls up short when he finds it empty. The damaged medical droid Vader had found for him to work on is still sitting powered down and untouched where it had been left days ago.
There is no sign of a cup or plate from Luke's trip to the replicator.

The bedroom is equally empty, though Vader notices with a flash of rage that Luke has used some pigment to paint two circles on the low ceiling.

It makes Vader's blood boil. There's no mistaking the twin suns of Tatooine. He has tried for years to break his son of the habit of expressing fondness for that thrice damned dustbowl.

Slowly he retraces the route Luke would take to the replicator. There's a cup of sauce spilled across the hallway, and the shattered pieces of brittle cookies sprayed out from a cracked plate near the entrance to the access stairs.

Vader does not jump to conclusions. After all, nothing in Luke's appearance could betray his identity. He'd look like a sleep dazed tech roused from bed by the alarms, or an off-duty Stormtrooper who'd gotten lost. Nothing to interest rebels.

Luke must have encountered them and hidden himself in fright. Vader concludes, as no other conclusion is acceptable.

In his office he calls up the holo of the criminals being allowed to escape on their Corellian freighter.

And there's his son slipping free of the Wookie to greet Obi-Wan. It burns Vader to watch it. It confirms what he had long suspected— that it had been Obi-Wan who had taken his son from him, for no greater reason than petty revenge.

*As though Obi-Wan had not first betrayed him.* As though there was justice in condemning the boy to a life of deprivation, drudgery and sand for the sins of his father.

He watches Luke balk at the prospect of boarding that death trap of a ship. He watches his son shackled and carried away as a prisoner.

He retreats to his medpod though it feels too large and empty without Luke balanced on the pressure tank, smile in place as he ruminated to himself, and to Vader and also to no one in
particular on the merits and (ethics) of sentient droids or the latest Holonet Sensation, or the virtues of various swoop bike models.

Vader banishes this new ghost as he has banished all the others that came before it.

He meditates.

Once he is calm. Or at least calm enough that he's not likely to Force choke the next incompetent Death Star employee he sees, he comms Luke.

It is Obi-Wan's face that greets him, though it is haggard and weathered beyond his years by Tatooine's harsh conditions. Serves the old snake right.

“Where is my son, old man?” Vader demands.

Obi-Wan has apparently been free of the Jedi long enough to entertain feelings of smugness because it's written all over his face. If Vader were still Anakin Skywalker he might growl in the back of his throat, but he isn't. So he just waits letting the unsettling sound of his mechanical breathing fill the line.

“He is well enough, and likely to remain that way- if you call off your pursuit.” Obi-Wan informs him.

“I want him returned to me!”

And there's the smile, the bland, false indifference that carried them through countless missions when they were different men in a different galaxy. The one that suggested much but promised nothing.

“That hardly seems fair considering you're the one that stole him in the first place.” The old man replies his voice thoughtful. “And left his Aunt and Uncle to rot in the desert.”

Vader wishes he could reach through the Force and strangle the old man, but the distance is too great. His bond with his old master is too weak. Instead he feels for Luke through the Force.
The boy is confused and afraid, and it makes Vader's blood boil ever hotter. He never wanted his son to be afraid. He'd done so much to try and protect him from the Jedi, and the Sith and the two sides of the Force that would tear him to pieces as they fought over him if Vader was only slightly less vigilant.

Well, even now, with everything he had done, with all the precautions he had taken, it seems he hadn't been vigilant enough.

What do these rebels intend? Vader wouldn't be surprised if they killed Luke to strike a blow against the Empire. A futile blow, since Luke's existence as the son of Darth Vader was a closely guarded secret, though he did, technically hold the title of an Imperial Prince.

“I'm sure in time, the Rebels will be convinced to sell him back to you.” Obi-Wan continues taking advantage of Vader's silence, and he means it to sound cruel and vindictive though the desert had long since scoured him clean of all his bitterness and most of his grief, but right now he wants to do his best to keep Vader from thinking clearly, and he'll use the weaknesses of Anakin Skywalker against him if he has to.

“I want to see him.” Vader demands.

Luke comes onto the comm, looking comically small with his hands bound in front of him in wookie sized cuffs.

“You'll be coming home soon, son.” Vader promises. “Don't worry. You'll be safe again soon.” Luke nods, ducking his head. Vader doesn't need the Force to know the boy doesn't believe him, but with these rebels watching Vader cannot allow himself any greater sentiment.

Obi-Wan pushes the boy away and looks at Vader with a surprising frankness. “I'd move quickly if I were you Vader.” and there's no threat there, it's an honest warning. Obi-wan had never threatened. “I'll do my best for him but I'm not what I once was and there will be little enough I can do if the Rebels decide to take their vengeance out of him.”

“Then know that for every wound they inflict upon my son- I will scorch a world from the sky.” Unlike his old master Vader is not above threats.

“Indeed?” Is all Obi-Wan replies to that before ending the connection. That and an amused quirk of
the lips, as though Vader was still an impetuous boy vowing to single-handedly free a world rather than the most feared man in all the Galaxy with an entire army at his backing, and the Death Star at his command.

Vader grits his teeth, and turns away from the comm in a swirl of black fabric. They *will* pay for this.

Han wants desperately to feel contempt for the kid. He's soft from easy living (though Han can't help but notice that, no actually his hands are hard, those are working hands), the son of a despicable figure in the Empire.

He's weak and stupid and....and he was just getting a snack when they grabbed them. Wrong place, wrong time. He'd even tried to help. Hadn't given them away when his father had commed.

So Han felt, just a little bit, uncomfortable with having kidnapped him. Not, that Han had particular qualms about abetting kidnapping, if the price was right and he was hungry or in debt enough. But, he did have a code, of sorts. Perhaps more accurately described as guidelines, but still.

Han had never thought he was the sort of man who'd kidnap a child from their bed. He might drive the getaway ship for a kidnapper. But there he drew the line. It was a fine line, Han could admit that at least, but it was one he'd never crossed till now.

The kid is sitting in one of the passenger seats in the cockpit. He looks stunned and lost, and maybe, but Han is probably imagining this, caught between relief at getting free of his nightmare of a father and fear of living under some worse unknown monster.

Han's probably projecting. After all, based on that comm call Dad Vader's awfully eager to get the kid back. He probably spoils him rotten. Luke's probably a pampered little Prince of the Empire and Han is a sentimental fool for thinking otherwise and he-
Han's eyes suddenly catch on something he hadn't noticed before.

The kid doesn't even have any shoes.

Oh, shit. That hit Han in all the soft places he liked to believe he'd left behind years ago.

The kid is sitting cross legged in his chair, to keep his bare feet off the freezing floor.

If you're a kid alone you need shoes. Han used to sleep in his- back when he was young and it seemed like all he had to his name was a fast talking kid named Lando and decent pair of boots.

Han curses under his breath and looks away.

_It's not my problem._ He tells himself. The kid didn't even need help.

He could feel Chewie watching him. He knew that Chewie had noticed that Han had noticed that the kid had not shoes. Chewie was always more of soft touch than he is.

It was why he let Han do the talking. That and basically no one spoke Wookie.

The silence in the cockpit is deafening.

“Say something.” Chewie pleads. “This is unbearable.”

“I'm flying this thing. I need to concentrate. You says something if you're so determined.” Han snaps back.

But Chewie keeps sending him pleading looks so finally Han asks the kid. “So, how'd you know Old Ben?” Because he is not a monster and only a monster could resist a Wookie's pout and he doesn't want them to have to sit choking on silence for the remainder of the trip.
And it seems like the most innocuous thing he could ask any of his passengers at this point.

The kid shrugs. “He lived near my Aunt and Uncle on Tatooine. He used to get into shouting matches with Uncle Owen about funny little things. I think they both just liked having someone to match them blow for blow in scathing sarcasm.”

They lapse once more into awkward silence. There are other questions Han could ask. Like, what's the son of the second most powerful man in the Galaxy doing on a dust ball considered worse than 8 out of 9 Corellian hells? But there's no questions he can ask that won't lead to unpleasantness. So he stays silent.

Han glances desperately at Chewie and shrugs. Hey, he tried.

The Princess makes a noise of scorn and Han braces himself for her scathing disaproval.

Instead she says with icy primness. “Is your name Luke Vader then? I imagine it must be, Darth Vader being your devoted father and all. Are you Lord Luke? Or will you inherit his title?”

The kid flinches curls in on himself.

“My name is Luke Skywalker, and you don't have to tell me who my father is.” Luke says softly. “I know as well as anyone.”

“Your father tortured me for days, and blew up my planet in front of me. For no other reason than to demonstrate that weapon to the galaxy.”

“As you say” Luke mutters to his ankles. “All the more reason to give me back to him. What do you think he'll do if you actually give him a reason to come after you? He'll kill everyone in his way until he gets me back.”

That makes something old and unpleasant twinge in Han's conscience. He knows what it's like to run from someone you feel you can't escape- though maybe the kid doesn't need escape, maybe Vader's a better father than any Han had known- but all the same, it makes bile rise in his throat to think of what it must feel like when the person you're running from really is inescapable.
“Seriously, kid.” Han pipes up, because he's got to ask, he just can't help it- he has to know.
“How’d you go from living with your Aunt and Uncle on Tatooine to lording it up in the Empire's Top Space Station?”

The kid looks up, just a bit, and Force Almighty, is this how Chewie felt when their paths first crossed? ‘Cause someone needs to look out for this kid, since it doesn't feel like anyone else is.

“Lord Vader found out I existed, I don't know how. So he came and got me from Tatooine.”

“What happened to your Aunt and Uncle?” Han knows he shouldn't ask, but, well, he's come this far hasn't he? What more could it hurt?

“He killed them, for hiding me from him.” Is the blunt and emotionless reply.

Han looks away. It's hardly the saddest story Han has ever heard, probably not even cracking the top 10. It shouldn't bother him. It's not his problem. The princess certainly doesn't seem to care.

Old Ben pipes up suddenly from the doorway of the cockpit. “I'm sorry Luke. The fault was mine. I should have protected you.”

Luke shake his head. “No, it's better this way. There's nothing you could have done. If you'd been there. You'd just be dead too.”

Luke stands abruptly and shoulders past Old Ben out of the cockpit, hands still held in front of him in shackles.

Old Ben follows.

Han's eye catches on the kid's bare feet again. He thinks of the metal grating on the floor-the Falcon's hardly the most comfortable vessel.
“Hey Chewie,” he mutters. “Go see if you can find an extra pair of socks in my bunk will ya?”

“Get em yourself.” Chewie grumbles.

“Think about it ya walking carpet- either you go and get them or you stay here alone with the princess while I do it.”

“Fine.” Chewie relents standing up in a huff and walking out.

Luke is using the force to weave a pebble through the outstretched fingers of his left hand without touching it. It's quite an impressive bit of fine control.

Ben sits down next to him and eyes the little display. “I see your father has taught you of the force.”

Luke snorts and grabs the pebble out of the air tossing it and catching it with the other hand. “Hardly. He lets me practice with his saber sometimes, but mostly I think he taught me meditation because it was something that required sitting still and staying quiet.”

Ben eyes him thoughtfully. “I could teach you. If you like.”

Luke smiles at him, and then shakes his head.

“There's no point. I'll be going back soon. He said that if I learned the ways of the force than the Emperor would insist I train as an Inquisitor or a Hand or something.”

“Ironic isn't it? That we hid you from Vader for fear of what would happen should he learn of your existence. And now Vader hides you from the Galaxy for fear of the same thing.”

Luke glares. “It's not exactly funny from where I'm sitting.”
Ben smiles wryly. “No, I suppose it wouldn't be.”

Chewbacca enters then, roaring something incomprehensible and then shoving a pair of lumpy woolen socks that were worn thing at the heels into Lukes hands.

“Oh. Thanks.”

It's awkward to get the socks on with his hands still shackled but he manages it.

They land on Yavin with the space station on their tail.

Leia storms off like a bat out of hell and is almost immediately surrounded by Generals and Lieutenants eager for her information. Ben is swept away somewhere in the rush as well.

Han ambles down the ramp looking for someone to talk to about that reward when he notices the kid shrinking back from the hangar and covering his face with his hands.

All it takes is a look for Chewie to move so they're shielded from the room against the Falcon.

“You okay, kid?” Han asks hovering awkwardly just out of arms reach.

Luke nods, without uncovering his face. “I just-...It's been a long time since...I haven't seen this many people at once probably... ever... and well, no one other than my father and the droids in-”

Han nods in understanding, realizes the kid can't see it and then gingerly reaches out to put a hand on the kid's shoulder.
“Vader keeps you locked up pretty tight. Don't he?”

There's a pause, and then Luke nods slowly and peaks out from between his fingers at Han.

“I don't think I've talked to anyone else in three years.” the kid admits.

That upsets Chewie. Han can see it immediately. The big guy's always had a soft spot for kids. Hell, it had taken Han the better part of a year to break the Wookie of the habit of referring to him as 'my sweet bald child'.

Han just pats the kid awkwardly on the shoulder and clicks his tongue. “That would do it...”

There's a commotion on the other side of the Wookie wall. Some guards have come to collect the prisoner.

Han waves Chewie aside and gives the kid's shackled hand a squeeze.

“It'll be alright kid.” he reassures him.

Luke twists his mouth wryly into something that might be an attempt at a smile and nods at him over his shoulder as he's led away. He doesn't pretend to believe Han. Which is good because Han doesn't believe it himself.

Luke doesn't see the Station destroyed, but he feels it.

The blinking out of thousands of lives, like a shockwave through the Force. Like Alderaan had been, but closer somehow. He stares at his ceiling blinking back tears. He had been supposed to be on that station. If they hadn't kidnapped him he'd be dead now.
Though, he supposes, it's equally true is that if the rebels hadn't kidnapped him, *they'd* be dead right now. The Death Star had been in range for nearly half-an-hour before the X-fighters had managed to destroy it. The only reason the station hadn't fired was that his Father wouldn't have allowed Tarkin to destroy a planet Luke was on.

He reaches for his father through the Force and is surprised to feel his father faintly reaching back.

It's a relief to know he isn't dead, but Vader is incandescent with rage. They had destroyed everything. They would have killed his son. And he is adrift in space in a TIE fighter. There's nothing he can do. No way he can reach his son.

It will be some time before he can even pay the ransom that will no doubt soon be demanded. But, he will pay it. From his own funds, no matter how great the amount is. He can't afford to owe the Empire anything where his son is concerned.

His helplessness and rage digs into Luke's brain like dozens of sharp needles. Luke groans and presses the palms of his hands against his forehead, trying to find that calm spot at his centre which allows him to block out his father's pain so he won't have to feel it as his own.

Han's not sure what possesses him to stop by the make-shift prison before heading off to settle his score with Jabba- fine medal for bravery pined to his chest and reward carefully stowed.

The kid's sitting cross legged on his bed and is still wearing Han's old socks.

He forces a smile when the smuggler hesitates in the doorway.

“Hi Han.” he murmurs with a small wave.

“Hey kid.” Han hesitates. He's about to do something really really stupid and he'd like to brace himself for it.
“Look, I umm...” Han tries to start.

“I'm glad you came.” Luke says suddenly all in a rush, as though he might lose his never if he didn't say it all right away. “I've been wanting to thank you for kidnapping me. If you hadn't I'd be dead or the Rebels would be dead and either way Father would be...anyway, I'm glad I'm not dead, and I'm glad this moon hasn't been destroyed. So, thanks.”

Han nods, embarrassed. “You know many of the guys on that thing?” he asks in a halfhearted attempt at consolation.

Luke shakes his head. “I'd only lived there a couple of weeks. And I didn't really leave my room much.”

Right, Han knew that. The kid said he hadn't talked to a non-droid in years. Not that that made Han feel any better about this whole situation.

“Listen, kid, it looks like there might be a delay in ransoming you back to your dad.” Han explains.


Han considers him for a long moment, and after a second hands the kid a scrap of card with a string of numbers scrawled on it.

“Here. If you're ever needing to go somewhere. Looking to get out of town or atmo on the quick. Give me a comm, and I'll help you out. Not for free, in case that's what you're thinking, but, I figure I owe you one, for showin' us the way out back on the station.”

Han can't say he's certain about doing this, he really doesn't know anything about the kid and, well, Han historically has not always been an excellent judge of character. But, the kid is stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea, as far as Han can tell. Between his terror of a father who, from what little Han has heard, keeps the kid locked up and has a habit of strangling people who annoy him, and the rebels who see him as another acceptable Imperial casualty at worst and a resource to be ransomed at best.

The kid's got no good choices. And anyway, Han's not really sticking his neck out. He's not being
soft. He's just giving the kid another way to jump if he needs it. After all having a friend in the son of Darth Vader can only come in handy. Imperial Princes don't just grow on trees.

Luke stares at the string of numbers and blinks slowly, like it's a shock that someone has offered him even as paltry a kindness as this, before looking up at Han with a watery smile. “Thanks. I can't imagine I'll ever get to use it though. Father wouldn't ever let me go anywhere.”

And that does it. This kid is...nice. For lack of a better word. He's a good kid, and he's resigned to never having anything like freedom. Han Solo hasn't gotten to be the man he is today by doing the smart thing.

“Your dad,” he blurs out. “Does he hurt you?”

Luke stares at him with complete confusion, and a slowly dawning anger. “NO. Honestly, why would you even think-!”

“He's Darth Vader. You said yourself he killed your Aunt and Uncle.”

“I told you before I know who my father is. But... he'd never hurt me. EVER. Everything he does is to protect me!” Luke shouts at him in outrage and betrayal. He'd thought Han was, well, maybe not on his side, but at least not against him. Not going to try and turn him against his father.

Han holds up his hands. “Sorry, Little Lord Luke, just trying to be decent here.” he snaps in annoyance. “The number's still open to you. If that changes.” He adds over his shoulder before he leaves the makeshift cell.

Some time later on an insignificant rock of a planet, Vader stumbles out of his ship and scans the horizon for a familiar form.

His eyes catch on something not far away and he stumble across the uneven terrain towards the figure sitting on the rock.
Luke looks up at his approach. He seems weary. Tired, and worn somehow. Not like the bright boy in Vader's memories. For a moment fear and hate consume Vader's mind, *oh Luke, what have you suffered?* But, then, like a shock of cold water (a sensation Vader can barely remember after so long inside this prison of a body), he realizes that his son looks no different than before. It is just he is seeing him with new eyes.

In fact, Luke looks better than he had when Vader had left him all those weeks ago in his room aboard the Death Star- there's more colour in his cheeks (he must have been allowed into outside during his captivity) and there's a strength to his spine. A look of something solid in his gaze that meets his own with all the remembered love and compassion, but also with an equal force.

Vader cannot let himself consider what that means. He calms his panic by yanking his son to his feet. The harsh sound of his respirator echoes across the empty world.

“There are you alright my son?” Vader asks frantically. “They didn't hurt you?”

For a split second Luke looks at him strangely; calm, and detached in a way that makes Vader wonder if this separation has made his son look at him with new eyes also. And then he smiles, and any fear Vader may have had evaporates.

It is still Luke. Luke, his son, sweet as summer in the Lake Country of Naboo. Luke who has his mother's smile, and her nose, and her tender heart, but none of her fire, or her duplicity.

Vader crushes his son to him in a harsh embrace. He uses the Force to check the boy's face and body, looking for any sign of injury; there is none.

Luke must sense what Vader is doing, because he grins all the wider and reaches up to pat his shoulder. “Don't worry, Father. I'm fine. Really.”

Vader releases his son and holds him at arms length, drinking in the sight of the boy. It had been such a close call. He'd nearly lost him.

“I will keep you safe Luke. Nothing like that will ever happen again.” Vader vows, his relief at having his son in his arms again, already evaporating in the face of the rage that he was ever taken from him in the first place.
Luke's smile falters a tiny bit at those words. He presses his hand to his Father's prosthetic. “I really am alright Father.” he insists.

Vader shakes his head, the boy is naive and trusting. He probably doesn't even realize how close to danger he had come. “You are all I love in the universe Luke. I can't allow something like this to happen again. I will not have you in danger, my son.”

Luke laughs, but it's strange and wild as though it has escaped him unintentionally. “I love you too, Father.”
Interlude with Vader: Father-Son Bonding

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Vader Force chokes people and it's bad.

Note: There has been a time jump and Luke is now 22.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Luke slouches against the wall of the hyperbaric chamber frowning at his father who pretends to ignore him.

“I will not yield in this my son.” his father intones weakly, like his refusal is a line from some great space poem.


“I do nothing that is not for your safety.” Vader retorts.

Luke sighs and considers his maskless father. He alone of in all the galaxy sees him like this-weak, and human and loving. He knows his father worries, and keeps him close out of fear of losing him. But, he's asking to return to Coruscant to pursue his studies, he's not asking to go prospecting in the Outer Rim, or to join the Inquisitors.

“It's been three years, Father.” Luke reminds him gently. “I am not a child and you cannot keep me here as if I were.”

“I keep you nowhere.” Vader snaps.
“True, I am no longer locked my rooms, but I can go nowhere, not even on your own ship, without your express permission and a squad of guards, and must have a body guard droid with me at all times. It's ridiculous.”

“You are a Prince of the Empire, precautions taken for to ensure your safety are your right.”

“Oh, Father.” Luke sighs “We both know I am Prince of nothing in particular.”

He can feel his father's thinning patience and rising anger through the Force, like a coiling snake sitting just beyond the corner of his eye.

“You are the son of Queen Amidala, and ward of the Emperor himself, that makes you a prince.” His father's real voice is thin and laboured without his helmet. His head is bald and a patch work of burn scars. “You are a prince.” he reaches out and grabs his son's hand. “You have only what is your due. What you deserve.”

Luke remembers that when he was younger, and he had first been taken from Tatooine, he had been determined to hate the strange droid-like figure who had killed his aunt and uncle, but from the moment Luke had seen his father without his mask he'd known he'd never be able to hate him. Who could hate someone who was so sad and in such pain and who loved him so much? Maybe somewhere there was someone who could, but Luke couldn't. Luke wouldn't.

Luke forces a smile and looks away. “I haven't done anything to deserve it, Father. I spend my life learning skills I'll never use. I work on the engines for ships I'll never fly. I...”

He trails off and looks away, grateful that his father does not interrupt. “I haven't been outside since I was a hostage. I move from the apartment in Coruscant to your ship and back, depending on where I need to be to avoid the Emperor, and in either place, I live in two durasteel rooms which I hardly ever leave.”

“Your life is one of safety and luxury. Be grateful. What is it you require that I have not provided? Name it and I will fetch it for you.”

Luke grins sadly at his Father who still believes, somehow, that if he can only find the right cure all problems will evaporate.
“It not like that Father.” he sighs and slumps back against the wall again. “Never mind.”

Vader eyes him skeptically, and then shakes his head. “How are your studies progressing?” he asks mildly.

Luke smiles at him, cheekily. “The design of the new X-wing is truly a work of genius...”

“Oh, really?” Vader asks, not bothering to hide his amusement and Luke's obvious attempt at baiting him.

“Yes!” He makes a gesture at the hovering med-droid, and a schematic of the fighters is projected. “See here?” He asks, “The way the hyperdrive, lifesupport and short range engine are all integrated with the power source? Not to mention the clean exterior lines- I know the TIE fighters are better ships over all but, the Empire could learn a thing or two about elegant design from the rebels.”

Vader smiles indulgently at his son.

Luke smiles back, a brilliant light of joy in the Force, and points to the way the astromech port is designed to work with the droid models P through AA.

A light blinks on indicating that the medpod is about to open.

Luke glances at it with a raised eyebrow and abruptly falls silent.

Vader shoos him out of the way, and Luke ducks out of the medpod just as his father's helmet and breathing apparatus descend from the ceiling.

Vader answers his comm.

“My Lord, We've begun receiving results from the probes into deep space.” The bridge commander informs him.
Vader swirls his cape over his shoulders. “I will be on the bridge momentarily.”

He turns to where Luke is standing to the side, out of side of the comm and puts a hand on his shoulder. “I must go to scourge these rebel scum from the galaxy.”

Luke blinks at him. There’s that epic space poem diction again. “Of course. Do your duty as you see fit father.”

Vader strides out, pausing briefly to inform the droid C-3T4 that he would be away and to look his son.

Luke sits down on the step by the med pod and runs his fingers through his hair in frustration. MT-9, the med-droid he'd built his father spins nervously and then floats over to him, beeping a question.

C-3T4 looks at Luke, “MT-9 wishes to know if you are quite well, Your Imperial Highness.”

Luke sighs and forces a smile at the droid. “Of course 3T4. Why wouldn't I be?”

“I’m sure I don't know sir, but Organic lifeforms are rather fragile.” C-3T4 opines.


He sighs again and stands. “Come along, I don't like being in this room when my father isn't here.”


Vader stormed back to his quarters three days later in a towering rage like little he'd seen before. He'd killed the Admiral of his fleet no less than 3 times, and at the moment wasn't entirely sure exactly who was acting beneath him within the military hierarchy.
Honestly he didn't care. He'd lost the Rebel princess yet again.

He pauses at the threshold of his own room and then turns on his heel to enter his son's adjacent room. He was wary to have him on any ship these days, no matter how secure, but the Emperor can sense the boy's growing power within the force and it's made Vader nervous to leave his son within the old lizard's reach.

Luke looks up from the gaming table where he seemed to be engaged in some sort of game of chance against C-3T4, the custom protocol droid bodyguard Vader had made for him, and MT-9 the refurbished medical droid that Luke had made for Vader.

"The Rebels have escaped thanks to the incompetent buffoons the Academies see fit to send me!" Vader declares.

Luke smiles when he hears the news—the bright one that Vader does all he can to bring forth, but which, despite his best efforts, seems to be rarer and rarer these days.

"Really?" Luke asks, and Vader can feel the Force brighten with his son's hope and eager relief.

"And why should the continued existence of those criminals and traitors delight you so?" Vader asks.

Luke shrugs and moves a piece on the board. "I liked them when I was with them. I'm glad their not dead. They're good people—"

He pauses as he feels his father's anger slither into the force from whatever dark place it never seems to hide in for long.

"They kidnapped you."

"I'm well aware of that."
“They killed thousands of men on the DeathStar.”

“I know. I felt them die.”

“How can you rejoice that they live?”

“I suppose it's the same way I can be happy to see you when I know you killed three men today for things that were not their fault.” Luke snaps, taken aback at his own daring even as the words leave his mouth. The sound of Vader's mechanical breathing is the only thing in the oppulant room.

“Besides,” Luke adds softly, even though he knows he shouldn't. “They're right, aren't they?”

Vader bolts forward, large and threatening and livid. Luke looks up from where he sits at his game and swallows back his nervousness. There will be consequences for saying that.

“How can you believe that?!” Vader demands.

“How can I not?” Luke asks hopelessly, exhausted already by this fight that he knows will do nothing, will change nothing. His father is an immovable in his loyalty to the Empire. It's why they've never spoken of this before, when they have spoken of almost everything else. “You kill people who annoy you. The Emperor treats the entire galaxy as his personal gladiatorial arena. And then the pair of you talk about Safety, Security, Justice and Peace. It's all a sham. Like me, I'm called a Prince but considered an imposter, and treated like a prisoner-”

“YOU ARE NO PRISONER!!!” Vader thunders.

“But, even that is better than being a noble hostage like the rest of the so called Princes and Princesses of the Empire.” Luke rambles on morosely, ignoring his father and staring determinedly at the pieces on the board. His father may rant and rave but Luke has weathered this storm a hundred times in the last few years. It's nothing he can't handle.

“You are no impostor. You are my son- and the son of Padme Amidala the Queen of Naboo.” Vader roars.
“The ELECTED Queen of Naboo. The FORMER Queen of Naboo, the DEAD Queen of Naboo.” Luke mutters to himself.

“Luke Amidala-” Vader begins but Luke doesn't let him finish. He can feel the darkness of his father's rage through the Force like dark oil slowly filling the room. But, his father is so often angry and Luke is so rarely angry.

But he is angry now.

“STOP CALLING ME THAT! THAT IS NOT MY NAME- MY NAME IS LUKE SKYWALKER! You can't just change that. Name's matter on Tatooine! You know that-” Luke screams. ”-and you can call me whatever you want, but that doesn't make it my name! Not even if I was your slave and you'd bought me for a goat!”

Vader's rage breaks across the room like tidal wave, and to Luke it feels like he's drowning in the black oil of his father's rage. He wants to spit it back in his face.

“You know nothing of slavery!” Vader roars throwing out a hand. “You know nothing of want, and nothing of fear and you have been shielded from all these things by the Empire you pretend to disdain!”

Luke is slammed up and off his chair by the pressure on his throat. He gasps and claws helplessly at the invisible hand that is squeezing the life out of him.

Vader has already killed three men today.

“You know nothing of suffering. Nothing of fear. The fault is mine, I suppose. I've spoiled you.” Vader continues, calm in his rage now.

Vader lifts his son by his throat higher and higher off the ground.

Luke's feet kick helplessly in the air. He's stopped gasping, now there's only a silence.

A sudden sensory feedback from Vader's prosthetic leg surprises him and he drops the young man
who falls hard to the ground with a hollow thud.

Vader jerks around to find MT-9 zipping away from him towards his son, one of her scalpels still sticking out of his leg as she weaves to avoid any reprisals.

C-3T4 squawks at her from where he was sitting at the gaming table. “Oh dear, now you've done it T9! And who will help His Imperial Highness when our Master has taken you apart for scraps?”

Vader begins to stalk towards the little group his leg responding with a slight delay, and his anger slides into something cold and terrible as he sees his son struggling weakly on the ground his breath a ragged rasping struggle.

The little medical droid beeps something insistently at C-3T4.

“Activate bodyguard functions, are you mad? Those aren't meant for-” the custom protocol droid protests until he is cut off by a shrill whistle from the medical bot.

“I'm terribly sorry about this my Maker.” the droid apologizes as the electrostaff unfolds from his arm, and he swings it hard for Vader's head.

Vader ducks it but is forced back but the wide whistling arcs C-3T4 cut through the air with it as he crowds Vader back against the doors of the room.

Vader supposes he should be grateful the droid isn't utilizing the blaster functions he had also installed before giving it to his son as a bodyguard.

MT-9 is frantically darting back and forth over Luke's prone body, beeping in distress.

The little droid had always been fond of her maker.

“I don't know!” C-3T4 snaps to her. “You're the medical droid. Can't you repair him?”

MT-9 let out a long wailing whistle.
“Well I would come over there and help you but I'm afraid my programming won't allow me to disengage defense protocols at the moment. I must ensure that any attacker is kept away.”

C-3T4 whirls and cracks his staff against one of Vader’s arms with a jolt of electricity.

“Those protocol's were not meant to apply to me!” Vader growls as his arm shorts out.

“I'm quite aware of that sir, however, with a little creative thinking, it seems that they do.”

Chapter End Notes

So, this verse is continuing. Thanks everyone for the comments and kudos.

The med droid idea is from Fiarrel's great 'Double Agent Vader' verse in which he has a loyal floating medical droid that lives in his hyperbaric chamber.

And of course C-3T4 is basically C-3P0 retrofitted to also act as a bodyguard, because why has no one done that in the star wars universe?
ON THE RUN

Chapter Summary

Han helps Luke find a new life.

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Dubious sexual choices made between consenting adults (Luke is 22 at this point and Han is 30-something). Some medical issues, and someone forcing someone who is reluctant to seek medical help to do so.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Han comes and goes from whatever Rebel base is active in the years following the battle of Yavin. He supports the rebellion as best he can. Flies for them on a few missions, flirts intensely with her Worship, who Chewie insists he's in love with, but doesn't stay for long.

He's Rebel smuggler these days, but he's still a smuggler.

Han's just come out of hyperspace near the Hoth system when he gets the comm. It's a short written message on his secure channel- Pick up on Matao, transport to a major spaceport- 15 000 credits upon passenger's safe arrival.

His days of debt to the Hutts may be long gone but Han's learned that his natural state is to be up to his neck in it with someone or other, so the cash influx would be helpful.

He lands on the platform specified by the controller when he told them he was Han Solo of the Millenium Falcon here for a pickup.

He lowers the ramp ambles down the ramp to find his client. It take him a minute to recognize the figure sitting on a cargo chest waiting for him with a couple of droids, but when he does he can only stare in shock.

The kid's eyes are still the bluest Han has ever seen.
His neck though, is dark purple with bruising, and he has a breathing tube between his teeth and going down his throat. He looks a wreck, lucky to be alive and barely standing.

“Shit kid.” Is all Han can say.

The protocol droid pipes up. “Master Luke extends you greetings Captain Han Solo, and thanks you for picking him up. You will be well compensated as promised. Unfortunately, he cannot tell you so himself at the moment as the medical droid has insisted he rest his throat while the bacta repairs the damage to his trachea.”

Luke smiles at him behind his clear plastic mask and give a little wave, one arm still slung over the little hovering droid as though it were a pet, and not a machine.

Han gestures for them to come aboard and doesn't say anything until they've cleared atmo and slipped into hyperspace. Chewie's grumbling about this run already, and Han unclips himself to go find the kid.

Who's considerably less of a kid these days. By the Force, it's been three years, and he looks like he's seen some shit. And Han has definitely seen some shit in that time so he would know.

He finds Luke slumped over the gaming table in the cabin, one hand still on his droid.

“I thought he'd never hurt you.” Han spits out, because he'd offered the kid an out. He'd had an escape hatch and he'd been too stubborn and blind to use it.

Luke makes a gesture at the droid and a holopad is projected in front of him. His fingers fly as he types out the message on it.

“He didn't mean to.” a cool clear female voice says.

It makes the bile rise in the back of Han's throat. He's heard excuses like that before.
“Where to kid?” is all he can bring himself to say. You can't save everyone, Han's always known that. Hell, it's only in the last few years he's even started trying to save anyone at all.

Luke looks up at Han, and his hand flies again. “You wouldn't happen to know where Ben Kenobi is, do you?”

Hesitantly, Han nods his head. “Last I heard he was with the Rebels.”

Luke's shoulders slump even further.

“Any major spaceport will do then.”

Han thinks about it and then nods. “But on one condition- I'm not dropping you somewhere like that without first getting you checked out by someone decent.”

He eyes the droid suspiciously. “You might end up seriously hurt.”

Luke meets Han's gaze out of the corner of his eye with a wry smile as if to say: Too late for that isn't it?

Han is most useful to the Rebellion as a known smuggler with ties to every Space Port from Coruscant to Tatooine, and while he still works enough to maintain these contacts the majority his life these past three years has been with the Rebels.

Which has the unfortunate consequence that the only decent doctors and medics that Han can guarantee will take his call are Rebels.

Not to mention, as much as Han likes the kid, he isn't about to risk his hard earned position in the Rebellion by failing to report that he's got Vader's son in custody.

Chewie can glare and grumble all he wants, but Han can't drop the kid off in a den of thieves with
his throat half crushed, and he can't betray the rebellion.

So, he takes him to a Rebel-friendly doctor. This is a very neat solution to a complicated problem.

They take Luke to a space station on a major trade route where a particularly Rebel-friendly doctor works.

They hustle Luke into the med-bay over his emphatically spelled protests, and Han takes the opportunity to use the doctor's comm to hail the Rebels and let them know he's got Vader's runaway son.

They acknowledge the receipt of the information and tell him to let him go. They have a blanket policy of clemency for individuals fleeing the Emperor's regime.

Somewhat relieved, Han ambles into the station's med-bay only to receive a death glare from the physician who is scanning Luke's throat.

The droids are fretting over him.

Han *hates* droids. The protocol droid, at least, he understands, even if he doesn't like it. A translator is essential if you're aimlessly drifting through the galaxy, and you tend to run into the basic model everywhere, but the other one, the little hovering alleged med-bot, worries Han. He's never seen one like that before.

Luke looks different from the kid Han had met on the Death Star, he's even paler, and his hair is darker, not to mention cut in an Imperial military style. It's a counterpoint, somehow, to the garish colours of the fading bruises. He still has the tube down his throat.

The floating medical droid beeps in apparent distress and tries to herd the medic away from the young man.

The scan is complete and the physician steps away.

“Your droid has done exceptional work. I think the tube can be safely removed now, and then I
would recommend trying to rest your voice for a number of days. There may have been untreated damage to your larynx.” The medic informs him.

The medical droid spins in indignation at the slight against her capabilities.

Luke smiles at it and flicks it's base.

He must feel Han's gaze because he turns to look at him before immediately looking away again. The medical droid hums in concern and bumps gently against his face, like a worried dog.

Han looks away, but he can't block out the gasping choking sounds as the tube is removed.

The medic advises the droid of which drugs to administer should various complications emerge and then brushes past Han with an ire that could peel paint. She pauses before disappearing into the maze of hallways.

“

“It's pure luck your droid was able to save your life.” She informs them. “Whatever it was that caused this...injury to happen, I'd be sure to stay far away from it in the future.”

And then with one final withering glance at Han, she's gone.

Luke massages his throat and says something softly to his protocol droid, who jerks up from his deep contemplation of his master and turns to Han.

“Captain Solo, My Master no longer has need of your transportation services but, wonders if you could direct him to a forum where he might purchase a small property. He would appreciate it very greatly.”

Han hesitates. “Yeah, sure, kid.”

Luke smiles at him. Christ, if you ignore the bruises, the kid's quite the looker, if you liked that whole 'sunshine inoncencce brightens the room' thing.
Which, it turned out, Han sort of did. *Huh, you learned something new everyday.*

The kid sets things up to purchase a property on Onderan with a bit of help from Han mostly in the form of the space pirate steering the kid away from obvious crooks, and acting as a glowering deterrent to the less obvious ones.

The business of the day complete Han wanders off to go check on Chewie and the ship. He meets up with the kid again a couple of hours later planning to say a sweet farewell to the kid, a sweeter hello to his credits and never cross paths with the young man again, but Luke hesitates and then turns bright red..

“I...uh, that is I won't be able to take possession of the property for a little while, and I'll need to arrange some things, buy a ship...you know...so I've rented a room here, for a while. You could..uh, come back to it? with me? If you wanted?” He manages to get out eventually.

Han thinks about it, for a second. The kid's good looking enough, and he's certainly not the first of Han's richer passengers to be tempted by Han's particular brand of handsome rogue after the voyage was done. Not to mention he's got to be 20-something by now, so it's all above-board there.

But, Han has the feeling Luke's young for his age, not mention he's Vader's kid and-

*-he's Vader's kid-

Yeah, Nope. Han is definitely sleeping with Luke, it's decided. He's morally obligated to, considering how much it would piss off Vader if he knew. It's practically a victory for the Rebellion.

Han grins, cocky, and arrogant. “Lead on kid.”

Luke blinks in shock. He hadn't actually expected Han to say yes. He blushes even brighter red and heads towards his rooms, droids and Han following along like a string of ducklings.

Lukes asks the droids to power down and puts them in the closet before they start.
It becomes almost immediately apparent to Han, at least, that this is one of his worse ideas.

Luke kisses like he's drowning and Han is air. He doesn't bother using false bravado to bluster past his own obvious inexperience, though Han thinks, somewhat uncharitably, that that might be because it's just SO obvious.

It's fumbled, quick, and mutually unsatisfying, and it's clear to both of them that neither of them are really very interested in what's actually happening.

Han's just putting another notch on his bedpost, another tale of conquest to tell in cantinas where scavengers, smugglers and bountyhunters gather: *I fucked Lord Vader's son and let me tell you he was desperate for it!*

For Luke it's something more and less complicated than that.

He can't remember the last time that he'd reached out to someone and felt warm flesh instead of cold durasteel. He just wants to hold on to someone and have them reach back. He's just so kriffing tired of being alone and being lonely.

The sex is secondary to that. He knows there's no other way to get this, here and now, especially from Han. But, he also knows, in the way he sometimes just knows things, that he can trust Han. That Han might brag about it later but at least he won't laugh at Luke now, and it's his first time, so he thinks that if Han laughed he might just give up and die (not that he'd told Han that it was his first time, he has a feeling if he'd knew than the smuggler would have said no).

The second Han rolls off and sees Luke flushed and panting in the harsh lighting of the space station with his neck still more bruises than unmarked skin, he feels guilty.

He shouldn't have done that. Certainly not for those reasons. Luke seems to catch something of what Han's feeling, either through the mumbo jumbo of the Force that Ben's always going on about, or through the expression on his face, Han can't know.

Luke smiles wryly at the smuggler. “Is this the part where you say you've got to be somewhere and it can't wait?” he ask a little breathlessly.

Han shakes his head, slowly. “Not unless you want me to.”
Luke smiles again, the full bright one, that lights up the room and makes Han's heart do uncomfortable things.

God, he's scum. He took advantage of this sweet innocent kid.

Luke chuckles, presumably at Han's tortured expression, and tugs on his arm. Han lays back down. Luke wraps his hands around his bicep and rests his head on his shoulder.

“Thanks.” he murmurs. “I know I'm not exactly...well, I'm not very good, am I?”

Han snorts. “Like all things worth doing, it takes practice kid.”

Luke laughs, and it's so unexpected they both jump. Han has never heard him laugh before.

“Won't your Wookie be missing you?” Luke asks.

“Probably. I really probably shouldn't stay too long. He'll worry.”

Luke's grinning like he thinks Han's awkward excuses are hilarious. “That's fine, want to use my 'fresher?”

Han nods, after a minute he leans back to get a look at the kid. “What about you?” he asks genuinely curious.

Luke shrugs. “What about me?”

“What are you going to do? You goin' straight to Onderon from here?”

“Safety ain't everything kid.” Han quips.

Luke pauses and thinks about something for a long moment before he speaks. “Hey, Han. You ever heard of a planet called Dagobah?” He hadn't known what he was going to say before he spoke, but the word feels right and...significant somehow the moment they leave his mouth.

“Dagobar? ’Fraid not.” Han sits up, and considers putting on some clothes for the walk to the fresher. “What the hell's in Dagobar?” He decides not to bother with fishing his clothing out from under the bed and ambles into the fresher naked.


Han comes back and shrugs back into his clothing.

Luke eyes him from the bed. Han hesitates at the doorway. It seems like he might say something, instead he shuts his mouth with a click and mutters. “G'bye kid.”

“Han.” Luke calls after him. Han freezes half-way out of the room already. “You can come visit me on Onderon. If you want.” He grins at the smuggler.

Han looks a bit spooked and runs out of the room at top speed.

Luke chuckles to himself, and heads to the fresher to clean off. He slides into bed, feeling likes he's standing on the edge of a great vista and for the first time in his life there isn't a locked door between him and the horizon.

*He kicks wildly against nothing. The vice around his throat is holding him up, and choking him at once. It hurts. It never occurred to him that this would hurt!* 

*He desperately reaches for the Force but he doesn't know how to use it to save himself. He needs to do something or he's going to die. He screams into the Force with all his being. Screams for help, begs his father to stop and finally, just screams.*

*But, his father can't hear him. Or maybe he just doesn't care.*
How could this happen? He'd believed his father when he told Luke he loved him more than anything in the galaxy. It had never even occurred to Luke to be afraid of the man.

Luke feels something give in his neck, and the pain gains a sharper jagged quality.

Then he's hitting the floor with a crash and the vice on his neck is gone but he still can't breathe. His lungs feel like they're spasming in his chest. His heart pounds in his ears like a runaway bantha.

He's trying to gasp, to choke, something! But he can't get air.

Father's crushed my windpipe, he realizes.

His vision is going dark at the edges. Everything hurts. He's going to die.

The thought occurs to him suddenly: His mother must have died. Just. Like. this.

He wakes up screaming and gasping, the dim night-cycle lights of his rooms faintly illuminating the droids. He reaches instinctively through the Force for his father for comfort and reassurance, but finds nothing. Emptiness.

He has not been more than a Star Destroyer's length away from his father in the last three years. And the realization that he is well and truly alone for the first time in nearly a decade makes Luke shake uncontrollably.

What is he going to do? His father has always told him how dangerous the galaxy is. How he needs to be guarded and protected. He doesn't know how to live without him. He hasn't ever been alone in all his life. Not like this.

C-3T4 has his electrostaff extended, and his back to the door, while MT-9 hovers over him lights blinking in silent distress.

“Are you quite alright, sir?” C-3T4 asks tentatively.
Luke reaches out and puts a hand on MT-9. She'd saved him, even though she'd been his father's droid at the time. He wasn't alone then, he reminds himself, and he's not alone now. He has the droids. They'll look after him.

“Yes, 3T4. It was just a dream.”

3T4 folds the electrostaff back into his arm. “Oh. Honestly sir, the inconveniences of being an organic seen astronomical.”

Luke huffs at that. “We manage somehow.”

“I suppose you must.”

Luke rolls over to go back to sleep, and faces the wall. “3T4?” He asks suddenly. “Can you guard the door while I sleep?”

He hears the electrostaff unfold again. “Of course sir.”

Chapter End Notes

For anyone who's wondering Han/Luke is not endgame. Just so you know and don't get disappointed later on. I mean there's some love there, but.

The structure of this fic will be longer chapters featuring Luke, Han and Leia (I swear she's going to show up eventually!) with shorter chapters in between featuring either the above characters on their own or other characters like Vader, Yoda and Obi-Wan.
Interlude with Vader II: Old Friends Meet Again

Chapter Summary

In an attempt to distract himself from the loss of his son, Vader pursues his favourite leisure activity: Attempting to hunt down and kill Obi-Wan Kenobi.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vader paces his chambers, trying not to see the door that never before had been left open. Luke was gone. That was good.

It hurt like knives in his gut to know it all the same.

Then he remembers the way Luke had silently clawed at his own throat and it sets ice to the wound. He is dangerous. He cannot be trusted with what he loves. He will only destroy it.

Padme hadn't screamed either.

It's a relief when a sighting of Obi-Wan on some swampy little moon gives him an excuse to go on a wild goose chase.

He needs a distraction.

He's grown so used to Luke that he instinctively moves to accommodate the boy and in doing so is constantly reminded of the empty space his son left behind.

He goes alone in seach of his vengeance against his old master. He has a score to settle and he does not want it interrupted by the usual Stormtrooper incompetence.

Obi-Wan is waiting in a crumbling ruin in the wilderness.
He stands when Vader walks in saber already drawn and ignited.

“Oh, finally.” Obi-Wan drawls in his impeccable Coruscanti accent. “You know I had to walk past my wanted poster no less than 5 times before someone actually noticed? Terrible, the lack of creative thinking these Imperial troopers have.”

“Cease your chatter, old man, and draw your saber: one of us dies here.” Vader growls.

Obi-Wan holds up his hands and backs away towards where the swamp looms through a hole in the crumbling wall. “I didn't come here to fight you, Darth.”

“And yet, we will fight, and you will die here.”

“Hardly. This ruin is surrounded by hundreds of miles of swamp. I may be old, but you're heavy. There’s no prizes for guessing who’ll win that foot race. Besides- strike me down and I will become more powerful than you can possibly imagine.”

Nonetheless the old man ignites his saber and for a moment Darth Vader is years younger and a lifetime lighter circling his old friend in a duel.

He can feel the fires of Mustafar.

He will have vengeance.

“Then what did you come here for you old fool?” Vader asks, hoping to distract the old man.

“Is your son still alive?”

That pulls Vader up short. “What?”

“I heard him cry for help. I felt his pain and fear through the Force, and I need to know: did you kill him?” Obi-Wan demands to know.
Vader lashes out with a violent swing but the old man is still nimble and dances away.

“Is Luke alive Darth?” Obi-Wan pleads. “Please! I need to know if by returning him to you I sent him to his death.”

“I would never hurt him! He's my child!!!” Vader roars. There's wetness on his cheeks behind the mask.

Obi-Wan cocks his head in interest, and Vader wonders what it is the old serpent can sense through the Force.

“Now, Darth, we both know that's not true.”

He points his saber at his old apprentice, and it is Obi-Wan circling the Sith Lord now. He is angry in a way he'd forgotten he could be.

“You did hurt him.” He snarls. “You frightened him so badly that half the Force Sensitives in the Galaxy must have heard him begging for his life. Did. You. Kill. Him.”

Vader thinks of Padme's small body hoisted in the air, her dainty feet kicking furiously and fruitlessly. She had refused to accept her fate.

Luke had.... -

“He lives.” Vader admits.

Obi-Wan scoffs. “Unscathed?”

Vader bows his head. “Yes. The medical droid who examined him assured me he would make a full recovery.”
He takes another swing at Obi-Wan, somewhat halfheartedly. Obi-Wan absent-mindedly jumps backward out of the way.

The old man is glaring at him.

“You nearly killed the boy.” It's not a question. Or an accusation. It is a statement of fact.

“I didn't mean to! It was an accident.”

Obi-Wan sneers. “As Yoda says: Do or do not. There is no try- You nearly killed the boy. And he loves you. He is loyal. What could he possibly have done to warrant it?”

Vader lowers his lightsaber. Obi-Wan is right. He knows it deep in his bones. In the part of his heart that he's reclaimed from the Empire in caring for his son. He knows:

But for the timely intervention of a medical droid he would have killed his only son. The only thing he truly loves in all the Galaxy.

“Nothing. He did nothing.” Vader admits.

Obi-Wan has always been a fair man. He considers Vader, dispassionately. He loved this man once, a lifetime ago. There is an echo of that now in what he is feeling but, mostly, Obi-Wan feels only contempt.

“The Dark Side gives much Darth. But it demands so much more, doesn't it?” He observes lightly.

Vader's mind fills with Sidious. Sidious who had tricked him. Engineered the conflict that made him a weapon and whose grasping greed for power had desired his son from the moment he'd learned of the boy.

An interest that had only grown as Luke had.

If Vader had truly believed in the rightness of the dark side he would have given his son over to be
trained in it's ways, but he hadn't. Luke shone like a small sun in the Force, his strength was so
great and so...untainted.

Palpatine had promised to leave the boy alone, but it was a promise Vader had never trusted. He
knew his son was far too strong in the Force for Palpatine to resist exploiting him should the
opportunity arise.

And there was always the chance that Sidious would desire Luke's power as he had once desired
the power of Anakin Skywalker. And like Anakin Skywalker before him, Luke would kill Sidious'
apprentice and fall to take the dead man's place. Kill Vader as Vader had killed Tyrannus.

Vader did not mourn the destruction of Anakin Skywalker, but he could not bear to watch his son
destroyed. It was a weakness.

One Palpatine had been all too happy to exploit.

Palpatine who had poisoned Vader's life. Who had twisted his mind to the breaking point in the
final days of the Republic.

Who had lied to him about Padme's death.

Who had imprisoned Vader in this painful terror of a suit. This half life. Which with Luke's
departure seems all the more unbearable.


Vader looks at Obi-Wan, and the sadness and desperation Obi-Wan feels through the force is so
familiar he half expects to see that very particular hang-dog expression Anakin had so often worn
when he was young and whole. Every instinct Obi-Wan thought he'd buried springs to life again,
demanding he fix whatever it is his troublesome young apprentice has done this time. The old love
he cannot seem to kill no matter how he tries, awake once again.

But, it's not Anakin in front of him. It's Darth Vader.
“Where is Luke?” Obi-Wan demands. “What have you done with him?”

“I don't know where he is.” Vader replies, his voice as small as the vocoder can make it.

Obi-Wan is taken aback. “What?”

He shuts off his own lightsaber. “Did he escape?”

Vader says nothing.

Obi-Wan considers him for a long moment. “You surprise me Vader.” he says at last. “I would not have thought you capable of learning from your mistakes.”

Vader bristles and brings his saber back up but does not ignite it.

“You have your news.” Vader spits. “What now?”

Obi-Wan shifts his grip on his own lightsaber. “That, Vader, depends entirely on you.”

Darth reignites his saber and surges forward, but Obi-Wan, ever the coward, has already turned tail and run.

Vader tries to pursue but Obi-Wan sprints across the swamp like a scraggly old deer as he follows some hidden safe path. Vader takes one step and sinks up to his knees in mud. He fights free and runs back for the swoop bike he'd rode in on but by then Obi-Wan has disappeared into the trees.

He conducts a cursory search of the area but there is not sign of his old Master.

Vader would blockade the planet, but it's an important trade outpost and he doesn't want to have to admit that he'd had the Jedi General within reach and had failed once more to capture him.
So, he let's Obi-Wan have this round.

Vader's coming more and more to believe that, for all the man is not so strong in it as some, the Force loves Obi-Wan best of all the Jedi. Better, certainly, than Vader.

Chapter End Notes

Han and Luke will be back next chapter.

Vader is making strides in his emotional development. I'm so proud. Hope you guys like it, comments are always appreciated.
IN EXILE

Chapter Summary

Han and Luke fall together and then fall apart.

Chapter Notes

Okay, so just a note. This fic roughly follows the timeline of the Original Trilogy. So at this point Han is in his early thirties and Luke is about 22.

No warning this chapter, just some making out, some drinking and some really poor emotional communication. So a regular day for Han Solo.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Han doesn't expect to see the kid again.

He spends most of his time running guns for the Rebels and Leia, when she'd learned he was late back because he took the time to deposit an Imperial Prince in the Outer Rim, had looked like all it would take was one flippant comment from Han too many and she would claw his face off herself.

Besides, it's a big galaxy and paths don't always cross twice.

But, it's about six months to day since he'd helped the Prince that he finds himself coming out of hyperspace at Onderon. He knows an Imp battle cruiser flagged his ship leaving the Core, he needs to land on Onderon to throw them off his scent, but if he lands at a spaceport he's sure to be stopped and questioned.

Well, if there's one place that no one's going to be looking for a rebel it's at an Imperial Prince's summer house. Right? Well, Han hopes so at least.

Chewie does not approve. He reminds Han is quite strong language that he has spent nearly the entirety of the last six months alternatively lusting after, talking about, or flirting/arguing with one Princess Leia of the Alderaani people. To which Han replies in that there's no law against enjoying yourself when you can, at least not yet there isn't.
Chewie grumbles through their entire descent but doesn't actually do anything to change Han's course. Which Han interprets to mean that while Chewie may thinks this is stupid or dangerous, he doesn't actually think it's dangerously stupid.

Onderon is a well-populated and wealthy planet by the standards of the Outer Rim. Once a member of the notorious Separatist alliance, it now was part of the Empire and the troopers stationed there met with no resistance, merely sullen but obedient compliance.

The terrain of Onderon is more varied than most- it has lush hilly temperate regions, and cold howling poles, oceans, and lakes, and at least one desert given that Han's descending towards one now. The coordinates the kid gave him all those months ago belong to a surprisingly small house surrounded by gardens and set into a steep hill that leads down to a shallow lake blue as Luke's eyes.

There's a landing platform with a warp-drive integrated ship, and a swoop bike. Han angles down towards it and brings the ship in to land.

The protocol droid is there to meet them.

“Captains Han and Chewbacca, what a pleasant surprise! Master Luke will be so terribly pleased when he returns!”

“What a shame, he's not here! Well, we tried.” Chewie grumbles sarcastically. “We should turn around and leave now before you do something that ruins everything.”

“Oh, please don’t do that!” The protocol droid exclaims making both smugglers gape in surprise at his understanding of Chyrywook. “Master Luke will be so terribly put out if you leave, and I was just about to begin preparing dinner, and seeing as we have guests now, I think perhaps something special is in order. How do the two of you like your steak cooked?”

The noise Chewie lets out is a cry of true and pure joy. They don't seen much fresh meat with the Rebels and even less when they're hopping between planets smuggling this and that in the name of Freedom or whatever it is they do these days.

“Chewies likes it raw.” Han supplies. “I like mine rare.”
“Oh, excellent.” The droid exclaims. “If you like you may wait inside, or in the gardens, or go down those awful stairs to try and find Master Luke yourself.”

Han pauses in confusion. “Wait, Luke is here?”

“Not exactly. He's down by the lake, at the bottom of those ghastly steps.”

The droid points and Han can feel Chewie balk beside him. The steps are pretty daunting, shallow, steep and rail-less they plunge down towards the water far far below.

Han sighs. “You handle the meat Chewie. I've got-uh....someone I wanna see.”

“You don't need try and sound all suave Han!” Chewie bellows after him. “The only person here to impress is me and that droid.”

Han ignores him and starts down the stairs.

He's not even halfway down when he realizes why the droid had assumed he'd prefer to stay at the house. The sun is blisteringly warm after the coldness of space, and the wind is, if anything even hotter and bone dry as it blows in from the distant desert.

Still, Han has nothing if not follow through, so he clomps his way down the rest of the stair.

By the time he reaches the bottom, he's sweated through he shirt and is thanking the god of shiftless smugglers that he decided to wear his vest and not his jacket today.

The beach is rolled out before him blindingly bright in the sunlight. He spots a shape stretched out on the sand and heads towards it.

It seems like every time Han lays eyes on Luke, he's a different person.

The figure stretched out asleep on the sand looks nothing like the pale haunted young man with the
bruised throat he'd left on the edge of the civilized galaxy.

The sun has toasted his skin brown and bleached his hair blonde. His body is hardened with lean muscles that Han certainly would have remembered last time around. Not to mention he’s basking naked in the sun, languid and content in a way that Han had forgot actually existed.


Han sits down next to him, unabashedly giving his naked form a long appreciative look. “I don't see you could have known that, when I didn't even know it.”


Han nods shortly and looks out across the water. If there's one thing he doesn't want to think about it's Luke's father.

“You look good kid.”


Han chuckles. Running with the rebels has worn him a little thin. “The galaxy's a tough place.”

Luke leans against him, skin so warm from the sun that Han can feel the heat of it through his (slightly) sweat damp shirt. “You should go for a swim.” Luke suggests. “It always cheers me up.”

Han gives Luke an incredulous look. “You kidding? Anything could be in that water!”


Han eyes the lake dubiously. “I haven't got a swim suit.”
Luke raises an eyebrow and smiles wider. “You'll notice I don't either.”

Han leans down over the young man, flicks a strand of blond hair out of his face. “Maybe I'd rather do something else?”

Luke laughs like the galaxy is a bright and wonderful place. “Why Captain Solo,” he asks breathily with much batting of his eyelashes. “Are you trying to seduce me?”

Han thinks about it. “Nah, no seductions needed here, I think.” He says holding Luke's gaze. Luke cocks his head at Han as though he's a particularly interesting puzzle. Then he sits up and climbs into Han's lap.

“You know, I think you may be right.” He kisses him, and it's like before but it's not.

Luke still kisses him like he's drowning and Han is air, but there's no panic underneath, no raw wound of lonelineess and fear. He kisses Han and Han kisses back, and neither of them are thinking of anything at all other than how nice it feels to kiss a handsome young man on a beautiful warm beach.

This time it's the best sex Han's had in years.

Staying with Luke on Onderon is surreal. It's like it's some sort of strange parallel world where hearts are never broken, trusts never betrayed and good always triumphs. The water is cool and bright and clean, the gardens carefully tended by a delighted Luke who explains that he'd hardly seen plants at all before he came here. There's always good food and good drink. The sun doesn't stop shining. It's like nothing could ever go wrong here.

Even Han walking into the kitchen to find Luke intently levitating spoons only adds to the sense that this has all been a pleasant sun-drenched dream.

It certainly feels like it was all a dream when they take off three days later and return to the frozen wasteland of Hoth.

Certainly when he sees Leia waiting at the docking bay, it seems like Han must have dreamt up the smiling accommodating young man and his sunny paradise. He's back in the real world where love hurts, and is so often denied.
Leia doesn't smile at him once, in the entire time he's on base.

When he left Onderon the first time Han had told himself he wouldn't come back again. But, it's too hard to give the place up, despite Chewie's constant glares and grumbles on the subject.

After all, it's the life he's been chasing since he'd been born. One of ease, and wealth and safety. When he's with Luke on Onderon there are no difficult decisions. No thorny problems of bravery or morality to wrestle with.


So, he visits Luke again- has Chewie drop him off for a day or two everytime a crun takes them near Onderon and they can afford the delay. It doesn't feel real but it's a beautiful dream.

Being with Luke is easy. The kid is easy to care about, and even easier to get along with.

This time he spends his day with Luke in the garden instead of the lakeshore. Han lounges on a cushioned chaise while Luke bustles around carefully tending his plants.

Luke turns to smile adoringly at him and an uncomfortable feeling starts growing in Han's stomach, squeezing his heart until he felt like he might be sick.

Luke wanders over and leans down to kiss Han, before moving to straddle him on the lounge chair.

Han looks up at him. Luke's open and trusting and more naive than any son of a mass murderer had any right to be.

“I'm an opportunist. You realize that” Han blurts out. Luke stares at him in complete confusion.

Han realizes he hasn't made himself clear. “You do know I don't love you kid, right?”

Luke jerks back like he's been slapped. “What a thing to just come out with.” he says staring at Han in shock as he climbs off him.
Luke takes a deep breathes and squares his shoulders before meeting Han's gaze.

“You're telling me that the space pirate who drops by maybe once a month isn't in love with me? **Shocking.**” He asks archly, voice dripping with sarcasm.

He stares at his feet blinking determinedly trying not to cry. “You really don't think much of me do you?”

Han frowns at him and Luke's face falls even further.

“I never expected you to love me.” Luke admits “And I don't love you, or at least I'm pretty sure I don't. But, I thought we were friends Han.”

Han blinks up at him. He's not really sure where this is going. “I guess we are. I mean, friends that have a lot of sex but...yeah, friends. I guess.”

Luke blinks up at him from beneath his bangs. “Are we? 'Cause to me it sounded like you just told me you were using me cause I was there and it was **easy.**”

Han shakes his head vehemently. “No, kid. Of course not! I just- I-”

Luke just stares up at him, eyebrows raised, waiting for an explanation.

Han opens and closes his mouth a few times. “I just, didn't want you to...get hurt...if uh, you were...ummm...you know, just in case we weren't on the same page?” he finally manages to stammer out.

Luke glares and then slowly and deliberately reaches down to grab the plant mister which he then sprays in Han's face for what feel like a very long time. Han takes it. He's probably lucky at this point that no mention has been made to a certain over-protective mass-murdering Dad Vader.

“You're an idiot Solo.” Luke mutters once Han is thoroughly drenched, and for a second he's making precisely the same expression Leia does nearly everytime she looks at Han- a mixture of fondness, exasperation and soul deep anger. The resemblance is a little unsettling to be honest.
“You couldn't have opened with that?” Luke snaps.

Han winces. “Yeah, I probably should have.”

Luke shoots him a withering stare that would have made the Princess proud.

Han intends to spend the rest of the visit groveling but Luke gets bored of that pretty quickly and by the next morning seems genuinely confused about what Han is still apologizing for.

He does take the opportunity to coax Han into joining him in the water and spends a happy hour floating on his back laughing at how the spacer standing up to his knees in water- stiff, disgruntled and looking for all the world like a particularly offended cat.

Han figures they're about square after that.

For the first time Han's happy to fly away from Onderon, and the uncomfortable feelings that have sprung up between him and the kid.

To try and make amends he brings a bottle of Corellian brandy on his next visit. Some of the good stuff that he picked up as part of a non-Rebel smuggling gig.

He splits it with Luke one night, the pair of them sprawled awkwardly across Luke's surprisingly small bed in his equally surprisingly spartan room. They take turns taking swigs right from the bottle as they pass it back and forth.

Luke, unsurprisingly, is a terrible lightweight and is red-faced, pliant and giggling after about 3 gulps, but stubbornly tries to keep pace with Han, whose knocking it back with single minded determination, anyway.

The Princess has smiled at Han twice since he'd last visited Luke. It's a significant uptick compared to earlier statistics from similiar lengths of time. Though still pretty dismal considering Han's pretty sure she's smiled at Chewie about 8 times in the same period.

Han glares at the bottle of brandy in betrayal. This isn't right. He's not usually a morose drunk.
When he looks up Luke is considering him with bleary drunken seriousness.

He taps the centre of Han's forehead.


Han grins at him. “So, you're a mind reader now?” He asks.

Luke gives a a very exasperated look. “I've always been a mind reader. Sort of. With emotions, not thoughts.” He waves his hands around randomly. “It's sorta a general impression thing. ”

Han raises his eyebrows and tries not to laugh. Luke takes the opportunity to arrange him as a pillow.

“So. Why is Han full of sadlyness? Spill it, Solo.”

Han relents. “There's this...girl and I..uh.”

Luke perks up and smiles evilly. “You like-her like her?”

Han scowls. “Shut up. Anyway, she doesn't like me back.”

Luke fake-scowls, rolls onto his back and then starts lightly smacking Han on the arm, without ceasing his solemn contemplation of the ceiling's mysteries, until the smuggler grudgingly relents and hands him the bottle.

“Hey, Luke?” Han asks hesitantly.

“Ummm-hmmm?”
“Do you think a princess and a guy like me could ever-?”

Luke snorts and turns to look at Han over his shoulder. “You're kidding right?”

“Hey.” Han protests, offended. “There's always hope no matter how slim the chances are!”

Luke rolls onto his stomach and rests his head one hand. “I didn't mean that. I meant that you've already managed to get with an Imperial Prince, and I know I'm nice and all, but I'd think that after that particular challenge, a princess whose not even been raised to be morally and physically repulsed by your very existence would probably be easy.”

He punctuates this by pointing at Han with the bottle.

Han sputters.

Luke rolls back over onto his back to continue his deep contemplation of the ceiling. “Is this a hypothetical princess or a metaphorical princess or an actual princess that we're talking about here?”

“You remember the princess I was rescuing from the Death Star when we first, ah-” Han hesitates because there's no good way of saying “when we first met and I kidnapped you”.

“Ran into each other?” Luke supplies after the pause goes on a little too long.

“Yeah. Well, it's her.”

Luke turns to look at Han incredulously and then starts laughing so hard he almost rolls off the bed and it's only Han's swift and decisive intervention which saves him from his well deserved fate.

Han takes advantage of Luke's distraction to swipe the bottle back.

“That's real nice, kid.” He snarks taking a long swig. “Way to make a guy feel confident.”
Luke pouts. “S'waht you get for talking' bout someone else when you already have a vision of loveliness in bed with you.”

He stretches out his arms as though presenting Solo with his beauty. Luke does have a point there.

Han smile softly at the kid. Luke catches him and smiles that huge goofy smile that squeezes Han's heart and makes him understand why someone might lock this young man on a Star Destroyer to try and protect him from the universe.


Luke pulls away blinking up a little drunkenly at him. He tilts his head to the side again and laughs.

Han frowns. “What?”

Luke smiles that smile again, and shakes his head. “Nothing.”

“C'mon kid what.”


Han groans and rolls off him. “Okay, kid. Level with me. How drunk are you?”

Luke shrugs, and cuddles up to Han. “Not sure. Never been drunk b'fore.” There's a long pause. “I like the way the room is spinning.”

Han scowls at him “Okay, you're cut off for the night. Last thing I want is to clean up your vomit.” He grumbles, disappointed that his plan for the night is being derailed because Imperial Princes can't hold their liquor and Luke cracks up again.
“It's such a good s'cret!” he slurs between giggles.

Han decides to play along. “Aw, c'mon, don't keep me in suspense. What is it?”

Luke reaches up and taps the centre of Han's forehead. “You lied.”

“Huh? When?”

Luke has been distracted by his own attempt to rearrange Han's muscular-skeletal system in order to make it more suitable for use as a pillow.

Han pries the kid off him. “C'mon. Stop that.”


“You're drunk! I'm worried you'll puke on me unless I prop you up and get you some water.”

“I'm not that drunk.

“Sure you're not.”

Luke pouts at him for a moment, but when Han doesn't immediately cave, he gets the giggles again. “I'm only forgiving you.” He informs the smuggler. “Because it's such a nice secret.”

Han rolls his eyes and cuddles the kid up to his chest. The prince passes out pretty quickly. The next morning Luke doesn't say anything about the night before but he keeps shooting Han these smug, pleased little smiles when he thinks the smuggler isn't looking.

After that, visiting Luke becomes something of a habit. One Han knows he can't sustain. Not if he wants to stay a Rebel.
The disconnect between his two lives is becoming too great. The odds are too high in the conflict that rages outside this strange little pocket universe. The Empire is tightening its chokehold on the Galaxy. The Rebels are being hounded across the stars suffering defeat after bloody defeat despite destroying the Death Star.

It feels wrong to occasionally lay down his weapons, his morals and his cause to scurry off to bask in the sun with a handsome Imperial Prince.

Besides, Leia had hugged him last week and smiled at him no less than three times, genuinely happy to see him. They'd talked over the terrible rations the Rebels were living on these days.

It was terrifying in a way that being with Luke never was.

She smiles at him more than ten times that month.

He doesn't want to let her down.

There's a question Han's been needing to ask Luke. One he's been avoiding.

“Luke?” Like all important things between them it's left unsaid until Han blurts it out at the least appropriate moment. In this case, as he's getting ready for bed and Luke is already half asleep. He goes to bed ridiculously early.

“Wha?” Luke lifts his head off the pillows.

“If you have that-” Han waves his hand vaguely around his head because, proof of it's power or not he refuses to dignify the Old Religion with respect. “-feelings thing, that you say you have-”


“Whatever it is. If you can feel what other people are feeling, how can you support the Empire?”
Luke rubs his eyes. “It doesn't work like that, Han.” He sighs blearily.

“Okay, fine. But, you must know what the Empire is doing to the Galaxy.”

Luke looks at Han blankly. “I know what my father has done. I know what he's been involved in... and I don't believe in the Empire. Not the way my father does, but I don't believe in the Rebellion either. I think it's a pointless waste of lives.”

Han gapes at him. “Do you believe in anything at all?” He asks incredulously.

Luke shrugs and gives him a small smile. “I believe in not dying if you can help it, and enjoying what you have, for however long you have it. That's the Tatooine way, and I'm still a Tatooine farm boy at heart.” He holds out his hand to Han. “Now, if the philosophical discussion is over. You should come to bed.”

Han frowns and taps the side of his head. “Nah. I- uh. You've got me thinking and I think I'd keep you up with my...feelings. Or whatever.”

Luke frowns at him but doesn't stop him when he heads outside.

Han paces round the property a dozen times. He could understand if Luke was just trying to save his own neck.

 Heck, Han respected self-preservation. But, he didn't see how the kid could look, could understand and could somehow remain indifferent. Could be so dismissive of the people who'd risked so much to try and build a better world.

If Han was honest with himself, what really bothered him, wasn't that Luke didn't believe in the Rebellion. It was that not so long ago Han had been just as indifferent.

Han lets out a long breath and stares up at the majestic sweep of stars over Luke's estate. It's remote enough that they're bright as lanterns out here.

It's funny how people can change.
Han looks around at Luke's lovingly tended plants, the steps down to the lake, the careless luxury of the place. This used to be the life Han wanted, but now, it's not.

He made his choice when he turned his ship around to try and help save those X-wing pilots when they were trying to blow up the Death Star.

Or maybe he made it even earlier than that. Back when he was young and stupid and left the Imperial army by punching an officer in the face over a Wookie.

He's never going to just hang up the blaster-belt and live a live of ease. He's a Rebel.

And rebels fight.

Realizing that feels like the end of something.

The next time Han visits Luke is because he actually has a pick up on Onderon. Produce and food from the fertile agricultural regions south of Luke's desert.

It's just a quick stop. But he thinks it might hurt Luke's feelings if he found out Han had been on Onderon and hadn't come to see him, and it was basically guaranteed that Luke would find out because Chewie was vengeful like that and very firmly on team Leia.

Han lands and is greeted by the familiar sight of C-3T4 on the landing pad. Han brushes past the droid and leaves Chewie to deal with him, since for reasons known only to infuriating Wookies, he actually liked the fussy protocol droid.

Luke is standing in the main room of his house facing away from the door talking on the comm. Han leans against the doorway taking a minute to appreciate the view when he registers just what he is hearing on that

The whoosh hiss of a respirator.
“And you are still well? There has been no trouble?”

There's no mistaking that vocoder bass. Darth Vader. Han's blood runs cold.

“Yes, Father. I've been exceedingly well. It's you I'm worried about.” Han can hear the smile in Luke's voice.

There's a pause filled with the hissing of the respirator.

“I am quite well, my son.”

“You sure? Because it sounds to me like you've been neglecting some of the maintenance on your suit. When was the last time you meditated? I'm worried you're not sterilizing your mask often enough.”

“I meditated last nightcycle. As for maintenance I simply haven't had the time lately.”

Han can see Luke go tense. “What's happened Father? Don't lie. I can always tell when you're lying.”

“The Emperor is proving more difficult than I anticipated in regards to your recent...relocation.”

“I don't-” Luke starts to protest but Han has heard enough and loudly clears his throat. Luke jumps and stares at him in panic before hurriedly turning back to the blue figure of Vader.

“I'm sorry Father I have to go. One of the boys from the village is here. I promised to help him repair his speeder.”

“Very well, good bye Luke.”

“Goodbye Father.” The comm call ends.
Luke hesitantly turns around to face Han, who smiles spitefully.

“So, you and Dad Vader seem pretty tight.”

Luke curls in on himself.

“Which is real funny to me-” Han continues blithely, “--since, you know, last you saw him he just about choked you to death. You call him often?”

Luke stares at his feet, his back ramrod straight and mutters barely above a whisper: “At least once a week.”

“Kriffing Hell kid, at least tell me he doesn't know where you are!?”

Luke swallows. “He has a vague idea. No specifics.”


Luke visibly steels himself and then raises his chin to defiantly meeting Han's gaze head on. “Oh, shut up Han. It's not like you don't report back to Rebel Command about me. ”

Han opens and closes his mouth a few times, before scoffing. “I may be a smuggler, and you may be a Prince, but that doesn't mean I'm not allowed to care about whether or not you get your throat crushed by sheer idiocy, and it doesn't mean I'm spying on you, Your Imperial-ness.

It's basic survival instinct kid: 1) Don't go swimming in alien oceans. 2) Don't poke Rancors with a stick. 3)Don't call Darth kriffing Vader up to chat about the weather and your new swoop bike!” Han shouts.

Luke does not look impressed by Han's little rant. “You forgot one: 4) If you're a soldier in the Rebel Alliance maybe don't befriend and begin a sexual relationship with an Imperial Prince who also happens to be the son of the Empire's chief enforcer and Admiral of the Fleet. Even if the Prince is in exile. Just thinking out loud here.”
“Is that a threat?! Have you told him about me?”

Luke rolls his eyes. “No. I'm not an idiot. I don't tell my father things that I know will make him mad! So, no, My father doesn't know about you, your cause, your Wookie, my going places without my bodyguards, my eating the local produce, or my new swoop bike.”

Han gapes at the kid. “I just don't get it.”

“What's to get. He's my father. I'm all he has in the universe. I call him sometimes to check in.”

“He CRUSHED your THROAT.” Han roars.

“Yeah, I remember! I was there! It was my throat!” Luke screams back.

“But he- I....HE'S DARTH VADER!”

Luke scowls and stalks toward him. “Why do you Rebels always feel like you have to remind me who my father is? I know. I know better than anyone else alive. He's a monster who kills people. But, he'd do anything for me. Even let me go.” He hisses.

“I thought you ran away.” Han sputters, taken by surprise.

“I didn't run away. I left after he told me I should. There's no way I could have escaped Vader on my own, even if I had wanted to.”

Han opens and closes his mouth, huffs and shakes his head. “That's it. I'm leaving. I'm done.”

Luke's face crumbles. “Han, please, don't be like that it's not-”

Han takes a step back. “It's not just this. I...it's time. This isn't my real life. None of it.”

Han clenches his jaw. Luke looks like something out of Empire Propaganda. Human, beautiful, fit and blonde practically glowing in the nimbus of the late afternoon light. Han will miss him, but this can't go on.

Han takes another step back. “You're a Prince of the Empire. And I'm fighting to bring it down. You're right. It's hypocritical to keep coming back and benefiting from the Vader's blood money.”

“I don't care about the Empire, or the Rebels or any of it!” Luke protests.

“Well you should! You can't hide from the whole kriffing galaxy kid! Your dad kept you in a box, and when you got out the first thing you did was put yourself in a bigger one. It's a nice one, I'll grant you, but it's still a box.”

Luke blinks back tears, then he cocks his head to the side as though listening to something far away. “You don't actually believe that.” he says slowly, sounding surprised.

Han points emphatically at him. “Like that. Your spoon bending-mytical force mumbo jumbo! If you're like your father or Ben Kenobi you could fight and try and change the course of this war! If you can know what I'm feeling from across the room, how can you not care?”


“Your father brought down a Republic that stood for a thousand years!” Han argues “You could-”

“The Republic was falling anyway he just gave it a push.” Luke interjects.

“And the Jedi Order?” Han snaps.

Luke his bites his lip. “He killed people. That's how he changed the fate of the galaxy. He killed hundreds of Jedi, the young, the old and the children- and I don't think I can kill anyone at all ever. I don't want to anyway. I don't believe in violence.”
“You don't believe in violence? Violence isn't like that destiny nonsense that Kenobi spouts, that can't be proven or disproven. Violence exists! What, you don't believe in violence so a blaster bolt dissolves before it hits you? Violence is a reality you have to deal with.”

“But it's not one I have to accept. Fighting makes things worse- it-” Luke breaks off and hugs himself looking miserable. “How could I do anything to effect change in the galaxy? I'm just an imposter Prince. I don't know anything. No one would listen to me. I'm useless.”

Han takes a hesitant step forward. “You'll never know what you're capable of kid unless you do something. Did you ever go to that planet you asked me about? Have you even left this rock since you landed?”

Luke shakes his head. “You know I haven't.”

Han thinks for a moment. “I think you should. Take the bodyguards wherever it is you stashed them and see a bit of the galaxy. You should know just what it is you're turning your back on.” There's a long pause.

I should go.” He finally repeats.

Han has collected Chewie and is nearly back on board the Falcon, when he pauses at the sound of a shout.

“Han, wait!” Luke comes running out of his house. He slides to a stop in front of Han. “I meant what I said that time, about you being my friend. You can always come back if you decide you miss this place, and if you get into trouble with the Imps I'll do my best to help you. Even if it's just to ensure you get a clean death.”

“Tempting offer kid but I'm going to have to pass. At least for a good long while. Don't you know there's a war on?”

Luke grins at him, and waves as the ship takes off.

C-3T4 toddles up. “Oh my, sir. That was a short visit.”

“Yes. It was.”
C-3T4 looks between Luke and where the ship had disappeared in cloud cover. “Do you think they'll come back soon?”

Luke turns away and head back inside. “No. I don't think we'll ever hear from them again.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm curious if you guys can guess what the secret Luke picks up from Han while drunk is, or whether I need to make it more obvious?

Also, before anyone asks. Yes, Luke will be seeing Han again.

Anyway, hope you all like it. Nothing motivate like comments, just sayin'. Thanks for reading! :)
Interlude with Yoda I: Cryptic Comes Easy

Chapter Summary

Adrift and alone Luke decides to finally get around to visiting the Dagobah system. Yoda finds Luke Skywalker's not exactly what he was expecting.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Luke had only been on Dagocah 10 minutes and he already wanted to carefully wade back to his ship and leave it far far behind.

Humidity, he decided, was some sort of Force-sent trial to weed out the weak, because this was disgusting.

With an annoyed huff he sat down on a log. MT-9 buzzed over to hover by his head. He'd had to leave C-3T4 in the ship. This terrain was too treacherous and unstable for him to navigate. The refurbished protocol droid had worked himself up into hystericst at the news and had had to power himself down before Luke was actually able to leave.


“So, this is Dagobah.” he grumbles to MT-9. “I didn't even know air could be this damp.”

MT-9 whirs, spins and beeps.

“Yeah, I'll be sure to check your interior wiring for rust when I get back to the ship.”

Luke cranes his head to look up at the towering vine draped trees. “It's a nice place. I guess. But I wouldn't want to live here.”

“Good thing, that is.” A small rough voice piped up. “Because live here, I already do, and company, I do not want!”
Luke jumps in surprise, narrowly avoids falling into a stagnant pond, and finally scrambles back onto the log to come face to face with...a talking frog?

“Who are you?” He squeaks and then pauses thinks about it for a second and amends. “What are you?”


Luke shrugs. “My space boyfriend, only he wasn't my boyfriend, sort of broke up with me? And told me I should get out more? I've been meaning to come here for ages.” He looks around the dank swamp in distaste. “Force knows why.”

Yoda smack him on the leg with his walking stick. Hard. “My home, it is that you insult!”

Luke scowled and rubbed his sore leg. “Ow. Okay. I mean it's pretty. If you like water. And trees. And mud. I'm sure you'd hate the desert if I took you there. It's nothing personal.”

He sighs.

Yoda is looking at him very intently. He climbs up to balance on Luke's knees, his face no more than a few centimeters from Luke's own.

“Your eyes, seen them before, I think I have.”


Yoda cocks his head. “Come here, why did you?”

Yoda daintily jumps back to the log. “Young Skywalker you are. Luke. I remember your eyes now. Long time it has been since last I saw them.”

Luke stares at Yoda incredulously, barely even knows his birth name, let uses it. “But, we've never met before!”

“Met we have. Though you forgot it. Forgive this I will, because young you were.” Yoda giggles to himself. “Very young. Just born in fact.”

Luke gapes. “You were there when I was born?!”

Yoda nods. “MmmHmm. Held your mother's hand Obi-Wan did. Decided to send you to Tatooine, I did.”

Luke stares at Yoda in shock and thinks carefully before he finds the right question. “Yoda, what are you? Why were you there?”

Yoda turns to look up at him. “I am Yoda, Jedi Master.” He gives a small bow of introduction.

Luke gapes. “There are still Jedi Masters? I thought Ol'Ben was the only one left!”

“Last of his kind, Obi-Wan is not. But of us, few remain.”

Luke blinks. “Huh. You know, my Father always blamed Obi-Wan for my ending up on Tatooine.”

“Blame? What was done worthy of blame!?” Yoda squawks. “Happy you were on Tatooine! Safe! Hard your life was, but what knew you of pain or fear or loss until you Father came and took you away from those who loved you, hmmm?”

“Living with my Father wasn't so bad.” Luke protests.

Yoda scoffs loudly, and begins to wander away. “Fool you are, if think that you do.”
Luke runs to catch up to him. “Hey!” Drawing level with Yoda he looks down at the diminutive creature. “You don't like my Father much do you?”

Yoda looks up to meet Luke's gaze. His eyes are as ancient as the tree around them, older even, and as sad and regretful as an ancient stone god surveying a dead city.

“Killed all I loved, he did. Forgive him, I cannot, and stop him I must.” Yoda explains shortly.

Luke jogged to keep up with the surprisingly quick little creature. “You? You're going to stop my father?” he asks incredulously.

“It seems I must. Great evil he has done. Great evil he will do. Stopped he must be. When hid you, I did, it was my hope one day your strength would be enough to oppose his. But, love him you do, so defeat him you cannot.”

“You make it sound like love is a weakness.” Luke protests.

“No, powerful love is. Great strength it can give you for good or for evil it can. Do not worry about your love for your father. Love him Obi-Wan once did too, that's why kill him he could not either.” Yoda explains sagely.

“So you think, I should ignore my own feelings, train as a Jedi and kill my father?” Luke asks bitterly.

Yoda scowls up at him. “Say that, I did not. Come with me. Food I have. Good food, not like those bars.”

They wander deeper into the jungle, until Yoda reaches a small round hut with a door so low Luke practically has to crawl through it.

Luke sits cross legged on the floor and accepts a bowl of soup.

Yoda looks at him thoughtfully. “Trained you have been in the Force.” he remarks.
Luke huffs in annoyance. “Barely. Father only taught me enough so that my thoughts and feelings weren’t loud enough to disturb him at his work.”

Yoda laughs. “Understand that I do. Powerful your feelings are. Heard you screaming I did all the way out here.” He cocks his head to the side. “Learn more, do you wish to?”

Luke shrugs. “I don’t know. My Father always told me it would be dangerous for me to learn more.”

“And forever live your life but what your Father thinks, you will?” Yoda snaps.

Luke winces. “I would like to learn. If you think I would be a worthy pupil.”

Yoda cocks his head again. “Too old you are to begin the training.” he barks decisively.

“Oh.” is all Luke says, shoulders slumped in disappointment.

“Oh?! Deny you your dream, I do and all you have to say is ‘Oh’? Achieve nothing you will if give up you do at first opposition.”

“But Yoda, I know so little of the Jedi or their ways. If you say I am too old to learn, than I accept your wisdom.”

Yoda glares at him.“Lies, that is. Unsure you are- of your path, and of yourself.”

Luke stares into his soup in despair. “Well that’s certainly true. I don’t know if I can be a Jedi...I’m not much of a fighter...but...Han says-”

Yoday smacks him with his stick again. “Han says? Again you speak of others when asked about your own life. What care I for what this Han says? Hmm? It is YOU I am asking. Strong in the Force you are, and follow your own destiny you must. Full of darkness and danger this galaxy has become, and hard your path will be, not matter what you choose. A light for hope, and for peace
you could be if you only have the strength to fight for these things. Or, do nothing you could, return to your life of ease and comfort, but escape the dark you cannot, find you eventually it will.”

“Want to fight I know you do not, but the Jedi did not fight for glory, or for honour. It was civilization they fought for. Peace they wished to protect. If you choose it, you could do the same.”

“But make this choice for you, I cannot. Such was the way of the old Order, and it was because of that that fell it did.” Yoda considers him. “The training would be hard. A Jedi must have the deepest commitment. The most serious mind. A hard life it was. A difficult life it would be, for you.”

Luke sits there in silence thinking and drinking his soup.

_You'll never know what you're capable of kid, unless you do something._

“The Jedi really fought for peace?” he asks finally, after a long time.

Yoda nods emphatically. “Yes. Guardians we were of peace and justice in the Galaxy. There was a time when thousands of Jedi fought evil and injustice wherever we encountered it. But, gone are those days. Alone are we now. Lost.”


“And we might not even really win.”

“Oh, believe that I cannot. Win we will, because win we must.”

Luke grins at the strange little creature, so contrary and so strong. As unlike his Father and the Emperor as night and day. They felt like freezing black oil in the Force. Like a snake coiling to strike just out of your line of sight.

Yoda feels no less powerful and in someways no less dangerous. But he feel like a forge, like a crucible. A mighty fire defiantly still burning in a universe growing ever colder.
Luke feels something within himself kindle into flame just by sitting next to the wizened old creature.


“Than your first lesson I will give you.” Yoda announces, banging his stick on the floor in emphasis. “Do, or do not. There is not try.” He turns and looks at Luke expectantly.

Luke smiles, and Yoda feels the young man's joy blossom through the force. “Then I will learn from you, Yoda. I will learn the ways of the Jedi.”

Yoda smiles back in satisfaction. “A strong Jedi you will be, I think. Like your Father before you.”


Yoda nods again very forcefully. “Oh yes,” he says. “A very strong Jedi was he. Very strong. Remind me, you must, to hail Obi-Wan. Your father's lightsaber he has. Get him to bring it to you we must.”

Luke gapes at the strange little frog.

“Close your mouth!” Yoda barks. “Unless want to catch flies you do?”

Luke shuts his mouth, but can't stop staring. His father had once been a Jedi!?

Chapter End Notes

So, I recently read the Revenge of the Sith novelization (which is super amazing!) and some of what Yoda is talking about comes from there. In it Yoda acknowledges the failings of the Jedi Order to adapt to the changing times. When Obi-Wan suggests that the two of them should take the Skywalker twins and raise them as Jedi from birth Yoda disagrees and says that way of doing things failed and led them to the current mess, and that the children need to be free to choose their own fate.
Also, I've always interpreted Yoda in Return of the Jedi as trying to get a measure of Luke before revealing himself. He was always going to train that kid, but he wanted to see what Luke would do when he was denied. I also think the thing that really wins Yoda over is when Luke says "I'm not afraid." because he's really not and fear was such a big part of why his father fell.

Of course that tactic doesn't work here because Imperial!Luke needs to be talked into becoming a Jedi a lil'itty bit.

Anyway, I just have a lot of Yoda-feelings apparently. Hope you guys like the chapter. Also when explaining the plot of Star Wars to a friend that hadn't seen it since she was six I called Han "Luke and Leia's space boyfriend" which she thought was a) a perfect description and b) hilarious. So I had to sneak that in too.
Chapter Summary

Princess Leia befriends a smuggler by the name of Han Solo, and when the Rebel base on Hoth is attacked they're forced to call in a favor from an old friend of Han's...

Chapter Notes

Timeline note: There is some overlap between this chapter and the last two chapters. We're getting a look at what Leia's been up to.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Leia has never particularly warmed to Han Solo. He's too much of a liability. Too much of a wild card. Albeit a wild card they've managed to play to their favour a time or too. But still. *Unpredictable.*

She doesn't think he really believes in their cause, or if he does he's certainly not dedicated to it. His willingness to ferry the son of Vader around proved that if nothing else.

Worse, he's *proud* of it. Considers himself clever for having befriended such a potentially influential ally.

He wears his mercenary morals like a badge of honour, and damn him to all the Corellian hells he wears it well.

And if that wasn't enough he's also just about the only interesting thing that ever comes to Hoth. Not that there aren't dozens of smugglers working to for the beleaguered rebellion, but Han is the best. He runs the most crucial missions, the most dangerous ones, or at least that's the way it seems from the stories he tells. He's certainly the best storyteller if nothing else.

He's a diamond in the rough, C-3PO says. But Leia is reluctant to agree on that. What he is is...useful, despite being difficult, smug, brash, abrasive, annoying, cocky as hell and luckier than sin. And speaking of sin- Leia is half certain that the way he wore his pants was a sin on at least twelve planets.

Han swaggers into the command centre where Leia is sitting trying to parse patterns out of
unanalyzed data collected by droids and other spies. Out here on the edge of the Empire there's is hardly anything else to do.

“Princess.” he says, with barely a nod. “I heard some interesting news lately.”

She doesn't look up from the datapad. “What exactly is it Han?”

“Darth Vader's got it out for you in particular. Holds you personally responsible for the destruction of the Death Star.”

That is enough to make her look up. “You're telling me Vader is vengeful and delusional. Wow, with intel like that you're really going to turn this war.” she snarks.

He holds up his hands. “No need to get offended Princess. The intel's reliable by the way. I have a drinking buddy who's pretty high up in the Empire.”

Leia rolls her eyes. “If you're trying to impress me bragging about your imperial contacts is not the way to do it.”

Han looks a little hurt at that. He grabs her arm as she tries to storm past him. “Hey, I'm trying to look out for you. If Vader were gunning for me I'd like to know that there was a target on my back.”

Leia frowns and hesitates. “He's really after me in particular?

Han shrugs. “Apparently. The source didn't understand it either, just seemed to think you somehow got under Vader's skin. Second only to Kenobi.”

Leia raises her eyebrows at that. Vader's issue with Kenobi is legendary. Rumour had it Vader had once abandoned an in progress battle to chase a rumour of the old Jedi being sighted.

Honestly, having worked with the man for much of her teenage years Leia could understand Vader's overwhelming desire to murder Kenobi. For a man so powerful he was unfortunately completely maddening to be around. His attempts at teaching Leia of 'the Force' had ended rather
abruptly when she'd tried to throw a chair at his head (without using the force, which seemed to disappoint him more than the fact she'd tried to kill him with a chair in the first place).

Kenobi could do just about anything. Only problem was that since his falling out with Rebel High Command over the ransoming of that Imperial Prince, Kenobi only followed orders he wanted to complete anyway and had developed a bad habit of wandering off if he didn't want to do something. Or if he got bored.

Vader's hatred of Kenobi's only real redeeming feather. He acted as a diversion or a decoy. Or as the very obvious Rebel contact for nervous defectors who wanted to be very very certain they weren't about to be double crossed.

Leia laughs. “I'm not sure if I should be flattered by that comparison.”

“I would be. I've seen the old coot in action” Han's smile turns eager and a bit hesitant. “I uh, just landed with the latest food shipment in. Everything's still fresh.”

Leia beams at him. “That's the best news I've had all day!”

They eat off of the ugly plastic trays in the dinning hall, perched on rickety frigid metal benches. They swap tales of close calls, and wild chases. Leia with tales from her days in the Senate and as a Rebel. Han from his days as a thief and a smuggler.

Leia hasn't tasted fresh produce in nearly a month. Han doesn't say anything when she steals her favourites off of his tray.

She catches his eye and he smiles tentatively at her. It's different. Like he's worried she won't smile back. She does.

And somehow it's a moment where things change between them.

Han is still infuriating and rude, but he seems to grow in his dedication to the cause.

He flies the dangerous missions, and the important ones, and doesn't tend to disappear for long stretches which he only explains as 'freelance work’ or continually try and sneak a couple extra
days onto even the most routine missions.

If he'd only just stay, Leia feels like she could begin to understand so many things. They could give him an actual rank within the burgeoning military hierarchy of the rebellion, he could have responsibilities, and she could rely that he would be there the next day.

Of course he doesn't ever stay long enough to do any of those things.

She wishes she could sort out what she feels for him. Sometimes she hates him for treating this cause, for which so many have already died, so casually. Other times she thinks perhaps he's the only sane one among them. The only one who, and this is the thought that she cannot accept, cannot even entertain, if they should fail would be able to go on.

Other times she just appreciates that he's managed to remain casual about the entire enterprise. Things on base are often so tense and serious that Solo's arrival feels like a breath of fresh air.

It gets to the point that they're friends, and Han will come and seek her out as soon as he gets back to base. She looks forward to it. He's the only thing like a friend that she has these days. Oh, she has colleagues and compatriots, men and women respect her and trust her, but she's both younger and higher ranking than most so friends are hard to come by.

So, when Han returns to base and doesn't come to find her, Leia goes looking for him.

She finds him in the hangar hunched in a parka and staring off into nothing sitting on top the Millennium Falcon which looks a little worse for wear.

“You okay Han?” she asks. “How did your mission go?”

He shrugs. “Went fine.”

“You sure?”

He screws up his mouth and leans forward to look down at her. “You know the more I see of the galaxy the more I see how badly the Empire has made a mess of things. Half the missions I run are
relief drops to worlds that are being starved out or enslaved.”

Leia nods. “I know.”

Han hits the side of the ship. “And people don't care! People who could do something about it! They just don't care.”

Leia sighs. She's had this conversation with rebellion recruits dozens of times. The pain of other people's indifference is the price of caring.

“You care. You're doing something. That's all you can do. That and maybe hope that by doing something you can change people's minds.”

“Nothing phases you does it?” He looks down at her and grins. “You know, you're something else Princess.”

She smiles up at him. “I know.” She gestures back towards the direction of the control room. “I need to get back to command. You're alright?”

Han nods and bats away the support. “I'm fine. S'just my ship being all busted up. It makes me morose. Won't feel right until she's shining again.”

“She can shine?” Leia teases over her shoulder.

“You know what princess?!” Han call after her irately. There's a pause where Leia assumes he's making a rude gesture at her. She doesn't turn to look, just smiles to herself.

Hoth is the largest, but not the only rebel base and they've been expecting an attack for months. When it comes they all move automatically, they all know what they have to do, they all have the roles they've drilled for.

The Empire's onslaught batters the base, but Leia barely registers it as she is slowly abandoned in the command centre. She's too focused on coordinating the defense of the base and the burning their data-drives.
She furiously writing a code that will infect and corrupt the network systems of anyone who tries to access their information banks when large hands try drag her back from the console.

“Princess! What are you still doing here!? We need to go!” Han shouts over the concussive blasts of the laser cannons. His face is pale with fear.

She smacks him away and keeps furiously typing.

“Then go! I have work to do here.” she shouts over the din.

“The last transport is about to leave. The defenses are crumbling if we don't-”

The entire base shudders as a larger blast hits.

“This needs doing!” She screams at him as the snow ceiling cracks.

He picks her up in a bear hug and moves her away from the console. “If you stay here, princess, you will die! AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE!!!” His voice is choked with fear and panic. He cares about her, she realizes distantly. He cares about her as more than a voice in the movement, a hero of her cause. He knows her and he cares.

“FINE!” She relents, elbowing him in the gut top make him drop her, darting forward to send her half-finished virus into their data-drives, and then grabbing his hand and running.

The hallway's collapsed, the route to the transport blocked and they're sprinting back the way they came, heading to the small craft hangar where Chewbacca and Han's rust-bucket of a ship is waiting.

They barely make it off the planet.

The hyper-drive is broken and the ensuing chase is an endless hours long ordeal through an asteroid field that has them all so tense Leia thinks she might shatter.
They finally lose their imperial pursuers after hiding on the Star Destroyer itself.

Finally, alone again in the vastness of the void, Han frantically tries to raise someone on the comms and scans the lists of nearby planets where they might find some help.

“I hate to say it Chewie but I might be calling in that favour a little earlier than anticipated.” Han growls to Chewbacca.

“You're an idiot.” Chewie moans. “You shouldn't poke banthas with a stick.”

“Well, unless you want to try and crawl to Bespin to throw ourselves on Lando's mercy than this is our best shot.”

“Lando likes me. It's you he has a problem with.”

Han scowls at the Wookie. “Shut up you furball.”

“I'm sorry,” Leia demands from the back seat. “Favour? Bespin? Lando? I'm only hearing half the conversation here?!?”

Han winces. “Don't worry about it Princess. Chewie and I are just debating which of our old connections we want to gamble on to try and get us out of this mess.”

“We should let the Princess decide.” Chewie declares, staring Han down and daring him to disagree. “After all she outranks us in the rebellion. And is much more sensible than you.”

Han shoots Chewie an exasperated look. “Fine. I'm explaining, if you'd just stop interrupting!”

Leia clicks her tongue in annoyance and Han snaps to attention. “For Force's sake Han, get to the point!.” she growls out between gritted teeth.
“There's Lando, an old buddy of mine who I last parted with on less than friendly terms, but we go way back Lando and me and I'm sure he's forgotten about that by now. He's on a Bespin, which would be a long slow crawl from here.”

Leia does not look impressed by that option.

“Or,” Han continues “I can call in a favour from a powerful friend who did technically promise to do me a solid if I needed it but was probably not expecting me to cash it in so soon. With his help we might be able to get on and off a much closer planet with no trouble.”

To Leia it's no question. She wants to rejoin the fleet as soon as she can. “Call your friend.”

Han sighs and enters the comm frequency.

“C'mon, kid. Pick up, pick up, pick up.”

“WHAT HAN?!” Is the less than pleased greeting he gets when the kid finally appears, clearly occupied with something else and annoyed as hell.

“Hey, kid. Umm, about that favour?”

Luke sighs dramatically. “That was supposed to be life or death Han! I'm busy right now!” Luke yells, his back mostly turned to the comm. It looked like he was at the controls of a ship or something.

“C'mon, you know I wouldn't cash it in if it weren't important!” Han protests. He can practically feel Leia rolling her eyes behind him.

Luke sighs dramatically. “On a scale of one to ten how likely are you to die if I hang up right now?”

Han thinks about it. “Eight?”
Luke groans and swivels around so he's at least partially facing Han.

“What did you do? And how can I help?” He sounds resigned.

“I've got the Imps on my tail, and my hyperdrive's blown.”

“Well, you're dead than.” Luke declares coolly, turning back to his controls. “There's nothing I can do about that.”

“The son of Dath Vader can't do anything!?” Leia shouts in disbelief. “You're honestly trying to get us to believe that a boy important enough to stop the Death Star in it's tracks can't call in a favour and get the Imps off our tails!” Leia freezes as another thought occurs to her. “Wait, a minute-He's your 'drinking buddy high up in the regime' isn't he?” she shrieks at Han.

Han tries to smile innocently. “Yesh.”

“I can't believe this!” Leia shouts “The entire time you've been colluding with-”

“And you have the princess with you.” Luke notes dryly. “How nice.”

Han looks beseechingly at the comm. “Look, we lost the Imps for now but they'll be bound to work out where we're headed eventually. C'mon, help me Luke Skywalker, you're my only hope.”

Luke sighs heavily again. “Where are you? I'm in my ship now, I'll come get you.”

“Near the Anoat system?”

“Then why don't you go bother Lando with your little Rebel problems?! He might actually be sympathetic to your attempts to push the Galaxy further into Civil War.”

“EXCU-” Leia starts to shout, but Han puts his hand over the princess' mouth as she leans forward in her chair incensed by Luke's callousness.
“I would.” Han explains, through gritted teeth. “Except if they saw the ship and know anything about me than they will expect me to go there.”

Luke nods at that thoughtfully. “Believe me Father knows ALL about you. He had a very comprehensive dossier drawn up after you kidnapped me. Happy Belated Birthday, by the way.”

“Well, that's great kid, really. I-“

Luke turns and yells at someone off camera. “Oh, be quiet C-3T4! NO! I'm not going to let the Wookie die!!“

Luke turns back to Han and the camera: “I'm transferring some data to you. Land on Matao using the ID, registration and clearance I'm sending. Tell them you're delivering a ship for pick up by it's new owner. Falsify your flight log to say you're coming from Bespin. That might throw people off, make them think you sold it there.

Complain at length about your boss, that should throw off suspicion, and if anyone gives you trouble tell them it's been cleared by the Imperial Admiralty ID I'm also including. That will stop anyone who checks it in their tracks but make you very inconspicuous. So only use it if you're stuck. Don't leave the ship if you can help it. I'm in the Outer Rim now and MY hyper-drive is in perfect working order so I shouldn't be long. Sit tight.”

Abruptly the little blue figure disappears as Luke disconnects the call.

They do exactly as Luke instructed and Han has never been treated so politely landing in a non-criminal spaceport. It's amazing, and a little disconcerting.

The entirety of the staff seems flustered and slightly suspicious of them. No one gives them any trouble at all.

They sit in silence in the cockpit, hardly daring to breathe as the crew of the space port runs back and forth with at least one man who seems to have been tasked with watching them.

Leia doesn't know what to think about Han being in touch with the Imperial Prince they'd ransomed years ago. In someways it hardly seems surprising. The spectre of that incident has hung over her ever since.
Kenobi had never forgiven her for ransoming the boy back, and despite her own declarations she couldn't help but feel a bit uneasy about it herself. To a certain extent Kenobi had been right— they were supposed to be better than the Empire, and the truly moral didn't sell people to Sith Lords. Even if they were children of the Sith lord in question.

Finally, after a couple anxious days of waiting, a familiar voice drifts in through the open hatch, though the tone is so different that it takes both of them a long moment before they place it.

"- of course there's an Imperial alert out on it! Despite appearances that is a very valuable craft which I have gone to considerable trouble and expense to acquire and I didn't want my servants getting any ideas about running off with it. You just can't find good help out here and their both Outer Rimmers who simply cannot be trusted even if it is in their own best interests to obey for once in they're-"}

Han bolts from his chair for the ramp with Leia hot on his heels.

He has to remind himself not to gape when he catches sight of Luke talking to the Imp in charge of the Space Port.

Luke is wearing something that's sort of like a specially tailored imperial uniform, complete with knee high boots and hair swept straight back from his brow, under some sort of large heavy ceremonial robe that is bright blue, positively encrusted with embroidery and presumably the latest thing in Imperial Fashion.

Luke turns sharply on his heel when he catches sight of Han. "It certainly doesn't look like much." he drawls in a passable imitation of a high class Coruscanti accent. "Are you certain this is the ship that made the Kessel run in 12 parsecs?"

Han snaps to attention and nods sharply. "Of course sir."

Luke sighs, and his eyes sweep appraisingly over the Millennium Falcon. "I suppose the interiors need to be refurbished as well?"

"Well-"
“Never mind.” Luke cuts him off with a lazy wave of his hand and with a twirling flourish removes his heavy over robe tossing it without looking to a small hovering droid that deftly catches it. “I'll look for myself.”

Luke strides regally past Han and shoots Leia a sneer before disappearing inside.

The Imp in charge gives Han a look of sympathy and horror. “You weren't exaggerating about him.”

Han shakes him head. “Oh, His Highness requires no exaggeration.”

Luke sweeps past them again. “Yes, the entire thing will eventually have to be refurbished before it's presentable- interior and exterior. I can't be expected to travel in those conditions. Is the engine undamaged at least?”

The last question is, presumably, directed at Han rather than to the room at large.

“Uh, the hyper-drive shorted out shortly before landing, sir.”

Luke turns on him in something he probably thinks approximates towering rage but is really more like a child throwing a tantrum. “WHAT?!”

He points at the Imp who cringes. “I want this ship repaired and in running order by the end of the day. Surely, even this inefficient excuse for a Space Port can manage that?”

The Imp nods.

“Good. The Admiralty is very interested in this ship, and wants to take a detailed look at it's engines as quickly as possible. Imagine-” He turns dramatically back to the Imp, his droid floating up to once more drape his robe over his shoulders. “-if the entire fleet could be engineered to reach the speeds we hear this ship is capable of, how quickly this rebellion nonsense would be squashed.”

He waves to someone in the distance. “Come along C-3T4! I want all my luggage loaded as soon
as possible.”

Sure enough, there are a few hints of gold visible behind the approaching wall of luggage crates.

Luke turns back to the Imp in feigned confusion. “Why are you still here? Aren't you supposed to be running this spaceport? Did you not hear me when I said I wanted this ship repaired by the end of the day?”

He turns with a flourish of his robe and descends the rest of the way down the ramp. “I'm going to go supervise the storage of my pleasure cruiser. Based on what I'm seeing here, it's necessary I do so if I want the job done right.”

He swans off his little droid bobbing along beside him.

The Imp takes off as a sprint once he's sure Luke's got his back turned.

Han collapses against the side of the falcon. “Huh.”

Leia looks between Luke's retreating form and Han. “Is he always like that these days?”

Han shakes his head slowly, still stunned. “No.” He says faintly. “That was new.”

Luke reappears a minute later still striding like he's crushing his enemies underfoot with each regal step. He waves them both in after him as he enters the Falcon. They follow, a little nervous.

C-3T4 appears from one of the cabins. “Ah, Your Royal Highness!” he trills in delight when he see Leia, performing perfectly the courtly Alderaani bow of a non-citizen to royalty. “May I present, his Imperial Highness, Prince of the Empire, Luke Amidala of Naboo.” He does a half turn to Luke. “Master Luke, may I take it that you are familiar with Her Royal Highness, Princess Leia Organa of the Alderaani people, sole survivor of the Royal House of Alderaan.”

Luke nods casually. “Yeah, C-3T4, we've met.”

Leia pulls a face. “It was a real treat.”
“And what have I told you about calling me Luke Amidala?” Luke whines to the droid.

“Well, it is your official name, and I didn't have your permission to tell Her Royal Highness your preferred name I-”

“Oh never mind C-3T4,” Luke cuts him off, he point to Leia. “Don't call me 'Your Highness', 'Prince' or 'Luke Amidala' unless you want to loose a hand, alright? I'm Luke Skywalker as long as we're travelling together okay?”

“Skywalker? What, like the Jedi?” asks Leia.

Luke looks like he'd like to punch her. The feeling is entirely mutual.

“No, after my grandmother- Shmi Skywalker. It's the name I had growing up on Tatooine and it's a little more inconspicuous than the dynastic title of a popular dead queen of the very planet we're headed to.”

“You don't need to tell me who Amidala is. I know.”

“Well, how lovely for you.”

Han grins at the kid. “Well, it was certainly lovely for us that we know who you are. That was something else back there. I didn't know you had it in you.”

Chewie pokes his head into the cabin and grunts something in response to that which make the protocol droid gasp. “Honestly Chewbacca. I know you've excellent manners when you choose to use them. That sort of talk is not necessary.”

Luke blushes and ducks his head to hide his grin. “The thing about the Empire that you should know-” he remarks as he hands his robe to the floating droid, which on closer inspection appears to be MT-9 the medical droid with a coat of paint and some chrome fins glued on. “-is that everyone respects orders, and hierarchy, so all you have to do is convince people that you're important enough to take orders from and they'll hop to it.”
He scrubs his hands through his hair to muss it out of its severe Imperial style.

“I’m sure it’s easier to do that when you actually have the authority to order people around.” Leia snarls.

Luke forces a smile. “I wouldn’t know. Imperial Highness though I am, I hold no military rank and so have no real authority.”

Han tries to stifle a snort. He fails and it earns him two nearly identical glares.

“So, we just fly out of here?” Leia asks, maybe a little awestruck.

“Yes.” Luke says with exaggerated slowness as though talking to a small child. “That was the point of calling me here, and having me act out that little pantomime? We’ll fly to Naboo, the last place any Imperial pursuit will expect you to head, and incidentally where I was heading before I had to turn around and save you idiots. The Imps will be so far off your scent by then that you can leave there and rendez-vous with the rest of the Rebellion. Unless, the rebellion really is just you, Chewie and the princess working out of a single space ship. Which would not surprise me at this point.”

Luke turns away and balks at the sight of Chewie looming in the doorway.

“If you’ll excuse me Chewbacca.” He says with a nod, edging around the glowering Wookie.

Han grins apologetically at the Princess and Chewie and follows him out.

Leia raises an eyebrow as the Wookie roars something after them.

“Fry my circuits!” C-3T4 exclaims. “I’ve never heard such language uttered in the presence of Royalty! You ought to be ashamed of yourself Captain Chewbacca!”

Chewie snarls at the droid, nods respectfully to Leia with more muted whine, and turns back
towards his cabin.

Leia smiles at the droid. “What did he say?”

“Oh, well, he assured you that his anger was not directed at you and he hold you in the highest regard.”

“No, before that, what did he say to Luke and Han?”

C-3T4’s circuits whine as he shifts in discomfort. “Umm, well he made a number of rather crude suggestions about how they were planning to spend their time and told them that if he ever caught them doing such things in the cockpit he’d ah, rip His Imperial Highness' arms off?”

Han lounges against the door to his cabin and takes a minute to drink in the sigh of Luke now that they're alone together and Han finally has a chance to look.

Luke looks good. Hair is a bit darker, skin's a bit lighter, gaze a bit sharper, especially in those Empire digs he's got on. Less of a kid though. Luke's lost some of that shiny naivete that he used to wear so well, and there's a centred kind of calmness to him that Han thinks is new.

Luke catches Han looking and meets his gaze with a smile.

He lounges against his own door, mirroring Han's pose. “So, that's the actual completely real princess that stole your heart then?” he asks.

Han shifts awkwardly and blushes. “Yeah, I guess so.”

Luke hums and nods to Han before ducking into his own cabin. “Good luck with that.”

Chapter End Notes
Yay! Leia's finally here!! *Cheering in Background*

So, I actually went and counted how many chapters it will take for me to finish what I have planned for this story and we're looking at 29 chapters to finish this monster. Yikes. Especially since the longest thing I've ever written was 13 chapters long.

Now, I hope you're all going to be happy with the epic mess I have planned for these guys, and I just wanted to check, if, seeing as this is going to be a long haul, you'd prefer me to have a regular update schedule, where I post the new chapter the same day each week, instead of more or less posting as I write?
Interlude with Chewbacca I: A Matter of Principle

Chapter Summary

Leia and Chewbacca discuss their latest ally.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Leia finds Chewbacca sulking in the bowels of the ship and pretending to repair something, but Leia's been around Han enough to recognize the difference between pretending to look busy so people will leave you alone and actually repairing something.

Actually repairing something tends to involve a surprising amount of shouting.

Leia has brought C-3T4 along to translate, but he's under strict orders to only repeat exactly what Chewbacca says without adding commentary or paraphrasing for the sake of her supposedly delicate sensibilities.

She leans against the wall.

“You're not happy about my decision here, are you?”

“I wish we'd gone to Lando.” Chewie growls, and C-3T4 translates. Leia grins, it's nice to be able to understand Chewie again, she hasn't been able to really talk to him since they left Hoth and her and C-3PO went their separate ways.

Leia nods. “I understand. But it was a risk either way, and this at least is unexpected. The Empire won't see it coming.”

'Unexpected' is the understatement of the century. Leia had known when Han had ferried the Prince from Matao. Hell, everyone above a certain rank at rebel command had known. She was one of the one's who'd argued against recapturing the young man, after all they were Rebels, and who were they to exploit someone who, for all his privilege, was more or less a refugee fleeing the same oppressive state they were fighting?
But, now he's back and he's not exactly a fugitive from the Empire the way Han implied, and he's saving Han for old times sake rather than to support their cause or weaken the Empire, and Leia doesn't know what to think.

She met this boy a long time ago, she remembers. He'd been...smaller than somehow, though she's sure he's not actually physically that much bigger now than he was then.

The Prince they stole from the Deathstar was never worth a second thought, but the young man she's met today? With steel behind his bright blue eyes and a calmness that feels dangerous as the desert? Him, Leia is wary of.

And she's holding on to the prayer that whatever sent him scurrying from the Empire in the first place will be enough to keep him from turning them in.

“I don't trust him.” Chewie admits.

Leia nods. “I don't either.”

There's a long moment where they consider each other.

“It doesn't seem right to ally with an Imp like him.” Chewie growls.

Leia shrugs and sits down next to him. “We're using their own systems against them. It's...practical.”

There's another long pause and Leia has to ask, because Chewbacca is usually so easy going, so warm-hearted, and Luke certainly doesn't appear to have a malicious bone in is body. for all that, when Leia uses her small amount of Force training to try and get a measure of him, it feels like standing in the desert alone at night. It's peaceful, and it's beautiful and it's dangerous as hell.

“Why do you hate him?” she asks bluntly.

Chewie bristles. “I don't hate him! But, he's Imperial. He's a Prince. They enslaved me and I will never forgive that, and I will never forget! And Han just...ignored that!... took up with him
anyway."

"I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault. But, Han knows, and he knows that kid's never going to stop being who he is and I just don't understand how Han trusts him like he does."

They sit together in silence for moment, and Chewie begins tinkering with the part in his hands.

"Why...do you think...Han does trust him?" Leia asks at last.

Chewie shrugs. "Han always likes what's bad for him and he's not exactly a great judge of character. He's in it for the adrenaline rush of doing what he shouldn't. That Prince...he's a bad influence on Han." C-3T4 translates by way of explanation.

Well, that's unexpected. Leia knew that Chewie tended to fuss over Solo like he was a small helpless child rather than a hardened criminal, and, granted, Han had once considered Jabba the Hutt a personal friend which didn't speak positively to his judge of character but-

"I wasn't aware that Han was capable of being influenced." she quips.

"He joined your rebellion didn't he?" Chewbacca points out.

"Oh." Leia had never realized Han had joined because of her, but...it did make a certain kind of sense. "Yes. I suppose he did."

There's a long pause.

"But, you can't possibly be worried that that little Princeling, would be enough to sway Han to the Imperial cause. As far as I can tell Luke doesn't give two shits about the Rebellion one way or the other."

"That's the problem, Princess. Han didn't used to care either, and it would have been tempting,
don't you think? Money, no trouble, pretty young man who doesn't know better.”

Leia thinks about it. It does make sense, she's always known those were the sorts of things that Han wanted from life.

“So, how long were Luke and Han...?” she asks. She has no right to be hurt by the idea that the entire time Han was flirting with her, he's been fucking him. After all they'd only really become friends a few months ago. But, still the twinge of hurt and jealousy was there, she'd thought he liked her, hell she thought she'd known that he liked her.

It's seems ridiculous now, a school girl fantasy that someone like Solo would ever...

God, she feels like an idiot, and that burn of humiliation is worse than any hurt feelings.

Chewie is looking at her sympathetically.

“First time was when he ferried the kid from Matao, maybe a year and a half ago? Then six months later Han needed somewhere to lie low where the Empire wouldn't think to look, so he went and visited the Prince.” There's a long pause. “After that I'd drop him off every couple of weeks for a few days, until a few months ago.

I honestly never understood why he bothered, when I knew how he felt about you.”

Leia shrugs, blinks hard and hugs herself. “Men are a mystery sometimes.”

Chewie rolls his eyes. “Humans are a mystery.”

Leia smiles at him sympathetically. “'Fraid so.”

“It not like he would have left you behind, even if had gone off with...Luke.” she points out, because it true. Han is more loyal to Chewbacca than anyone or anything else in the galaxy.

Chewie growls. “If he'd turned traitor, I would have left him behind.”
Leia blinks. Chewbacca loves Han Solo. It's something she knows instinctively to be true. Chewie loves Han like someone loves their best friend, their child and their mentor all rolled into one.

But he would leave him for the sake of the Rebellion.

“Oh.”

Chewie lets out a little wail. “It's not really Luke's fault.” he admits. “He didn't choose to be part of that evil that's eating the galaxy.”

“But, He's been sheltered from the reality of things in the galaxy.” Chewie finally explains. “He just...doesn't understand. He can't.”

Leia nods. She understands how Chewbacca feels. When you've suffered so much it can be hard not hate those who haven't suffered at all, and don't understand how important your fight is.

“Well, he did come and rescue us.” She points out. “Maybe Han's been a bad influence on him, and not the other way around.”

Chewie nods and looks down at the machinery he's no longer pretending to fix. “Well, here's hoping.”

Chapter End Notes

Heya! I'm not super happy with this but I really wanted Leia and Chewie to get to bond. So. Next chapter will be up as soon as I have time. But, RL is a bit busy at the moment, so it may not be until the weekend or later.

Also, thanks guys for the really nice comments on the last chapter! Really made me happy to see you guys are liking this. :}
Luke and Leia stare awkwardly at each other across the gaming table. Chewie and Han having heartlessly abandoned them to pilot the ship into the Mid-Rim where Naboo was.

So, now they were alone together trying to find something to do other than stare at each other.

“I hope you understand the risk I'm taking for you.” Luke remarks at last.

“What?” Leia snaps.

“Yes, if I'm caught and convicted of abetting the activities of the Rebellion...” he trails off.

“Not” he adds quickly. “That I'm on the run from Empire. As a free citizen with a travel permit from the Commander of the Fleet himself, I can go wherever I please within it's borders. But...if we are caught and you are recognized, well, things would go badly for me.”

“Oh, please.” Leia says disbelievingly, “Like your daddy, the Commander of the Fleet, would ever let you get more than a slap on the wrist for this sort of thing.”

Luke meets her eye squarely, and gosh, his eyes are blue aren't they? “You once made a comment about Governor Tarkin holding my father's leash. What makes you so sure of he's the master of his own fate let alone mine?”

Leia pauses. She hadn't meant much by her comment at the time, honestly she even now hardly even conceptualized Vader as human enough for it to rankle. It's strange to think of it as something
that Vader had remembered and repeated to his son later.

She wonders, absurdly, if Vader used to sit with Luke and complain about his day.

“Believe me.” Luke continues. “If I get caught helping you of all people, I’ll be lucky if my father kills me. Though don’t tell Han I said that. He gets tetchy when I say things like that.” Luke sighs dramatically.

Leia frowns at him. “Well, he'd right. You shouldn't joke about people being murdered by your father. Not when so many people already have been.”

“I'm not joking. Ask Han, well don't actually, because as I said he's sensitive about what happened. Anyway. I said I'd be lucky if he kills me for a traitor in a furious rage. If I'm unlucky he'll throw me to the mercy of the Emperor.”

“I don't understand why you'd consider death a best case scenario.” Is all Leia can think to say. This conversation is as uncomfortable and unstoppable like riding a runaway tauntaun.

Luke shrugs. “There are worse things than dying. I'm sure you and I can agree on that if nothing else.”

Leia scowls. “I don't think so. If you live there's always a chance that you can fight.”

“Not if they've turned you into someone else. Not if you've been unmade, and put back together again as something you don't even recognize.” Luke shudders. “I guess you haven't ever met an Inquisitor?” he ask.

“No. I've heard of them though.”

Luke nods. “You're lucky then”

They lapse once more into uncomfortable silence. She wonders what's going on in that blonde head. She's heard rumours since they ransomed him back. They've tried to spread the word that Vader has a son. Tried to make the myth into a man. And even in Imperial space word had somehow gotten out about how Luke Amidala almost always traveled with Lord Vader.
Of course, people preferred the more lurid tales to the simpler truth. Maybe it was just too unbelievable to think that Vader was capable of love.

“What’s so important on Naboo anyway?” she grumbles at last.

Luke shrugs. “My mother's people, I suppose. I've never been, and Han got on my case about seeing the galaxy-yada-yada.”

Leia considers this young man. She has a sense that he's playing her. That there's considerably more behind those eyes than just the good-natured sheltered young prince he is pretending to be. There's a strength to his determined calmness.

Leia has been surrounded her entire life with men whose convictions have turned their spines to steel and she somehow gets that sense from the Imperial Princeling, who to her knowledge believes in nothing except survival.

“Chewie made some remarks about you and Han earlier. Your droid translated.” She remarks at last for a lack of anything else to say.


“Were they true?”

Luke smiles serenely at her. “How can I tell you that if I don't know what he said?”

Leia eyes him. Yes, definitely cannier than he pretends. But then, she realizes, you'd have to adapt quickly to survive as long as he had with Vader whose changeable moods and notorious temper were infamous even in the now defunct Imperial Senate.

“He said he'd tear your arms off he caught the pair of you having sex in the cockpit.”

Luke huffs a near silent laugh at that. “As if we would when there's a perfectly serviceable bunk
just down the hallway.”

He must catch something she doesn't intend in her look because he grins wider. “Not that you have anything to worry about Your Royal Highness, Han and I have agreed that our differences of political opinion preclude out continuing a sexual relationship, and it's better we go our separate ways.”

Leia twists her mouth. The solving of the mystery of Han's 'free-lancing' and 'vacation days' had been a little bitter for her. It stings that he'd been going to visit his Imperial lover, no doubt ensconced in the lap of luxury.

For some reason the image that comes to mind is the pair of them feeding each other grapes as they lounged on satin pillows.

“How long were you two together for then?” She wonders if his estimation will line up with Chewbacca's or whether he'll lie to her.

Luke cocks his head to the side in confusion. “I mean... we weren't ever really 'together'. Han is not what you might call romantic. He'd stop by every month or so for a few days eat my food, fuck me stupid and get out while the going was good.”

There's a bitter twist to his mouth and to his voice but not, Leia thinks, to him. She knows somehow that Luke and Han parted ways much more amiably than Luke pretends.

“Hmm.” is all Leia says. “Well, Chewie doesn't like you much.”


Leia rolls her eyes and fights back a smile despite herself. “Oh come on. We're not that bad.”

“You kind of are.” Luke informs her consolingly. “I don't blame you. I mean, Han's a scoundrel and even he decided he cared about his principles too much to keep hanging around the Imperial Prince son of Darth Vader.”
Leia winces. That must have hurt. To be used for your money, body, connections and influence and then to be abandoned when even those weren't enough incentive to outweigh an evil you'd never chosen.

“T'm sorry.” she says hesitantly.

He waves her off completely unconcerned. “Don't be. I'm happy with my lot in life.”

Leia realizes that she likes this young man.

“How old are you, anyway?” she blurts out, after the silence had once again stretched on too long to be comfortable.

“Twenty-three.”

Leia gapes. It had never even occurred to her that he would be the same age as her. When they'd first met he'd seemed so entirely a child it's mind boggling to think they'd been the same age. At that age she'd been a Rebellion operative for years, a senator for even longer and a political force into and of herself practically since she was born.

Luke at that age, she realizes with growing pity, had barely left his room.

He must catch it because he points and scowls at her. “No! I don't want your pity. Why are you pitying me?”

She's taken aback. She's certain that her expression hadn't changed, no matter what her thoughts were.

“I just...well, we're the same age, you know? And I've done so much, whereas you-”

He cuts her off sharply. “Were safe and protected from a hostile galaxy?”

“Don't.”
He holds up his hands. “Whatever you say Princess.”

They lapse once more into awkward silence.

The next day, they play Dejarik and to Leia's complete bewilderment Luke trounces her without any visible effort.

He takes in her frustration smugly. “As you so compassionately noted yesterday, I have had a lot of time on my hands, Your Highness.” he explains mildly as he resets the board. “I play against the droids a lot.”

His little medical droid buzzes over and beeps excitedly, his protocol droid trudging along more slowly behind her.

“MT-9 wonders if she could play the princess next.” The protocol droid explains.

Leia hesitates. “Play against a droid?” she asks, not bothering to hide her surprise.

The medical droid squeaks indignantly. Luke pats her dome consolingly. “Don't worry MT-9, I'm sure she didn't mean it like that. I'll play you later, alright?”

The little droid speeds off.


“No, thank you though. Are you doing alright? I know this ship is something of an adjustment from our usual travel arrangements.”

“I'm managing quite well, Master Luke. I'll see you later.”

Luke waves as the droid shuffles off.
Leia eyes him thoughtfully. Born in the shadow of the Clone Wars, she had been raised to be wary of droids. “You talk to them like they’re people.”

Luke frowns at her. “They are people, enough that when humans sell them they have to put restraining bolts on them to keep them from running away. You know, plenty of droids pass the tests for sentience.” he informs her primly.

“Besides,” he adds as he resets the board. “They were the only people around. I’d have gone insane pretty quickly if I hadn’t been able to convince myself they were people.”

Leia cocks her head to the side and smiles.

“You're tougher than you look aren't you?”

Luke smiles back wryly. “Hardly, after all next to you Princess, we're all weaklings.”

Leia resists the urge to kiss him on the cheek and settles for grinning at him. For the first time she understood the appeal the Prince held for Han. He is bright, sweet, and funny in a galaxy that has the bad habit of beating those traits out of people.

They reach Naboo airspace a few days and countless lost games later.

Luke gets C-3T4 to break open one of his Coruscanti cases and they manage to cobble together outfits that make them look like Core-worlders on a pleasure cruise.

“Remember,” Luke reminds them. “As far as anyone here will be concerned, I'm just another hedonistic Imperial Elite on a vacation to the Emperor's home world, nothing worth making a fuss about, and you are my loyal attendants and bodyguards. No one will even look at you if you play this right.”

Luke is in his faux-military uniform with a bright blue robe with a deep hood, those having been constantly in fashion since the Emperor began wearing them to help disguise his deformity. Leia throws a bright red hooded robe over her own clothing.
Han doesn't both with a disguise. He's too tall for Luke's court finery to be of much use.

Luke says everyone will just assume he and Chewie are mercenary bodyguards, anyway. So, no one's particularly bothered by it.

Theed is a strange city. Ancient, elegant and beautiful but also, somehow seeming half dead, at least to Leia's eyes. Luke cranes his neck to look at the arches and the domes his face split in a disbelieving grin, like he'd never seen anywhere so wonderful.

Maybe he hadn't. Leia thinks, after all Coruscant was a canyon of glass and durasteel not a garden with domes and arches.

It reminds Leia of Alderaan just enough to hurt.

Han is not impressed and has his arms crossed and shoulders up like somehow he might catch sentimentality and conservative mindedness from the place.

“So are we going anywhere in particular or is this just a sight seeing expedition?” Han drawls in annoyance.

Chewbacca bellows his agreement. He wants to get off the streets as quickly as possible.

Leia can't blame him. Though she knows that there is an indigenous sentient species on Naboo the only people on the street are human, despite Quen Amidala—despite Luke's mother having famously made a peace with the Gungans nearly 40 years ago.

“There's a couple places I'd like to go. You don't have to come with me.” Luke replies.

They do, though, because the city is beautiful and they've all had their fill of the cramped ship.

He threads his way through the streets like he was born here, his route obviously planned in advance, until they come to a small quiet square off of an even quieter street not too far from the
Luke pulls his hood off, and looks up his face full of sadness, regret and longing.

Leia follows his gaze.

In the centre of the square in front of them stands a statue of a beautiful woman with a small holoid playing in its base and a painting on the wall behind her... the statue seems to show what she was in life, a small beautiful woman, the painting her as she was perceived by her subjects, something closer to a demi-goddess, and the holoid is of what Leia can only assume is her funeral procession.

Padme Amidala had been and remains a popular figure on Naboo.

“They used say she died of heartbreak when the Republic fell, she loved it so much.” Luke remarks sadly.

He doesn't turn to look at Han and Leia. He can feel the princess' sympathy for him, mixed with barely contained annoyance and contempt for a woman who would be so weak as to die of something as silly as a broken heart in the very moment when she most needed to fight. Han is probably trying to look concerned and interested out of respect for Luke, but is no doubt failing to conceal his true boredom. Only Chewie, strangely enough, seems truly touched by the solemnity and grief of this small memorial to a dead Senator and Former Queen.

Han looks at the holo of her funeral. She's surrounded by flowers, and glowing softly. She was very beautiful, even in death, but that's not all Han notices.

“She looks pregnant at her funeral.” He can't help but point out.

Luke shrugs trying feign nonchalance. “According to some she was, and I'm an impostor set up by the Emperor to take advantage of her popularity and pregnancy at the time of her death.”

Leia looks between the serene visage of the dead Senator and Luke's own face. There's maybe a hint of her in his features but it's not nearly enough to know for sure. “What do you think?” she asks shrewdly.
Luke shrugs, pretending his eyes aren't swimming with tears. “It's plausible either way. Since my existence was hidden from my father to try and protect me, if she were my mother they would have tried to make it look like I had died with her. But it could be her's was just a convenient identity to assume after my father had found me and needed an excuse to place me at court and under his protection. I don't suppose I'll ever know.” He sighs.

Han drapes his arm over Luke's shoulders. “Knowing is overrated anyways. I don't know a thing about my parents.” He gestures to the holo. “At least you've got an idea. Even if it is just a nice lie.” Luke grins weakly at Han.

“You're sweeter than you play, aren't you Solo?”

Han scoffs and leans back. “What me? Hardly. I'm a hardened criminal. Just ask the princess here, Your Imperial Highness.”

Leia bristles at the title, but Luke doesn't say anything. He just takes another look at the memorial for Amidala and turns away.

She's a dead woman who may or may not be his mother. It doesn't really matter either way. She's dead, and for a second Luke understands Leia's contempt, even if he doesn't feel it himself.

*How could she have just given up? Died like that? Why hadn't she fought her fate?*

Leia is so filled with fire and resolve that it's no wonder she can't find compassion for someone who just didn't have to will to carry on. Leia would stand stalwart against hurricanes, and holocausts. She'd faced the destruction of her home-planet and with it everyone and everything she'd ever loved, and she had simply gritted her jaw and carried on the fight without pause.

Luke admires her for that. He wishes he had that sort of strength but he knows he doesn't. That's alright. He has a different kind of strength. A Jedi's strength, or so he hopes.

He thinks of his Aunt and Uncle, dead in the dust of Tatooine at his father's hand and reminds himself that, in all likelihood, Padme Naberrie Amidala *had* fought her fate. She just hadn't won that fight. It didn't make her any less brave.
He swipes at his eyes and walks out of the square. Han, Leia and Chewie all follow after him, concerned. There's a bar open opposite the memorial square.

Luke turns to face them. “I need a minute. Wait here.”

He ducks into the bar and threads his way through the tables until he finds one in the back where a hooded old man is waiting.

“I'm sorry I'm late.” Luke apologizes as he pulls up a chair.

Obi-Wan Kenobi lowers his hood to reveal his face.

“It's no trouble at all, Naboo is a very pleasant planet on which to spent a few extra days. I see you've picked up some traveling companions along the way.”

Luke nods. “Just for now. We'll be parting ways soon.”

Obi-Wan nods and smiles mischievously. “Very well then, but I'd keep track of that Princess, if I were you.”

He reaches behind him and produces a sleek wooden box which he slides over to Luke. “Here is what you came for.”

Reverently Luke opens it.

“Anakin Skywalker's light saber.” Obi-Wan continues. “Great evils were committed with that lightsaber at your father's hand, but, great acts of bravery and selfless as well. Bear it with my blessing.”

Luke stares up at Obi-Wan at a complete loss for words. “I-...”

Obi-Wan pats his hand. “I know. I remember when I held my first lightsaber. I was also rather
overwhelmed at the time.”

Luke bites his lip. “I've never fought anyone in my life, you know? I don't believe in your rebellion...or their's?”

Obi-Wan leans back to consider the young man before him. He was hardly the tiny, strangely silent infant he had transported to Tatooine more than two decades ago, nor was he the adventurous gangly youth he had guarded from afar.

Luke looks the part of an Imperial Prince, but Obi-Wan has bet his life that he isn't one. Not really. Not in the ways that count.

“I'd say the question that truly matters is: Do you believe in the Empire?” Obi-Wan asks mildly.

“No, of course not.” Luke answers automatically.

“Well, then there's hope for you yet, I'd say. Master Yoda feels you've progressed far enough in your training to require a lightsaber and that you are trustworthy enough to wield it. A desire to remain outside this conflict is admirable, indeed.” Obi-Wan continues looking around the bar to be sure they were not being overheard. “- many believe that it was when the Jedi took sides in the Clone War to act as generals and soldiers that the Order was truly lost.”


Obi-Wan smiles tightly at him. “But, sometimes war is an unavoidable and a necessary evil.”

Luke sighs and grasps the lightsaber. “War is intolerable” he quotes. “The moment you commit to fighting, you've already lost.”

Obi-Wan looks at him sharply. “An admirable sentiment.” he remarks. “But, I knew the woman you're quoting. Duchess Satine may have been an idealist but she was not unyielding. Her main concern was always to do what was right for her people.”

Luke glances up from the lightsaber to meet Obi-Wan's sharp gaze.
“And a lightsaber is as much a weapon of defense as of offense.” Obi-Wan continues. “By taking up arms you commit to nothing except a refusal to die needlessly.”

Luke grins and pockets the metal cylinder. “Don't worry, Ben. I plan to be around an while yet.”

He throws his hood up and tips his head before striding out of the bar again. Han, Leia and Chewie are still waiting for him in the street. The entire exchange has taken maybe two minutes.

“You okay kid?” Han asks gently.


There's a long pause as everyone stares at him. “So where are we heading next?” Leia asks finally.

Luke stares at her blankly.

“You said there were a couple places you wanted to visit.” she prompts.

He shakes his head as though clearing out cobwebs.

“Oh. I has thought I might try and contact my mother's family. But. I think I won't now.”

“Oh.” Leia echoes, looking questioningly at Han.

“There's a market, back near the docks.” Han suggests. “We could go there if you don't want to go back to the ship.”

“Sure.” Leia answers for them all. They’ve all gotten sick to death of the cramped quarters of the Millennium Falcon in the last few days.

The market is bright and crowded. Han can see Luke tensing up, unused to this many people.

Leia is in her element though, weaving through the crush to look at the luxury goods on offer. Luke follows her, and Han follows Luke, until suddenly he isn’t.

He scans over the heads of the crowd in a panic. How could he have lost him? He was just there a second ago!


Han shakes his head, concentrating on looking when he spots a familiar jewel-blue hood over at a stall selling holocroms.

Luke is haggling with the stall owner over the price of some old pre-Empire law texts, when someone bumps into him and nearly knocks him over. Instinctively he grabs their arm to steady himself, almost taking them down with him and in the scuffle his hood slips off.

He hears a gasp, sees a look of shock on the young man’s face, before he is grabbed and set on his feet by the familiar, if none too gentle hands, of Han Solo.

Han dusts him off irritably. “What the hell were you thinking kid?”

Leia follows in the wake that Chewie cuts through the crowd. She saunters up to where Han is haranguing Luke for having wandered off.

Luke does not look impressed, and Leia shares a knowing smile with him. Han may play the hardened criminal but he certainly worries a lot for one.

Luke rolls his eyes. “It’s fine Han. No harm done.” He jerks his head to the stalls further into the marketplace. “C’mon, I’m hungry and I think there’s a food stall a little way in.”
The tension bleeds out of Han, and he makes a joke about not thinking a place like this had enough to feed a Wookie. Luke laughs and makes a joke back about having enough money to enough.

Leia isn't really listening. She's floating along happily in a sea of normality. This is the first time she's had a day to herself in years. She can't remember the last time she'd quarrelled good naturedly about trivial things with people her own age, rather than fiercely arguing with men decades her senior about things that were desperately important.

It's nice to relax. She notices that Luke doesn't put his hood up again. She keeps to the shelter of hers though. After all, Luke isn't considered a wanted criminal anywhere.

Luke has bought them all grilled skewers of some kind of meat and Han is making a show of his bad manners and purposefully smearing the grease all over his face and letting it drip down his shirt.

Leia freezes when she hears a loud voice bark.

"I'm sorry, Your Highness, but you're going to have to come with us."

Leia instinctively grabs Luke's wrist, and ducks her head.

Chapter End Notes

Oooh! Cliffhanger!

Luke quotes Duchess Satine of Mandalore, a pacifist leader of the traditionally warlike Mandalorian people, and Obi-Wan's love interest in the Clone Wars tv show. She's awesome.

Soo...I'm doing the thing where you procrastinate by working on stuff you're not supposed to be wasting time on! Yippee! But I have quite a lot of this written (but not edited) and it's burning a hole in my hard-drive I'm so excited to see what you guys make of it. :)
Interlude with Vader III: The Master's Orders

Chapter Summary

Sidious is running out of patience and Vader is running out of time. He resolves himself that this time he will not fail.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I grow tired of your evasions on this matter.” Sidious' voice is like a whip crack even through the holo-comm link. “I know the boy is no longer with you.”

Vader holds fast before the onslaught. “For his own safety. I thought it time he established his own residence. He's living on a secure estate in the Outer Rim.”

Sidious. “And yet, you have failed to inform either myself or my Inquisitors of where this estate is. I know you nearly killed him, but that hardly seems reason to get squeamish. If you've tired of the son of Skywalker than return him to Imperial Centre at once, where he may be of some use to me. His absence was noted by the Holonet on Empire Day and I've had the Naboo asking after him already.”

Vader mentally digs in his heels, and braces for the blow. “I'm surprised you allow the Holonet to comment on such things or the Naboo to question you. For his own safety I think it is better the boy remain in exile.”

Sidious bristles at that. He hates it when anyone acknowledges that the Emperor's control of his subjects is anything less than complete.

“You will return the Son of Skywalker to the Core as soon as you are able. If you do not, I will find him myself and he will suffer cruelly fro your insolence.”

Vader bows his head. “Yes my Master.”

“You know, I almost begin to wonder, my apprentice, whether the boy in truth has escaped.”
Vader raises his head before his Master's wrath. “I assure you my Master, he has not. He will be returned to the Core and to your court.”

Sidious smiles his loathsome smile. “Good.”

The Holo transmission ends.

Vader sits in his Medpod trying to meditate.

Luke has been gone long enough that his absence no longer feels like a gaping wound. Still, with the Rebels scattered, the fleet running smoothly for once under the surprisingly competent Admiral Piett, and Vader for the first time in months at a lost for what to do next, his thoughts keep turning to his son and what the Emperor has ordered...

His quarters seem quiet. Too quiet. It makes Vader feel his son's absence all the more keenly.

Not that Luke had ever been particularly loud. He talked a lot certainly, but he knew when Vader needed silence and would almost always comply.

Vader growls in annoyance as his thoughts cycle fruitlessly once more through his last conversation with his Master.

Attempts at meditation have been frustrating for some time.

Vader has heard very little from his son in many long months, and it grates on him, for all that he knows Luke is traveling with companions and simply does not wish to alarm them by being seen chatting with the Emperor's most feared enforcer.

Vader feels the Light side of the Force like sand beneath his armour. It grits and chafes and no matter how much you think you've shaken it all out there always seems to be more. It seems to be growing stronger these days.
It has no power over him and does not tempt him. But, he is aware of it in a way he rarely has been before.

He has a suspicion that, despite his warnings, his son has begun to explore the Force. Kenobi certainly would try and teach Luke if he could find him. And Luke had always had an affinity for the Jedi-way that he never displayed for the path of the Sith. He had only learned to sit still once Vader had taught him Jedi style meditation after all.

He fears that his Master has the same suspicions, though he has not voiced them.

Luke was always remarkable in the most surprising of ways.

That is Vader's only comfort in face of the Emperor's less and less thinly veiled threats against his son.

The Emperor has long ceased to content himself with Vader's excuses when asking about the whereabouts of 'Skywalker's son' and had sent his agents out to find the leverage by which he kept Vader docile. (It irked Vader to no end that he could not claim patrimony to his son, that still, now after so many years, to the Emperor Luke was the Son of Skywalker, and to the Galaxy he was the princely Imperial son of the great Amidala. Vader had no official ties to the young man beyond being his jailer by some accounts, his guardian by others, and still darker things by the uglier rumours that swirled around the Core Worlds and the members the Emperor's Inner Circle)

Vader still did not dare to go against his Master. He was still too weak, to unsure of what he would do, of what would befall Luke should he fail.

He remembers himself as a young man, newly bestowed with his name standing before his wife and confidently explaining their future together. There had been no doubt in him in those days. No weakness gnawing at his nerves, or unsteadiness in his mind to suggest that he might fail in his designs to topple the newly crowned Emperor and set himself up in his place.

It is a lifetime ago now, those plans, much like everything and everyone else he'd known in those years, have been long consigned to dust. Luke, now the age Vader was then, had not yet even been born.

Which turns Vader thoughts to that most irksome of facts- his son's long absence from his side.
following his birth, the years which were stolen from him by the Jedi.

Growling in annoyance, Vader finally abandons all further attempts at meditation and lowers his mask once more over his face before springing to his feet as the pod opens with a hiss of lowered pressure.

It is not supposed to be the way of the Sith to dwell upon the past, but Vader can't help it.

He strides towards the door he has kept close for the last year.


He does not hesitate when he opens the door, though his heart is in his throat.

These had been Luke's room for the majority of the last two years they'd spent together, excepting those few times Vader had escorted Luke back to Imperial Centre for Empire day or other Imperial celebrations so he could be paraded before the Holonet, as a reminder that the staunchest opposer of Palpatine's rule had died for nothing, as her son now lived the life of a Prince by the gracious good will of the very regime she had tried to toppled with allegations of cruelty and despotism.

Luke disliked those visits to Coruscant and Vader heartily agreed with him. The city planet bore too many scars from the fall of the Republic. Empty spaces where proud monumental buildings had once stood, hastily disguised by new more timid erections of steel and glass.

For Vader it is a city full of ghosts.

For Luke it is a city full of people, which was almost as bad.

Vader paused before the half finished game of Dejarik Luke had been playing with his droids. Eyes the data-projector which contains the schematics for the latest Corellian speeder ships.

Luke had never been very comfortable around people. He preferred, in Vader's experience, to spend his time with his droids and his engineering projects.
High on the wall, daubed in some pigment Vader still didn't know how his son had acquired, were the twin suns of Tatooine picked out in palest yellow and fiery red.

After he had sent Luke away Vader had thought long and hard about wiping those off, but...they were important to Luke in some way that Vader had never understood. So he hadn't. There was very little left of his son in this room. Most of Luke's belongings had gone with him, wherever it was he had run to.

He sighs and sits on his son's long abandoned bed.

It was the right choice to send him away. He reminds himself. Luke was too old to be kept confined to his rooms like a child, and with the Civil War escalating a Star Destroyer wasn't any safer that anywhere else.

And Vader knows, deep down, that one day he would have lost his temper again, and he would have killed the very last thing in the galaxy he had left to love.

Vader reminds himself of this. Luke is safest where he is.

But, all the same: Vader is afraid for his son.

Afraid in a way that is more ancient and familiar than his own name.

The last time he had felt this way had been a lifetime ago, when he was still Anakin Skywalker.

But, then again, the last time he'd loved anyone at all he'd been Anakin Skywalker.

Vader looks over the room, at the detritus of the life of a half-grown young man whose light and intensity could outshine a blue dwarf star if it was only given half a chance.

If Luke is returned to the Core, he will be in the Emperor's hands, and if Vader gives the Emperor even the slightest excuse, his son will be taken from him, and no doubt forced into the training of
an Inquisitor.

Which would break him. Maybe not kill him, but undoubtably destroy and consume the son that Vader held so dear, as surely as Anakin Skywalker before him had been destroyed and consumed by the Dark Side.

Vader imagines that star-bright quality his son has in spades tarnished, dimmed and ultimately extinguished.

*Even Stars burn out.* A voice in Vader's mind hisses.

Vader cannot allow that to happen. He will not. Not this time.

No matter what.

Chapter End Notes

Vader is an empty-nester. He's not okay with this.

The 'Even Stars Burn out' line is a reference to the Revenge of the Sith Novelization (shocking!) where it's a repeating motif of Vader's existential angst and growing mental instability.

Basically don't threaten Luke because one dark day in the future you will find yourself facing the wrath of Dad Vader. But, you'll never know when, the darkness is patient after all. *Eyebrow waggle*

Thanks for the comment as always guys. I always love to hear what you all think of how this is going!
DETAINED

Chapter Summary

The visit to Naboo continues to go horribly horribly wrong.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I'm sorry your highness, you're going to have to come with us.”

Luke whirls in surprise, and feels Leia grab his wrist, whether in warning or alarm he can't tell. To his relief, it is a squadron of Naboo's police force, not the interplanetary Imperial Stormtrooper guard that confront him.

“I'm sorry?” he asks, because when in doubt feign confusion. He prays that Han, Leia and Chewie will let him handle this.

“Your Highness,” the police captain repeats. “You're going to have to come with us.”

It's clear he's speaking to Luke and not to Leia.


“Yes.”

“May my bodyguards accompany me?” Luke asks, scrambling for time. He honestly doesn't know what this is about.

There's a long pause as the squadron takes in Han, smirking and confident with his hand already on his blaster, and then another as in unison all of the helmets tilt up to take in the scale of the Wookie who's also guarding him.
The captain glances at Leia, and then nods in her direction. “They can come, but not the Wookie.”

Luke nods and steps towards Chewbacca. He reaches into the pocket in his sleeve, and presses the cylinder of his lightsaber hilt into the Wookie's giant hand.

“Keep this with your things please?” He whispers desperately, hoping the crush of the crowds has disguised what he's just done. “No one would ever search you, and if they did I doubt they'd ever recognize it in with your other weapons.”

He looks up at the Wookie in panic. “Please?”

The wookie bellows and nods.

Luke steps away blinking hard. He nods sharply once. “Good. Be sure to follow those instructions. On second thought, I'm sure there's no need to be concerned with the brave soldiers of Naboo looking after me. Take Captain Solo and wait for me at the ship.” he admonishes with much finger wagging, trying desperately to muster some of his usual Imperial arrogance, but it's hard to sound imposing when you feel like you can't breathe, giving Han an imploring look.

Han is watching him wide eyed. He grabs the kid. “I can't let you just walk off with them!”

Luke tries to smile and the result is pathetic. It makes something in Han's chest hurt just looking at it. “Don't worry. If I'm not back by the end of the day inform C-3T4 to activate kidnapping protocols. He'll know what to do.” he whispers.

“Your HIGHNESS.” The captain barks sounding annoyed. “I don't want to have to drag you but I will if I must.”

Leia is waiting for him by the squad of guards. “You don't have to come with me.” he hisses lowly. “They'll understand.”

Leia levels him with a glance. “I'm not going to abandon you.”

Luke shakes his head. “You barely know me.” he reminds her.
“And you didn't know me at all, but it didn't stop you from saving my life.”

Luke nods and falls in with the squad of soldiers. He keeps his head high. He can't see far beyond the small cordon of his escort but he can hear the whispers and gasps of the crowd.

It hadn't occurred to him that he'd be recognized, or that if he were it would be a problem.

They take him to the throne room, where the Queen sits, face painted like a thousand Queens before her, wearing the more austere Imperial styles rather than the ornate traditional clothing from the Republic era.

It's hard to tell how old she is under the make-up but she seems young.

“Prince Amidala,” she drawls in an imperious and utterly inauthentic Coruscanti accent. “What a relief it is to see you well. Tell me, how did you escape?”

Luke blinks at her and glances around at the guards. He catches the eye of a dark skinned man with an eyepatch who watches him intently for a minute before looking away.

“I beg your pardon?”

“The Empire has made it know that anyone who recovers you safe and sound, and returns you to the custody of the Imperial Fleet will be greatly rewarded. It has been speculated, out among us distant star systems, that you had been captured by Rebels.”

Luke grits his jaw. “I was captured by rebels. But that was years ago, and I never escaped. I was ransomed for a considerable sum.”

The Queen, Luke doesn't know her name and more than that he doesn't care, stands abruptly. “Walk with me, Prince Amidala.” She commands, still in that affected Coruscanti accent.

Luke glances at Leia who nods minutely under her hood and he falls in step next to the Queen.
“So, you were not captured by the Rebels.” she declares, softly, this time her voice is rounded by what Luke assumes are the tones of her native accent.

“Tell me,” she asks again. “how did you escape?”


She meets his gaze. “The Empire.” she answers frankly.

Luke bristles and looks around to see if they have been overheard. The Queen's handmaidens hover nearby and Leia is no more than a step behind them, but other than that they are alone, the guards in the distance and out of earshot as they slowly descend the steps towards the royal gardens.

“I'm quite confused Your Majesty,” Luke whispers back. “I'm sure I don't know what you mean.”

Her eyes darts to his sharply and away again just as quick.

“Very well.” she responds, louder this time and back to her Coruscanti accent. “I have someone I would like you to meet.”

They are entering the garden now. It has high hedges and beautiful fountains. A person could easy be lost in here.

Luke follows the Queen silently, and Leia and the handmaidens trail after them both like hooded ghosts. The palace guard stay further behind.

They reach a courtyard with a large fountain enclosed by a high hedge. There are three women waiting there. One is very old, much older than the Empire, a woman in her late middle age sits next to the first, and the last, perhaps a decade or so older than Luke himself, stands restlessly next to both.

The Queen stops in front of them and turns to Luke.
“May I present Jobal, Sola and Ryoo Naberrie. Your grandmother, aunt and cousin if what the Empire says about you is true.” There's no doubting just how unlikely the Queen considers that possibility to be.

Luke stares at the women by the fountain. They are his mother’s people. Or the woman he has always believed to be his mother. They have never, in all the years they must have known he was alive, spoken to him or tried to contact him even tangentially.

Sola stands. His aunt, perhaps.

She strides towards him back straight. Luke holds himself still as she walks around him, like a Sand Person surveying a prize bantha they're thinking of buying.

She stops in front of him and stares into his face. Her daughter walks up to her and hands her a device. Luke recognizes it. It's a portable DNA scanner, most commonly used in the identification of corpses during incidents of mass death- battles, famines, plagues and the like.

Ryoo hands it to her mother who hesitates.

Luke can feel her turmoil, her uncertainty.

He meets her gaze. She tries to smile at him, but it's rather weak and watery as attempts go.

“You have to understand.” She tries to explain. “When Padme died, it was very terrible for us, because, it wasn't just her who had died, it was her child too and no one could tell us what happened. We didn't even dare ask questions, things being what they were in the Empire at the time.”

Luke stares back at her, unyielding. He is hurt and humiliated. There is no need for this. If they don't believe he is who he has been told he is then they can continue ignoring him easily enough. This little charade cannot possibly change anything.

He feels Leia at his back, angry for him, defensive of him. He squares his shoulders, trying to be as strong as she is.
“And then one Empire day, more than a decade later, when we thought we'd put it all behind us, suddenly there you were with the Princes and Princesses of the Empire and they said you were Padme's son,spirited away by the Jedi for reasons unknown. And it reopened the wound.”

She holds out her hand for Luke's arm. He hesitates. “This won't answer anything.” he informs her coldly. “Either way.”

He puts his arm out and lets her take a tiny drop of blood. Presumably Amidala's DNA is already on file and ready for comparison.

The results are almost instantaneous. Sola gasps and covers her mouth. She looks up at Luke with tears in her eyes, she reaches out to cup his cheek.

Luke steps back, recoiling from the touch. “So I am her son then?”

Sola nods, Ryoo comes forward and steadies her mother, she looks angry, Jobal has not moved from the fountain but her head is bowed and Luke can feel her grief like a physical blow.

Jobal puts her head in her hands. “How can this be?” she wails. Luke can tell she would have preferred it if he's been an impostor.

Luke feels compassion for this woman. Her daughter dead for years, the child she carried presumed gone with her. He knows from experience that sometimes it is easier to grieve for the dead than for those who are only lost forever to you.

He looks past Sola and Ryoo to address his maternal grandmother.

“I was raised on Tatooine with my Father's people,” Luke explains, “until a few months after I turned 13. I was well looked after. One day some stormtroopers raced a sandstorm from Mos Eisley to the moisture farm where I lived. My Aunt and I hid in the storage we use for the water in case of raiders, so I don't know what happened. I just knows that suddenly the roof of our hiding place peeled back like the rind of a pallas fruit and Darth Vader was there with his hand up. My Uncle was already dead, my aunt was executed a few minutes later. Vader told me I was the son of someone very important that it was their deserved punishment for kidnapping me, but, I never believed him. He became my guardian, and I split the next decade between Coruscant and whatever Star Destroyer or Space Station he was on. I was well cared for. No harm ever came to
Jobal lifts her head, her cheeks streaked with tears. He can feel Ryoo's roiling anger, Leia's outrage and Sola's helpless despair, but he can't make out his own feelings at all. He feels brittle, and false. He is surrounded by blood relatives and he doesn't feel a thing for any of them. He wishes he were anywhere else, with anyone else.

The Queen looks at him intently. She, he feels, doesn't particularly care about this little family drama. And why should she? He is the son of a woman who had been dead for nearly a decade before she was even born.

“So, tell me,” the Queen says again. “how did you escape?”


The Queen glides around to his other side. “Than why, is the Empire looking for you?”

“I was released into exile. Told I was free to live quietly and comfortably under certain conditions. Conditions which I have met.”

He meets the gaze of the Queen of the Naboo. “I would never defy the Empire.”

He can feel Leia shift behind him, perhaps stifling a smile at the blatant lie.

The Queen sighs. “Well, then you and I have something in common.” She smiles at him like a shark. “Because, neither would I.”

Luke swallows back his panic. “So, back to Coruscant then?”

The Queen nods. Luke glances at Leia. “Were my bodyguards and attendants also ordered to be detained?”
The Queen really looks at Leia for the first time during their entire encounter. “No.” She says at last. “The order was only for you to be detained until you could be taken into custody by the Admiralty and transported back to Imperial Centre. No mention was made of your attendants.”

Luke nods and turns to Leia. “I thank you for your loyalty and your service.” he declares formally before turning back to the Queen.

“What about my belongings?” he asks. “They're loaded on a Corellian freighter on the docks. I would like to retrieve them.”

The Queen makes a gesture and the man with the eye-patch rushes to her side from where he had been waiting out of earshot. “Take a squad to the docks. You will be returning Prince Amidala's attendant to her ship, and retrieving the Prince's belongings, as quickly as possible.”

The man nods. “Yes, Your Majesty.” and turns on his heel.

Leia hesitates and walks over to grasp both of Luke's hands in hers. She leans in and kisses his cheek before whispering, so close her mouth still brushed his skin. “I'm sorry. I won't forget what you did for us, or what it cost you.”

Luke nods. “Thank you. Please tell Captain Solo to try not to be too upset. There wasn't anything he could have done.” he whispers in reply.

Leia nods and steps back releasing Luke's hands. He feels very alone without her strong, solid presence in the force.

Leia walks back to the ship with her head bowed. Though she's only known him a few days, somehow it feels like she's committed the most heinous of betrayals in leaving Luke behind.

Han is waiting for them on the ramp of the Falcon.

“Leia! What's-”

She doesn't let him finish. “The guards have come to collect the Prince's things.”
Han gapes but stands aside and the Nabooan troops file on board, and leave hauling Luke's ridiculous number of cargo crates.

They do not take off immediately after the Nabooan's have unloaded the last of Luke's belongings. Instead they all sit in the cockpit, uncertain of what they should do next. It squeezes something painful in Han's chest to see MT-9 and C-3T4 hovering abandoned and alone around the luggage as it is taken away.

They don't say a word for a long time. The comm chirps. The luggage has reached the palace and they have official permission to leave Naboo airspace. Han begins entering the take off sequence.

“He was right.” Leia says finally once they've cleared the atmosphere and slipped into hyperspace. “Next to the Imperial Prince, no one even noticed us.”

Han leans against the control panel, head in his hands, as they make the jump to warp-speed. “Shit kid. Why couldn't he have just let me-”

“This way only he gets caught.” Leia reminds him sharply. “And It's probably just his father looking for him anyway.”

Chewie shakes his head and mournfully wails something.

Han whirls in his seat. “What did you say Chewie? He gave you what!”

Chewie fumbles at his ammo belt, muttering something.

Han looks at Leia. “He says Luke left something with him, something you should see.”

Leia unbuckles and walks over to the Wookie who presses a cold metal cylinder into her hand.

She stares at it in shock.
Han looks like he might be sick. “That's...”

Leia steps back, ignites it, performs a few experimental twirls from half-remembered forms she'd barely studied, and disignites it.

“It's a lightsaber.”

Han stares at Chewie aghast. “Luke had this?”

The Wookie nods and moans lowly in the back of his throat.

“No shit it's bad!” Han snaps. He looks up at Leia in horror. “We didn't just abandon our friend to his fate- we've handed the fucking Empire a Jedi on a silver platter!”

Leia stares at the lightsaber she can't seem to put down.

“So it would seem.” an all too familiar voice drawls behind her.

Leia turns on her heel and sure enough there he is standing in the doorway of the cockpit with a sardonic twist to his lips.

“Kenobi.” she hisses.

“Honestly I think this may be a record. He had that blade in his possession for less than hour.” Obi-Wan Kenobi remarks.

He sighs and leans his head against the wall. “The last of the Jedi, under arrest and headed to Coruscant. This is really not the outcome I had hoped for when I agreed to this rendez-vous.”

“Wait a minute!” Han yells. “How did you get in here!”

Chapter End Notes
There may be a slight break in updates after this chapter (I know I keep saying that and then just keeping to my regular update schedule but I mean it this time!), due to the story kind of starting a new leg and my being pretty busy in the upcoming weeks (also the chapter I'm working on now is being difficult).

Anyway, I hope you guys like this one, it's one of my favourite chapters so far, let me know what you think!
Chapter Summary

Vader tries to catch up with his son. Luke is not happy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Vader finally sees his son again, after their long separation it comes as something of a shock. The last time he'd seen him, Luke had been pale as a sheet and hooked up to a respirator, his throat a mass of bruises, and his eyes terrified.

*Just GO. I promise no one will come after you. Not me, not the emperor. You will be safe. I promise, you will be safe. Just GO, please Luke, go and no matter what never tell me where you are.*

Looking at him now, Vader has to admit just how terrible Luke had looked before he'd gone. Even ignoring his injuries Luke had been a timid and nervous young man, thin, and pale, his blonde hair long since faded to dirty brown. Now, Luke's hair has lightened back to blonde, he's less thin, and there's more colour to his face than there has been in years. Not to mention a cold defiant light in his eyes that is entirely new.

Vader did not expect his son to be happy about being returned to Coruscant but the wave of petulant rage coming off the boy was somewhat unexpected.


Vader doesn't bother to respond to that.

“The Nabooan's treated you well?” he asks instead.

Luke scowls and crosses his arms. “Oh, yes. Except for the part where they rifled through my things and made me put my droids in the cargo hold. I'm not sure where either of them got unloaded to, actually. Apparently it's all being sent directly to Coruscant.”
Vader winces internally at that. To say that Luke was attached to his droids would be an understatement, but few beings in the galaxy shared his sentimentality about them.

There's food laid out for Luke in Vader's quarters, an impressive banquet to welcome him home. Luke does not seem to appreciate it.

Vader pours some wine into his own glass just to have something to do.

“So, my son, tell me of your travels.” He demands.

Luke throws a grape at Vader's head. His eyes are full of tears.

“You promised.” he chokes out. “You promised me, I wouldn't have to come back to live on this ship or on kirffing Coruscant and I believed you.”

“Situations have changed.” Vader replies, his anger growing, and honestly, he's been looking forward to this for months and Luke is ruining it with his petty childish behaviour.

Luke swallows, apparently recognizing both the warning and the dismissal in his father's words.

He stares down at his plate.

“I met my mother's family on Naboo. They're horrified by my very existence.” he bites out bitterly tearing his roll into little pieces.

Vader hesitates, at a loss for what to say. He can feel his son's pain through the Force, which surprises him. Luke had never openly expressed much interest in the Naberries, though that was most likely because he could not have failed to notice their lack of interest in him and was smart enough not to court rejection.

“They would have preferred I was an impostor.” Luke continues.
If he had them before him Vader would kill the entire Naberie clan. He idly wonders if he could get away with having them arrested and then immediately abandons the plan. It probably wouldn't make Luke feel any better.

“They are fools than.” Vader intones.

Luke glances up at him through his lashes. He hesitates for a moment before he asks in a small voice. “Has the Emperor changed his mind then? Will it be the Inquisitors?”

Vader shakes his head. “I have forestalled that outcome at least, but the Emperor wishes to have you close, he senses your potential, and my...reservations about your training.”

Luke sops his bread in sauce directly from the serving platter of roast meat, after all it's not like Vader's going to be having any of it.

“So, I'm going to be a hostage? The Emperor senses your wavering loyalty and if you step out of line, the Emperor will toss me to the Inquisitors?”

Vader bristles. “Your assessment is crudely put but essentially correct.”

Luke smiles bitterly. “I guess I'm finally a real Imperial Prince after all.”

He snaps a bone to pick the meat off, glaring at his father the entire time. “Hostage to the good behaviour of my family. Making them vulnerable because they love me.”


Luke cuts him off with a wordless shake of his head.

“The Emperor will lose interest in you. Eventually, and then you can return to your home on Onderon, by the lake.” Vader reassures him.

Luke's face screws up as he fights not to cry. “My plants will die.”
“I had assumed.” Vader notes coldly, “That given your recent travels you had put a system in place to prevent that.”

Luke pulls a face and for a moment he's a 14 year old hormonal terror again. “Obviously, but that system doesn't account for seasonal changes now does it? I didn't think I'd be away this long.”

Vader considers his son for a long moment. “I assure you Luke, when your sojourn on Coruscant is over, I will buy you new plants.”

Luke glances at him, smiles and shakes his head.

“You always think you can just fix everything so easily.”

Vader frowns underneath his helmet.

“Because, when it comes to you, I can.”

Luke huff, smothers a smile and shakes his head.

“It's not always that simple, Father.”

Chapter End Notes

*That awkward moment when your trying to have a nice family dinner but your adult son won't stop pouting about how you kidnapped him, and throws food at your head. *

Oh look! Exposition! And the triumphant return of Dad Vader!
Chapter Summary

Luke settles into his life on Coruscant and makes a few very useful connections. Leia and Han adapt and recruit for the rebellion. Obi-Wan continues to be his annoying self.

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING for: A creepy dude who won't keep his hands to himself, and references to a character's repeated suicide attempts

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Luke stares out the window of his apartment at the never ending flow of speeders through Coruscant's airways. He doesn't like it here, though he realizes now that his hatred of the place as a child stemmed as much from his inability to block out the crush of people and emotions that he could sense through the Force as it did from the place itself.

Not that it matters much either way. He spends most of his time with his Stormtrooper guards, a mixture of men from the 501st that his father had left behind and the regular Coruscant division in charge of security detail on the Princes and Princesses of the Empire.

Luke has never felt this fragile before, this vulnerable. His father is gone, off in his ship among the stars, and they took his droids.

Luke doesn't know what to do without them. They've been the one constant in his life since he was a young teenager.

He honestly has no idea where C-3T4 is. On Coruscant and most other Core Worlds, sentient droids are banned. So, in all likelihood to poor fellow has just been left powered down in storage somewhere, until such a time as Luke journeys off planet again. But Luke doesn't know for sure and it worries him.

And, well, MT-9 had always been registered as Vader's possession, so she's back with Father under orders from Luke to watch him like a hawk and make sure he disinfects his mask often enough and spends enough time in his Medpod.
Luke has never been this alone before. Not in his entire life. Even when his father used to leave him in his room for days or weeks at a time there was always the droids and usually his father was only the length of the star Destroyer away and Luke could reach out through the Force and know that he was there.

He spends a lot of his time in a half-trance feeling the Force move through and around him, or alternatively trying to calm himself down enough that he can reach that state.

When the panic of being trapped, a plaything to a vindictive Emperor, with the only person who really cares whether he lives or dies lightyears away and powerless to help him becomes too much, Luke makes lists.

He counts the number of times Han came to visit him on Onderon. Runs through the different ways the people he cares for feel in the Force, Leia is a strong stone wall that splits the water, Han is a sparking electrical cord, his Father is cold oil and a snake coiling just out of sight, Yoda is a white-hot crucible, Kenobi, from his few brief encounters, is like a deep flowing river, peaceful on the surface but deadly if you get pulled under. He lists off by rote the key components of an interstellar engine with integrated light-speed capabilities, the planets he's visited, the songs he's listened to and the languages he's tried to learn, until he can breathe again.

He watches the reflection in the window of the stylized twin suns of Tatooine made of different precious metals that hang above his sofa on the opposite wall. It had been a habit more than anything else that made him set them up, he's painted them or drawn them or carved them into the wall of every room he's considered his own since the day he left Tatooine. Except for his house on Onderon, he hadn't needed them there.

Whenever he sees them he is reminded- You are Luke Skywalker, and this remains true so long as you don't forget your name. You are Luke Skywalker. Your grandmother was a slave but she was brave and kind and gentle. You're not strong like your father, or clever like your mother, you just don't have it in you, but you can be brave and kind and gentle like Shmi Skywalker, you have that in you at least.

Names are important on Tatooine. So long as you have your name, they can't make you into somebody else.

Luke's not entirely sure that he's managed that, but it was the best he could do under the circumstances.
He turns away from the window and can't help but jump when one of the Stormtroopers turns out to be much closer than expected.

He feels the Stormtrooper's embarrassment through the Force as he takes a step back, away from Luke.

“Sorry, your Imperial Highness.” he mutters.

He expects annoyance, a reprimand, perhaps for Luke to lash out the way his father or some of the other, less amenable, Imperial Princes would.

Luke has heard that Prince Korkie of Mandalore's keeps trying to throw the members of his Stormtrooper security detail off the off his balcony, and has succeeded more than once.

Luke won't do that. Because Luke's Aunt raised him better, and he is still the same boy who was mercilessly drilled on the value of politeness to strangers while living in an uninhabited wasteland.

So he turns and smiles at the trooper. “No, I'm sorry. What is it...Lieutenant, uh,-” He struggles to remember the man's name. “Detlan, wasn't it ?”

The Stormtrooper straightens and mask or not Luke can tell how pleased he is to have his name remembered by an Imperial Elite.

Luke tries to be kind to the Stormtroopers. They remind him of the boys from Tatooine, most of whom must have gone to Academy and Force knows no one else bothers to treat them decently.

The Rebels view them as acceptable casualties of war. The Empire views them as expendable canon fodder from the moment they put their helmets on. Yet another reason that Luke hates this war.

“Visitor for you sir.” The trooper points towards the doorway.

Luke freezes when he sees the red uniform of the Emperor's personal imperial guard.
He's met Sidious when he first came to live with his Father. He remembers being a terrified child brought before the deformed old man. He hadn't been upset by the Emperor's looks, but he had assumed he wasn't human, and even then had known enough about the Empire not to say it.

The Emperor likes to have him by for dinner and a 'chat' regularly since he's been on Coruscant. He seems to be trying to play a grandfatherly role, except it always rings false, as if it's a part he once played but is now out of practice with.

Luke isn't fooled by the old man's false solicitousness or offers of gifts and treasures beyond count. He still has enough of the desert in him to recognize that these seemingly freely given favours have strings attached, and will one day need to be repaid.

He knows what Palpatine is after. He's after Luke's power, his strength in the Force. Luke can feel the old man probing at his shields like an unwanted touch in his mind. It gives him the shudders and he doesn't bother hiding how uncomfortable he is at these meetings.

He's long suspected that Palpatine likes nothing more than to revel in his own power.

"You have great potential, you know." Palpatine says at nearly everyone of these unpleasant encounters.

Luke always smiles blandly back and offers some excuse or evasion. "Oh, I barely manage to keep up with my charity work, I think anything more strenuous and I'd drop dead." or "My Father prefers I stay away from religious studies" or "I do my best to live up to my mother's memory." Palpatine always smiles condescendingly, a sharp brittle veneer over his malice.

Luke has spent a life-time recognizing danger. In the desert it was watching for sand-storms, poison snakes, and Sand-people. On the Star Destroyer it was watching his Father's mood and making sure to take evasive manoeuvres when it looked like they might turn.

He is not about to make an enemy of the most powerful sentient being in the Galaxy. So he smiles back and laughs at the Emperor's decidedly unfunny jokes.

He never refuses to go to events, or give interviews.
In fact, he goes to public events as often as he can. They terrify him, even now that he’s never gotten somewhat used to people.

He knows what he is to the galaxy. A prize trophy, a declaration and a warning of the Emperor's might. The Princesses and Princes of the Empire are afforded great luxury, and protection for a very simple reason— they are expected to implicitly lend their support to the Empire's regime by appearing publically at Imperial events, whenever the Emperor or the Empire chooses.

So long as you're breathing and smiling no one much cares what the Imperial Highnesses get up to in the meantime.

But, all the same he feels, somehow that he owes it to...someone, to be there. To try and make things better in the little ways he actually can control.

When he gets afraid he thinks of Leia. She had gritted her teeth and soldiered on in face of planetary destruction. Surely, Luke can manage to smile gratefully, wave to the crowds and remember the names of the other Princes and Princesses.

They're a varied bunch except for two things: they are all human, and they are all important, or influential within their native cultures, but other than that they come from different cultures, different star systems and are there for different reasons. Some are little more than glorified hostages, others have been promoted to the rank as a reward, while still more are Imperial collaborators using their power on their home worlds to keep the people in line with the Empire's vision for tomorrow. There are nearly a hundred of them in all.

The closest thing Luke has to a friend among the Imperial elite is Prince Korkie of Mandalore, his neighbour on the floor below him, and, considered by many to be the rightful ruler of his people. He's twenty years older than Luke and twenty times less resigned. He's killed no less than three of his guards and, if rumours are to be believed, has tried to kill himself more than once in attempts to rob the Empire of its leverage over Mandalore. He also happens to be the nephew of Satine Kryze whose pacifist political philosophy Luke has been studying for years.

Korkie tolerates Luke's presence, enjoys talking about his aunt and her ideals, and has only tried to stab him for an Imperial collaborator once. So, Luke considers it a successful acquaintance.

If Luke is honest most of the Imperial Princes and Princesses are pretty annoying, either choosing to waste their time on pleasure, or on beating themselves to death against their gilded cages.
Luke doesn't understand it.

After all, they are privileged and in a position of power and influence, and the Emperor doesn't much care what any of them get up to so long as they're breathing, smiling, and haven't committed treason whenever he decides they need to make a public appearance in support of his reign.

As far as Luke can see, so long as you claim you're acting to further the Empire's aims, aren't actually affecting anything he cares about, and are above a certain rank- you can do whatever you want.

So, Luke learns and thinks, and writes and holds on as tightly to the Force as he can because it's all he's got left these days, unless you count the growing number of souls he's quietly started taking under his care.

He uses his generous personal funds, which are really his Father's but Vader doesn't ever buy anything at all ever except when he's buying something for Luke, so there's really very little difference, to found orphanages and schools. He endows scholarships, and research grants and artistic bursaries.

He learns the names of every single one of the Stormtroopers and Imperial guards that cycle through his protective detail, no matter how brief their assignment to him is and does his best to always be polite and friendly with them. He talks to them about their home-worlds and their families, and what they plan to do with their lives once they leave military service.

That's how he learns about the sorry lives many members of the military lead once they've left the military and helps to start programs to help them and their families re-integrate into ordinary, non-combatant life. Stormtroopers and especially clones, have particular trouble with life after service, and Luke spends a lot of his time sitting and talking to former soldiers at one charitable event or another.

On day, after being forced to sit serene faced through no less than 12 hours of bombastic Imperial pageantry, and veiled threats against his person made snidely by the Emperor himself, Luke collapses face down on his couch with a groan.

*You are Luke Skywalker. He reminds himself. You are not who they make you. Your mother fought her fate even if she failed. Your grandmother emerged from slavery unbowed and unbroken. You can do this.*
He feels Lieutenant Detlan saunter over to stand near him, mildly concerned that Luke may have been poisoned but mostly amused at his dramatics.

Luke rolls onto his back to stare up at the white mask of the Stormtrooper.

“I’m sorry about this.” he apologizes. “You must get very tired of having to deal with the dramatics of Imperial Highnesses after having been on the front lines.”

Detlan smiles behind his mask. Luke can tell.

“In all honesty sir, yours is everyone’s favourite rotation. Everyone’s always fighting to be on your detail.”

Luke sits up and stares at Detlan in surprise. “Really?”

“Of course sir.”

“Huh.” Luke looks out over the City for a moment. “I suppose that’s not really surprising considering your rotating between Vader and me.”

“It, uh, might just have something to do with it.” Detlan replies and Luke grins up at him.

“Are you allowed to play Sabbacc with your charges?” Luke asks. “Or do you have to stand on ceremony?”

Detlan glances around at the other Stormtroopers in the room. There are three in all, two by the door and one by the window. The two by the door came with the apartment. The one by the window is on rotation from the 501st same as Detlan.

He breaks parade rest and waves at Detlan. “Oh go on sir.” He says, his voice slightly muffled by his mask. “If you don’t I will.”
Luke wanders over and turns the board on. “You can have the next Game, Sergeant Darklighter.”

“Alright

Luke tries not to get too casual with his troopers too often. After all, if there's one thing living with his father all those years taught him it's the value of fear. But, then again, if there's something he learned from his trip to Naboo it's the power of love and loyalty.

He knows that love is weaker than fear if you put it to the test, but he prefers it anyway.

Today's event for which they all must be breathing and smiling is a race held in what was once the Senate building.

They've turned the floor and lower levels into a great race track. Luke has never seen the Senate building in it's original form, but he can't imagine it was ever very effective as a seat of government, not when you can cram hundreds of thousands of people into it to shout and scream as the swoop bikes roar.

The Princes and Princesses are all herded together to be siphoned off into their separate boxes, 5-10 to a box, their seating assigned, mixed in with elite members of the military. The seating for the military is not assigned.

They're here to smile and make the military men feel important- after all they're rubbing shoulders with the Emperor's own inner circle, though of course, the Emperor has no inner circle, no friends, no confidantes, only hostages, and slaves of one stripe or another.

But, not everybody knows that.

Luke is in the same box as a number of the other princes. Prince Korkie is there too, looking like
he's wondering how many of the Stormtroopers he can take with him if he goes for a swan dive to break the monotony of the day. He is arguably the most handsome of the Imperial Princes with the white-blond hair common for the Mandalorians, and the facial features of an apex predator that is the hallmark of clan Kryze.

Luke is standing at the railing looking down into the vast amphitheater when he feels a disturbance behind him and glances over his shoulder to see the military has arrived in a group. They seem to be mostly familiar with the other Princes and Princesses who jump to their feet to greet their friends or acquaintances.

All, except Korkie who is looking at a particular General with such pure hate that for a minute Luke wonders if the murder/suicide scenario is more likely than he thought.

The General meets Korkie's gaze and smiles the smile of a boy who pulls the wings off flies.

Luke sees disaster looming ahead and injects himself into the milling crowd.

He purposefully knocks into the General as though he had been pushed from behind.

Luke turns and smiles at the man. “Oh, I'm sorry! I don't believe we've met, I'm Prince-”

“Luke of the Naboo. No, I don't believe we have.”


The General's smile is icy. “It would be difficult not to. You've been an object of some interest.”

Luke pretends to look surprised at that. As though he doesn't realize that people have been speculating about him for years, and that that speculation has reached a fever pitch after his apparent abandonment by Vader and the subsequent interest and favour shown to him by the Emperor.

Whether or not he is Vader's secret son, a story no doubt spread by the rebels who knew the truth, has been quietly speculated for years and now that he's become a public figure, and apparently no
longer under Lord Vader's personal protection, it's is become much too juicy a story for the gossips of the Empire to resist.

Luke is watching over the General's shoulders, and is relieved that the seats around Prince Korkie are now occupied.

The General catches the direction of his gaze and turns to look. His mouth turns down in a scowl.


Luke shrugs. “I just thought the day might be spoiled if Prince Korkie went full Mandalorian and tossed you over the side of the box.”

The General's scowl deepens. “I've been looking forward to teasing that self-righteous little prick for weeks!”

Luke smiles serenely. “Well, there are always other events. But, for today, it looks like you're stuck with me.”

There's only two empty seats now and they sit down next to each other.

Luke hopes that's going to be the end of it but knows almost immediately that it isn't. The General is scrutinizing him far too closely for that.


“Yes, I remember exactly who you are now.”

He puts his hand on Luke's thigh and leans in to whisper in his ear. “Your that slave the Emperor gave to Vader aren't you?”
Luke freezes, and goes to move the General's hand off his thigh, but the General grabs his wrist with his other hand.

Luke sees Lieutenant Detlan reach for his blaster in his peripheral vision and makes a small cutting motion with his free hand.

Honestly, this is possibly the stupidest thing an Imperial General has ever done, and Luke's been studying recent history: Imperial General's have done some incredibly stupid things.

For one, they're in about as public a place as you can find, no doubt with camera's filming them for the Holonet. For another the box is literally packed with Stormtroopers whose sole duty in being there is to protect the persons of Luke and the other members of Imperial royalty. Not to mention that it suits the Emperor's political machinations to have the Imperial Princesses and Princes treated with great respect and dignity.

That doesn't stop Luke from panicking for a moment. He still skittish in crowds and with strangers. He doesn't like being touched unexpectedly.

He takes a deep breath, thinks of what Leia would do, and turns to glare the General down.

"We are all slaves to the Empire." Luke retorts in his best serene Jedi/Holonet Interview voice.

This seems to take the General by the surprise, and Luke pulls his arm free and moves the man's hand back to his own lap.

The General is looking at him in surprise, as though he hadn't expected Luke to bite back but he doesn't particularly mind that he had.

"Huh. That's one way of putting it."

Lukes smiles like a stiletto. "Yes, another would be that since you know Lord Vader is fond of me but choose to insult me, and that you were planning to entertain yourself by antagonizing a Mandalorian warrior prince, than you have a terminal case of stupidity."

The General throws back his head and laughs.

“You know, Prince Luke,” and there's a mocking twist to Luke's title but at least he uses it and that's something. “I like you.”

Luke forces a smile. “I can't say that the feeling is mutual, but thank you for the compliment.”

The General chuckles again and holds up his hands in defeat. “Fair enough, fair enough. Look I'm sorry, we got off on the wrong foot here, let's start over.” he holds out his hand for Luke to shake.

“General Windrider, pleased to meet you, Your Imperial Highness.” This time he uses the honourific with complete sincerity.

Luke sighs, glances towards the Imperial box where the Empire has yet to appear, and reluctantly reaches over to shake the General's hand. “Prince Luke Amidala of the Naboo, the pleasure is all mine General.”

The General smiles like he's won something and Luke thinks how, if Leia were here, she'd have definitely slapped him by now. Or verbally eviscerated him to the same effect.

They sit and listen as the Emperor finally appears, and gives a speech about re-gifting the Senate building to the people.

It's long. Luke catches the General rolling his eyes at it, and suppresses a smile.

Finally, after more speeches and various dignitaries (including Luke, and Korkie) getting to their feet to wave to the adoring crowd, the race starts.

Luke leans forward eager to see the spectacle. There will be races all day, and they begin with the smaller, less impressive vehicles, but it's exciting all the same.

The General must catch it, because he quirks his lips and asks. “Have you ever been to something
like this before?”

Luke leans forward to get a better look. “My Uncle took me to see the Pod-races on Tatooine once.”

The General is surprised at that. “But, pod-racing was outlawed years ago...and what the hell were you doing on Tatooine?”


He whoops and cheers as the bikes whoosh by them, grinning in delight at the power and maneuverability of the engines.

“Have you spent much time in the Outer Rims?” Luke asks out of stilted politeness more than anything else.

The General shrugs. “More time than I'd care to, honestly.”

“Oh, are you with the fleet or on a planet?” Luke asks politely, not really paying attention. The bikes roar by again on another lap.

“I've been stuck out on Endor over-seeing the constuction of the damned Death Star.”

Luke tries very hard not to react to this news. Instead he swears colourfully in Huttese as a biker that had previously lagged behind overtakes the fore-runners.

“Oh? I thought that had been destroyed.” he replies off-handedly, once he's sure he can keep his voice level.

The General is surveying the race with vague boredom. “Yes, well, we're building another. I'm surprised you hadn't heard. Lord Vader's kept very well informed on our progress.”

Luke screams abuse at a swoop-biker who loses control and nearly slams into one of the boxes.

Something seems to have occurred to the General. “...what language is that?” he asks suddenly. “Nabooan?”

Luke rolls his eyes. “Huttese. Have you ever tried to swear in Nabooan? It sounds like reciting a tone-poem. Is there betting on these races?”

The General laughs and gestures a servant over. “Of course.”

Luke wins every bet he makes that day. It's probably an improper use of the Force but what Yoda doesn't know won't hurt him, and his intense focus on betting deflects the General's suspicions about Luke's interest in his work.

The day is long, and by the end of it everyone but Luke is overheated and irritable. Luke, is flushed with pleasure in his victories, and at the familiar scorching heat that reminds him of home, of both his homes. He blows kisses to the crowd on his way out and grants a Holonet channel that staked out the VIP exit an exclusive interview about his latest charitable project and his enjoyment of the day.

Prince Korkie corners Luke on the transport home. “You didn't have to do that.” he growls. “I don't need protecting.”

Luke stares at him in bewilderment. “You're considered by many to be the Mand'alor, warrior ruler of the Mandalorian peoples. Of course you don't need protecting. I just thought it might not benefit your people if you ruined the opening of the Hyperdrome by murdering a General.”

Korkie keeps glaring at him like his gaze will cause Luke to spontaneously combust. Luke shifts uneasily under it, a by-product of time spent with someone whose long silent stares could actually cause instant death.

“I can handle myself.” the Mandalorian hisses finally.

Luke notices Korkie's strangely high collar. He wonders if he's tried to kill himself again, this time
by slitting his own throat in an attempt to make it stick.

He reaches out with the Force and feels Korkie's helplessness, his humiliation and his rage, and running through it all his worry...for Luke?


Korkie relaxes when he realizes Luke's not going to make anything of what happened today. “Yeah, he is.”

They fall in step beside one another once the transport docks. Korkie lives on the floor below Luke. Luke can feel the Mandalorian watching him from the corner of his eye.

“He didn't give you any trouble, did he?” Korkie asks finally.

Luke grins at him. “Nothing I can't handle.”

Korkie raises his eyebrows. “Really?” he doesn't bother to hide his skepticism.

Luke tries to summon some of Han Solo's famous bravado. “Hey. I'm stronger than I look.”

Korkie laughs, and it rasps in his throat like it's been a long time since he's done it.

He glances at their escorts. “Do you think your guards would let you stop by for a night cap?”

Lieutenant Detlan nods at Luke, not bothering to pretend he hasn't been eavesdropping on them the entire time.

Korkie pours a glass of very fine Corellian brandy, and Luke feels his heart contract as he thinks of Han and the long lovely nights on Onderon when he hadn't had a care in the world.
Korkie raises his glass, eyes on the Stormtroopers that line the wall. “To the Emperor.” he toast with a snarl. “Long may he reign.”


He wanders around the apartment glass in hand while Korkie sprawls out on his couch. It is the same layout as his own but different in almost every way. Where Luke's is spare and sleek, with little in the way of personal belongings or decor, the entirety of the Mandalorian Prince's apartment is encrusted with keepsakes, artifacts and mementos of his life on Mandalore.

There's even a Holo of him as a boy standing proudly next to his Aunt Satine with a wide grin.

“You know, I've always wondered why you bother.” Korkie announces to the room at large, apropos of nothing.

Luke glances over his shoulder at him. “Bother with what?”

“With your little-” Korkie twiddles his fingers. “-causes.”

Luke blinks. “I'm surprised you need to ask that considering your Aunt.”


Luke stands awkwardly, holding his glass in both hands. “I'm sorry, I didn't mean to presume...”

Korkie waves him off. “It's nothing.”

Luke breath catches in his throat when he spies something tucked away in a corner.

A holo-comm.
Of course Korkie would have one! He's still the unofficial ruler of his planet, and needed to keep in constant contact with his home world to help pacify his war-like people and their disparate clans.

Luke rushes over to it, hands already hovering to call his father, to call Leia and Han and Chewie, to tell them he misses them and he's alright and not to be fooled by what they see on the Holonet— he hasn't been turned into someone else.

He freezes when he realizes the entire room is staring at him, except Korkie, who has a hand under a pillow and an eye on the Stormtroopers. Some of the guards have their hands on their blasters.

Luke takes a deep breath and steps back.

He counts the number of Dejvarik games he played against Leia (19), and how many he won (17) and how many he lost (2). He lists the number of repairs he had to do on C-3T4 after he first left his father’s ship (3), how many C-3T4 was convinced he'd need (13), and how many times MT-9 had needed repairs in the same period (1).

He calmly walks back to sit on the couch next to Korkie, who is watching him sympathetically.

“You're not allowed your own comm then?” he asks softly.

Luke shakes his head. “I'm allowed to make one call every standard week and I can receive calls if they're from an approved source.”

Korkie whistles, lowly. “That's pretty tight. Who'd you piss off?”

Luke takes a long swig of his drink. “I wasn't *me* who pissed anyone off.”

Korkie winces, and then suddenly hurls his glass across the room to shatter on his marble floor. “DAMN THEM!!”

Luke jumps in surprise and the guards all move forward, ready to restrain Korkie, and shield Luke if it becomes necessary.
Korkie shakes his head. “I don't know how you can help them.” he snarls glaring at the guards. “Imperials.” He spits on them.

Luke holds his glass in a white knuckled grip. “If I could help the entire galaxy then I would.” he explains. “But, I can't. So, I help the people it is in my power to help, and I hope that I make a difference.”

Korkie glares at him. “You run a charity for Stormtroopers.”

Luke swallows, suddenly very aware that he is less than two feet from the cultural leader of one of the fiercest warrior races in the galaxy, a position traditionally only achieved through martial feats, who could probably kill him with very little effort and most likely before his security could do a damn thing about it.

“I help fund and manage a charity that provides services for Stormtroopers and their families, but it's only one of a dozen or so charities I'm involved in.” he explains in a very small voice.

Korkie shakes his head in disgust. “How can you just..give up? Knuckle under and crawl? I met your mother you know! She'd be ashamed that your don't have the dignity to at least fight.”

Luke glares at him. “Leave my mother out of it. You don't hear me wondering about what your Aunt would think of the bloody swathe your carving through your protection detail do you? I'm a pacifist. I'm not like you. I don't want to fight anyone and if I could I'd end this war tomorrow. Let the Rebels keep the Outer Rim and see how they like trying to hold a galaxy together. But, I can't. So, I do what I can.”

He grabs the bottle off the table pours himself a generous portion and knocks it back.

Korkie looks somewhat taken aback.

“Sorry. That was...unfair.”

Luke scowls at him. “It was.”
“Did I thank you for stepping in with that General today?”

“No.”

“Oh, well. Thank you. He likes to amuse himself at these sort of events by making comments about my honour or lack of it, and my battle prowess or lack of it. He's a nasty piece of work.”

“He a kriiffing idiot is what he is. He all but called me a sex slave- as if I couldn't get him killed with a comm-call...honestly I am tempted to get him killed with a comm-call. Vader'd do it no question if I asked. Does he also enjoy poking Gundarks with a stick?”

Korkie leans back his head and laughs.

Luke smiles at Korkie, and just like that, they're not almost friends anymore. They're actually friends.

He is still afraid sometimes, and desperately lonely and isolated. He wakes up with tears on his face after seeing the people he loves die in his dreams, or remembering the day his father nearly killed him, and this time there is no C-3T4 to guard the door, or MT-9 to hover reassuringly, and when he realizes that sometimes it feels like he can't breathe.

When that happens now he studies. He memorizes and repeats the names of all the districts and their governors, the military ranks and who holds them. Learns the home planets, political affiliations and origins of his fellow Imperial Princes and Princesses. The laws on property and institutions endowed by non-military citizens, on military disarmament, shipping routes and neutral zones.

He meditates and feels the Force running through the building and the City planet. He does the exercises Yoda taught him to the best of his ability, and hopes that it's not conspicuous to his Stormtrooper bodyguards that he's following a Jedi-Master's training regimen.

Luke is not a warrior. He hates the thought of war, despises the cost, and the way it makes good people suddenly accepting of the atrocities of others and willing to commit their own, because it's 'war'.
Yoda was right, it is a hard life, fighting for peace with the sword dangling over your neck all the while. And Luke was right, because it may not change anything, may win him nothing.

Some days he feels hopeless and brittle and fragile like dry chalk.

But, on other days, he feels full of light, like that night in the Space Station years ago when he'd been free for the first time. He feels he is what Yoda once promised: a Jedi fighting for peace.

He does not love the Empire. He will never love it, much of it is truly terribly evil. But, he's come to love many of the people in it. The loyal Stormtroopers who enlisted on the chance of something better, and the ones who were grown from a dozen genetic template to round out the ranks. The drawling spitting speeder drivers who he watches sometimes from his window and the wild daring swoop-bikers he cheers for from his well used box at the Hyperdrome. All of them.

He remembers living on a Hutt controlled world, if only faintly, and he knows that the Empire is better than that. If not by much.

So, like his mother, he'll fight his fate, and the fate of the whole galaxy if he has to, and even if he fails, it won't make it any less brave that he tried. Or so he tells himself when he can't sleep and he sits up at night staring at the beaten metal circles that represent the twin suns of Tatooine.

You are Luke Skywalker. He tells himself. They tried to make you someone else. But, you are Luke Skywalker, son of Darth Vader, and Padme Amidala, and you may refuse to fight but that doesn't mean you refuse to resist.

His mind whirs with thoughts of Leia, Han and Chewie, of General Windracer's loose tongue and well-placed connections and, most importantly of all, Prince Korkie's unrestricted Holo-comm...

Leia wakes up in the night to a cold space beside her, she throws on a shawl and wanders out of bed to find Han crouched on the couch watching the Holonet.
She leans against him. “What're we watching?” she mumbles sleepily.

“News from the Core. The Emperor has turned the Old Senate building into a sporting arena, for races and things.”

Ah, she knows what that means. “And how is the Prince?” she asks, grinning against Han's shoulder.

Han shrugs, tense as a wire. “The same. Hard to know if he's miserable and acting, or whether he really does just find the Emperor's speeches that interesting.”

Leia laughs. “I've heard the Emperor's speeches, the safe guess is it's the former.”

Han swallows. “I don't know. He's on the Holonet a lot for someone acting under duress. He smiles a lot too, and not fake ones- the real ones. There's a whole channel dedicated to keeping track of every time he genuinely smiles in public.”

Han fiddles with the projector and a close up of Luke at a private event of some kind appears. The man next to him leans in and says something and Luke smiles in delight as the swoop-bikers zoom past.

Han pauses the holo.

Leia pats his arm consolingly.

“Back on Onderon, all he had to do was smile like that and he could get me do to anything he wanted.” Han admits.

Leia leans against him and hums softly. She doesn't know how to deal with loss like this one. Where you can see someone but they're just out of reach and it feels like you'll spend the rest of your life in terror for their lives. All her losses had been total, permanent. No grave to grieve at, no pictures to cry over. Nothing left at all.
She's not worried that Han still has feelings for Luke. Not like that. Han made his choice and while he has many more faults failure to commit to a course of action is not one. He's just worried about someone he used to know, an old friend he still feels responsible for.

“He'll be all right Han.” She assures him. “You need to let this go. It wasn't your fault and we have work to do.”

Han nods and kisses her on the cheek. “Yeah, I know. No one's going to depose the Empire for us.”

The next day she meets with a Nabooan envoy. The entire planet seems to be rousing itself from a long slumber since Luke was detained there. Perhaps it's the news that he really was the son of Amidala and they handed him over, but more likely it's Kenobi making himself a visible part of the Rebel Alliance once again.

The Jedi are still considered heroes on Naboo, and Obi-Wan Kenobi in particular is well remembered and well-liked for his role in breaking the trade Federation blockade a generation ago.

Fucking Kenobi who won't stop smiling and commenting enigmatically about how everything is going to plan.

It makes Leia want to throw another chair at him- The man had trained the son of Darth Vader as a Jedi, misplaced him and had the gall to say everything was going to plan?! Well, technically he hadn't misplaced him, they all knew exactly where he was, Luke appeared on the Holonet often enough.

The Nabooan envoy is a teenage girl, which Leia knows she has no right to get huffy about considering her past, but, she feels slighted all the same.

She looks at Leia with dark knowing eyes and then unexpectedly breaks into a grin. “You're the girl who was with Prince Amidala!” she exclaims.

Leia blinks and realizes she looking at one of the Queen's handmaidens. “Yes. I am.”

“Then he's sided with the Alliance after all?”
Leia shrugs and shakes her head. “No, he's not. Honestly, we don't know what his situation is right now. I'd say he's on his own side, but he's willing to listen which is more than can be said for most Imps.”

The Nabooan envoy nods seriously. “I suppose, for now, that will have to be enough.”

Chapter End Notes

Long Chapter is Long. So Long.

Yuup. Palpatine pulled a Flavian Amphitheatre. The Senate building wasn't actually very practical even when there was a Senate. This way everyone gets to enjoy it!

My Soundtrack for Luke this chapter was Everything Else, from the musical Next to Normal:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ht30tN0Ahk

OH, also. This story just broke 10 000 hits!! Which is crazy and has never happened on one of my stories before. So, thanks dear readers for that!
Interlude with Vader V: Hard Truths

Chapter Summary

Vader combines his two favourite hobbies: trying to kill Obi-Wan Kenobi and worrying about his son.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Gravel crunches beneath Vader's feet as he approaches the ruins of a Jedi Temple.

A familiar hooded man is waiting for him just inside the doors.

Obi-Wan looks up and smiles his serene smile of infinite cosmic amusement. “Ah, Darth. We meet again.”

Vader stands before his old Master and the threshold of the Temple, lightsaber drawn, and hesitates to step inside, to swing at the old man, to begin the battle he came here to fight.

“Your son has become quite the Holo-net sensation.” Obi-Wan remarks from the shadows of the ruins. “I saw him at the opening of the new Hyperdrome.”


What he remembers is General Windrider leaning in with a cruel smile and grabbing his son, and what was worse, he remembers the way Luke hadn't reacted at all to the touch.

The son that Vader knows has never been comfortable around strangers, has always shied away from unexpected touch. To see him not react at all to such blatant intimidation makes Vader doubt what he's been told of his son's safety.
It makes him wonder if Luke hasn't just been putting on a brave face during their Holo-calls because he knows what Vader would do, what Vader would risk to protect him if he thought he was in danger.

It makes him wonder what Luke's life has become that he is used to indignity and offense.

Vader steps into the temple as Obi-Wan retreats back into it.

Obi-Wan call from just out of reach. “I feel your conflict Darth. I felt it on the Death Star and every time we have met since that day it has grown only stronger- you love your son.”

He steps forward towards Vader and his blade.

“Tell me what slight you made against the Emperor that he punished you by taking your son from you?”

Obi-Wan slowly circles his former student.

Vader says nothing. There is nothing to say. He has been loyal in all things. More than loyal. His only defiance, if it even deserves the name, is in failing to immediately return his son to Coruscant when the Emperor ordered it.


Vader pivots on his heel and swings his sword at where the old man stands. Only he is no longer there. As always he has slipped beyond reach of Vader's vengeance.

“You know it's true Darth. I can sense it.” Obi-Wan's voice echoes from the shadows. “None have been more loyal to Sidious. None have sacrificed more in service to the Emperor. You kept one thing for yourself, and the Emperor promised you, I'll warrant, when you found the boy on Tatooine, that the boy was yours to keep. Another reward, no doubt, for your loyal service.”

Vader swings once more, wide erratic. “You know nothing!” he roars. Too often he has heard Luke
spoken of as though he were a thing, or a slave. It was one betrayal he hadn't expected from his old Master.

Obi-Wan steps into the light again. “But he lied. He lied like he has lied about everything else. He was always going to take him Darth. He was always going to try and turn him to the darkness. The Emperor has not gotten to be the man he is today by allowing useful things to sit unused.”

Vader lowers his sword. “He is not a thing!” He shouts desperately.

“To the Emperor, everyone is a thing, a tool for him to use and dispose of as it suits him. Even you. Even Luke.”

“One day, the Emperor will find an excuse.” Obi-Wan drawls darting away once more into the darkness as Vader swings at him again. “And Luke will be given over to Inquisitional training. They'll corrupt him to the dark side. Do you know how they do that Darth? Are you familiar with the methods that Inquisitors employ to make someone strong in the dark side?”

Vader knows what they will do, and no doubt Obi-Wan guesses just how familiar he is with those methods. After all, it was he that had trained the first Inquisitors. He had had who had chosen which methods were effective and would be continued to be used.

If Luke is given to the Inquisitors he will be asked to do reprehensible things, and if he refuses he will be tortured until he agrees or turns to the darkness for succour in his pain and rage, and if he will not turn then he will be tortured to death to send a message to others who might hesitate in the completion of their duties.

After all pain and fear are the paths to the darkside.

But Vader has always known that that would not be Luke's path.

Obi-Wan is right. The Emperor had promised that Luke would safe for however long it pleased Vader to keep him so.

Vader thinks of Luke. He has always said he would do anything for his son, and now comes the time he must prove whether or not that's true.
He disignites the blade.


Obi-Wan smiles, his small sly smile from when he had achieved the desired results in a negotiation.

“Oh, won't it?” he laughs in the Sith Lords face.

“I won't let it happen!” Vader insists.

“Like you wouldn't let Padme die? Wait..no, I remember now: you killed her yourself.”

Darth Vader re-ignites his lightsaber and swings at Obi-Wan but the man melts away into the darkness again.

“Come now, Darth, when are you going to admit you didn't come here to kill me?” His voice echoes through the empty room, but Vader cannot see the man himself.

“And what else could I possibly have come here for, old man?” He demands.

“You came because you knew I would say what had to be said- If you wish to save your son, you cannot do it by remaining obedient and loyal to the Emperor.”

The voice is coming from just behind him but when Vader turns and swings his sword at where the old man should be standing there is no one there.

He is alone in the Temple it seems, and then suddenly he's not.

“Know this too, my very young apprentice, when the day comes that you need to turn against Sidious, I will help you save your son.”
Chapter End Notes

Obi-Wan knows how to hit where it hurts.
Luke watches from his window as Korkie's transport takes off and is swallowed by the constant stream of Coruscant's air traffic.

The Mandalorian Prince had killed another Stormtrooper in his protection detail, this time somehow managing to stab the man in the neck after getting his helmet off, and was being summoned to answer for his actions.

Luke was fond of Korkie. They had become friends. In someways Korkie was the first good friend Luke had had since he'd been taken from Tatooine, but he did not understand why Korkie's rage against his imprisonment always seemed to fall on those least responsible for it: the Stormtroopers in his protection detail. Well, he did actually. The Stormtroopers were some of the only people Korkie could actually get at.

If Korkie had had a habit of killing Imperial dignitaries then Luke could have understood, after all being from Mandalore, with it's famous warrior tradition, he was subject to more ridicule and mockery from those (foolish) Imperials who felt the need to crow about the Empire's unparalleled military might.

Now, why couldn't Korkie have worked through his feelings of powerlessness by killing General Windrider? Luke mused.

Luke had spent a few afternoons now in the General's company, and his opinion of the man had not improved with increased familiarity.

But it was worth it. He reminds himself.
He turns away from the window and towards his own protection detail. He can feel their disgust and anger at the crime Korkie has committed, and their confusion at why such a difficult and dangerous political prisoner could not simply be returned to Mandalore or actually imprisoned given the difficulty of containing him under house arrest.

Luke forces a smile.

“Would it be possible to go to the Hyperdrome?” Luke asks with fake brightness that he knows his guards have long since learned to see through. “Something to take our mind off the day?”

The guards hesitate, but trips to the Hyperdrome are as much a relief for them as for Luke, and they take a certain pride in the way their Prince (and they do consider him theirs in a way that none of the other Imperial Princes and Princesses are) always wins his bets.

The Lieutenant Hidenoff (not Detlan whose back on a rotation on Vader's ship) thinks about it, nods, and activates his comm quietly coordinating the necessary transportation and security measures.

Luke follows his guards out onto the landing platform. They're busy sweeping the ship, and preparing for take off and no one is much bothered when Luke wanders off over to the edge.

He's never been a problem to his security detail, and they trust him to look after himself and keep out of trouble. They're all pretty fond of him actually. In their own particular Stormtrooper way.

Luke looks back over his shoulder at them all scurrying around the transport. He smiles.

He looks back to the edge. He takes a step forward.

He jumps.

It's a terrible risky gamble. Luke knows the theory of how to direct your body using the Force, and he's certainly strong enough in the Force that he should be capable of such feats, but he has never had the opportunity to practice outside of jumping around in the trees of Dagobah with Master Yoda.
Trying out the technique while falling to what will most definitely be your death if you fail, is not an ideal way of learning.

Do or do not. Luke reminds himself, heart in his throat as he angles down to land with a hard thump that sends pain splintering up through his ankles, on the landing pad directly below his own. The one that leads to Korkie's empty apartment.

He opens the door, locks it behind him and sprints to the main entrance and locks that too.

It won't hold his security detail for long if they realize what he's done, but it will buy him some time.

He scans the room desperately, and the he sees it half under the couch. It must have been dropped during the scuffle.

Korkie's unrestricted comm-link.

He crouches down and fishes it out, before frantically dialing one of only two frequencies he has memorized.

“Please, please, please, please” he whispers begging the Force and any other deities that might be listening that his plan will work. He won't get another chance if it fails.

Finally the comm-call is answered.

“KID!!?” Han Solo looks almost exactly as he did when they first met. “What are-”

“It's a trap Han. You need to tell the princess! I-I don't have her comm-frequency-”

“Wha-”

“The Death Star II is operational. They're waiting for you on Endor! They'll destroy the Rebellion in one shot!”
Han blinks at him in shock and confusion. “Luke how do you--?”

“I don't have time to explain Han! Just-”

He hears the sound of laser fire as his guards try and blast open the door to Korkie apartment. That was quicker than he expected. He thought he'd have more time to tell the details.

“Just tell the Princess, it's a trap, alright? The fleet is waiting for them!!”

The door bursts open.

He ends the call and stands, viciously crushing the comm beneath his foot, and grinding the pieces into the floor.

With a gesture he scatters them across the apartment as the Stormtroopers barge in. He doubts they will be able to reconstruct who he had called. Perhaps they'll be so distracted by his show of Jedi prowess that they won't even think to wonder why he jumped down to Korkie's room in the first place.

He can sense the regret of his loyal guards as they take him in. He goes quietly. They're good men after all, and he likes them, there's no reason to make this harder for them than it already is.

Han skids around a corner as he sprints down the hallway desperately trying to find Leia. He's lucky he was on base when Luke called.

He had thought she would be in the command center but all he'd found was Admiral Ackbar and Mon Motha speaking to that old snake Kenobi.

If he had been thinking he would have given the information to them, but he hadn't. His mind had
been too caught on Luke's crouching form as he gave a warning that, judging by the yells and the abrupt end of the call, had likely cost the young prince not just his position of safety and privilege but his life.

Finally he bursts into a conference room where he's been told he might find the Princess.

She's sitting at a table with a young woman in a dove grey hooded robe, a few years younger than her, there's a group of 4 or 5 similarly dressed woman standing around.

*The delegation from Naboo*, a small voice in Han's mind that sounds suspiciously like C-3PO supplies.

Leia looks torn between shock and rage at Han's interruption.

“I've just received a communication from Luke-” he finally fully registers the people in the room. It's not just a delegation from Naboo, it's the Queen herself and her dedicated handmaidens. “That is His Imperial Highness Prince Luke Amidala-” he corrects. “He said to bring the information directly to you.” He rewinds the recording device in the comm and slides it across the table towards Leia.

A little blue hologram of Luke appears, “*It's a trap Han. You need to tell the princess. I don't have her comm-frequency-*”

“The *Death Star II is operational. They're waiting for you on Endor! They'll destroy the Rebellion in one shot!*”

“I don't have time to explain Han! Just-”

There's an explosion of laser fire in the distance and Luke turns at the sound.

“*Just tell the Princess, it's a trap, alright? The fleet is waiting for them!*”

The recording ends as a crash echoes from the kid's end of the line, and the comm presumably falls to the floor briefly projecting the image of a very sleek looking sofa for a second, before it abruptly
Leia gapes, and stares at Han. “We need to get this to command right away.”

She turns to the Queen. “My apologies your Majesty, I’m afraid this simply can’t wait.”

The Queen inclines her head serenely and then nods at the comm. “The Son of Amidala?” she asks softly.

Leia hesitates. “Yes. It seems he’s not as opposed to our movement as you had thought.”

The Queen gracefully rises to her feet. “It would be a great comfort to my people if that were so, but I doubt he can be trusted. After all, we are all who we were raised to be, and he-” she points at the comm disdainfully. “was raised to be loyal to the Empire.”

Leia swallows. The Queen is not wrong. While Luke hadn't been exactly fond of the Empire he'd certainly spoken of it with a certain amount of respect, something he definitely hadn't done with the rebellion. The information that Luke was a Jedi trained helped to soften that blow a bit but if he was a Jedi why hadn't he done something.

Leia's eye fall on the comm, well he had. She realizes. He'd used his position to gain access to the kind of information the rebellion could only dream of.

Leia glances at Han who is standing at attention hands clenched into fists, and jaw set as he glared at the Queen of Naboo.

“You don’t need to be a rebel to have a problem with a weapon that can vaporize planets.” Han snarls.

“We’ll take this to Command. If you’ll excuse us.”

The Queen waves them out.
Leia takes Han's hand once they are in the hallway. “Do you think they shot him?” he asks.

Leia shakes her head. “Not yet, if Imperial troops are waiting at Endor you can bet Vader's with them. Would you want to be the one to tell Vader his son had been executed in his absence?”

Leia sighs and leans against his shoulder. “I hope I'm right about that. I can't imagine what Kenobi would become if Luke died.”

Han nods. Kenobi has been somewhat manic in his defense of the Prince, to the point that, despite the fact the truth of the matter was classified to the highest level, many of the ground troops in the rebellion were beginning to suspect that Prince Luke must have some sort of connection to the Jedi.

Within the rebellion itself Luke was a somewhat contentious figure, having become a Holonet fixture since his return to the Core since the gossip around his mysterious connection to the fearsome Lord Vader had become too good to ignore.

Some liked him, admired his charitable work and enjoyed his easy smiles during public appearances and interviews.

Others thought he was just another Imperial leech, and his frequent visits to the Hyperdrome hadn't exactly helped to dispel that.

But, Leia, Han, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Rebel Command knew the truth as difficult as it was to swallow: Luke was a Jedi who didn't believe in their cause.

Kenobi treated Luke's indifference as though it were only a minor obstacle.

And, judging by this holo-call he'd been right.

Realizing this filled Han with horror. There would be no living with the old coot now.

And sure enough when the holo-recording was presented to Rebel Command, Kenobi smiled very smugly and then looked at each of the council members directly as if to say: “I told you so, didn't I tell you? And you didn't believe me! HA!”
He refrained from actually saying it out loud, but Han felt like it took quite a bit of self-control to manage it. The old Jedi did rub his hands together a bit and murmur enigmatically mystical phrases about things 'going to plan'.

Force, Han found that old man creepy.

Mon Motha just nods primly after watching the holorecording. “Thank you for this update Commander Solo, we will take it under tactical advisement.”

Vader is annoyed to be taken away from his supervision of the completion of the new Death Star (and baiting the rebel trap) by a communication from his Master.

He sinks to his knees before the projection. “What is thy bidding my master?” he asks, trying to muster up the respect he once felt for the man, even as the fear remains all too real.

“I though it best, my Apprentice, that you heard the news from me. Today, the Prince of Naboo evaded his guards using Jedi techniques, luckily he didn't go far and they were able to apprehend him but, it seems his corruption by the Jedi is less a theoretical threat, than an already established fact. We must move quickly to sway him to the Dark side. I intend to send him to the Inquisitors, they should have no problem breaking him of his..impetuous nature.”

Vader feels icewater in his veins, more than icewater- The collapsing frozen stillness of a dead star.

No, no, no. NOT LUKE. Luke would never betray him, never betray the Empire and everything Vader has thought to build. Not like that. Not with them.

You know the Jedi wanted him. They've always wanted him. You know it was them who hid him. A voice reminds him. Is it so hard to believe they managed to find him when you sent him off all alone with only droids to protect him? This is your fault. Like all the rest.
And then a voice from the deeper darker depths of his mind, that speaks in the voice of a woman so long dead Vader had been certain he'd forgotten her face, let alone her voice, murmurs in Vader's burnt husk of an ear.

*What choice did you really give him? You know what he is. After all, it is why you love him.*

Vader bows his head. It is the one voice he has never turned away from and cannot deny. He does not know if it is truly her ghost that speaks to him now through the Force, or merely the faded echo conjured by his own shattered mind. He doesn't care. At the end of the day, Shmi Skywalker has been the one being in all the galaxy whose wisdom Vader never doubted. Not once.

He thinks of her last words. Her death and torment at the hands of the Sand People and welcomes back the warmth of that rage like an old dear friend.

“May I beg my Master indulgence, to delay this transfer?” Vader hears himself asking. “After all that I have done for the boy, I would like to punish him for his treachery.”

Palpatine cackles in delight at his words, perhaps pleased that it has proved so simple to turn Vader against his son, perhaps looking forward to the pain that the upcoming encounter will cause his apprentice, whose devotion, he has noticed, is more and more half-hearted of late.

“Such a simple boon, I believe I will grant it to you.”

“Have I your permission to abandon the trap for the Rebels?”

Palpatine waves him off. “The power of the Death Stat is such that it hardly requires your expertise to blast the rebels from the sky. You have my leave to return to Coruscant.”

Vader bows his head. “Thank you my Master.”

“Don't be too long getting here. The potential Force-power of the son of Skywalker is quite considerable. I only have it in my heart to deny the Inquisitors such a prize for so long.”

Vader bows even lower. “Of course my Master.”
Vader goes down to the crew decks of the Star Destroyer where the 501st are currently stationed.

He stands before them in all his terrifying regal glory. He is not a fool. He knows he has their loyalty, and their fear, but he knows something else as well: Luke, in his years on this ship, and through his charitable work on Coruscant, has earned their love.

He lets his hissing breathing intimidate them into quiet before he speaks.

“It is my sad duty to report that His Imperial Highness Luke Amidala was taken into custody today to be detained indefinitely without trial. I have managed to forestall the Emperor's plans for him, and will be returning to Coruscant immediately to try and rectify this situation. I will be taking a contingent of Stormtroopers with me. Any volunteers for this assignment please step forward.”

This announcement is met with stunned shock.

Vader does not usually ask. He orders. He demands.

He can feel the shock and uncertainty in the minds of his men. Then in one and then another and another he feels resolve. *Prince Luke is worth dying for.* One man thinks to himself as he is the first to step forward.

Then there's more. It's no time before he has enough for a full squadron. That's all he'll be taking. Any more would be suspicious.

None of the men have the slightest clue what he has planned. But it doesn't matter. They trust him. They fear him.

They've seen the wizened old Emperor on the Holo-net and they haven't been fighting for him in a long time. They've been fighting for Vader who they believe could win this war single-handedly if the Admiralty would only let him.

And more than that- those who have been with the 501st are thinking of Luke. They remember the child who had haunted all of Vader's commands, so rarely seen and even more rarely spoken of but known. They're remembering the young man, ransomed back from the rebels, who was seen more often, though never without guards, but who smiled shyly at them if it seemed like they had tried
to catch his eye.

Finally they think of the Prince on Coruscant. Who had started programs and societies for Stormtroopers, who had endowed scholarships which they'd commed home to tell their children to apply to, who remembered their names and ranks and sometimes even their home planets and hobbies and who was always kind and polite to them. They're thinking of how he looked on the Holo-net watching the races from his usual seat in the Hyperdrome (and winning every bet too).

The men of the 501st are hard men. They're cruel men some of them. But they are men who had chosen to fight because they believed it would make a better galaxy, you didn't end up in the 501st serving under Vader otherwise. Some of them still fought for that reason, others had become disillusioned with the Empire over the years, but to a man, each and everyone of them is certain that the galaxy is a better place for having His Royal Highness Prince Luke Amidala of the Naboo in it.

When they get on the transport heading back to the Core all of them are expecting the moment when Vader turns to them and gives the order.

“I am going to attempt to secure the Prince's release, however if that fails we will use force. Consider this a rescue mission.”

They nod. They knew that when they signed on. They're ready.

Han Solo wouldn't say that blowing up the Death Star II was easy exactly, but it was as easy as a ground assault on a Forest moon to take out a shield generator in a heavily armed base, with unexpected reinforcements in the form of some sort of species of tiny evil demented bears was ever going to be. But Kenobi, septagenarian or not, is a one man army who, apparently, also has a hidden talent for tree climbing and the day is won.

Afterwards while he's enjoying the sight of a thousand shards of Space Station scattering across the galaxy. He turns to Leia and smiles.
“So are we gonna go spring the Prince from jail now?”

Leia frowns at him in sad surprise. “No. Han, he's being held on Coruscant, even if we were willing to ensure the losses it would take, there's no way a mission like that could succeed.”

“But, he's a Jedi! He may have just saved the galaxy.”

Leia looks at him sympathetically. “Exactly, he knew exactly what he was risking by coming us. Better than anyone.”

“May I interject?” Kenobi pipes in popping up from behind one of the great trees like some sort of jack-in-the-box from hell. “I have been planning for just such an eventuality...”

Han rolls his eyes. “OF COURSE YOU HAVE!” He yells to the sky throwing his hands in the air.

Kenobi and Leia both just look at him like he's crazy, but he's not. He's just been around the Jedi Master too damn long.

“As you may or may not be aware, the Rebel Alliance came into the possession of a bodyguard droid belonging to Prince Luke Amidala some time ago. I suggest we send the droid to try and free the Prince.”

Han gapes at him. “That is insane.”

Leia shrugs. “All we really need is to get him out onto the streets, from there well...he's the Jedi son of Darth Vader and current Holonet Darling of the Core. Give the boy a little credit. I'm quite sure he won't need our help to deal with things from there.”

Han throws up his hands. “Fine. Do your dumbass plan, I guess even if it goes horribly and terribly wrong as it inevitably will, then at least the only one who's going to die will be the droid. What droid is this that you have anyway? Luke always talked about having bodyguards but I only ever saw that fussy little protocol droid...”

Kenobi and Leia exchange a look that makes Han want to go hide under a rock because Force help
the galaxy if those two have decided to band together.

“The bodyguard *is* the fussy little protocol droid, I believe his designation is C-3T4...?”

Han barely resists the urge to bang his head against the nearest tree. “I take it back, Princess. We're all doomed. Me, you, Luke and that droid. All of us except Kenobi, who will out-live us all weird old space wizard that he is.”

Leia rolls her eyes and pats Han's arm consolingly. “I doubt it will be that bad.”

Kenobi glares at Han. “The design of the droid is based on the personal MagnaGuards of General Sidious, which were colloquially known as 'Jedi killers' during the Clone Wars. Now, if he's designed to handle Jedi a few Imperial troopers won't be any trouble now will they?”

Han opens his mouth to argue, thinks for a minute and closes it. “Fair point.” he grudgingly admits.

Chapter End Notes

Fasten your seat belts kiddies! The wheels have just come off, everything's spinning out of and it's gonna be a bumpy ride!
Interlude with Luke: The Emperor's Offer

Chapter Summary

Luke comes face to face with Sidious and finds is given a choice.

Luke is surprised that he is taken to the Palace and not to the prison. He shudders as he is led through a side entrance. The Imperial Palace was once the Temple of the Jedi, though so refurbished and renovated that Luke doubts any of the Jedi who'd spent their entire lives here would recognize it now.

It boils with dark energy. Pain and fear and of other terrible things. Luke shudders at their echoes.

He is brought before Emperor Palpatine himself who seems to have foregone his usual affable grandfather routine in favour of something, which Luke suspects, is closer to the truth.

The Emperor sits on his throne, cloaked and hooded as always, but Luke can see his yellow eyes gleaming from the shadow of his hood. He clenches his hands into fists to keep them from shaking.

“Leave us.” The Emperor barks to Luke's guards who hesitantly file out of the room on his command.

“So, Luke Skywalker,” the Emperor begins, and he spits the word 'Skywalker' out in such a way that he might as well have just said 'Son of a Slave' the way the other children had when he was a child. “It seems you have been dishonest with me.”

Luke swallows. “Not dishonest, no. I would never lie to your Imperial Majesty.”

Emperor Palpatine slowly rises from his chair. “Perhaps not, but you hid your training from me, and from your father. It is treason to speak or study the teaching of that old religion.”

“You mean to speak or study the teaching of the Jedi.” Luke quips back.

Palpatine laughs, not the gentle chuckle he'd use during their stilted formal dinners, but a hash
cackle that makes the hair on the back of Luke's neck stand up.

“You have some spirit Luke Skywalker. You remind me of the man your father once was. You certainly inherited his power.”

Luke doesn't say anything. He can't imagine he's expected to. He feels like he's sprung a trap that's been lying in wait for him for years. The jaws are finally closing around him, and he never even suspected they were there.

“You fear me, and you fear the Inquisitors training. That is wise, Vader may have been a little over zealous in the training regimen he laid out for their recruits. There was a time he was quite jealous of his place as my Apprentice.”

That Vader no longer places much value in his role as Sith apprentice goes unsaid but hangs in the air between them. Luke suspects he knows where this is going now. He doesn't like it, but he knows.

“I could help you, Luke. I've always been fond of you.”

Luke doesn't say anything, just stares at his own hands as he clenches and unclenches his fists.

“Lord Vader has been somewhat lax these last few years in his duties as my apprentice. Perhaps it is time I supplanted him, with someone actually capable of doing the job.”

Luke looks up at that. He knows the role he is supposed to play here, and he will play it. It will buy him time if nothing else.

“You're surprised I think so well of you? Of course I do. I am not so willfully blind as my apprentice. Not so foolish.”

Luke swallows nervously. “I have no interest in following the path of the Sith.”

“Nonsense, that's your father talking. He's been whispering in your ear too long. Telling you that you are weak! Helpless! That you would never survive on your own! That you would be nothing without him. Well, take my offer boy. Prove him wrong. You have power within you that he
“I've never had much interest in power” Luke snaps, trying to channel some of Han's wry bravado. “And I have no interest at all in killing my own Father just to gain a little more.”

Sidious sits back down. “Are you so certain you'll have a choice? Vader is in a terrible rage over your betrayal. He asked for the privilege of seeing to your punishment himself. I wonder what he'll concoct. He can be quite inventive you know. It's one of his gifts.”

Luke's breath hitches at the words. He wouldn't. Father wouldn't. But the memory of the terribly pressure on his throat. Of kicking against the air. Of Father's instruction never to tell him where he lived.

It occurs to Luke that maybe his Father has always known that one day he would kill his son.

Luke tries to remember to breathe. He thinks of Yoda's ornery white-hot defiance and the softness of his grief and kindness. Embrace your fear, but do not let it rule you. Release it into the Force.

He raises his chin, thinks of Leia's bravery, and replies. “I will not kill my Father. I will not join you. Not now. Not ever.”

Sidious smiles a slow smile down at him. “We'll see.”

“I will give you some time to think over that decision and ask you again later. I will not be so understanding if you refuse me a second.”

He must press a button on his throne because suddenly the room is filled with guards. Not the regular white-armoured Stormtroopers, but the fearsome red-armoured Imperial guards.

Luke shrinks away from them as they grab him. They all have minds like polished metal.

He was already cuffed when they first arrested him but now they collar him as well. He lets them, but once the collar closes around his neck he panics. It's a Force-dampener, technology developed to be used against the Jedi in the Clone Wars. It feels like he's soul is dying and his body hasn't
noticed.

They shove him into a cell within the palace itself, and with his hands still cuffed, he stumbles and, with his hands bound, can't catch himself. His head smacks against the floor and he can feel blood trickling down his brow.

The troopers laugh as they leave.

Luke picks himself up and sits down on the bed trying to focus on the pain in his head rather than the fear and uncertainty in his mind.

*You chose this.* He reminds himself. *You decided you couldn't let them die.*

But it was one thing to theoretical accept that your actions might land you in prison and dead, but it was another entirely to be in prison waiting to see whether or not your father would come to kill you.

He started shaking as scenarios flashed through his mind. Vader in one of his towering rages that frightened Luke so much when he first left Tatooine that he'd hide under the bed if he felt his father coming. Vader in a slow burning anger built of frustration ready to lash out at anything that gave him an excuse.

Or worse.

Vader in pain and sadness because Luke betrayed him. Vader indifferent, unsurprised because of course Luke was so weak that such a betrayal would be expected.

Vader killing him slowly to punish him for his falseness. Vader killing him quickly to try and spare him from the Inquisitors because there's no question that Luke would ever be strong enough to survive that.

Maybe Sidious is right. His father has always thought he was weak.

Luke does want to die.
No. He takes a deep shuddering breath and tries to find his calm centre. It's hard with the Force-dampener making him feel like he's half-dead, but he finds it eventually.

He thinks of the sunset over the moisture farm on Tatooine, the relief of the cooling air as the sky went dark.

In the desert the dark is no more dangerous than day.

Luke kept his name and that means he's still a child of the desert if that's what he wants.

*I do not need to fear the darkness. It has no power over me.*

Carefully Luke draws a circle on the wall near his bed using his blood and then another slightly lower and slightly smaller. He carefully fills in the first circle.

He stares at them for a long moment and takes a deep careful breath.

When he'd first come to live with Vader and been so frightened his father hadn't gotten angry at him and pulled him from beneath the bed. He'd just sat on the floor next to it, and talked to him until he'd felt safe enough to come out.

He takes another deep breath. *You are Luke Skywalker.* He reminds himself.

He takes another deep breath. He's still too agitated to properly meditate. So he closes his eyes and tries to make a list of every time he's ever made his father laugh. He scours his memory for those moments.

His father loves him. He tells himself. His father once almost killed him. A voice from the darkness replies.

He focuses on the remembered laughter and decides he'll simply have to have faith that those memories will be enough.
Eventually he calms himself enough to try to meditate and with a smile thinks of Yoda. It suddenly occurs to Luke that he's in Master Yoda's old home. The centre of the Old Religion.

He regrets the thought as soon as he has it. Everyone Yoda ever loved is dead he remembers. Thousands of Jedi had been slaughtered here and suddenly Luke feels like he's been locked into their tomb with them.

He shudders and wishes his hands were free so he could wrap them around himself. Compared to those poor helpless children his own fate isn't looking quite as dire.

Luke at least as a number of advantages. He suspects, though of course he's had no one for comparison in quite a long time, that he has grown more and more powerful in the Force.

If he does not know the limits of his own powers how can the Emperor hope to guess them?

More than that, the Emperor underestimates him, he's allowed Vader's perceptions of Luke as his beloved son to colour his own expectations of Luke.

Luke is kind, and he is gentle. He believes in justice and fairness, and if he has a choice at all he will not fight. But these things don't mean that he is soft, or weak.

A weak person wouldn't have made it through what he has unscathed.

Luke smiles to himself and lays down on the cot keeping his eyes on the bloody suns he's painted on the wall in his own blood.

The Emperor won't leave him here for long. He knows that. The guards will be back, and Sidious will try and persuade Luke to join him again. This time he'll probably use Force lightning to try and persuade him.

Luke is not weak. Something the Emperor may soon learn to his peril.
Chapter Summary

With Luke's fate unknown Vader puts events in motion that could forever alter the fate of the galaxy...

Chapter Notes

Ladies and Gentlemen....the moment you've been waiting for!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Vader strides into the room flanked by Stormtroopers and heralded by his own breathing. Vader had been met the members of the 501st, that he'd left here to act as Luke's bodyguards, at the landing platform. He'd considered killing them for their failure but for now they are more useful alive.

Korkie looks up from where he is sitting on his couch. His eyes are both blacked and his hands are free but his feet are manacled.

Vader doesn't know if that's because of his recent crime or the increasingly precarious nature of the situation. Word has reached the Core of the destruction of the Death Star II, and there are rumours of unrest across the Empire.

Not to mention rumour of Prince Amidala's arrest is starting to spread.

The air of Coruscant is choked with anger and defiance.

Vader is not surprised they've shackled the most dangerous of the Imperial Princes.

“Prince Korkie.” Vader intones.

Korkie glares at him. “Lord Vader.” he spits.
Vader glances around the room. If there had been a struggle when Luke was arrested all trace of it has been erased.

“What are you here for?” Korkie demands. “I thought my new terms of imprisonment had been made very clear.” He stomps a shackled foot to emphasize it.

Vader walks slowly around the slightly cluttered room. He can feel his son's presence in this place. He'd spent a lot of time in these rooms and he'd been happy here.

“I have no interest in curbing your aggression towards your guards. In fact, I have had them all temporarily dismissed from their posts. The men you see now are my men.”

Korkie, for the first time, begins to look a little nervous.

“What's this about...?”

Vader picks up a small trinket that sits on a side table. It's a holo of Korkie with his Aunt Satine. Vader remembers the woman from another time. A different war. A different life.


“I had nothing to do with that!” Korkie yells. “It wasn't my fault!”

“I am well aware that you had no involvement in the events that led to his arrest. But, reports have led me to believe that the two of you are...friends?”

Korkie hesitates, he's wary of answering any question posed to him by an Imperial but he doesn't see the harm in this one. It's not exactly a secret.

“I suppose you could call us friends.” he finally admits.
Vader sets the trinket down. “How would you like to be something a bit more useful to him?”

Korkie frown and leans back against the couch. “And what is that?”

“An ally. With your help, I may be able to get him released. In exchange I will help you in achieving your own ends.”

Korkie tilts his head to the side. “So...he escapes into exile?”

“That is not my plan.”

“Well, than I don't see what you think you can accomplish- the Emperor doesn't just let people go.”


Korkie smiles at the Sith Lord in surprise and delight. “You're plotting a coup!”

Vader give him a long level glance. “I am plotting nothing. I will first attempt to secure the Prince's release through normal channels. If that fails I will take...appropriate action.”

“And then Palpatine dies?”

“Palpatine dies.”

“If I help you.” Korkie says slowly. “I'll need your assurance that I will be released, and the People of Mandalore will be freed of Imperial Occupation?”

“You have my word on my honour.”

“I know better than to trust your honour Vader. I want you to swear on something that matters...” he pauses and looks at Vader out of the corner of his eye.

Vader rankles at the Mandalorian's presumption but he doesn't have time for this.

“I swear.”

Korkie laughs. “Well sign me up Lord Vader. What is it exactly you want me to do?”

“Find Luke if you can, and protect him during this unrest. I will bring him to you if I find him first. Once I have matters under control, I will come back here to retrieve him from you. Alert your people to Palpatine's failure on the Death Star, rally them behind me if you can.”

The bonds are broken with a flick of the lightsaber and Korkie springs to his feet. He holds out his hand and Vader puts a comm into it.

“If you betray me,” Vader warns. “Mandalore and all it's people will burn. You last of all.”

Korkie is already typing in comm frequencies for a mass broadcast on his home planet. “I've heard all the threats before, Vader. Don't worry, I won't mess this up.”

Vader inclines his head and walks out of the room.

He pauses when Korkie shouts after him: “Hey, Vader! What is it with you and Prince Amidala, anyway? Why do you care what Sidious does to him?”

Vader considers answering. If he'd still been Anakin Skywalker he would have. Obi-Wan would have had some scathing witticism to deliver.

Instead Vader just repeats his earlier warning. “Don't fail me, Korkie of Mandalore.” and walks out.
Vader finds Sidious in what passes for a throne room, though the man has never really been much for ostentation. He prefers real power to the appearance of it.

Vader thinks perhaps he catches a trace of Luke about the place. But he can't be sure.

It's like when he was someone else and he might think he caught a whiff of Padme's perfume. It used to happen all the time during the Clone Wars. He'd be on the front or on Couruscant and suddenly he'd think he could smell her perfume and turn a corner expecting to see her. Usually he wouldn't find her but sometimes he would.

He failed her. He killed her.

He almost killed Luke too.

Sidious looks down on him from his dais. Vader looks up at him. He feels nothing. No hate or rage or pain. This man shaped him from when he was a boy. Vader loved him once. Hated him longer. But, now? There's nothing. He's just an old bent man. A Lord of the Sith who has tired of his apprentice and is looking to replace him.

It's foolish that Vader never thought that this would happen. After all, first there was Maul, and then Dooku who Sidious sacrificed to open the door of hate in the heart of Anakin Skywalker, now there is Vader who never truly recovered from Mustafar and whose son is as powerful as he once was.

“My dear apprentice.” Sidious simpers. “Shall I have the boy brought out? I must admit I am curious as to what you will do to him.”

“I want him released Sidious.”

Sidious leans back into the chair. “Well, that is disappointing.”

He makes a gesture and his red-armoured Imperial guard step forward blasters already firing.
It easy to cut them to pieces.

He turns back to his master and takes a step up towards the him.

Sidious laughs and springs to his feet. “Ah. So you are looking to follow the way of the Sith.” His lightsaber ignites in his hand. “You've come here to kill me.”

Vader ignites his own sword. “Yes, my Master.”

Sidious laughs again and springs forward.

Their blades meet in a shower of sparks.

The duel is not actually particularly impressive. Neither of them have used lightsabers as their primary weapon in many long years. They both prefer other means of killing their enemies these days. It doesn't take long for either of them to turn their focus away from the swords and towards other means of attack.

Sidious begins throwing Force lightning.

Vader keeps his sword up. He needs it to catch the Force lightning his Master is throwing.

He reaches his arm out to choke the old man, but Sidious is too strong with the Force and Vader cannot break his shields.

Suddenly there's the sound of blaster being fired and Sidious' head snaps back a circular burn in his forehead. He crumples to the floor.

Vader whirls around. His Stormtroopers have filed into the room as he had commanded. One stands in front of the rest, his blaster drawn.

Vader glances between the old man and the troopers. “Was your blaster set to stun?” he finally asks.
The Stormtrooper snaps to attention and salutes sharply. “To kill! Sir!” he barks.

Vader looks down at the old man’s crumpled body. “That’s a pity.” He stabs him through the chest for good measure. You can never be too careful with the Sith after all.

He steps over the corpse of one of the Emperor’s Imperial guard.

“Let’s find the Prince.”

All the Stormtroopers snap to attention at that. “Sir! Yes, sir!”

Luke is lying on his cot trying to meditate in an attempt to distract himself from the pain of the electrical burns Sidious had inflicted during their last meeting.

Suddenly, the door slides open to reveal a familiar beloved face.

Luke leaps to his feet and throws his arms around the metal body.

“C-3T4!! You're here! I thought I'd never see you again!’

“Oh Master Luke! I'm so pleased to see you myself, though I must admit I wish it were under better circumstances. You're going to have to come with me.”

Luke steps out into the hallway that is strewn with unconscious Stormtroopers.

He turns to C-3T4 in shock. “Did you do this?”

“Kidnap protocols have been engaged since Naboo. I've been working tireless for months to obtain your release. And these fellows were being very uncooperative.” He awkwardly steps over one of

“Only stunned sir! No need for extraneous loss of life and Oh! I almost forgot! I have something for you!”

He opens his chest plate digs around in it for a moment and finally pulls out a metal cylinder which he reverently hands to Luke. “Compliments of General Kenobi.”

Luke grins and ignites it. He swings it in a few rusty forms.

“They've been with Ben this entire time?”

“Yes sir. Well, not the entire time. I had a few adventures getting off Naboo, let me tell you.”

There's a loud noise from the flour above and they both freeze. “Maybe later.” Luke whispers. “You know the way out?”

“Of course! Follow me Master Luke!”

It a strange feeling of deja vu wandering through steel corridors in his bare feet. Like back on the first Death Star all those years ago.

Luke almost laughs when C-3T4 leads him to a set of access stairs. “These go out at the lower levels, where there is an exit that had previously been blocked off. I doubt very much anyone will think to pursue us through this route.”

“Previously blocked”

“I opened it again.”

“Alright. But I can't go out into the lower levels like this!”
“Not to worry sir!” C-3T4 reaches behind the door and pulls out a bag that holds a change of clothes, some shoes, and a cloak with a deep hood that is nearly exactly like Luke's favourite one in galaxy blue.

He does laugh when he sees that. “You think of everything don't you?”

“Of course! I'm programmed to! Now come on!”

Luke swings the cloak over his shoulders and awkwardly hops down the stairs after C-3T4 while trying to get his shoes on.

Once they're out of the temple (and really Luke is very impressed with the hole that C-3T4 had blasted in the wall) Luke flips his hood up, keeps his head down and walks at a brisk but not suspicious pace.

“Do you have a speeder C-3T4?” he asks.

“No! I'm a droid, I don't know how to operate a vehicle, but I believe there's a rental agency a few blocks from here. Do you have an unmarked account?”

“Of course not! Everything's monitored.”

“Well I suppose we'll just have to take our chances. We only need to get to the docks after all.”

They slip into the stream of foot traffic and are almost at the rental place when someone in full Mandalorian armour flies down to land in front of them.

“One moment Master Luke. This shouldn't take long!” C-3T4 assures him as he steps forward as his electrostaff unfolds from one arm and a high power precision blaster unfolds from the other.

He whirs the staff into fighting form and arms the blaster.
Taken by surprise by the sudden lethal armament of a seemingly harmless protocol droid, the man in Mandalorian armours holds up his hands and stumbles back.

“Wait! Luke, call it off! Wait!” he yanks his helmet off. “It's me! Korkie Kryze! I'm here to rescue you!”

“Korkie?!” Luke yells in surprise. “C-3T4 cease attack protocols!”

The weapons fold back up and disappear as the gold plating slides back into place. “Oh very well, sir but I don't like the look of this one!”

Korkie is gaping at C-3T4. “Where did you get a MagnaGuard?!”

Luke shrugs. “My father made him for me out of an old protocol droid and some spare parts? How are you here? And in armour!”

Korkie shoves his helmet back on. “Vader sent me to get you. He's dealing with the Emperor now.”

“He's WHAT?!! C-3T4 turn around! We need to go back, I should have known he'd do something stupid.” Luke shrieks.

C-3T4 puts a hand on Luke shoulder and drags him back. “Sir! My first priority must be your safety and well-being! Which will be put in significant danger if I allow you to return to the Palace!”

Korkie holds out his hand. “C'mon Luke. I have a feeling things are about to get very ugly out here.”

Luke shakes his head but takes Korkie's hand. “I have bad feeling about this...” He says looking back over his shoulder at the way they'd come.

Han is playing Dejvarik with Chewie and watching the Holonet with one eye when it suddenly
blinks off.

He leaves the game, and flips the receiver on and off a few times to no result.

Frowning he ambles down the hallway. He finds Leia and Obi-Wan sitting in tense silence around a table.

“Leia, do you have another Holonet receiver? I think mine's busted.”

Leia takes a deep shuddering breath. “It's not. All signals from the Core are being blocked. We don't know what's happening.”

Han sinks into the chair next to them.

“And now is the time when we learn whether the gambit pays off.” Obi-Wan muses.

Han frowns at Obi-Wan. “You mean sending the droid?”

“I mean Vader, and his son. I've been working to turn them against the Emperor for some time now.”

Leia just shakes her head. “You've been playing with fire Kenobi, and if you're wrong about what's happening over there than it's not just you who will burn.”

Han sits up straight. “Are you saying you think the signal's down because Vader's turned against the Emperor over Luke? You think there's a coup?”

Obi-Wan shrugs. “I'd say it's a distinct possibility. With men like Vader it's always a matter of finding the right leverage.”

Han turns to Leia. “What would that mean for the Rebellion? If Obi-Wan is right?”
Leia shrugs. “It could change everything. Or nothing.”

Han frowns, shakes his head and crosses his arms to stare at the ceiling. “I got a bad feelings about this.”

Chapter End Notes

So, you know what's really hard to write? Lightsaber duels.

Anyway, I hope this has lived up to people's expectations since I know some of you were really excited for this to happen.

Let me know if you liked it! Comments are always appreciated!
Interlude with Everyone and the Holonet: Waiting

Chapter Summary

With the Core in lock-down everyone watches the Holonet waiting to see what the fate of the galaxy will be.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

We regret to inform you that our regularly scheduled programming is canceled until further notice. Communication systems are down all across the galaxy and we have no information coming out of the Core Worlds. We will update you on this situation as it progresses.

For the first time since he came to Coruscant, there are no Stormtroopers guarding Luke.

Instead he's sitting next to Korkie, who is sprawled like a happy lion on the couch in his apartment. It's strange to see his friend in his Mandalorian armour. He seems a different person from the desperate angry man who'd made a habit of trying to murder his guards.

Luke supposes he is. It occurs to him that this is the first time he's met the real Korkie of Clan Kryze.

Korkie seems calm, sharp and content in a way Luke has never seen him before.

“You should have let me go back.” Luke murmurs.

Korkie looks at him and raises an eyebrow. “What were you going to do? Stop him from murdering the Emperor? Stop the Emperor from murdering him?”
Luke rests his chin on his knees. “I don't know. Stop him from doing something too stupid! Vader can be...volatile” he trails off and cocks his head to look at Korkie thoughtfully. “Do you know why I was arrested?”

“No.” Korkie replies. “I knew you slipped your guards and tried to use my comm but-” he shrugs. “Why does anyone get arrested these days? Because the Emperor decided to have them arrested.”

Luke grimaces and explains. “I jumped from my landing pad to your landing pad and then used your comm to warn a known rebel smuggler about a trap that had been laid for the Rebellion.”

“WHAT?! But...how could you make a jump like that...?”

Luke gets to his feet and fishes his lightsaber out from the pocket of his robes. He ignites it and gives it a few experimental twirls.

“SHUT UP! You're a JEDI?!”

Luke grins. “I told you I was tougher than I looked.”

“No one knows what’s happening! There was a rumour that nice Prince from Naboo was arrested, next thing we know Vader’s been recalled to the Core and then the entire City just closed down!”

Han paces back and forth watching a Holonet interview of a Core-worlder who's ship had taken off just before the entire sector had gone into lock down.

“I don't like this.” He grumbles.

Leia doesn't look up from her datapad. “You've mentioned.”

“Kenobi's playing fast and loose with all of us. Did you know he'd been meeting with Vader?”
That makes her look at him. “No. He has?”

“Oh come on Princess! It’s obvious now that I think about it- all his talk of plans and gambits, and now this about turning Vader against the Empire. The only way he could even hope that would work would be if he either had someone close to the man, or if he'd been meeting him. Or both.”

“You don't think he set Luke up to get arrested do you?” Leia asks.

Han chews on his fingernails and shrugs. “Who knows? I wouldn't put anything past that old lizard.”

Leia shakes her head. “I know you don’t like him, but Obi-Wan wouldn't do that. He's a Jedi. He has a code.”

Han looks at her skeptically. “Suuuure he does.”

Han goes back to pacing. “Do you think he's even still alive?”

Leia doesn't need to ask who he's thinking of. “I don't know Han. We can only hope at this point.”

She looks at him for a long moment. “Luke could have been in on whatever plan Kenobi is hatching. Have you ever considered that?”

Han shakes his head. “C'mon, remember his face when they grabbed us in the market? He had no idea.”

“As of yet there has been no word from the Palace. The whereabouts of Prince Amidala of the Naboo, Lord Vader and the Emperor himself are unknown.”
Luke is lying on the floor of the apartment. It's boring.

Korkie’s sprawled next to him, armour on and blaster at the ready. They moved there out of sight of the windows after a squadron of Stormtroopers flew by about 10 ft from where they were sitting.

Korkie insists they stay in this room as much as possible since it has the most exits (three if you count the window, which Korkie does because he's got a jetpack). He's got his helmet on and is quietly focused like little else Luke has ever seen.

They've been sitting here for hours.

“How did they even capture you in the first place, so they could put you under house arrest?” Luke asks because the more he sees of the real Korkie of Mandalore the more grudgingly impressed he becomes with whoever actually managed to capture him in the first place.

Korkie glares at him. “What?”

Luke shrugs, which is something of a manoeuvre when you're lying down. He has a feeling that no one is going to come looking for them for quite a while.

“You're the Mand'alor. Your people love you and they're influential enough that the Empire wouldn't risk upsetting them by out-and-out arresting you, not to mention that, as one of the most fearsome warriors of your race, capturing you at all would be pretty difficult. So how did they—...” he trails off.

They don't usually talk about this sort of stuff. They have an understanding.

Korkie shifts. “I hold no official office.” He finally says. “There was a conference about trade regulations and...” he sighs. “it seemed important that Mandalore have a voice there. It wasn't even on Coruscant but it was in the Core. I thought it would be safer for me to go than to risk someone essential to the government or...” he shrugs. “I don't know. I seemed like the best choice because I was a warrior and, have no official title, so who would bother with me? But, the Empire was waiting for me. I think the entire thing was a set up.”
Luke smiles sympathetically “I'm sorry.”

Korkie waves it off. “It's in the past. I don't really care what happens to me, but I hate how much my position here has weakened my people's resolve.”

Luke nods and pats his leg consolingly.

Korkie's helmet angles down so he's looking at Luke. “What about you?”

“Me? I wasn't captured.”

“Oh come on. You weren't here then you were and that means whatever leash you were on got a hell of a lot shorter very suddenly.”

Luke huffs and scowls at him. “I lived with Vader for a while, and then I didn't anymore...”

“Wow, way to overshare...”

“He gave me an allowance and sent me off to set up my own estate under remote supervision and with the bodyguard droid.” He waves in the direction of C-3T4 who is charging in the corner. “And that was pretty much that. I lived on my estate, I had friends who visited and a swoop bike and it was all very nice until I decided to go to visit Naboo and my mother's grave and was unceremoniously detained by it's internal security by order of the Emperor... and then I was sent here, because the Emperor and Vader had decided I should live here and hadn't bothered to tell me.”

He shrugs. “Not a very interesting story.”

“Uh huh. And how in your sad life of hermitude in the Outre Rim did you become a Jedi?”

Luke grins up at Korkie. “So you didn't forget that?”

“Nope.”
Luke laughs. “It's actually really dumb. I'm 'Strong in the Force' which means among other things that sometimes I get...feelings about things that are usually right or significant or you know.”

“Unlike you I was actually alive when the Jedi Order existed so, yes I do know.”

“So, the, uh, guy I'd been seeing ended things with me for a variety of reasons, but one of them was that I just like, hid from the world? And talked about doing things but never did them? Anyway, I'd had a 'feeling' about this planet called Dagobah for a while and so I thought I'll show him' and so I went to Dagobah and there was this like, green troll called Yoda who.”

“You were trained by Yoda?!”

“Well, yeah? Why? Have you heard of him?”

“He was Grandmaster of the Jedi Order, the greatest of them all. There were rumours he survived but no sightings for decades we'd all given up hope! Do you understand what this will mean to people?”

Luke stares up at him blankly. “No? Honestly, this is a very strange reaction to have over an old green thing that hits people with his walking stick.”

Korkie laughs.

“There are still no reports from the Core Worlds as the entire galaxy remains in lock-down.”

Han holds Leia's hand and sits with her and the rest of their friends on the base watching a news feed that never changes. Chewie's gone. He couldn't stand the waiting anymore, didn't want to get his hopes up in case, at the end of this thing, nothing changed.
“If the Emperor is dead what would that mean?” ‘I guess it all depends on who'd succeed him.’ ‘Palpatine has been ruling the galaxy my entire life! It's terrifying to think he'd ever be gone!”

Korkie's finally admitted that they aren't likely to face any threat that C-3T4 can't handle now that he's fully charged and agreed to change out of his armour and get some sleep.

He carefully piles it at the foot of the bed. These apartments are luxurious but not spacious. There's only one bedroom and one 'fresher plus the main room (it still feels strange and wrong to use the rooms earmarked for their bodyguards). Luke leans against the doorframe of the bedroom as he waits his turn in the fresher and eyes Korkie. There are scars on his wrists and a fainter one on his throat that someone's obviously been working at with bacta to try and erase.

He must feel Luke looking because he turns and scowls.

Luke's taken off his tunic and the electrical burns stand out red against his skin.

“You should get those looked at.” Korkie remarks.


“It just looks like they might leave a scar.”

Luke raises his eyebrows and nods at Korkie's throat. “You're one to talk.”

Something occurs to him in that moment. Something he probably should have realized sooner.
“How did Vader get you to agree to help him?” he asks.

Korkie doesn't look at him.

“My freedom, plus a withdrawal of Imperial troops from Mandalore.”


Korkie nods. “An offer I couldn't refuse.”

Luke looks at Korkie thoughtfully. “What has you so convinced he'll honour his end of the deal?”

“I made him swear.”

“I wouldn't think the word of an Imperial would be anything close to enough to satisfy you.”

“No, I made him swear on something that actually mattered to him. I made him swear on you.”

Neither of them mentions that without the deal Korkie would have happily let Vader die, and in all likelihood wouldn't have lifted a finger to save Luke either.

They both know it.

“Greetings, my fellow citizens.” Vader intones, his breathing a sharp hiss in the sensitive microphone. “It is with a heavy heart that I stand before you today to announce the death of our beloved Emperor. He was assasinated three standard days ago by a member of his own guard. He gave everything to make this galaxy a place of security, prosperity and peace. To lose our beloved leader in such a manner and in this time of crisis is a blow that we may never recover from.”
But, there is hope. The Emperor was aware that an attempt might be made against his life, and, as the man so often did, he planned for every eventuality even one so unthinkable as his own death. Prince Luke Amidala of the Naboo, whom the Emperor had begun grooming as his successor, was taken into protective custody and is well and safe despite this terrible tragedy.”

“Did he just call me Palpatine's heir?” Luke asks trying to twist around to see the holoprojection from where he's meditating in a one-handed handstand.

Korkie glances up from where he's lovingly servicing his blaster. “Yeah, I think so.”

Luke folds down to stand and points at the holoprojector. “See, this is exactly the sort of thing I was worried about when you wouldn't let me turn back.”

“You were worried Vader might decide that you should rule the galaxy?” Korkie asks dubiously.

“Well, not specifically, but this is exactly the sort of thing that I'm very good and preventing if I'm present!!”

“You're claiming you can stop Vader from doing something he's decided to do.”

“Not stop, just redirect him. Sometimes.”

“Think there's still a shot at that now?”

Luke shakes his head. “Once his mind's made up disagreeing with him outright is only going to get you strangled.”

Korkie looks up at Luke sadly. “I'm assuming you know from experience?”
Luke looks away and doesn't answer.

Korkie turns his attention back to the Holonet. “Besides, he's not actually going to make you ruler of known space is he?”

Luke shrugs and flops down onto the floor. “Probably not.”

“All across the Empire people are taking to the streets in celebration of the assasination of the Emperor Palpatine, but I'm here on Naboo where the mood is more sombre...”

“This is good, isn't it?” Han asks Leia. “It's what we wanted.”

Leia shakes her head. “Vader's in charge now. We'll have to wait and see whether he manages to hold the Empire together, but if he does I think we can expect things to get more difficult again for the Alliance. He hates us more than the Empire ever did.”

“Maybe Luke will be able to soften his stance.”

Leia laughs. “Don't kid yourself Han. Luke's in exactly the same spot of as before. Vader's going to use his popularity to bolster his own rule. It's probably the only reason he's still alive.”

“C'mon Leia, surely you don't think...he's his father after all.”

“He tried to kill him once already, and that was before Luke gave him any reason to. Now that he's a Jedi trained rebel-collaborator?” She shakes her head. “I'd say his days are numbered. Even if they're not there's no way Vader will let Luke have any sort of real power.”
“This is the moment we've been waiting for! Palpatine is dead, that piece of mad human wreckage can't hope to hold the galaxy together for long! If we unite, if we resist, if we fight. Then we will be free at last from the yoke of tyranny!!!”

Luke bites his lip as he watches the local news. “Do you think it will be Civil War?”

“In case you hadn't noticed most of us consider the galaxy to already be in the midst of a Civil War.” Korkie snaps.

“I meant within the Empire. Do you think Vader will be able to hold it together?”

Korkie laughs and shakes his head. “No way. Everyone hates him too much. I don't doubt that he's spent the last few days purging the government of it's hard-line Palpatine loyalists, but most of the Generals, the people, and plenty of Stormtroopers aren't too fond of him either. No one wants him in charge. I've agreed to back him so he'll have the Mandalorians on his side but, that's not going to be enough. The Core worlds will be splitting into factions within the week.”

Luke stares at Korkie wide-eyed. “You really think so?”

Korkie nods. “It's what happened at the beginning of the Mandalorian Civil Wars.”

“Do you think...he could do it if I helped?” Luke asks slowly.

Korkie stares at him in shock. “Yeah. I mean. I guess so. You're Coruscant's darling. With them, and Vader and the Stormtroopers who practically worship you for the charity work you do and me and the Mandalorians...?” Korkie whistles through his teeth. “I don't think many General's would like those odds.”

Luke turns to Korkie. “What do you think I should do? Maybe I should run, head for the docks now. If I stay I could be trapped here for the rest of my life.”
Korkie looks at him seriously. “I think the galaxy's far better off in your hands than those of Vader or some other power hungry general. If he really plans to make you Palpatine's heir then constitutionally you'd have ultimate authority.”

“What would you do?”

Korkie laughs. “We all know what I'd do if given the opportunity to lead. I joined the army on Mandalore and never sought office even when people asked me to. I saw what it did to my Aunt...and my father.”

Luke frowns at Korkie. The only family he'd ever heard him mention was his Aunt. “Your Father?”

Korkie nods. “Pre Vizla of Klan Vizla. He was a staunch defender of Mandalore's traditions, believed the warrior culture was important and spent years trying to depose Duchess Satine whose pacifist philosophies he saw as weakening our people. He planned a coup with a group of gangsters and cast-off Sith...ended up beheaded for his trouble.”

Luke blinks. He's heard of the infamous death of Pre Vizla and the Duchess Satine at the hands of the Shadow Collective. He'd never realized that Pre Vizla was...

“I'm sorry.” is all he can think to say.

Korkie shrugs. “Don't be, I was raised more by my Aunt than anyone else.”

“What about your mother?”

“Second in command of Pre Vizla's organization. She led our people through the Republic occupation. She's still alive actually.”

Korkie grimaces. “You know I hate the Empire and everything it stands for, but maybe the question you should be asking is ‘Is there anyone worth saving in the Empire?’”

“In a turn of events that has surprised many, Prince Luke Amidala of the Naboo has been formally invested as Palpatine’s heir with plans for a coronation to take place in a few days. Though granted the title of Prince of the Empire at age 14, the soon-to-be-Emperor remained a virtual unknown to the public until his permanent relocation to Coruscant nearly a decade later, when he quickly became one of the most widely beloved public figures within the Imperial court...”

Chapter End Notes

Oh, Vader. Vader don't do that.

Big thanks to everyone who left comments on the last update. The few days have been kind of rough so it's nice to see you guys are liking this.

Okay, so official canon has it that Korkie is the son of an unnamed third Kryze sister. I have decided that's a bit convenient especially since he breaks Satine out of jail with the help of Bo-Katan. So I'm saying she's his mom and Pre's his dad and the Clan system makes things complicated. Plus if Korkie is seen as being connected to both old and New Mandalore it would give him wider public appeal.

Any comments are always appreciated.
Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

WARNING: This is a long one. Brace yourselves.

TRIGGER WARNING: Suicidal thoughts, Panic Attack (or something quite like one), non-consensual drugging

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When they hear sounds in the corridor Korkie reaches for his helmet. Luke holds up his hand. “Don't bother it's just Vader.”

Korkie rolls his eyes because only Luke would ever describe Vader as 'just' anything.

Sure enough, the door slides open to reveal the Sith Lord.

Luke glares at him over the couch.

“Luke. I'm glad to see you are well.” Vader rumbles, he's flanked on all sides by Stormtroopers.

Korkie hops to his feet. “Well, that's my end of the bargain complete. Now, if you'll excuse me, my lord, I'll be heading to the docks.”

Vader doesn't move, neither do any of the Stormtroopers.

“You will not be going anywhere.” Vader states.
Korkie grips his blaster eyes darting between Luke, Vader and the guards.

“What are you talking about- we made a deal!” He yells.

Vader doesn't say anything.

Luke stands up. “You need to honour your word. Please.” he pleads.

“I need to do no such thing.” Vader says turning on his heel. “Come along Luke.”

“You lying sack of murdering shit-” Korkie is muttering to himself under his breath.

Luke takes a step forward to do what he's not sure and then-

then...

And then..Korkie raises his blaster at Vader's turned back, and in the same instant one of the Stormtroopers hits him with a bolt right to the neck.

Korkie goes down like a sack of bricks.

Luke screams and rushes forward to his friend. He's alive, thankfully. Luke can feel his presence in the force. The blaster must have been set to stun.


Vader glances over his shoulder. “Prince Korkie is far more useful here where I can control him, than out of reach on Mandalore.” he explains matter of factly.
Luke puts his hands on his friend's head. Through the Force there's an echo of the pain and desperation he had felt the moment he was shot, and also satisfaction. Korkie had thought the blaster was set to kill.

Luke swipes at his own tears, frustrated by his weakness.

Vader looks on dispassionately. “Get up.”

Luke looks up at him. “I can't just leave him on the floor!” he protests.

“His security will see to him.” Vader informs his son.

“But-” Luke protests as the Stormtroopers haul him to his feet and march him out the door. A few stay behind to watch Korkie.


There's the familiar feel of warning through the Force. Vader is in no mood for his son's rebellion.

Luke ducks his head and glances around at the guards. He probes them gently with his mind surprised to find he recognizes them all. They've all been on his security detail at one point or another.

There's a notable absence though-

“Where's Lieutenant Detlan?” Luke asks suddenly. At the name every guards' mind fills with fear, rage, uncertainty and confusion.

Vader's stride doesn't waver.
“He is under arrest for murder and high treason.”

“You're saying he killed the Emperor?” Luke gasps incredulously.

“That is unfortunately correct.”

“But-”

Vader cuts him off. “We can discuss this once we get back to the palace.”

The transport ride back to the palace is silent and tense and honestly Luke is thinking more and more that he should have run when he had the chance. Convinced Korkie to give up on the deal and just left. Korkie back to Mandalore and Luke back to Onderon and peace and his house by the lake.

Luke follows on Vader's heels as they enter the building, flanked on all sides by the Stormtroopers.

He hesitates for just one second on the threshold and in it his father's arm reaches back and hauls him along at a brisk pace until they reach a room in the upper levels.

“Leave us.” Vader barks at the Stormtroopers.

The troopers comply, and Luke is surprised to feel hesitance from them in the Force. *They're afraid to leave me alone with him.*

Luke jerks free of his Father's grip and stares at him in shock.

Despite their many and frequent comm-calls Luke hasn't been face to face with his father since he came to Coruscant.

It feels like a lifetime ago that Luke used to comfortably lounge in his Father's medpod and gently
tease him for fun. He supposes that makes sense, it was years ago now, and they'd only really seen each other one time since Vader had almost killed him, and that had been the time his father had had him arrested.

“What have you done?” Luke whispers.

“What was long overdue.” Vader replies.

“You killed the Emperor!” Luke screams, and he doesn't know why he's so upset- he just is. The Emperor has been a terrifying spectre hovering over his life and his future from the moment his father found him on Tatooine. He should feel relief that the old man who shot lighting at him from his fingers and laughed while he screamed is dead. He should be happy.

Instead he feels confused and angry and like he's maybe going to start crying.

Vader stares at him like he doesn't understand. Probably because he doesn't. Luke loves his father but the older he gets the more he realizes that Vader doesn't understand anything that really matters.

“He hurt you.” Is the explanation that Vader finally comes up with.

“So?” Luke growls. “Why would you do this? I've been hurt before I can take it-”

Vader grabs him by the shoulders. “Who else?! Who else hurt you?”


Vader lets go like he's been burned, and suddenly Luke misses his Father's face. He hasn't seen it in years. Not since he left for Onderon with a crushed throat.

Vader takes a step back.

Luke just keeps staring at him. “Are you really going to make me Emperor?”
“Yes.”

Luke doesn't bother asking if he has a choice in the matter. He knows he doesn't. He knows his father would just get angry if he argued. It probably hasn't even occured to him that Luke might not want to be Emperor.

Luke swallows. “Why did you do that to Korkie? Do you realize what it will do to him?”

Vader looks at him. “He's weak if that is all it takes to break him.”

“Bullshit.” Luke hisses. “You did it to be cruel! You did it as a message to me!”

Vader is looking at Luke like he's a stranger.

“I refuse to discuss this if you're going to be unreasonable.” Vader snaps, and begins to walk towards the door.

Luke follows. He's so angry and sad he could tear this building apart with his bare hands. He grabs his Father's arm to stop him.

“Well, I've decided we need to discuss this! What really happened to Detlan?!" he yells. “Why are you doing any of this?”


“I will return once you've calmed down. I know this has been a difficult period.”

Luke strains against where Vader is holding hims motionless with the Force. “FATHER!” he
Vader looks back. “Rest, my son.”

He turns on his heel and then Luke is free. He collapses onto the floor sobbing.

He can't breathe. He doesn't know what to do. What can he do? Korkie will kill himself over this. Luke's sure of it.

He covers his mouth and tries to stop his breath coming in short gasps. But he can't. He can't stop crying. He doesn't know what to do. He doesn't know if there's anything he can do.

He feels someone gently pull him up onto his feet and guide him to the couch.

“It's going to be okay Your Highness.” Someone says.

Luke finally gets a breath in and looks up at an familiar face. The surprise and confusion of that is enough to break him out of his hysterics.

The man snaps to attention and salute. “Sergeant Darklighter at your service sir.” he explains.

Luke tries to smile at him.

Sergeant Darklighter's been on and off his security detail almost as much as Lieutenant Detlan, but Luke hasn't seen his face since they were kids on Tatooine. Luke grew up with Biggs Darklighter until the day his Father came and took him away. He's always know it was Biggs under that mask but seeing it is a completely different thing. It feels like home even as it makes him homesick for a place he hasn't seen in a decade.

Even if Biggs has never suspected that Luke is the same boy the ill-fated Lars' were raising on Tatooine.

Luke takes a deep breath and wipes at his face in embarrassment.
“I’m sorry about that.”

Darklighter smiles at him. “It's alright.” He glances at the other Stormtroopers who are spread out around the room. “None of us think any less of you for it. You're the only person anyone's ever even heard of who stands up to him.”

Luke swallows and looks around the room. “What happened with Lieutenant Detlan?”

Darklighter glances away.


Darklighter swallows nervously and wrings his hands.

“Vader asked for volunteers, to come and rescue you, after he heard you got arrested. Detlan was the first to sign up. When we got here we went straight to the throne room. Vader told us to wait outside and if he wasn't back in a few minutes to storm the room and come in shooting. Detlan said we shouldn't run in like crazy people so, when the time was up we filed in careful and quiet like. Vader was fighting the Emperor. And Detlan...Detlan all cool calm and collected drew his blaster and shot him right in the forehead.”

Darlighter gulps. “But, see, Vader had told us to come in shooting! Detlan was just following orders!”

Luke blinks up at him, the pieces falling into place. Vader hadn't wanted them to kill the Sith Master, probably hadn't even occurred to him that Stormtroopers would be able to. He'd been planning to use them to distract his master. Break his concentration.

It was a plan that probably would have cost a few of his trooper their lives, but Vader never cared about that sort of thing.

Luke stares down at his hands. “Oh.”
Darklighter bites his lip. “Do you...do you think you can do anything for him?”

Luke shrugs. “I'll try. But, I can't promise anything. Vader doesn't listen to me much.”

Darklighter nods. “I understand.”

He stands there awkwardly in front of Luke for a minute, before clearing his throat.

He toys with his helmet for a second.

“Is Vader really your father?” he asks finally.

Luke looks up at him and then looks away. “Yeah.”

“Oh.” Darklighter blurts out. He jams his helmet back on his head. “Right.”


Darlighter steps back into formation around the edges of the room.

Luke gets up and wanders around. These rooms are larger and more luxurious than his apartment. There's a huge bedroom, office and a refresher, not to mention the main sitting room he's standing in. There's a large transparasteel window that looks out over the City. Luke wonders who these rooms once belonged to and then quickly tries to bury that thought. Nothing good has ever come of the people who lived in the Palace.

He wanders into the adjoining bedroom and sits down.

He feels like crying again but tries to banish the feeling. That won't help anything.

Instead he decides to do some training.
If his guards think there's anything odd about holding a one-handed handstand until your wrist gives out they can take it up with Vader.

He lets himself flow into the Force. He feels Darklighter, and all the other guards. He senses his Father a floor away. The staff, the guards. There are bureaucrats on the lower levels, and people from the Holonet, and deep down in the depths of the palace: prisoners. He finds Lieutenant Detlan and tries to send him some strength and comfort.

All the while he senses the shadow of the Emperor.

He flows deeper into the Force. He senses the evil that happened here. All of it feels like the Emperor.

And then he feels something worse. Something new.

The Jeid purge. Terror, and resolve, and bravery and fear fear fear fear.

The younglings are screaming and trying to run and their master and minder is trying to shield them, but he can't fight and protect the younglings at the same time. The attacker is too strong.

The attacker is familiar. It's a face Luke has never known, a whole human body that he has never seen. But, he recognizes the way that black oily rage feel in the Force, the coiling snake of anger that you can't fight.

*Master Skywalker, there are too many of them, what are we going to do?*

Luke looses his balances and falls to the floor with a loud thump. A Stormtrooper pokes his head in. “You alright Your Imperial Highness?” he asks.

Luke nods, still gasping. He lays flat on the ground and stares at the ceiling.

The purges were led by Dark Vader. By Anakin Skywalker. *He was a Jedi.* Luke reminds himself.
They would have trusted him. They would have let him in. They would have thought...

He thinks of being young and frightened and Han asking ‘Does he hurt you?’

He had been outraged and incensed. The very idea of it had been inconceivable. He'd thought himself so safe. He been so stupid to think that.

He understands now what happened. Why the Jedi were so easily dispatched.

They trusted him. They thought he'd never hurt them.

Luke gulps and presses his hands to his eyes. He pictures the twin suns of Tatooine. He thinks about Shmi Skywalker. He is kind, and brave like her, he reminds himself.

Luke isn't dumb enough to think he doesn't have options. There are always options. Being around Korkie has taught him that if nothing else. Being around Korkie had also taught him that sometimes there weren't any good options.

He could probably stop this. His father is planning on making him the most powerful being in the galaxy. In theory anyway. It's not like that is something he can drag Luke kicking and screaming to enact.

The Empire is evil. Luke knows that. But, he also knows that Vader can't hold it on his own. He knows that the military higher-ups can't be trusted. That all they want is power, they'll fight the rebels and they'll fight each other and they'll never admit defeat.

Thousands will die.

If Luke is Emperor. If people accept him as Emperor. He can stop that from happening. He can make the whole war stop. The Rebellion. The slavery. The exploitation. Not all of it, probably. But, maybe just enough.

Theoretically anyway. He doubts Vader would let him.
He goes to the 'fresher and washes his face.

Yoda was wrong, sometimes there was no do and no do not, there is only try. And Luke has to try.

He goes back to the main room and rifles through the desk. He looks around on the tables.

The Stormtroopers watch impassively.

Finally he finds the comm tucked away near the very decorative lamp. He enters the frequency.

“Father!” he says forcing a smile. He knows how Vader prefers he act. “I've calmed down. I'm reasonable...and I've thought about it and I agree with you.”

“I am very relieved to hear it.” Vader replies.

“We'll need to talk though.”

“Of course my son. I will be there momentarily.”

Luke ends the call and puts the comm down. He takes a deep breath. Leia is a cliff that the sea breaks against. Han is sparking electric cords. Yoda is a scorching fire, and Obi-Wan is a cold deep river.

He lets the breath out. He squares his shoulder, he lifts his chin. You are Luke Amidala. Son of the Sith Lord Vader. He reminds himself. Your mother faced down invaders at 14. Your father is an unstoppable force in the galaxy. You can do this.

He pastes on a smile when he feels his father coming down the hallway. This is the right thing to do.
Vader comes back the next day. He feels agitated and unsteady somehow to Luke in the Force.

“The coronation is arranged for tomorrow.”

Luke stares at him. He can feel how uncomfortable his Father's presence makes the Stormtroopers. They're afraid. Afraid he'll hurt Luke. Afraid he'll hurt them.


Vader is surprised. “Good?”

“Yes, I've thought about it, and I realized how much good I might be able to do for the Galaxy if I were in charge.”

He can feel how pleased his father is with this decision.

Luke swallows nervously. “I'll need my things from the apartment.” he adds. “And I'd like to know that Korkie is alright. I'm worried about him.”

Vader inclines his head. “Very well.”

“And I was wondering...where's MT-9? Did you bring her with you when you came?”

Vader smiles behind his mask. Finally, this are going the way he'd hoped. “Of course. She's in my Medpod. You can go visit her if you like.”

Luke wears white to his coronation, and silver jewelry. It's ridiculous. There's no tradition of Emperors. This is a purely theatrical ceremony.

There's an air of relief among the few Imperial higher ups there to witness the ceremony. From the woman who did his makeup to the Governor of Coruscant everyone had assumed that Vader intended to seize power for himself or barring that that the Empire would crumble as the many lesser generals of the Fleet fought for control.

Luke is not taken seriously. He does not have their respect, but he is better than the alternatives and they're grateful for that if nothing else.

But, he is now the Emperor. He now holds all the power that was once shared by a thousand star systems.

Luke looks at Korkie who stands half propped up by his guard and listlessly staring at nothing and strengthens his resolve. He thinks of the lightsaber he's hidden with C-3T4 again. He has a plan. He's going to fix things.

He smiles at the cameras. At the assembled dignitaries and his Father who is lurking like an unwelcome shadow at the edges of the scene.

He accepts his duty and presides over a sumptuous banquet. Korkie sits next to him toying with the knife. Luke pretends not to notice when he slips it off the table and into his lap.

Korkie catches him watching and meets his eye defiantly.

Luke tries to force a smile.

Korkie frowns and reaches out to put his hand over Luke's.

He raises his eyebrows and somehow the question is clear. *Are you alright?*
Luke bites his lip and nods.

There's a ball afterwards and Luke manages to steal a moment with Korkie between the jockeying for favour of the people who are now his subjects, when the opportunity is take for a very long and dull recital of Imperial music.

Korkie still seems listless and it hurts Luke to see him like this. The prince of Mandalore who had been so full of resistance and fire for so long finally giving in. How had he put it when they first met? Knuckled under and crawling.

Luke stands next to his friend, smiles his Holonet smile and whispers. “I'm going to remove you from the blacklist that prevent you from going off planet. You should try and get off world as quickly as you can.”

Korkie's eyes dart to Luke's face but he doesn't turn his head. Pretending to be absorbed in the musical performance. “Vader will never allow that.”

“He won't realise I've done it until it's too late. And you need to get out of here before that happens.”

That makes Korkie turn and frown at the young Emperor. “Why?”


That makes Korkie while around bodily and grab Luke's arm. “What are you going to do?”


Korkie's eyes are bright and sharp again. He's focused on something. Luke doesn't care whether it's the prospect of vengeance or his escape or relishing in Luke's very likely and most likely imminent death.
Korkie takes a deep breath. Nods and turns back to the performance. “Thank you, Your Imperial Majesty.” he says loud enough to be overheard by those nearby. “You do me great honour.”

Luke smiles his Holonet smile again. “You are most welcome my friend.”

Vader watches his son greedily. He sees his own foolishness for what it is now. No wonder Luke never flourished in his isolation- His son moves through the crowd as naturally as a fish through water, blazing in the Force like a star.

He is so good it hurts Vader to use the Force to sense him.

Vader had been selfish before, trying to keep the universe from tarnishing his son. The Galaxy would benefit under his son's careful rule he is sure of it. Luke must sense his gaze because he turns and sends his father a soft smile.

Vader is right about the Galaxy benefiting from Luke's rule.

The first thing Luke does is call for a restructuring of the military to make it more efficient. Those officers with unusually high casualty rates, or complaints against them are relieved of their duties. Those who have glowing reports from their underlings are promoted.

Then there is the government itself Palpatine's stalwart loyal servants must be swept clear for new growth.

And of course the Inquisitors are quietly disbanded.

Vader hasn't really been alone with his son since the day before the coronation.
The Stormtroopers who guard Luke so fiercely are hesitant to allow it. They buzz around his son like flies and have forgotten to whom they truly owe their loyalty.

Finally after a long day discussing government restructuring, Luke meets Vader's gaze with a weary smile and falls in step next to him, the Stormtroopers who are his son's constant shadows flanking them both now.

“I was thinking…” Luke begins softly. “That we have not had the chance to spend time together like we once did.”

Vader pretends like he hasn't been obsessing over his son's reluctance to be near him, and instead inclines his head to show he has heard. “You have been busy, with your new duties.”


Vader would shrug but he's honestly not sure if he can. “As qualified as any,” he insists.

“I thought I could come sit with you in the Medpod like we used to. Just us and MT-9. Get away from all.” Luke waves his hand at the palace and the guards and his own formal outfit. “this for a little while.”

Vader nods. “I would like that very much my son.”

Luke flashes him a quick dazzling smile before he looks away. “Alright. I'll see you later.”

Vader smiles at his son across the Medpod. It's the first time they've been face to face as opposed to face to mask since Luke's move to Onderon.

MT-9 zooms over to him beeping delightedly. Luke tickles the bottom of her sphere. “What are you doing over here?” he asks. “Get back to work lazybones.”
With a remorseful buzz MT-9 complies and flies over to hover near Vader's head double checking his various drugs and medications that are dispensed through his life support.

Luke smiles back and then shakes his head. “I missed your face. It's good to see you again.”

It's a strange remark, from Vader's perspective. He hasn't seen his own face in years, but he doubts it's become any less horrific with the passage of time. But, then he remembers how frightened Luke had been when they'd first met. It had taken removing his mask to convince the boy that there really was a man beneath the armour.

Vader leans back. “I missed yours. Finally things are the way they always should have been.”

Luke bites his lip. “Did you always plan to make me Emperor?” he asks

Vader pauses to consider that. “When I became his apprentice I always meant to let Palpatine turn the galaxy against him and then throw him down.”


Vader pauses to consider that. “No.” He admits at last. “I never wanted to rule alone.”

Luke smiles sarcastically. “What good is a galaxy if you don't have someone to share it with?”

Vader laughs. His son isn't wrong. “I've always wanted to give those I love everything there is. Nothing wrong with that.”

Luke nods, hesitantly, and Vader reaches out with the Force to try and determine the cause of his son's unease. He's surprised by what he finds. Luke is shielding himself, or maybe has let down his shields for the first time, and Vader doesn't find the familiar sense of a blazing star but instead the cool quiet of a desert after dark when you can hear the Sabacc moving beneath the sand.

There's just enough time for Vader to feel suspicious and then things go dark.
Vader swims back into consciousness groggy and confused. He's surprised to find he hasn't moved. He's still in the Med-pod but everything feels muted and muffled. There's a pressure at his neck and he glances down to find he's wearing Force dampening cuffs.

Alarmed he looks up to meet Luke's cold gaze.

Luke is no longer sprawled carelessly across from him, but is sitting with his legs crossed and back ramrod straight both hands around a lightsaber handle in a white knuckled grip.

“WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!?” Vader roars hurt and betrayed. Instinctively he reaches for the Force to punish this betrayal but finds himself blocked.

Luke, if possible, tenses even further and grips his lightsaber ever tighter.

“I had to be sure that we could speak civilly-” Luke tries to explain.

“RELEASE ME THIS INSTANT!” Vader roars, throwing a hand out.

Luke flinches instinctively and then visibly gathers his resolve. He raises his chin, takes a deep breath and meets Vader's eyes squarely. “No.”

“How DARE YOU-” Vader begins to shout but Luke cuts him off with a voice like a cool knife.

“SILENCE!” Luke shouts back. “I am your Emperor and I was NOT FINISHED SPEAKING!”

Surprised more than chastened Vader falls silent.

Luke relaxes slightly and fiddles with the lightsaber. “I was hoping to have a civilized discussion with you about Imperial policy.”
“Where did you get that?” Vader asks softly, distracted for a moment, as his stomach lurches at the familiarity of the blade. He'd lost it on Mustafar to Obi-Wan, he had thought. He'd never expected to see it again, let alone in his son's hands.

Luke quirks his lips and there's something vicious in his gaze something that reminds Vader of the Alderaani princess staring down Tarkin and coolly replying: *The more you tighten your grip the more star systems will slip through your fingers.*

“Oh-Obi-Wan Kenobi gave it to me ages ago.” Luke explains, carefully enunciating the name that still feels foreign on his tongue. To him the Jedi Master will always be Old Ben, Hermit of the Jundland Wastes. “He wanted me to have something of Anakin Skywalker's.”

He meets his father's gaze with a challenge in his eye. Vader says nothing for a long moment. Anakin Skywalker is nothing now. Just an echo. Another ghost among so many.

“And why should you want some relic from a long dead Jedi?” Vader finally manages to ask, though he's lost whatever bravado he had mustered. He had not expected coldness. Not from Luke.

Luke's face tightens as though he's in pain. “I find this nonsense of assigning new names to the Jedi who fell awfully convenient as it absolves both parties of their guilt. Both the Jedi for their failure, and the Sith for their crimes. You are my father, you married the former Queen of Naboo in the lake country. You were raised by the Jedi and Obi-Wan Kenobi and you killed them all.” He holds up the saber hilt. “This was your blade.”

Vader feels his own regret and his son's anger at once. It is a strange disorienting feeling. Luke is not prone to anger.

“It would appear to me.” Vader finally struggles to say. “That it is yours.”

Luke smiles sadly and looks down at it. “No. To be a full Jedi you need to make your own blade. Isn't that right?”

Vader grits his teeth. He has chosen to ignore a great many things about his son but he is hardly going to sit and talk Jedi theology with the boy. Certainly not after he had drugged him with his own Medical droid and put him in a Sith-damned Force inhibitor collar.
“Why have you done this to me?” Vader asks again.

Luke glares. “I needed to have this conversation with you, and I needed to be sure that when we had it you wouldn't be able to hurt me.”

Vader's heart breaks. “All I've ever wanted was to protect you. I'd never hurt you.”

Luke rubs uncomfortably at his throat. “But you did.”

“It was an accident.”

“NO IT WASN'T!” Luke shouts. “I know something of the Force and you could not have done what you did unintentionally.”


“You have a habit.” Luke spits out, “of killing those you love, and I'm sorry, but I just couldn't take that risk!”

Vader is grinding his teeth in frustration. This is not what he envisioned! Not what he planned at all.

Is it though? The sardonic voice of his old master queries when he damn well knows the answer. What else were you expecting?

Vader doesn't know. He'd only thought that at last the only thing he loved would be in a safe strong enough to protect him from anything and that they'd be together again.

It just hadn't occurred to him that Luke would use the powers Vader had given him to try and protect himself from Vader.

Thinking on it now that seems the height of foolishness. Vader himself, after all, has been acutely aware of the danger he posed towards his son. Hadn't he hid Luke even from himself?
And Luke is not the sweet naive boy he found on Tatooine, young and frightened enough to forgive the murder of his guardians in exchange for love and safety and material possessions.

He is a man now, someone who has seen some of the ugliness that Vader always tried to hide him from. And looking at the young Emperor it's something Vader can't deny in the slightest.

Luke's face has lost much of it's roundness. He's lean and his shoulders have broadened. He is not a tall man, but he's reached his full height. He's faced down Vader, and the Emperor and Old Obi-Wan Kenobi. He's not a child anymore and Vader can't keep pretending he is.

“I'm sorry.” Vader says.

Luke twists the lightsaber in his hands. “You haven't even mentioned what I did to get arrested. I'm a Rebel. Surely you must realize that?”

“I do.” Vader finally admits. Grudgingly. He hasn't wanted to consider what it means that his son has trained with the Jedi.


“I have done something.” Vader finally admits. “I made you Emperor.” For all he hadn't considered it, hadn't wanted to consider it, he had to have known deep down that Luke would not be controlled once he was in power. That the goodness Vader so admired in him would not allow him to sit back and see to his own pleasure while Vader ran the galaxy for him. That he would object to much of the Imperial policy and to Vader's own actions and act to rectify them.

This is not a realisation, because he's always known it. It's an admission.

Luke stares at him blankly for a moment, and then leans back, relaxing slightly.

“So, you will calmly stand back as I unmake everything you've spent your life building?” he asks.
Vader can't find the words. He knows himself well enough to know that he can't promise that.

He had deluded himself into believing that somehow nothing needed to change between him and Luke. That Luke would be Emperor and any ugliness between them would be fixed or forgotten as they worked together to finally bring about the peace that the Galaxy deserved.

Luke makes a small noise of disgust in the back of his throat at Vader's long silence. “I didn't think so.”

“I will not be your puppet or your pawn. You made me Emperor so you will have to content yourself with my rule.” Luke declares.

“I intend to do things which I know you will not approve of. Things you will disagree with. I couldn't risk you flying off the handle and killing me before the work is done.

I have released Korkie Kryze to return to Mandalore. I have written an imperial edict which I intend to issue tomorrow which would ban the enslavement of sentient beings and release those prisoners held unlawfully by the Empire. I intend to the ban on the practice of the Old Jedi Religion.”

“The choice you have-” Luke continues resolutely. “Is to support or oppose me. You are my Father, I love you but I cannot let you kill anyone else.” he ignites the lightsaber. “I will fight you, if I have to. My Stormtroopers will fight you and we will win. If you oppose me, you will be imprisoned, kept collared and shackled as you are now.”

Luke closes the lightsaber.

“I have never known you to fight.” Vader remarks softly, shocked at the fire in his son's eyes when he speaks of protecting those he loves.

Luke blinks at him, eyes shiny with unshed tears. “No, I hate to fight. But I knew you'd never listen to me. I don't want to kill my Father with his own blade but-”

“That sword belongs to Anakin Skywalker.” Vader snaps. “Not to me.”
Luke looks like Vader's punched him in the face. He looks down at his sword. “I am the son of Anakin Skywalker.” he says at last. “Deny him, and you deny I am your son. And if that's the case, just who am I to you?”

He stands abruptly and turns to leave.

“You're my son.” Vader whispers.


Luke cautiously turns around.

“I'll help you.” he promises. “I'll help you do it all.”

Lurn swallows and blinks back tears. “You have no idea how much I wish I could trust that. But I can't.”

He makes a gesture and MT-9 flies down to unlatch Vader's collar. The Force rushing back into his senses hits him like a drug.

“So, you'll just have to spend the rest of your life proving it Vader.” Luke holds up the lightsaber. “I am the son of Anakin Skywalker and Padme Amidala.” he says. “This was my father's sword. If one day you find that man in yourself again, maybe you can have it back again. Until that day. You are my lieutenant, the man who raised me and I will not be alone with you again.”

With that Luke turns on his heel and exits the medpod, leaving Vader heartbroken and alone.

The Stormtroopers fall in behind him as he exits Vader's private quarters within the palace.
Luke strides back to his office.

It's strange he doesn't know what to do with all this...space. Despite his status he's spent most of his life confined to one room or another his movement carefully monitored and controlled, and when he'd been free he hadn't been living a life of luxury.

He sits down at his desk and carefully authenticates and signs the document he had prepared earlier that day and submits it to the official system.

He waves Sergeant Darklighter over. “Go down to the detention levels and pick up Lieutenant Detlan would you? I've just granted him an Imperial Pardon and I want him back on my security detail as quickly as possible.”

Darklighter snaps to attention and Luke can feel through the Force that he's grinning like a madman beneath the mask.

“Yes sir!”

Luke takes a deep shuddering breath in and out, pressing his palms down flat against the table. He feels the weight of his saber concealed in his sleeve.

He is Luke Amidala, Emperor of Known Space and he just put a Sith Lord in his place, and pardoned the man who killed the last Emperor.

He's not sure it's an auspicious start to his reign but it will have to do.

“And get my council in here! I want to try and contact the Rebels to negotiate an ceasefire!” he shouts to no one in particular, glad that his voice sounds sharp and decisive and not at all like the tremulous uncertainty in his soul.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry this is a little late! Easter got in the way of things! So Happy Easter to those who celebrate that!

Thanks so much to everyone who commented on the last chapter! It was greatly appreciated, and really brightened up my week.

I hope you all like this chapter as much as the last one! I'm pretty happy with how the Luke and Vader face off came out myself.
Interlude with Yoda II: Old Masters aren't in agreement.

Chapter Summary

Yoda and Obi-Wan have a chat.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Yoda is waiting. Which is not so strange, really. From a certain point of view he's spent the last twenty years waiting- for the universe to change and for things to be set right, but this is different.

Many days ago he had woken up and known- Obi-Wan is on his way.

Finally, he hears a ship lands and the soft cursing of a human trying to make his way through the treacherous marshy

Yoda waits for the old man (and the image of a young sardonic young man flickers before his eyes.. humans live so quickly) to crawl through the entrance into Yoda's hut before he speaks.

“Succeed, you did?” he asks.

He has never liked nor approved of Obi-Wan's plan.

“After a fashion.” Obi-Wan replies lightly.

Yoda levels a glare at the young creature (for the lives of humans are brief and even when they get old they are young).

“Either it did or did not. Equivocate on this you must not!” Yoda reprimands, still Grand Master of the Jedi Order, even if it is now only an order of two.
Obi-Wan smiles wryly and Yoda feels something pull and twist in his chest. For a moment The old knight looks like his younger self.

“Vader turned against his Master. Palpatine is dead.” Obi-Wan explains.

“Good news this is. Rejoiced the Rebels must have. This sounds like success but more there is to the story?” Yoda presses.

Obi-Wan winces. “He has crowned Luke as Emperor.”

Yoda whacks Obi-Wan with his gimmer stick. “If lost my young apprentice is, If fall he does, blame you I will! A dangerous risk you took- a risk without asking.”

Obi-wan rolls his eyes. “I gambled. And now we have only one Sith left.”

Yoda scowls. “Two there are,” he reminds Obi-Wan. “Always two.”

Obi-wan does not look convinced. “You should trust your apprentice.” he councils. “I found him to be a most singular young man.”

“Got us into this mess, leaving the fate of galaxies to singular young men did! A foolish hope, it is to do it now.”

“It was always a foolish hope. And surely that is better than no hope at all.” Obi-Wan suggests sagely.

Yoda shakes his head. “Wrong it was of you, Obi-Wan, to use my apprentice so”

Obi-Wan is unrepentant. “We all choose to serve something greater than ourselves when we become Jedi.”
Yoda whacks him with the gimmer stick again.

“The old ways speaking, that is. Changed the galaxy has, and change the Jedi must with it. Choose his own path Young Skywalker should. Agreed on this many years ago, we did.”

Obi-Wan huffs. “I don't see what you're complaining about, my plan worked didn't it?”

Yoda smiles grimly. “After a fashion.”

Obi-Wan winces.

Chapter End Notes

Short Chapter is Short. Sorry about that.

Good news, Han and Leia will be back next chapter! (which will be a full looong one).

Bad news: I've burned through my pre-written chapter buffer and said chapter is, as of now, still incomplete. So, it may be up Saturday, it may not, I'm pretty busy right now and haven't had time to write as much. But if it's not up by Saturday i will post it pretty much as soon as it's done.

Really Bad News: I have been informed that someone may have copied parts or all of this story and re-posted on Ff.net under the same title. If that is the case it was done without my knowledge or permission. If you come across that in your travels could you drop me a link to the page so I can check it out myself? I've taken a quick look and so far have not found anything (so fingers crossed it's a false alarm!) but if any of you guys know about this I'd appreciate a link so I can see for myself whether it's actually something I need to do anything about or whether it's just a repost or coincidence or what. Thanks.

Anyway, hope you all like Yoda's sass. Sorry for the long author's note and lack of main characters in this chapter...
Chapter Summary

The Rebel Alliance and the new Imperial regime edge towards peace. Leia and Han reunite with Luke. The truth comes out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Leia, Han and Kenobi all sit and watch the Imperial Coronation together. None of them say it but they're all waiting for the moment when Luke jumps from the platform into an open cockpit speeder and flies away to freedom.

None of them can quite believe what they're watching.

Leia is distantly impressed by the pageantry of the affair. There's some stylist in the Core who should be getting a raise for the visual language they've created here. Everything about the ceremony distances Luke from the old Emperor while maintaining the Imperial aesthetic in the most tasteful and beautiful way imaginable.

He wears blinding brilliant white (not black), and drips with white gems and silver jewelry (unlike the Emperor Palpatine's unadorned neck and wrists), while still somehow keeping the lines of his outfit clean and minimalist. His head is uncovered (Palpatine went deeply hooded from the day the Republic fell until the day he died) and his youthful handsome face is projected on screens thousands of feet high all across the Empire (in contrast to the old Emperor's wizened, and usually hidden deformity).

When the crown is slowly and reverentially lowered onto Luke's brow Han lets out a pained high-pitched squeak.

“T've fucked the Emperor.” he moans. “Do you think that's treason?”

Leia laughs and smacks his arm. “Only if his Father finds out.”

Obi-Wan looks like he's sucking a lemon. “You know I was there when he was born, I really do
Leia looks at the prudish Jedi incredulously. “Luke's old enough to rule known space but not enough to have sex?”

Obi-Wan covers his ears. “He's old enough to do both but I'd really rather prefer to pretend he's not doing either.”

That startles a laugh even out of Han.

The Rebellion is at a lull. No one's quite sure what to do now that the Emperor's dead... well, the Old Emperor now, and it will take them a long time to get used to that idea. They'd all held their breathes in the days after that news hit, waiting to see if the Empire would fall apart on it's own without him. Now that it's become clear Vader will manage to hold it together even without Palaptine, the Generals have begun to meet to talk strategy once more.

There's not much to do though, it all depends on what the Empire's next move is.

Obi-Wan clearly thinks that Luke will somehow manage to talk the notorious mass-murdering Sith Lord Darth Vader into an armistice and governmental reforms.

Han seems to think Luke's just waiting for his moment and will try and make a break for freedom any day now leaving Vader without a figurehead to hold the politically delicate state together.

Leia's not so optimistic. She's afraid that Luke is lost. Whether willingly or not, he will continue the terrible work of his predecessor and with his Father at his side, continue to subjugate the galaxy.

The Fleet is recalled back to the Core by Imperial Mandate in order to put military restructuring into place.

It's not a good sign but it's definitely not a bad one either.
So the Rebellion keeps up its relief drops and its smugglers runs and keeps waiting.

It's announced there will be a review of the protocol of hard labour sentencing and a release of political prisoners from the old regime.

The Rebellion doesn't trust it, not yet, but some of them are cautiously hopeful.

Then the news comes that no one can believe: The Emperor himself is requesting a ceasefire in order to negotiate a lasting peace with the Rebellion.

Obi-Wan doesn't actually say 'I told you so'. But Leia is assuming that the Force Sensitives in the three surrounding Galactic quadrants wake up in the night in a cold sweat with the iron-clad certainty that Obi-Wan Kenobi was definitely correct about something.

It is decided that the Naboo, traditionally neutral, and whose Queen, though technically aligned with the Empire, has made no secret of her personal distaste for the new Emperor, would provide mediators for the negotiations which are to be conducted on a Space Station in neutral territory with the Emperor himself in attendance.

When she hears that news Leia doesn't bother trying to talk Han out of coming. He'll be useless and quite possibly detrimental to the peace process, but Leia figures that any peace fragile enough to be endangered by an ill-mannered Corellian smuggler with a proclivity for bedding royalty is probably not worth having anyway.

Besides whittling down the guest list is proving difficult enough as it is. No need to add a pouting space pirate to the mix.

So, Han comes along, mostly for the ride, and in no official capacity and proceeds to have a complete meltdown over what he should wear when the Imperial delegation arrives.

Leia lounges on her bed and internally laughs at the impossible man who, for reasons inexplicable even to herself, she has come to love while he fusses over how to achieve a look that says 'loveable scoundrel' without actually making him look like a criminal.

“It's been a long time.” He reminds her for the fifth time as he goes through all the clothing he packed for the twelfth time. “It's not that I want to impress him or anything. It's just...it's been a
long time.” he finishes lamely.

Leia smirks and examines her nails and then glances up. “If you're saying you don't want him to think you've let yourself go, I'd wear the jacket not the vest.”

“Hey! I'll have you know I get lots of compliments on this vest!!”

Leia rolls her eyes. “Do they go: That's a nice vest but it would look better incinerated?”

Han scowls at her and clutches his chest. “You wound me, Princess.”

Leia laughs and flops backward onto the bed.

“You can take it.”

Han pouts. “See, I don't know if I can.”

Leia smirks. She needs to start doing her hair soon, it wouldn't do for the last princess of Alderaan to arrive at negotiations anything less than perfectly pressed, but she's enjoying the free show.

“Wear the black leather jacket, and that pale blue shirt.” she suggests.

Han looks at the shirt dubiously. “I'm not sure about that Princess. I got grease stains on it, plus I don't know that blue's my colour.”

Leia laughs and sits up again. “Then just wear whatever's nicest and cleanest. You don't want to look like you're trying too hard do you?”

Han wags a finger at her thoughtfully. “You've got a point there princess.”

She stands up and steps behind him sliding her hands up under his shirt and running them along the
planes of his chest. She rests her head against the middle of his back.

“Remember,” she reminds him softly. “It's been a long time, and things have happened to all of us. He was dragged back to the Core against his will.” She kisses Han between his shoulder blades. “He won't be the person you remember anymore.”

Han goes still beneath her touch for a moment.

“I know.” He admits.

“Alright.”

He turns around so she can kiss him on the mouth this time. “I just don't want you to be hurt or disappointed.” she reassures him. "I'm sure everything will go just fine."

He grins his roguish grin. The one he can't manage to contain every time she admits to her feelings for him.

He kisses her back.

“Hey,” he teases. “I'm a hardened criminal sweetheart, you don't gotta worry yourself that I might have a tender heart where my ex is concerned.”

She smiles wryly, hoping he can't read her trepidation beneath it and stands up on her tiptoes to kiss her on the cheek. “I know.” is all she says.

She turning to leave when he calls after her. “I do love you.” It's sounds like a consolation, there another word that hangs unsaid at the end of that sentence, one Leia hears anyway.

Too.

I do love you, too.
Love you as well.

Leia won't acknowledge it and so long as he doesn't act on it she's alright. He's loved her since Hoth she reminds herself.

This would be more comforting if she didn't know he'd been sleeping with an Imperial Prince at the time.


The young man who has been a strange shadow in her life since the day they met.

She fixes her hair, puts on the traditional diplomatic white royal robes of Alderaan and wanders into the conference room to see how the Naboo are doing.

What she sees makes her wish she'd learned more of the Force from Obi-Wan if only so she could strangle someone and make it look like an accident.

“Why do you have that here?” she all but shrieks seeing the DNA reader laid carefully on the table in front of the Queen's chair.

The Queen turns to greet her, serene under her makeup. “It is important to establish trust in a negotiation, so that all parties know they haven't been duped by frauds or imposters.” She picks up the device gracefully.

“All important negotiations on Naboo begin this ways.” She informs Leia earnestly, one Royal to another.

“Other planets don't use decoys like way the Naboo do!” Leia snaps. “Do you understand the insult you would be paying to the Emperor by demanding you check his identity like this?”

Particularly, Leia can't help but think, since the Queen had used a very similar device to humiliate
and demean a younger and less powerful version of the same man. Leia hasn't forgotten it, she knows Luke hasn't and looking at the determined calm of the young Queen's face she doubts the Queen of the Naboo has either.

This is a studied slight masquerading as a cultural misunderstanding.

Leia snatches the DNA reader from the Queen's white painted hands.

The Queen looks unimpressed, as though Leia is someone else's toddler who has chosen to throw a tantrum at an inopportune moment.

She holds her hand out. “Give that back.” the Queen commands, and her handmaidens shift in response, ready to act.

“No! You are sabotaging these negotiations out of petty spite and personal jealousy!” Leia shouts.

Han has wandered in, no doubt looking for her, and is giving her that besotted love struck look he usually gets whenever he sees her verbally or physically attacking someone.

Leia's partially convinced he first fell in love with her when she blasted an escape route into the wall of the Death Star.

She strides over to him and shoves the DNA reader at his chest pricking her palm on the needle as she does so. She hisses at the sharp sudden pain but otherwise doesn't say anything.

“Get this out of here would you?” she demands. “I need to be sure this laser-brained piece of nobility doesn't damn the galaxy.”

Han smirks, and gives here a lazy salute. “Will do Your Worship.”

He throws a wink at the Queen who looks fit to combust with rage. “Your Majestical-ness” he says with a nod before leaving.
“I am meant to be acting as mediator–” The Queen begins to argue.

But Leia rounds on her. “You are meant to be facilitating these negotiations to be as peaceful and un-insulting to both parties as possible. Now you are either purposefully trying to derail these talks or you are incompetent. I'm sure this mistake is due to ignorance rather than malice, so you shouldn't be insulted that I corrected it..”

The Queen looks taken aback and it sounds like some of her handmaidens stifle giggles.

“Of course, Your Highness.” The Queen finally replies though it seems like it physically pains her to do so. “Thank you for your help.”

Leia bares her teeth at the woman. “It was my pleasure.”

Luke arrives flanked by guards, government officials, advisors and at least one person whose sole job seems to be managing Luke's wardrobe. Only Luke and a very few number of his selected advisors will be attending the negotiations though, and Luke alone has final say on what they Empire agrees to.

It's much the same in the Rebel camp, there are dozens of hangers-on who couldn't be kept away: Han and Obi-Wan are only two exampled. But, as to the negotiations themselves only Mon Mothma, Ackbar and Leia will attend. Though in the end the burden of choice fall to Mon Mothma.

After all this is more negotiations for a ceasefire than anything else. Their aim is to determine how the broad strokes of how a peace could be achieved. The minutiae of such a reality will come later, if it comes at all.

Luke looks very like the exaggeratedly Imperial Prince that had swept into the hangar bay, and very little like the slightly rumpled young man with soft eyes who Leia had played Dejarik with on that space voyage which feels so long ago.

He's wearing a bright red imperial uniform which contrasts with the white of his storm trooper's armour and the white uniforms of the Rebellion, and the clean economical design set him apart from the determined oppulence of the Naboo.

It's a very tidy bit of work, even if red isn't Luke's best colour.
He looks hard and cold in a way he hadn't before. She's glad Han's not here suddenly, and that's surprising... she would have thought after all that fuss about getting dressed this morning that he would have managed to weasel his way into being present for the Imperial arrival.

Luke smiles stiffly at the assembly of Rebel Generals and hangars on, and manages to not glare at the Queen of the Naboo who looks like she could bite his nose off without that smile slipping one bit.

Luke twitches when Leia has that thought and looks at her reproachfully.

She's surprised. He must have gotten stronger in the Force since they last met to have heard that.

She smiles back at him and winks.

His gaze stays cold.

The negotiations are a trial.

“The first thing that I need before I can even consider moving forward is an immediate ceasefire, and an end to all attacks against Imperial forces.” Luke begins.

“Given the abuses of Imperial troops I hardly think that is-” Leia protests.

“I have begun withdrawing the Fleet back to the Core but I can hardly in good conscience continue to do so if there's to be a complete breakdown of law-and-order on every planet they withdraw from. The previous regime systematically crippled many planet’s independent governing systems and it's the Imperial occupation who has been over-seeing such trivial details as infrastructure, education and policing. History has taught us that such moments as these can be very dangerous for all involved. It needs to be a transfer of power not a collapse, and that entails a delicate situation unique to every planet, which cannot be achieved if the Imperial forces are constantly fending off attacks from Rebels!”
“That absurd how can anyone trust you-”

“I will not budge on this issue of attacks against Imperial troops. We're in peace talks. The Fleet is being stood down. Any further attacks are just egregious and unnecessary loss of life, not to mention a pointless provocation by the Rebels.” Luke states.

"I hardly think that's fair-" Leia shouts back- and so it goes all day.

Leia is in her element jumping on every misspoken word from Luke or his advisors, savagely ripping apart their arguments with carefully marshaled facts and statistics.

It quickly becomes clear that Luke has come to these negotiations with no intention of conceding any points that interfere with his goals of a peace as stable and lasting as he can manage.

“There is no question of restoring the Republic.” Luke bluntly declares, as he looks at the three Rebel leaders like they've suggested he try ruling from the Millenium Falcon. “That's absurd.”

“So you have no intention of restoring democracy-” Leia jumps in, ready to attack.

“I have no intention of resurrecting the bloated rotting corpse of a system that made a mockery of the word. No. The very idea is laughable.” Luke actually laughs at them. “Ridiculous. My government is already at work drafting a new constitution that would create chambers for elected representation, however the Senate is dead, and may it stay ever so.”

“The Republic stood for freedom and democracy!”


“But what about JUSTICE?” Leia demands. “What about reparations and settlements and-”

“For the crimes that have been committed there can be NO JUSTICE!” Luke snaps. “The Dead are still dead, the world's decimated, depopulated and destroyed still ash. I will not waste my time
trying to undo what cannot be undone or turn back time. My only thought is to continue onward. In
time perhaps there may be a war-crimes tribunal but I am Emperor not judge or jury and it would
not be for me to decide anyway. That is the past and the future. I am speaking of the present of
what actions can be taken NOW, this MINUTE, to alleviate suffering throughout the galaxy.”

“I think the Emperor is right.” Mon Mothma chimes in quietly derailing Leia's argument.
“Reparations and settlements are long term options which the Emperor is hardly qualified to make
decisions on for the species affected. But, I believe a war-crimes tribunal sooner rather than later
would be an important step to showing the galaxy you mean to make a real change to how things
are done.” she tells Luke.

Luke doesn't look happy with that suggestion. “All of us here know that the courts are a shambles.
And most of the more blood thirsty Imperial officials have already been dealt with by Vader during
the coup and if they survived that then they have been removed from office.”

“But they have not been held accountable for their crimes.”

Luke nods and gives a small gesture as though to concede the point. He turns to the Nabooan
Queen. “Please note that the Empire agrees to Trials for War Criminals as a condition of the
peace.”

He turns back to Mon Mothma. “Are there any particular names you want included or shall it be a
matter of comparing Imperial records and Rebel ones to name the culprits?”

Leia sits up very straight and levels an intense look at Mon Mothma, who inclines her head ever so
slightly in understanding.

“The main issue is seeing Vader brought to trial for the bloody swathe he's cut across the galaxy.
He's also one of the few sentients involved with the creation and deployment of the Death Star who
is still alive.” Mon Mothma

Leia holds her breath certain that Luke will balk. That he will refuse and cause a scene.

Luke freezes like he's been punched, and the he looks like he might be sick. She sees him struggle
to swallow.
“I don't know if that's...possible.” He finally rasps out. “Vader, as I'm sure you know, is responsible for my being on the throne, and is probably the only thing keeping a number of Imperial Elite from rising in open revolt or taking their funds and resources and heading into Unknown Space...”

Leia tries to contain her rage. “This is a matter of principal! Any war crimes trial that does not prosecute Vader will be little more than a sham and play no greater role in the galaxy than street theatre for the masses.”

Luke blinks once at her and then murmurs to his aid. “Table this point for further discussion at a later date.” He looks up at Mon Mothma. “You're right about Vader, but it would destabilize my government too much to remove or arrest him at the moment. Given that it will probably take a number of years to get the courts into an uncorrupted enough state to even begin these trials, and that by that time the new constitution will be in place rendering these events outside of my jurisdiction, would you be willing to have that particular issue tabled until such a time as it is actually possible to hold such trials?”

Mon Mothma nods and the discussion moves on.

Hours later, completely exhausted Leia stumbles back to her room planning to collapse into bed only to find that Han is pacing the room like there are fire bugs in his britches.

“Leia!” he rasps when he sees her.

“Han? Where were you? I thought you wanted to show Luke how hot you still are and how completely uninterested you were in anything to do with him?”

Han's eyes are too wide. It's a bit disconcerting.

“I did but uh...something came up and he once told me I had some of the loudest thoughts he'd ever encountered. Actually, we should go find him. Now. Yeah. Let's go now.”

He's bolted for the door before Leia can do more than blink in confusion.

“What-?”
She goes after him hating that with their difference in height she needs to run to keep up with his sharp pace.

“Han, what are you on about?”

He gives her a wide-eyed mildly deranged look that shuts her up. Whatever this is that needs the immediate application of the Imperial Luke, it’s serious.

Luke's door is guarded by two Stormtroopers.

Han puts on his best charming rogue swagger and grins down at them. “I'm an old friend of his Highness and-

“Majesty.”

“What?” Han flounders, taken slightly aback.

“You are referring to his Imperial Majesty. Show the proper respect.” The Stormtrooper corrects him.

Han looks and Leia who stifles a grin and puts on her diplomatic face.

“Please forgive him, he's a little rough around the edges. Actually, he's meant to be a surprise for His Imperial Majesty- I believe they knew one another slightly before his move to Coruscant. I thought it might be a nice break for the Emperor if they were reintroduced.”

The Stormtroopers glance at one another and there's a murmured conversation over the comms.

“You are approved entry.” one of the informs them.

After a beat where they do not move away from the door Leia asks. “Aren't you going to let us in?”
“Not until an escort arrives.” One of them explains.

Another Stormtrooper rounds the corner and falls in behind them. Then and only then do the Emperor's guards step away from the door and allow them an audience with the Emperor of Known Space.

The rooms are hardly up to Imperial levels of opulence. This is after all a disused space station put together for these talks. The room in small with just a desk, a bed and a bit of storage.

Luke is sitting on the bed in soft undyed cotton pyjamas. He sort of smiles at them and waves. He grins when he catches sight of their escort.

“Feen! You don't need to escort them, I'm sure the last princess of Alderaan would never stoop to try and assasinate me in my bedchambers.”

“It's regulation sir. These aren't sanctioned guests. They aren't secure.” The Stormtrooper, Feen, replies.

Luke waves him off. “I know them, and if I'm in the slightest bit of peril I'll scream and you'll all burst in and rescue me, I'm sure I'll manage to fight off the pair of them long enough for that to happen.”

“But, sir-”


The Stormtrooper salutes sharply and leaves.

Luke looks exhausted. Leia wonders just what it costs him to maintain the the serene uncrackable mask of the Emperor.

“So, what brings you here? Not that I'm not happy to see you...it's just unexpected.”
Leia shrugs and gestures to Han. “Ask laser-brain here. He's the one who got all in a tizzy over this.”

The smile drops of Luke's face and he scowls at Han. “So help me, if you're here because you want a threesome or have decided to declare undying love for one or both of us I will have you shot.”

“No!” Han sqwawks and holds up the DNA scanner that Leia had handed him earlier that day.

Leia remembers handing it to him. The prick on her palm. She connects the dots and snatches it away. Sure enough, the results are there, and they are damning.

**DNA- Comparison- Leia Organa-Luke Amidala**

*Match: 50%- Full Sibling*

Leia sinks slowly to the bed.

“IT seems you're twice royal Princess!” Han babble bordering on hysterics. “It's a mistake right? It's got to be a mistake! I mean, there's just no way it could have happened...logistically!”

“What is he on about? Leia? Leia! Oh give me that!” Luke grumbles scrambling across the bed to grab the scanner from Leia's numb hands.

His eyes flick over the information.

He looks from her to Han and then back again in bewilderment. “Is this some sort of prank? What's the punchline here?”

Han shrugs in a parody of innocence. “I have nothing to do with this! This is all” he waves his hands between the two of them. “Your business. Thing. Whatever.”

“Why do you even have a DNA scanner in the first place?” Luke mutters confusedly. He rolls his
eyes and turns to Leia. “What's Han on about?”

“The Queen of Naboo brought a DNA scanner-” Leia starts to explain.

“Of course she did, didn't she?” Luke says bitterly.

“and while I was taking it away from her I accidentally pricked myself and since it was set up to confirm your identity it-”

“Compared yours with mine.” Luke finishes for her looking alert now, he sits up straight. “And given these results, either the Queen of the Naboo was part of a plot to discredit me and my rule or...you're my sister.”

Luke glances at the screen and then carefully examines every aspect of the devices outer shell, and power source.

“There's no sign of tampering.” he concludes. “I say we do the comparison test again.”

They try it again. The results are the same.

Luke looks a little manic and wide-eyed. “It can't be right.” he mutters frantically pressing buttons.

“That's what I said!” Han chimes in unhelpfully. “She's a princess of Alderaan and you're ma died right after you were born right? Logistically it's just impossible.”

“Well...” Leia chimes in hollowly. “Not exactly. I was adopted into the Royal House of Alderaan. My parents were infertile and I was a War Orphan, it was a symbolic public gesture on my parent's part.... and my father was good friends with Padme Amidala...”

Han shakes his head. “No. No! Because if you were Padme Amidala's daughter and your father was her friend why wouldn't they have taken Luke too? Huh? 'Stead of shipping him off to Tatooine to be scooped up by Vader, why wouldn't they just leave him with you and raise him a royal? Huh?” He taps his foerhead emphatically. “THINK, Princess! It's impossible! But you know what's not? An assassination attempt! A coup! The Queen of Naboo is clearly up to
something and like it or not we've landed smack dab in the middle of it.”


Han crosses his arms. “Oh, yeah? Pray explain your Exhalted-ness.”

Luke massages his head. “It's not much of a plot if it can be scuppered by Leia holding to proper galactic protocol now is it? If there's one thing I trust about the Queen of Naboo it's that she's smarter and more cautious than that at least. I'm quite sure that if she was plotting to over throw me she'd come up with a better plan, if nothing else.”

Leia picks up the DNA scanner from Luke's lap. “There's nothing for it. We'll just have to retest on different equipment.”

Luke snorts. “Or we could ask the man who multiple sources have confirmed was present at my birth, and who happens to be sleeping a couple hallways away and ask if he remembers whether my Mother had one baby or two.” He waves his hand. “Simple. If we don't trust what he says then we risk raising suspicions tracking down DNA scanners.”

Leia nods. “Kenobi. Of course. You really think he would lie to both of us?”

Luke shrugs. “Maybe. I've barely seen him since I was a kid. It's not like it'd take much work to lie to me.”

Han seems caught between incandescent joy at finally having something major that he can blame Ben Kenobi for and the deep and all consuming terror of what this information, if true, could mean for him and the galaxy at large.

He barrels towards the door intent on retrieving the old space wizard this instant.

“Don't be an idiot, Han!” Luke snaps. “Though I know sometimes you can't help it. We don't want to rouse suspicions, remember!!”

Luke gets off the bed and ambles over too the door. He takes a deep breath and schools his features
into the expression Leia's seen him wear most often on the Holonet.

He opens the door and peaks his head out.

“Feen, could you run and get General Kenobi for me I'd like a word. Thanks you. And may I borrow someone's comm-link for a moment? I have a call I'd like to make. Thank you, I appreciate it very much.”

He shuts the door clutching the comm-link.

“Ben should be along in a minute. It may take Feen a little while to find him.”

Han keeps pacing. “I dunno if we should be bringing someone else into this. I mean, what if Luke's not the target here? What if the aim is to discredit the princess? Connect her to Vader and the Empire and all that?”

Leia face melts into one of complete horror. She thinks she's going to be sick. She'd forgotten about how Vader would fit into this.

“I think we can trust Ben not to spread vicious rumours.” Luke remarks. “He doesn't seem the gossipy type.”

Han glares. “It's not a ridiculous suggestion!”


Leia can feel the edges of Luke's mind, It is like a hurricane it's in so much turmoil. The kind of desert sandstorm that strips flesh from bone.

They sit in silence while Han paces the room.

“It's alright you know.” Luke finally murmurs to her.
“What is?”

“The fact that you're hoping it's not true. If I were in your shoes I wouldn't want it to be true.”

“It's not about you.” She tries to explain. “It's about Vader.”

Luke snorts. “It's always about Vader. If he's not doing something himself than everything's happening because of him. People always either want to kill me or kiss my ass. Han slept with me because of Vader and he left me because of him as well, did you know that? Korkie's probably the only person I've ever met who doesn't give a toss about my Father.”

“Hey!” Han protests softly. “C'mon kid, it wasn't like that...”

Luke glares at him. “Wasn't it?”

Then there's a knock on the door.

“I have Obi-Wan Kenobi for you, Your Imperial Majesty.” a voice calls from the other side. Luke sits up.


Kenobi enters.

Leia and Luke glare at him with eerily similar expressions. Han scowls.

“What is this about?” Obi-Wan asks nervously.

Luke opens his mouth but Leia beats him to it. “Did Padme Amidala die giving birth to twins?”
Obi-Wan blinks and smiles warmly at them. “Ah, so you know. I suppose it's to be expected that you'd work it out eventually. Good.”

Leia stares in shock. “That's it? That's all you have to say for yourself?”

Obi-Wan shrugs. “What more is there to say?”

“You lied to me!” Leia reaches over and entwines her fingers with her... her brother. And what a strange wonderful, joyous thought that is. “To us! For the entire time we've known you.”

“I hardly lied.” Obi-Wan sighs. “You have to understand. There was never a grand plan to unveil your identities, we had hoped to spare the pair of you from the pain of knowing who your father was. The man who was your father is as good as dead, he fell to the darkness and was consumed. All that remains is a monster.

When you were born, the Republic and Jedi Orders had just fallen. Your mother was dead, and your father had killed her along with hundreds of other. Those of us who survived long enough to gather, among them Bail Organa, who became your father, Leia,... we didn't know what to do. We were afraid that Vader or Palpatine might see you as future threats to their own power or worse-tools to be used to increase it. You had to be hidden. So we hid you.”

“You separated us!” she accuses him.

“Two babies would have been more conspicuous that one.” Obi-Wan explains.

“But putting a baby of the right age and name with the only living family of said homicidal maniac. That's not conspicuous.” Luke mutters.

Obi-Wan sighs. “Your mother gave birth on a remote Space Station. Her funeral was very public. The secret that her children had not died with her was one known only to 3 souls. There was no reason to think your Father would ever suspect anything. So barring his return to a planet that he left as a child and returned to willingly only once and under the terrible circumstances of his mother's death, we had every reason to believe you would be safe there and I accompanied you to protect you as much as could during your childhood.”

Luke does not look impressed. “But, after, when we met again as adults. On the Death Star. We were both, there! Why keep us a secret from one another and...just... why?”
Obi-Wan swallows and glances around the room. His eyes fall on Han and he frowns. “Does he have to be here?” he asks pointing.

“Yes!” Leia snaps. “You were saying?”

Obi-Wan sighs. “You are both very strong Force sensitives, not to mention twins and in that moment- with Anakin lost, the Order dead, and the Republic fallen you seemed like the only hope we had. We thought that it would be better to separate you; that way if one was discovered or betrayed the other wouldn't be.”

“Once that was decided Bail immediately offered to take Leia in. He was very close with your mother and had been planning to adopt anyway. And I felt that I owed it to your parents to see at least one of you raised by family. The Nabberies were out of the question, Padme's pregnancy and death having far too widely known for that deception to hold for long, but the Lars' were an anonymous family on a half forgotten planet. So, I took you to them.”

Leia understands. She doesn't like it. But, she understands. He, and those others who had made the choice had been trying to juggle the needs and well-being of two infants against those of the entire galaxy.

She always knew she was adopted and with that, comes the idea that there's a biological family out there she never knew, but it had never mattered who they were. She had never lain awake wondering about them. The mystery of it didn't bother her. The family she had had, the one she lost with Alderaan, they had been enough.

“And what was your plan? You came with me to Tatooine. Were you going to train me as a Jedi and send me to kill my father and the Emperor?” Luke demands to know.

Looking at the way Luke's physically trying to hold himself together, Leia can't help but think, that whatever family he's had, they haven't been enough. Maybe Obi-Wan is right, and his aunt and uncle would have been enough, but he lost them when he was so young, and for all these long years all he's had to hold onto has been the memory of them, and the knowledge that Darth Vader was the only family he had in all the galaxies.

“No. The Order fell because we did not change while our enemies did. It was decided that you would only be taught the Force if you sought us out to do so.” Obi-Wan explains.
Leia nods. It's all perfectly reasonable and actually a bit kinder than what she'd expect from the Jedi. It also explains the strange connection she's always felt with Luke, and Obi-Wan's own eagerness to teach her the ways of the Force despite her indifference.

She finds she respects the man more now that she knows he let her give up those studies despite what they must have meant to him with Luke in the hands of the enemy.

Luke licks his lips and opens his mouth, but then closes it and looks away.

“One to royalty and one to poverty.” he murmurs in a sing-song sort of voice. “It would've been like a fairy tale if things had gone to plan. Shame Vader found me and ruined the symmetry of the thing”

Obi-Wan huffs out something that from anyone else might have been a laugh. “Yes, it rather is, isn't it? I think it still works: The freed-slave who marries a Queen and falls to evil, and his twin children raised in different worlds on different sides of the conflict he started?”

Han is frowning at Obi-Wan and looking like he's going to punch him, or blast him and is just deciding which would be more satisfying.

“You know, for all your wisdom Old Man. You don't know a damn thing, do you?” Han snarls with all the rage of someone who's only got four people he loves and is currently watching two of them try not to cry.

Obi-Wan shrugs. “That, of course, is entirely a matter of perspective.”

Leia bolts unsteadily to her feet the information whirling around in her mind and two discordant litanies pounding incessantly against her temples, a war between something like relief and horror.

She embraces the old Jedi. “Thank you for letting me have my family.” you are not alone anymore, he's there, he could be your family, you are not alone you could have a family again.

Obi-Wan smiles sadly at her. “I'm only sorry that you lost them.”
“I need... I need to go” Vader, Vader, your father is Vader. He killed your mother, and he would have killed you, they had to hide you. Evil, you come from evil, your twin was raised by it you were lucky to escape it for as long as you did but you can't anymore

“Wait, Leia!” Han calls after her following her out of the room.

Luke stare at Obi-Wan for a second and then dismisses him with a wave. “Just go. Please.”

Obi-Wan nods and heads towards the door. He hesitates before crossing the threshold. “I would have thought this would be good news for you Luke. Please, respect the Princess, and keep her secret. Don't tell your father.”


Obi-Wan obliges.

Luke curls up on his bed and enters a comm frequency.

“Uh...is the peace conference over already?” Korkie asks once he picks up.

Luke shakes his head. “No. I- I. Where are you?”

Korkie tilts his head to the side. “On a job.”

“Oh, well never mind. I just.”


Mutely, Luke shakes his head and puts a hand over his mouth. “How soon do you think you can get here? I'll reimburse you for the job, but, I need...I'm going to fall apart and I don't want it to be during negotiations.”
Korkie presses his lips together till they almost disappear. “Give me an hour. Probably less.”

Luke blinks in surprise. “You just happen to be working a job less than an hour from the peace talks?”

Korkie makes a face. “Fine. So I was worried about Rebel-nutjobs. Sue me.”


Korkie shrugs. “Yeah, nothing says sweetness like being in position to thwart a kidnapping attempt. Sit tight, and don't do anything stupid till I get there.”


He ends the call and goes to the fresher to wash his face. Slightly more presentable he returns the comm to Feen with instructions that Prince Korkie is to be immediately allowed in the moment he arrives.

That completely he curls up on the bed, and does as instructed. He doesn't do anything.

He dozes off until he hears the sound of the door opening. Luke sits up, scrubs his eyes and looks at Korkie forlornly.

“Shit.” The Mandalorian hisses as he drops his helmet on the floor. “What happened?”

Luke blinks back tears and shrugs. “Turns out I have a twin sister. The Jedi hid her to and she grew up safe, and protected and happy, with everything she could ever want and-and she...she-” his voice breaks and Korkie practically leaps onto the bed to hug him.

“It's okay Luke. You're going to be okay.”
“I know. I know. This is stupid. It's good news after all. I shouldn't be upset about it. It's beneath the way of the Jedi! I should be better than this!”

“No. It's not stupid. Shh... You'll be alright.”

“I'm not alright!” Luke yells and Korkie hushes him and glances nervously towards the door. Luke swallows back how much he was to scream and yell and wreck things. The last thing they need is the bodyguards bursting in because they think Korkie is trying to murder him.

“Just tell me what happened. Explain what going on.” Korkie insists.

Luke takes a deep breath. “My mother had twins. A girl and me. The girl was sent to a rich family on a wealthy Core world. They changed her name, the parents were friends of my mother's and the Jedi. She was adopted. And me? They sent me to my aunt and uncle on Tatooine. One of the poorest planets in the Rim and I lived with Moisture farmers and I had my Father's name and he found me and that's hardly a surprise is it? I had his name and I was living with what was left of his family...and I can't help thinking that somewhere along the line someone decided one of the twins was disposable.”

Korkie freezes. “What?”

“The Jedi. They must have decided to put me in the obvious place so that if my father ever did come to suspect a child had lived he'd find me and that would be that. My sister would be safe for the rest of her life.” Luke sobs. “If they'd wanted to hide us both surely they could have put me anywhere else, with anyone else and he'd never...he'd never have-” he trails off. He loves his Father, but he's not so blind anymore that he can't see how his life would have been better if he'd never met him.

Korkie pulls Luke into an embrace and crushes him to his chest. His armour isn't exactly conducive to hugs but neither of them are complaining.

“I'm not saying you're wrong.” He whispers fiercely, because the idea that anyone would decide that Luke was somehow lesser infuriates him. “But if they thought you were weaker, that you would break, or that it wouldn't matter if you went darkside. They were wrong. You've lived through a shit time of it, and I would kill your father for free if you asked-.”

Luke glares at him
“But, I won't! because along with deciding to look after unstable Mandalorian royalty you also have room in your heart to forgive your psychotic father and that is why they were wrong if they thought you were weak. I was raised by warriors and pacifists. I know which is harder and you are tougher than any other being I have ever met.”


“Whatever. And maybe it's happenstance that you're you and she's her, but c'mon. Would you trade places with her, really? Even if it meant giving up those twin suns you draw on everything and I dunno...all those visits to the Hyperdrome?”


Korkie shrugs. “What? It's not like our friendship happened during a particularly psychologically healthy time for either of us! I have to work with the materials available!”

Luke sort of laughs and wipes at his eyes. “She got to live free and I was...locked up and it's not fair.”

Korkie sighs. “It sure as shit was not fair. But, right now, it means that you have a sister you didn't before and I thinks that's good. Do you like this girl? Is she someone you know?”

Luke nods. “She's a friend of mine.”

“Well, that's something.”

Luke leans on Korkie for a quiet moment. Finally he whispers. “You're right.”

“I am?”

“Yeah. I wouldn't trade places with her.”
Korkie smiles to himself. That's the Luke he knows. The one who chose to befriend a Korkie, not despite his instability and violence, but because of it, because Luke had seen Korkie was drowning and had walked out after him with no thought to the danger that Korkie might take him down with him, when no one else had been willing to risk it.

Korkie nods. “That's good. ‘Cause you can't.”

Luke makes a sound halfway between a snort and a sniffle and ends up getting snot on Korkies armour.

Korkie can't help it, he bursts out laughing, which isn't quite enough to crack Luke up but he does offer Korkie one of his brilliant blinding smiles, the one that lights up a whole room and that the entire galaxy fell in love with.

Korkie may have as well, but that's neither here nor there or relevant to anything at the moment.

Han finds the Princess pacing their shared rooms.

“What was that about?” He demands. “You okay Princess? I've never seen you lose it like that. Except at me when you threaten to kill me or kiss Chewie or whatever.”

Leia scowls and keeps pacing. “I'd forgotten.”

Han blinks. “About...?”

“Vader. For a minute there I'd forgotten that being Luke's sister means being Vader's daughter.”

Han clicks his tongue. “Aaaah. Yes. That would probably be upsetting.”
“Probably?” Leia bellows hurling a pillow at his head.

“Okay definitely. But, it's not like you have to deal with him, if you don't wanna. Luke can keep a secret. I think we both know *that.*”

Leia sits down on the bed with a thump and picks up another pillow to hug to her chest in lieu of attempting manslaughter with it.

She rests her forehead against her fists.

“Maybe that would be for the best.” She muses. “To just...pretend this never happened and we don't know what we know.”

Han makes a sound of disgust and when Leia looks up he's got his arms crossed as is looking at her very disapprovingly. It's kind of a funny look coming from a man who wanted in at least 15 star systems.

“That, is the sort of unkind thinking I was hoping not to hear from you, Your Highness.”

Leia cringes. He only gets her title right when he's actually cross with her.

“You're letting your notions about Vader determine your actions towards Luke. Like that piece of work Queen from Naboo. Only she *actually* hates Luke, but you *like* him. You were as thick as thieves on that trip we took gabbing like a coupla gossipy grandma's over Dejarik.”

Leia pauses, and tries to push aside thoughts of Vader and Empire and what this information could do to her own career and thinks of Luke, with his very blue eyes and his gentle smile. The way he played the game like it was easy and was so pleased with himself when he managed to fool the hangar-guards with his Imperial Prince routine.

It seems so long ago now, though it's not really. She was right when she told Han Luke would be changed, but it's not as though he's a completely different person.
Han blinks and then goes to lean against the wall. “You know, Luke was raised on some tiny dustball in the outer rim called Tatooine by his aunt and uncle. They're dead, Vader killed them when he found Luke. Did you know that? He's got all these little habits and beliefs he tries to hold on to so he won't forget them or Tatooine.”

Leia looks up at him. Had she known that? It would be quite the thing to forget. “Oh.”

Han rolls his eyes. “Yeah. Oh. He likes the desert for some weird reason, but he's got a thing for plants and water the way you expect a kid from a desert planet to. He loves X-wings with a pure and deep passion. He can't hold his liquor. He's good a fixing droids and mechanics and shit. Likes to read up on it. Or he did. Back when I knew him. Not to mention he's just about the nicest person you're likely to meet in this life.”

Leia forces a laugh. “You make him sound like a real stand up guy.”

Han shrugs. “He's not perfect. But, I'd consider myself lucky if one day out of the blue I found out I had family half as good as he is. The pair of you have more in common than you think. The two of you could be good for each other. You both deserve to have a family. And he deserves a hell of a lot better than Vader.”

Leia takes a deep breath and rises gracefully to her feet

Han's right. Luke does deserve better in a family than Darth Vader. There are a number of murderers who deserve better than Darth Vader.

“You're right!” She declares "I've already lost enough because of Vader. The galaxy has already lost enough because of him. I already lost my brother once, I'm not going to let kriffing Vader make me miss out on getting to know him not that we've found each other again. ”

Han bursts in a grin and slings his arm over her shoulder crushing her in a one-armed embrace as he kisses the top of her head.

“That's what I'm talkin' bout Princess! With an attitude like that the pair of you will be telepathic within the month!”

He slings his arms around her shoulders and draws her in for a kiss.
She pulls back and smiles at him. “You're a scoundrel.” she teases.

He grins unrepentantly. “Aw, your worshipfulness, don't pretend you don't love it!”

“So long as you promise not to pretend you don't have a thing for royalty.” she vows with mock solemnity.

Han laughs. “I would, but who would trust the word of a scoundrel like me?” he asks pulling her closer.

Leia laughs and stands on her tiptoes to kiss him again.

He's an impossible infuriating man, but she loves him anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, writing the stuff with Leia and Luke is proving to be some of the hardest dialogue in this entire fic. Probably because their dynamic here is so different from the OT.

Anyway, hope you like the reveal! As to update schedule, for the foreseeable future I'm going to shift to a once weekly update on Tuesdays, so I can try and get ahead of things.
Chapter Summary

Leia talks to Luke trying to reconcile their pasts, their families and to find common ground.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The talks go on and during the moments when they're not too busy arguing to forget what they've learned, Luke and Leia stare awkwardly at each other like bantha's frozen in the lights of an oncoming speeder. Which of them is the bantha and which is the speeder is a matter up for debate.

Han accompanies Leia to visit Luke in his rooms the last night of the conference. The Stormtroopers are still in place outside the door, which swings open with a bang when they're still a couple feet away to reveal a tall thin man a bit older than Han with white blonde hair, wearing what looked like a partial suit of Mandalorian armour and a particularly aggravated expression.

His eyes land on Han immediately. He frowns and purses his lips. “You must be the smuggler.” he glances at Leia and raises his eyebrows. “And the Princess is with you.”

He glances between them. “Well, that explains a few things.” he mutters to himself.

Han scowls, confused and angry to be confused. “Maybe, but it doesn't lend us a clue as to who you are.”

“I should think that was obvious.” The blond man sneers. “I'm Luke's Mandalorian.” He steps out of the doorway. “And he was hoping you'd stop by.”

Leia walks past him with a smile and a small nod which he returns.

Han receives a blistering glare and a disapproving head shake.

Luke's sitting at his desk this time, still in the outfit he wore to negotiations. Unlike most of what
He wears it isn't modeled on the Imperial military uniform, and instead looks like what might result
if ostentatious Nabooan finery managed to mate with Imperial minimalism.

He looks more exasperated than exhausted today, which Leia takes to be an improvement on the
last few days. Perhaps his Mandalorian has done him some good.

Luke glances up at her and then his eyes flick behind to Han and Korkie facing off like a couple of
disgruntled cats.

“That's Korkie Kryze, by the way, former Imperial Prince of Mandalore. Since he didn't feel the
need to introduce himself.”

Leia wonders if Luke had caught her last thought, or if he was just used to people being too
overawed or overwhelmed to actually ask him the obvious question anymore.

Leia glances over to where Korkie has broken off the staring match to sit primly on the edge of

“They don't need to know who I am.” he snaps at Luke who rolls his eyes at Leia in exasperation.

Leia swallows and looks around. “Former Prince of Mandalore?” she asks.

Korkie swears affirmatively and Luke grins at him. “He's officially renounced his title and returned
to life as a private citizen. Something I've been trying to encourage the rest of the Princes and
Princesses to do, but...well some refuse to budge despite persistent Imperial prodding.”

“Fat leeches the lot of them.” Korkie snarls.

“Well, not everyone has the skill set to start a promising second career as a bounty hunter after

Han catches Leia's eye looking somewhat alarmed.
Leia stifles a grin.

Luke sighs and smiles nervously at Leia. “I'm glad you came by. I thought about going to see you but—” he nods at the Mandalorian currently watching Han with a sharp assessing gaze and gestures towards the door to indicate the stormtroopers. “I thought the cavalcade might be unwelcome even if I wasn't.”

Leia smiles. “I appreciate that.”

Han makes a noise of affront. Luke and Leia turn to see him watching Korkie disassemble his blaster as though the Mandalorian is butchering a puppy.

Leia sighs. “What is it Han?”

Han extends a shaking finger. “He's disassembling a custom Vimarh's Revenge blaster! You know how many credits those things cost? And he's destroying it!”

Korkie rolls his eyes and deftly slots all the pieces back together. “It's only destruction.” he drawls. “If you don't know how to put it back together.”

“Stop antagonizing him, Korkie!” Luke snaps. “AND Don't pretend you didn't do that on purpose!”

Korkie smiles smugly. “You can't prove it.”

“I'm a Jedi, and an Emperor. I don't need to prove it because I know and have the power to have you executed without trial!”

Korkie bares his teeth. “I think I liked you better before you were either of those things.”

“I've been a Jedi the entire time I've known you. The fact that you only learned about it recently doesn't change that.”
Leia massages her forehead. “Could the Mandalorian and the Nerf-Herder get lost? I want to talk to-” she hesitates and glances at Luke who is very studiously examining the stitching on his shirt. She suspects he's bracing himself for rejection. “- my brother.” she finishes finally. “Get out. I want to talk to my brother.”

Han seems incensed and insulted. Korkie is eying her sharply, considering her.

He snaps the last piece of his blaster back into place and forces an unconvincing and mildly threatening smile.

“Sure, Your Royal Highness.” his gaze moves to Luke. “Holler if she tries anything. The Stormtroopers are itching to prove their efficiency after that assassination attempt.”

Luke snorts. “That was hardly an assassination attempt! He didn't even make it into the palace!”

Korkie scowls. “Don't make light of it. You could have died.”

“Hardly.” Luke scoffs. “But, even so, Korkie, you need to remember: it's not the Rebels who want me dead these days. I'll be fine. Now, listen to the Princess and get out.”

Korkie snaps off a salute and heads towards the door. Han opens his mouth to argue with them but Korkie snags him on the way and tows him out.

Leia struggles not to laugh and turns to Luke to share the joke but he looks solemn, and sad.

He meets her gaze and then looks away. “I appreciate you coming, but there's no obligation here. You don't owe me anything.” he mutters. “I'm not some charity case you need to pity, no matter what Han has told you.”

Leia blinks. She's not sure what she was expecting but it wasn't that. “Oh, yeah. Because as ruler of known space everyone's constant pity must get pretty grating.”

“I'm sorry.” Luke tries and fails to smile at her. “It's not you Leia. It's just...what this means for things I used to think were true.”
Leia nods. “I understand. I think...I think I feel much the same way.” she tentatively reaches out and when he doesn't shy away she takes his hand.

“You're my brother. My twin brother who I didn't even know I had. I'd like us to have some sort of relationship, Luke. We don't have to be siblings if you're uncomfortable with that. But, I'd like us to be friends.”

Luke looks like he might cry, takes his hand back and wraps his arms around himself. “I'm sorry.” he apologizes again in a small voice. “It's just hard. To deal with all this. And, well, almost everything you know about me you must have learned from the Holonet or Han. The Holonet is lies and...I don't know what Han told you and-” he looks away and sighs.

“He knows things that no one else does.” he finally admits. “He could paint me in a very bad light, depending on how he chose to spin it.”

Leia sighs. “He wouldn't do that to you Luke.” she says gently. “He wouldn't tell your secrets.”

Luke shrugs. “Probably not on purpose he wouldn't. When we first met I kissed him because I was sure that whatever else he might do he wouldn't laugh at me for it, but...it's been a long time. Things may have changed.”

Leia tries to keep from smiling. “You know, I spent 20 minutes helping him decide what to wear on the first day of the talks? He didn't want you to think he was...I don't even know what he didn't want you to think...that he was the worse for having broken up with you, I guess.”

Luke rolls his eyes. “We weren't ever even really together.” he tells her. “He'd just come around every few weeks and we'd have sex and he's stay with me for a few days. We never made promises. He was just...my friend, probably the best friend I've had.”

Leia pauses to consider the question she's about to ask. “Did you love him?” Because he loved you. Loves you.

Luke looks at her and she has the distinct impression he can see right through her bravado to all her insecurities and uncertainties about Han and her place in the Rebellion, not to mention the universe.
“I think so.” Luke answers. “I'm not sure. Love's a tricky thing for me.” He smiles sadly at his sister. “I don't have much experience with it except for Vader.”

She bristles at the name but bites her tongue. She didn't come here to talk about Vader.

“Are you angry he left you?” she asks instead.

Luke suppresses a smile at her obvious attempt to steer the conversation away from their father.

“No. I understood then and I understand now, it's just...” He trails off thinking.

“It hurt, for him to leave because of Vader, and the Rebellion and my Imperial connections. I know that's not the only reason he did what he did. I mean, I always knew he was half-in-love with you and that didn't really bother me.

But, he was the first person who ever cared about me and looked out for me just because they liked me and not because I was a member of their family or an obligation or something. It didn't matter to me whether we ended the romantic part of our relationship. I just needed my friend and I guess, he just didn't think he could do that.

I was too young and inexperienced to realize that was at the heart of things at the time, but I get it now. He loved me, but not enough and he didn't want to lead me on out of pity or use me for my connections. He cared about me too much to purposefully mislead me. Even after everything, he was still the first friend I'd had in years, and I'll never be able to pay him back for helping me after-” he draws up short and looks at Leia in alarm.

“Did he tell you about that?”

“About Vader trying to kill you? Yeah. It came up a time or twelve. There was a Rebel briefing.”

Luke looks smug. “I knew he was reporting back to Rebel command!”

“He only did it the once, when he picked you up from Matao.”

The lapse into uncomfortable silence.

Luke clears his throat awkwardly. “I know we don't agree on a lot of things...and, if we're going to be..." he hesitates. "siblings, you need to decide right now whether that precludes a relationship because...I just don't want to have what happened with Han happen again.”

Leia raises one delicate brow. “I can assure you I have no desire to have sex with you.”

Luke puts his head in his hands. “Please don't joke. My best friend, my mother's family and my own people all rejected me because of who my father is and the part I play in the Empire, and that was before I became the Emperor. I don't want to start to trust you only for you to decide that you can't stand that and leave.”

Leia leans back to look at Luke. “You don't think very highly of me do you?”

Luke blinks up at her. “What are you talking about? I admire you more than almost anyone else I've ever met.”

Leia swallows. “So, why would you think, that I have any less to lose than you do in this moment? When everyone I ever met or had a connection to was blasted into dust by the Emperor?”

Luke takes a deep breath. “Because...because your family may be dead but so is mine. And you have more than one friend, and less than a thousand enemies. Because you have people who love you and you have your conviction and your ideals if all that fails.”

“You don't have ideals?” Leia teases.

Luke sighs and smiles a tiny bit. “The only thing I believe in is peace. I'm a pacifist. Like Satine Kryze.”

“A Pacifist Jedi? Bit of an oxymoron isn't it?”
Luke laughs. “No more than a royal crusader for democracy.”

Leia has to concede his point there.

She purses her lips. “And what does your Mandalorian think of having a pacifist Imperial lover?”

Luke gapes and glances around before leaning in to hiss. “He's not my lover!”

Leia gives him an appraising look. “Do you want him to be? Because I think that door is open.”

Luke sputters in a very satisfying manner. Leia smirks.

There’s another uncomfortable silence. “Are you really going to have a new constitution drafted and yield your power to a democratic body?” she asks softly.

“Oh, course.” Luke replies in blunt surprise. “Why wouldn't I? If I keep my current position than I actually would have to rule the galaxy till I die, which, honestly why would anyone want to do that?”

It’s Leia’s turn to gape. “How are you even real?” she wonders.

Luke pulls a face at her. “That same way you are.”

There are things Leia desperately wants to know. Questions she’s dying to ask. But, she knows she shouldn’t. She knows that for all that she is greedy to know her brother, she hasn’t yet earned his trust or his secrets. Maybe one day, but not yet.

She smiles at him. “I’ve never had a brother before. Based on this experience I like it.”

Luke looks like he’s trying to hide his feeling. “Did you have sisters then? On Alderaan?” he asks mildly.
Leia shrugs. “Sort of.” She feels excitement bubbling in her brain like she hasn't felt in years. It's been so long since she could talk about her homeworld in any context other than lamenting it's loss, and that's not how she want to remember it. That's not how she wants her brother to think of it now that she's got the chance to teach him.

She has a brother and he's real and he's here, and he's sweet and kind with the sort of whip sharp intelligence that looks at problems from the side that no one expects. She remembers what Han had told her about him- about Luke not the Emperor or the Prince, but Luke the person: he likes plants and deserts, he loves X-wings and mechanics, he can't hold his liquor and plays a mean game of Dejarik.

“Sort of,” she repeats, trying to contain her excitement. “Winter and Neena. We grew up together. They were younger then me. Not officially adopted but part of the royal household and under my parents protection, and both far better at being princesses than I ever will be.”

Luke is staring at her with very wide sad eyes.

Leia falters and reaches out with the Force. Her brother's mind is not so tumultuous as it was the day they found out the truth about their birth, but it's still a whirling troubled mass of emotions- sadness, and anger and grief.

She's upsetting him, though she's not exactly sure why. She hates that she keeps hurting him without meaning to.

“Did you have siblings? I mean, I know you were raised bu your aunt and uncle initially, I mean, our aunt and uncle, but did you have cousins?”

Luke shakes his head slowly. “No. I've always been on my own....” he trails off clearly trying to think of some part of his life happy and innocuous enough that he can share it with her. “There was a pack of other Moisture Farm kids that I hung around with...but, that was a long long time ago now.”

Leia doesn't know what to say. What is there to say? Talking to Luke is comfortable, and feels natural enough that it's easy to forget the huge gulf of time, space and experience that separates them.
Leia has never thought of her life as particularly easy. Privileged, yes, obviously, but easy? No.

But looking at Luke, the farmboy kidnapped and raised by the most feared man in the galaxy, the pacifist manoeuvred into being the head of a military war machine, the thoughtful shy young man forced by circumstances to never be alone?

Compared to that Leia's life has been very easy.

“I'm sorry” She apologizes. “That was thoughtless of me. To ask that.”

Luke shrugs. “You're curious. It's...nice. I guess. It's not your fault that there's almost no common ground between us and even fewer events in my life that we can talk about without one of us getting upset.”

Leia winces and tries desperately to think of something they have in common. “Han Solo!” she finally blurts out. “We have him in common!”

Luke rolls his eyes and tried to stifle a grin. “I'm pretty sure we've already discussed him.”

Leia tries to think of something else. “I hear you like X-wings?”

“I head you don't.” Luke replies, struggling now to contain his laughter.

There's another long pause.

“The Force?” Leia finally suggests.

Luke turns to look at her. “You are trained as a Jedi.” he notes.

She grimaces. “Not as a Jedi, but I did train with Obi-Wan from time to time. Until I tried to hit him with a chair.”
Luke laughs. “I trained with Yoda.” he tells her. “I don't know whether he's better or worse than Obi-Wan. I didn't know Ben that well even before I left Tatooine.”

“Ben?”

“Obi-Wan. On Tatooine he went by Ben. He lived out in the Jundland wastes. We thought he was a crazy old hermit and some people thought he was a wizard.”

That makes Leia laugh so hard it takes her a minute to catch her breath. “That is priceless. You'd never know he spent twenty years sitting in the desert with the he acts with everyone.”

“I'm guessing he was the same on Tatooine. You can take the Jedi out of the Temple but you can't take the Temple out of the Jedi. Why? What's he done since he joined the Rebels?”

“Well, right after you were ransomed back to your dad, there was an incident with Admiral Ackbar...”

After that things get easier. They sit together and talk for the rest of the night. When the conversation lags one or the other of them gets it going again with a tale of Jedi nonsense.

It's fun. Leia can't know for sure what Luke feels, but to her, sitting there with him, and the comforting feel of his presence in the Force, it seems like she found a piece of home that she's been missing all her life. It doesn't replace the ones she's lost but it's a comfort all the same.

She hopes he feels the same

Chapter End Notes

Skywalker Family Communication 101: When in doubt make fun of Kenobi.
IN PURSUIT OF PEACE

Chapter Summary

Vader takes some time to think about what he's done, and tries to repair his relationship with Luke.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vader knows that Luke got back from the peace talks yesterday evening, but he hasn't come to see him yet, and it's troubling him. Not that he wants to admit that.

They have not spoken much since the unpleasantness in the med-pod over Luke's plans for the galaxy.

Vader has been tormented by that conversation ever since it happened. He has never wanted to harm his son, it's never been his intention. But he keeps doing it.

It's a pattern in his life.

He did not intend to fall to darkness. Or betray the Jedi or the Republic.

Or kill Padme.

But he had. He'd done it all. Luke's scorn over Vader's name had sunk in deep and he found it more and more difficult to preoccupied with the life of Anakin Skywalker. After all, if Vader is not the man that Anakin became than what is he doing with the man's son?

And Luke. Perhaps Vader needs to admit that he has almost always been Anakin with Luke, always treated the boy as Anakin would have.

Which means he must also admit that Anakin had also been Vader the entire time, no matter what he'd wanted to believe as a younger man. Anakin had had a rage and a temper that sometimes could not be controlled.
He thinks of what he'd done to the Sandpeople when he'd found his mother.

Yes. Anakin had always had a dangerous sort of rage, and Vader has gotten into the bad habit of letting it run wild.

The memory of Luke's frightened face and the white-knuckled grip he'd kept on the lightsaber when they'd talked comes to mind.

Vader grits what's left of his teeth and tries to think of something else.

He can't. Kriff it. He just can't.

Anakin had been good with children once. Padme's nieces had adored him and the younglings at the temple had worshiped him and Snips-

His stomach lurches. Ahsoka. How long has it been since he'd given more than a passing thought to his former apprentice?

Years. Maybe decades?

They had been close, once. He'd loved her like- not a daughter. He can't say that now that he has Luke and he knows what it truly is to be a parent. But, like a sister, a friend. He'd loved her as much as Obi-Wan at least. Needed her.

If she had only stayed--

The flush of anger is familiar, but the instinct to push it away is not.

He can't blame Snips for giving in to the same exhaustion and disillusionment that had consumed him. He may have lasted longer, but she had managed to turn away from the Jedi without a body count.
He wonders if Luke would have liked Ahsoka. Whether they would have been friends or siblings if they'd had the chance.

He smiles to himself beneath the mask. Luke probably would have found Ahsoka too loud and too brash if he'd known her at the age Anakin remembers her.

It hurts. Thinking of that. A fresh sharp pain unlike the loss of Padme or the betrayal of Obi-Wan those wounds are old and so achingly all encompassing that the loss cannot be felt all at once, but this, this small grief that Ahsoka and Luke will never meet. That is something that Vader can feel.

A Stormtrooper walks into Vader's office filled with a resolve not to show fear and informs him that His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor Luke would like to discuss the peace summit with Vader and would now be a convenient time?

Vader nods and waves him out and wonders why Luke bothers to ask. As Emperor it's not like Vader can refuse him and as his son it's not like Vader ever would.

He supposes it's politeness, though where Luke picked that up remains a mystery.

Luke enters with his bodyguards, 4 in all, three Stormtroopers and C-3T4 trundling along at the rear.

Luke's wearing something that, if you look past how devastatingly fashionable it is, is really just a very cozy bright blue robe thrown over something that looks suspiciously like pyjamas.

It's funny. Luke is careful about how he looks and is perceived and has a certain flair for fashion that reminds Vader of Padme. But unlike his mother Luke occasionally just really doesn't care what clothes he's wearing and will never sacrifice comfort or his ability to move easily to the gods of fashion.

Luke flops down to sit in the chair across from Vader. He looks worn. Vader doesn't like it, but knows he has lost the right to say anything.

“How was the conference?” Vader asks.
Luke shrugs. “As useful and productive as can be expected given the circumstances. Terms of a ceasefire were agreed to, and the basis for a treaty which should be drafted and signed within the month.”

“What did you agree to?”

Luke hesitates. “That's actually what I want to speak to you about. One of their demands was public trials for crimes committed under the old Emperor's regime—which I agreed to. They were particularly eager that you should stand trial- which I did not agree to.”

Vader feels ice in his veins.

“For what crimes?”

Luke shrugs. “They were non-specific, but I doubt they'll have trouble finding something- there are rather a lot to choose from.”

Vader swallows. Luke has judged him, he can't say that he's enjoying the experience.

“So if you refused why are even mentioning it?” Vader asks.

Luke sighs and puts his head in his hands. “Because, though I agreed to the trials, it will take time to put the tribunals in place, and by then the constitution will have been drafted and it may no longer be in my power to prevent you being brought up on charges. So, I'm telling you now so you can be prepared should that day ever come.”

Vader pauses and hesitates to reach out with the Force so as to understand exactly why Luke is telling him this. He's afraid he won't like what he'll find.

“Understood.” Vader drones with a nod. “Anything else I should be aware of?”

Luke studies his mask for a minute, perhaps trying to parse the reaction, or bracing for one.
He leans back abruptly and attempts to look unconcerned. “Not much. Nothing military. Some of the Rebel leaders will be appointed to my privy council. Some of their lower ranking but more well-known members will joining my court. And the Old Jedi religion is no longer illegal and it's practitioners have received blanket pardons.” he waves his hands. “Symbolic gestures, and politics. Aside fro the Jedi pardon there's nothing to interest you.”

Vader narrows his eyes at his son behind his mask. “You don't have a privy council.”

“They will be appointed to my newly formed privy council, I suppose I should have said.”

“And you haven’t so much as acknowledged the existence of the court since you were crowned.”

“That's technically not true anymore, now is it?” Luke replies blandly.

Vader wishes he could sigh. “It's very big of you, to legalize your own Jedi practices.”


The conversations stutters to a halt. They stare at each other.

Luke opens his mouth to say something thinks better of it and then closes it.

“Luke-” Vader begins, because there are things he needs to say. Things he needs to try and make right. But Luke bolts abruptly to his feet.

“Anyway, the Former Prince of Mandalore is an official member of my court as well, he'll be coming and going between bounty hunter jobs, so keep an eye out for him would you? And be sure to duck if he tries to shoot you.”

Vader makes a complicated noise in his throat that his vocoder mangles into incomprehension.

Luke stares at him in blank confusion.
“I've known Korkie since he was child afraid of breaking rules. It would take more than he is capable of to slow me down.”

Luke's gaze goes cold. “Careful Father, he may surprise you. After all, you have a history of underestimating people.”

He turns on his heel and walks out, flanked on all sides by the his guards.

Vader watches him go wistfully. Anakin Skywalker would never have let someone he loved leave like that. But then, it was that sort of inability to let things go that led to everything going wrong in the first place.

So, Vader tells himself consolingly, really this is progress.

It's not much comfort if it is.

The days cycle on. Obi-Wan appears and disappears, sometimes on the Holonet, sometimes in person. Vader pretends not to see him in both cases. Luke seems as cold and uncomfortable with him as he with with his Father which gives Vader a certain vindictive pleasure.

His path doesn't cross that of his old master in the time that he is there. He's grateful for that he thinks.

Luke's privy council is formed with the Rebel leaders sitting in pride of place. The court fills with thinkers and radicals and artists. Luke still doesn't have much to do with any of them other than a few favourites.

It's rankles Vader that one of those favourites is the Rebel Alderaani Princess who was such a thorn in his side.

There's her and the Mandalorian Kryze, and a handful of criminals and confidence men who swagger and smile and charm.
He's surprised that Luke enjoys their company. They're all so different from him—loud and chaotic where Luke is quiet and calm.

Luke visits, mostly to talk politics or to ask for updates on the Military which Vader still runs. His guards always stand sharp and at attention by the door their eyes fixed on Vader. They hate him, Vader can feel it.

That he raised Luke has been widely known for a few years now, but rumour has gotten out about why Luke made the acquaintance of a certain infamous Corellian smuggler, currently a member of the Imperial court and bodyguard to an even more Infamous Royal, and it has made Vader even more unpopular with the public.

Luke smiles at him sometimes now, and Vader is always careful to try and be the best version of himself when his son is around.

But it's hard. Luke has so many people now and it seems impossible that given a choice he would ever spend time with a monster like Vader.

But Luke is bright enough to relight the stars so he does not forget his father, even if he does not forgive him.

He still visits and they make stilted conversation Imperial policy and it's not like it was, but it's better than it's been.

Sitting across from him in horribly awkward silence makes Luke miss his Father more than he ever did when he was lounging on a beach on Onderon and hadn't actually clapped eyes on the man for over a year.

He smiles sadly at his Father once their business is complete and stands up. “I don't suppose you want to come to the Hyperdrome this afternoon?” He asks hesitantly, knowing it was a terrible idea but wanting it anyway. He misses his father. He misses their old camraderie and the easy alliance they had held against the world.

As much as he hated to even think about the life he had led confined to his quarters for years at a time, *that* was one aspect of those days he couldn't help but look back on with a tender sort of nostalgia, even though he knew that even in those days the love he had felt for Vader had been
laced with wariness and fear.

Vader is inscrutable as always behind his mask as he looks up at Luke. Finally he shakes his head. “Thank you my son, but I believe I would ruin the day.”

Luke nods and gets up to leave. Vader's not wrong.

It's not any particular occasion at the Hyperdrome, no special occurrence other than the presence of the Emperor.

Luke tilts his face towards the sun as he stands in his viewing booth at the Hyperdrome. Leia is to his right with Han next to her. He likes the Hyperdrome. It's one of the few places where he can be the Emperor without BEING the Emperor. He just sits in his box looks a bit regal, and chats with his friends in between trying not to scream too much abuse at the drivers during the races.

It's nice. Probably his favourite place on Coruscant.

He's standing to make the gesture for the race to begin and is considering making some small announcement over the loudspeaker system.

The plasma bolt would have taken anyone else by surprise and no doubt killed them instantly.

But, Luke is Jedi-trained and strong in the Force and tends to keep his lightsaber tucked in the right sleeve of whatever coat he's wearing (style and tailoring permitting of course).

So, he has the blade up out and is deflecting the shot before he fully processes what is happening.

It's good to know all those weeks carrying Yoda around and getting yelled at in illogical mystic phrases hadn't been a complete waste.

When they open fire from at least two other vantage points he deflect those too, Mostly because he's just very pleased and surprised that he can and wants to see how long he can manage to keep doing that.
Sadly, Leia jumps tackles him to the ground as the blaster fire continues.

Based on the noise his bodyguards have started to return fire.

“ARE YOU CRAZY!” Leia is screaming. “Do you understand what would happen to your precious galactic peace if you died?!”

Luke ignores her and crawls towards the loudspeaker console and moves the microphone to his hand using the Force.

“All civilians and innocent bystanders! Remain calm! Get out of here if you can. If not get down! They're not here for you but they'll kill you if you're in the way.”

He drops the microphone and crawls back to Leia. Han is crouched by the parapet taking potshots at the snipers despite his blaster being nowhere near highpowered enough to have that sort of range. Which, Luke realizes, his heartsinking, as he turns to look at his bodyguards, is a problem all around.

“There should be shields on the imperial box!” Leia is shouting. “Where are the kriffing shields!”

“Well, gee Princess,” Han drawls. “Looks to me like they might be down!”

These shots are being made with high-power precision sniper rifles. The Stormtroopers only have regulation sidearms which would be completely adequate for any firefight happening anywhere but here.

The Hyperdrome is one of the largest open spaces on Coruscant and while technically the regulation weapons have the velocity for that distance their accuracy over any sort of long range is completely non-existent and in this situation any missed shot is likely to result in civilian casualty.

Leia hunkers down next to him. “Is the Mandalorian on-world? Cause a jet-pack would be really useful right about now.”

Luke shakes his head mutely. Korkie is back on Mandalore acting as Not-officially-the-Prince-but-
yes-totally-the-Prince trying to help with the transfer of power there.

He reaches out with the Force to find the minds of the people trying to kill them. Well, mostly him.

“We need to get out of here!” Han yells.

“There are more waiting inside!” Luke yells back. “They're hiding-mixed up in the crowd and set up in other sniper positions.”

One of his Stormtroopers goes down. The armour takes the worst of the blaster shot so he's alive but he's in pain. It makes Luke want to scream and clutch his head. He's wide open from trying to read the minds of the attackers. He can feel the man's pain as if it were his own.

“We try and take him through the building and he's as good as dead!” Detlan yells back to Han.

This is a disaster.

Luke crawls back towards the controls.

“This was being televised wasn't it?” He asks over the din of blaster fire hitting the side of the pod.

“I don't know Your Majesty!” Darklighter yells back.

“I can guarantee it was being shown on SOME channel!” Han assures him.

“We have no way of knowing if anyone actually capable of doing anything would have seen it! We can't hold out for rescue!” Leia shouts. “They'll get through that door before then!”

“There are actions we could take to try and ensure the Emperor's safety..” Detlan suggests quietly. All the Stormtroopers are lying on the ground now and the blaster fire has slowed down waiting for one of them to present a target. “High risk, heavy casualty but it'd give him a better shot that staying here.”
Han grins his wild grin. “Now we're talkin' my language. I've always kinda liked long odds.”

“No!” Luke shouts. “No one is dying for me.”

They all stare at him in surprise and confusion.

“Your Majesty,” Detlan says gently. “There aren't any other options.”

“Oh, like HELL THERE AREN'T!” Luke growls through gritted teeth. He screws his eyes shut and reaches for the Force, cursing himself for being out of practice. This situation probably would pose no real threat to a real Jedi.

FATHER!!! He mentally screams.

Vader jolts to attention at his desk, his son's enraged mental shouts burning like a hot wire through his brain. He instinctively jams the button that calls the head of the 501st.

“Assemble a squad Captain! We're going to the Hyperdrome.”

Once the decision is made to go fetch the Emperor doing so is absurdly easy. They come in through the open roof of the Hyperdrome hover next to the Emperor's box and retrieve the dignitaries and bodyguards.

Vader is able to enjoy the singular pleasure of rescuing Princess Leia Organa of Alderaan and that Kriffing Correlia she constantly has trailing after her. He takes a dark and vindictive pleasure in watching her desperately try and refrain for outright hostility and remain gracious since he did just save her life. Even the most hated of enemies deserve some points for that and he had done it in a fashion dramatic and dashing enough to outdo even the most outrageous heroics of his former self.

Luke leaps gracefully to balance on the parapet and then nimbly leaps, using Vader as a solid point around which to spin, into the cockpit of the rescue vehicle.
“Thanks for that, Darth.” He chirps in a manner that might seem cheerful except it doesn't quite fit. It takes Vader a moment to parse what he's seeing.

Luke is livid. Not just angry or enraged. But angry in a vengeful, I-will-get-you-for-this-how-could-you-even-dare sort of way that is, based on Vader's own experiences with this particular flavour of rage (and if there is one thing that Vader is familiar with it all all the slight variations in the spectrum of anger), largely engendered by the perceived inferiority of the attacker.

In this instance that would be whatever laser-brained faction thought it would be a good idea to attack Luke in what even Vader knows to be his favourite place on Coruscant, endangering and injuring both bystanders and members of Luke's entourage.

The building has been cordoned off in a ground assault by the 501st in tandem with Vader's air-evac operation.

Depending on how determined they were to kill the Emperor it is likely that they will all be detained, arrested and eventually tried in some sort of public pantomime of justice.

Vader has never really understood the Republican notion that for justice to exist and be impartial it must be observed to be both.

To him that seems inefficient. But, Luke has been spending too much time with the Alderaani Princess and will probably insist on it. Actually, Luke will probably do his best to ensure that their trial is as open and transparent as possible so he can prove himself right in order to spite those who think he's wrong.

Vader would like to begin grumbling about how he doesn't approve/understand the need for such base theatricality but he's distracted by the feral edge of his son's rage.

Luke doesn't get angry. Luke has, in Vader's decade and a half of knowing him gotten angry in his presence twice. Once over politics and once over Vader's perceived mistreatment of that Mandalorian Prince Luke is so fond of, but even then that had been anger tinged with resignation and sadness and confusion.

Right now Luke is pure in his rage and it has made him incandescent.
He burns so bright it makes Vader grin beneath his mask, and step closer to let himself burn once again.

Luke must sense Vader's scrutiny as they fly back to the Palace because he softens a bit and places his hand over Vader's cybernetic limb.

“Thank you for coming to get us, Father.” he says softly.

Vader inclines his head slowly. “It was nothing. I will always come when you call, surely you must know that.”

Luke looks sad and almost smiles at him at the same time. “I know. It would be easier if I didn't.”

Vader turns to find both the Criminal Bodyguard and the Princess he is allegedly guarding giving him and the Emperor the sorts of looks that if they belonged to competent Force-trained individuals would mean imminent and instantaneous death.

Vader smiles again behind his mask.

“Your friends didn't think it would work, did they?”

Luke actually smile at that. Softly, but still, it's a smile, and then it widens into something wilder and vicious and for possibly the first time in his acquaintance with his son, Vader finds the boy looks rather uncannily like Anakin Skywalker once did when he was young and foolish and filled with anger and defiance that he couldn't direct or contain, but which spilled out of him from time to time as a terribly destructive violence that not even Vader ever really matched.

It's heartwarming and unsettling at the same time.

Luke leans back against the railing of their transport so he is now nominally facing his friends and bodyguards as they loiter not at all casually in the general vicinity in order to, presumably, prevent Vader from attacking his child. Again. For what would probably be the third time. Maybe second, depending on the metric you used to determine what constituted an attack, though that could also go in the opposite direction and exponentially increase the number.
What these people intend to do should Vader actually decide to attack the Emperor is something of a mystery, though he guesses they intend to die valiantly in the protection of his son. Which is an admirable goal and really the best that the majority of these people can aspire to.

Vader considers making a sudden movement just so he'll have the opportunity to thin the herd a little bit. The majority of Luke's entourage is just so... annoying.

Luke is eyeing him with barely suppressed amusement, perhaps reading some of Vader's feelings about this little honour guard through the Force.

“So, the culprits have been apprehended?” Luke asks.

“Presumably.” Vader intones. “We won't know whether we have captured them all until they are interrogated.”

Luke nods. “The nerve of the entire thing!” he hisses. “Honestly, if they want to kill me there's no reason to make several thousand innocent watch them do it! Or possibly you know, get killed in the crossfire and return to the Force with me. It's just... wasteful and ridiculous. How hard would it have been for them to attempt to infiltrate the palace or something?”

Vader considers this. “It's true the odds of the success for either plan would be approximately the same: approaching but slightly above zero. Though, the situation would have been more under control had C-3T4 accompanied you to the Hyperdrome in the first place.” Vader can't help but point out.

Luke laughs. “You're right. Fine. You get to say 'I told you so' forever now.”

Vader smiles behind his mask. “I will make full use of that singular pleasure don't you worry.”

Luke Amidala (preferred name: Skywalker), Emperor of Known Space snorts in a most un-regal fashion.

They stand together in silence or as silent as any moment can be with Vader's respirator working.
After a moment Luke frowns, purses his lips and turns his head to squint at his Father.

“When did you last disinfect your mask? Your breathing sounds...off.” There is a definite hint of accusation in that squint now.

Vader is about to protest innocence out of sheer reflex when he stops to consider the last time he had disinfected his mask and finds he can't remember...

“Um.”

It was probably before Luke became Emperor.

Luke is fully glaring now.

“You need to be responsible!” Luke chides. “Your life support is a complex and delicate system! It needs to be maintained! You can't just ignore it and expect it to keep working properly indefinitely!”


Luke is ignoring his words, and has his head cocked intently listening to the timbre of Vader's mechanized breathing. “It sounds like you might be getting an infection.” he accuses.

Vader would sigh, but this entire conversation is based around the fact that he can't control his own breathing. So he doesn't. “I promise I will spend some time in my Medpod with MT-9 when we return to the palace. All right?”

Luke eyes his suspiciously. “You better. I'll be checking up on you, you know...and it's probably bad judgement to ignore the wishes of your Emperor.”

He grins, and Vader feels something loosen in his chest.

It's only later when he's sitting in his Medpod having MT-9 check his lungs that he realizes: he'd acted as Anakin Skywalker would have all day.

It's an uncomfortable thought, but it's one that's not entirely unexpected.

What follows are what Vader has to admit are probably the happiest days of his life, even including his life as Anakin.

Things with Luke are getting better. The Stormtroopers still flank his son when he visits, but the visits are more than stilted conversation about Imperial Policy now (something neither of them have ever cared about).

Instead they argue about droid repairs, and Luke asks him to add a lightsaber extension to C-3T4 so he can practice, and Vader argues that Luke should do it himself since he used to beg to be allowed to come back to Coruscant to study mechanics at the University, Luke laughs him off and Vader wishes he wouldn't. Or Luke drones on and on about the gossip from the court and Vader complains about the incompetency of military officers.

It's wonderful- Vader is with the person he loves most in the world. Said person is not in mortal danger, does not hate him, admits and accepts his affection and smiles at him regularly. There is no war on but Vader is pleasantly occupied hunting down and rooting out the radical Imperialists or whatever they called themselves, who had attempted to assassinate Luke.

The Mandalorian comes back and only shoots at Vader once, which Luke assures him was mostly symbolic and really given the circumstances the best that could be expected.

Anakin tries not the remember the Korkie he'd known: teenage and lanky and still so young and vulnerable despite his attempts at toughness.

He remembers that Obi-Wan had been in passionate and unfulfilled love with that boy's aunt. She'd died in his arms.

Anakin wonders what it was that had made Obi-Wan so strong. So able to withstand such crushing blows.
Anakin has always been a deceptively brittle person. Easily shattered, easily lead.

He wonders about that.

One day, Luke comes to his office grey faced and murmurs something Vader doesn't hear to his guards. C-3T4 is with him, which is unusual, Luke doesn't usually bring the droid.

The Stormtroopers protest, and Luke loses his temper as Vader has never seen him do before, and roars “I am your EMPEROR, and when I ORDER you to WAIT OUTSIDE! YOU DO IT!”

The Stormtroopers snap to attention, salute, apologize and march out.

Luke rubs his hands over his face and turns to his father.

“I've just received the news: The Constitution has been drafted and it may only be a matter of weeks or even days until it is signed. Despite my reservations the new interim government that will take power once I sign it is insisting on going forward with the War Crimes Tribunal as quickly as possible once they're in power.”

Luke collapses into the chair and puts his head in his hand.

“You are their number one priority. They don't just want to see you brought to justice, they want you humiliated- destroyed...*diminished*. It's petty and it's cruel. They were down right gleeful when they raised the possibility of you being banned from wearing the suit in the courtroom as it has attained 'significant cultural and political meaning as a symbol of the Oppressive Imperialist Regime.”

“Luke...” Vader wishes he could speak softly and gently because when he is with Luke he is not confused about what sort of man he is. He is not Vader and he is not Anakin Skywalker, he is a better man than either- the one they both managed to become because Luke forgave him more than he probably should have.

But he cannot work his own lungs, and his voice is a mechanised vocoder. So he cannot speak gently or reassuringly as much as he might wish to.
Luke looks up at him and he is...desperate and trapped and angry and betrayed. He has taken risks and made sacrifices in the hopes that this new government will build something better than he could, and he is worried this small act of vengeance proves him wrong.

“I just thought you should know now, so that you have time to disappear.” Luke continues. "Head to the Outer Rims or Unknown space, or hell...switch out your cybernetic life support for something less conspicuous and live an ordinary life on Coruscant. I'm going to install a frequency in C-3T4, once you're safe and settled contact me on it, alright?"

He pauses and glances around the room in suspicion. “You don't suppose they've managed to put cameras or bugs in here do you?” he wonders aloud.

Vader looks around, and snorts. “They wouldn't dare. Besides, everyone but you is afraid to come in here.”

Luke sighs, looking unconvinced. “You need to flee. Go into exile. Don't worry, I'll handle everything. Say there's a lead with the extremist faction in the Outer Rims that you need to handle personally and then just disappear. No one will be surprised that you got wind of this and slipped the leash, but no one will expect you to lay low...it will work, you'll see.”

“Luke.” He says more forcefully. “I have no intention of running.”

“Please.” Luke begs. “Please, don't make some sort of last stand! They want to tear you down in court but they will happily shoot you!”

Vader snorts. “They could try-”

“FATHER!” Luke protests.

“Luuuke.” Vader replies. “If you'd just let me finish- I won't be running or resisting, because I will be going quietly and cooperating with all legal procedures.”

Luke gapes. “...What?”
Vader wishes they were in the Medpod so that his son could look into his eyes and see his sincerity.

“I intend to allow the people of the Empire—...or is a Republic now?”

“We’re still working on a name.”

“Regardless. I intend to allow them their justice and their vengeance, the Force knows I deserve both.”

Luke stares open mouthed and his eyes fill with tears.

“No.” He shakes his head. “Father, no. You don't understand, it will be awful and humiliating and they'll kill you in public! I can't lose you. I can't watch you die- You can't ask me to-” he buries his face in his hands as his shoulders shake.

Vader reaches out across the desk. Luke doesn't reach back, but Vader keeps his hand outstretched anyway.

“You asked me once to try and find within myself the man I once was.” He tries to explains. "The Jedi, and the husband and the friend. And I did, but...it isn't as simple as that. You say your Father was Anakin Skywalker, but Luke, I am your Father. I always have been your father. Anakin Skywalker, even as a padawan, was violent, angry, vicious and sometimes cruel. He betrayed those who trusted him. Killed innocents in anger and vengeance. He was a poor husband. A fair-weather friend. I am Anakin Skywalker, and Anakin Skywalker was Vader.

But, I am not the man I once was. I think I am someone better. I think you made me someone better. I'm just sorry it took such a toll on you to do so. I'm sorry that even at my best I was never the father you deserved. Never the family you needed.

I can't undo what I've done. I can't right the wrongs or restore the dead to life, but maybe if I stand trial, if I take responsibility for my actions, than I will fulfill even the slightest shadow of the potential that Anakin Skywalker, the freed slave who wanted to be a Jedi, had to be a good man, or even great one.”
“But, Father, I don’t care about that!” Luke cries in frustration. “Not now! I just want you to live.”

“If you help me escape it will undermine everything you've tried so hard to build in the galaxy.” Vader points out. “Everything your mother so desperately believed in. If I die, and they are unfair or cruel maybe the people of the galaxy will be a bit more wary of those who proclaim themselves their saviors. But, if they are fair, and just and decent than it will prove you right. My death will strengthen your cause, either way. Besides, I have two requests:

Firstly, I am to be tried under my true name of Anakin Skywalker, with Darth Vader treated as my Sith title within the Empire as it should be.

Secondly, I humbly request that the murders of the Jedi younglings in the Coruscant Temple on the day the Republic fell, and that of Senator Padme Amidala two days later on the planet of Mustafar be added to the charges.”

Luke looks like he might almost laugh through his tears. “Names are important on Tatooine.” he whispers.

Anakin Skywalker smiles behind his mask, and feels it twist his scars. “They do. If I die, I will die as myself.” The smile widens into something vicious and wild that if anyone could have seen it would have been instantly recognizable as the reckless expression The Hero with No Fear got right after he was told something was impossible, and right before he did it anyway.

“Let them try and diminish that.” he spits.

Luke shakes his head incredulously, caught between laughing and crying.

When they come to arrest him, Vader is waiting for them. He reacts calmly, and goes quietly which frightens the military police sent to arrest him more than bombastic threats or violent resistance ever could.
As they march him out of the palace a flash of blue catches his eye. It's Luke, surrounded by his guards, watching solemnly as they take him away.

Anakin Skywalker turns his head to meet his son's gaze as he passes by.

Chapter End Notes

Hi, I'm back. Sorry for the wait! I hope it was worth it. I'm kind of nervous about this actually because I know it's a very un-Vader, and un-Anakin thing he's doing right now, but I hope it's been earned by now.

We're heading full tilt towards the end now, only a few more chapters till we get to the epilogues (there will be like three because I'm Return of the King-ing this monster).

Alternate title to this chapter: Vader's agonizingly slow crawl towards redemption finally gets him somewhere.
Interlude with Obi-Wan: No Longer Like We Were

Chapter Summary

Obi-Wan hears some news from the Core, reflects upon the past and agrees to take a trip.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Obi-Wan hears the news it takes him so by surprise that he actually has to sit down: Darth Vader has been arrested by the new government (as yet unnamed) and will be the first to stand trial in the new Tribunal for Crimes Against the Galaxy.

He doesn't know what to think. From what he hears Vader went quietly, without ranting or railing or resisting in anyway, which goes against everything he knows of Darth Vader.

This would give him hope that perhaps the dangerous games he has played have borne fruit but, to go quietly to a terrible fate also goes against everything he once thought he knew of Anakin Skywalker.

He stands and wanders through the strange construction site that is so far all that exists of the New Jedi Order. With the Emperor's pardon and support Obi-Wan and Yoda have left exile and called the scattered remains back together once more.

The resulting group was more disheartening than Obi-Wan had expected.

Only a very few have answered the call. Less than a dozen, most no older than Padawans themselves at the time of the Fall of the Republic. A few of whom have brought students of their own that they have picked up in subsequent decades but most of whom arrived alone.

But, it's a start, and, besides, Obi-Wan reminds himself, the goal is not to recreate what was destroyed but to forge something new from the ashes.

He wanders into the mess hall and walks towards the front. As he walks the hall falls silent. The men and women here are too familiar with Yoda from the days when he would teach every single
youngling that passed through the Jedi temple to be overawed by him, but Kenobi was already a Master by the time most of these people became padawans, and they cannot help but still see him as that distant untouchable hero from the Clone Wars- the Negotiator, the Model Jedi unmatched by any other of his generation.

Obi-Wan turns sharply on his heel once he reaches the wall and clears his voice.

“I have just received an update from Coruscant: Darth Vader, the last of the Sith Lords, has been arrested for crimes against the galaxy too numerous to name-”

The mess hall erupts into loud excited chatter at the news.

Obi-Wan stands and waits for them to quiet down. He learned patience a long time ago.

Finally, realizing that there is more, they quiet.

“-among these crimes is the massacre of the Jedi Younglings in the Temple, and the unlawful slaughter of peaceful Jedi during the purge.”

More murmuring, this time more subdued.

“It has also been announced that he will be tried under his original name, rather than the title he used as a Sith Lord-” Obi-Wan takes a deep breath, feeling like he is 38 again and the loss is still too near and too brutal to be believed “-Anakin Skywalker.” he finally choked out.

The hall explodes into shouting, as people vent their shock and disbelief.

Obi-Wan doesn't listen, and he doesn't care. He turns on his heel and walks out the way he came, bitter and heartsick at the news.

He had mourned his brother years ago, made his peace with the loss. As much as he knows that he should rejoice that Anakin has been redeemed even if only just enough to accept his former name, he cannot help but wish that his former apprentice had stayed lost. It was easier to think of him when he was gone forever. Dead in all but body and Darth Vader only a stranger who felt familiar.
For all that this is the outcome that he has hoped and schemed for— and vehemently argued was possible in the face of Yoda's disbelief for years, it torments Obi-Wan to think that Anakin could have been saved all along. That maybe if Obi-Wan had only found the right words, if he'd argued to have Anakin accompany him on the hunt for Grievous or suggested Anakin take the mission himself. If he had broken the news to Padme better...

If. If. If...

There is no regret. There is only the Force.

Obi-Wan has had decades to meditate on his failures and he had thought himself broken of the habit of dwelling on past regrets.

He heads to the small hut on the edge of the budding compound and crawls in, cursing Yoda who had, in his opinion, become much too fond of forcing those seeking his guidance or training to approach on their knees during his time on Dagobah.

He's surprised, though he shouldn't be, to find Ahsoka already there sitting cross-legged and brimming with unreleased tension on the floor next to Yoda's non-functional hover-chair that someone had dug up on Coruscant. Why the Empire had seen fit to preserve Yoda's accessibility device was anyone's guess, though why they would have bothered to have it destroyed is, Obi-Wan supposes, an equally murky conundrum.

They both turn to look at him as he enters.

He meets Ahsoka's gaze calmly. He knows she wants him to be guilty, to be remorseful for what happened, but he isn't and he can't pretend to be not when he has so many real regrets, so they treat each other with a brittle kind of professional politeness.

They're strangers now, and that thought on top of all the others just makes the ache in Obi-Wan's chest grow.

Of course it makes sense that they would be strangers. It's been more than twenty years and she was still a child during the years when she was Anakin's apprentice.
She's a grown Togruta now. Not the girl she once was anymore than Obi-Wan is still that smirking young knight who once fell in love with a Mandalorian Duchess, let alone the wry and eternally unruffled Jedi Master Ahsoka had once known.

’Pleased, you must be, Obi-Wan.’ Yoda says wheezily. He’s mostly kept alive through sheer stubbornness these days and a determination to still be around when his apprentice, currently Emperor of Known Space, finds the time to return and complete his training, as Yoda is convinced he one day will. “Long time you have worked, this outcome to see.”


Obi-Wan shrugs. “What was necessary, it seems.”

Ahsoka shakes her head. “Why have you called me here Master Yoda?” she asks.

“Received a message from the Core, I have. Sent by the Emperor himself!” Yoda chortles.

Obi-Wan rolls his eyes. In his opinion Yoda spent too much time alone on Dagobah and became far too accustomed to laughing at his own jokes.

“ Arrested Vader has been, cooperated he has. And requests he has made of the court-”

Ahsoka screws up her face in disgust. “What right does he have to request anything!? They should kill him now and be done with it.” she spits.

“He has the right of any sentient being to a fair trial in an impartial court of law.” Obi-Wan reminds her softly.

She glares. He supposes he deserves her anger, but not for that.

“What has he requested, Master Yoda?” Obi-Wan asks.

“Seek the Death Penalty, the courts do, request a delay Skywalker has, to say his farewells and to
make amends. Agreed to nothing, I have, except that put the choice before the two of you, I would.”

Ahsoka gapes. “He wants to see me?” she sneers. “He tried to kill me! More than once!”

Obi-Wan nods. “I'm sorry my old apprentice felt it was only on his deathbed that I would respond to such a request. I'll leave on the next transport.”

Ahsoka stares at him incredulously. “You can't be serious! After everything he's done!? What could you possibly accomplish in visiting him other than giving him the opportunity to Force choke you!?”

Obi-Wan gifts her with a withering look.

“Redemption. Closure. Healing? This meeting was requested by the Emperor, who I am acquainted with, and who is a very kind young man that, it seems, is seeking nothing more than to provide some small comfort to the man who raised him before his inevitable and humiliating public execution.”

Ahsoka looks like she's like to bite Obi-Wan's nose off. Obi-Wan returns her gaze daring her to try.

Yoda bangs his gimmer stick against the ground. “Obliged to do anything, neither of you are! A request this was only. A choice to be made. Decided it is: Journey to the Core to make his farewells Obi-Wan will. Stay here, Jedi Tano will. Now begone! Both of you! Tired I am, and saddened by this reminder of things past.”

They both make low bows before crawling out again.

Ahsoka glares at him as they stand in the deepening twilight outside of Yoda's hut, her lekku twitching with suppressed annoyance.

“How can you possibly think Vader's had a change of heart?” she asks scornfully.

Obi-Wan shrugs. “Love has changed him before, perhaps it's changed him again.”
“Who could Vader possibly love that much?” Ahsoka sneers. She shakes her head and looks over all that remains of the Order that raised her. “I don't think he's even capable of love.”

Obi-Wan regards her unsympathetically. “You are making the same mistake I did for ten years, which is to assume that Vader and Anakin are fundamentally different beings, when they are still the same man. And Anakin loved more fiercely than any other sentient I've ever known.”

With that he walks away towards the compound- and the transports that will take him to the core.

The journey is long and nerve wracking. Obi-Wan sits, hands clenched the entire time, trying to find serenity.

It has been more than twenty years. He has made his peace with what happened. But he doesn't know if he can make his peace with what is about to happen.

He lands on Coruscant and is met at the airport by a small squad of Stormtroopers. It's only the bright blue stripes painted on their armour that make him pause instead of instinctively evading them.

The Stormtroopers greet him politely and are uncomfortably apologetic.

“Did the Emperor ask that you come?” one asks knowingly.

Obi-Wan looks at him in surprise. “Yes, the message was from him, but I understand Vader made the request.”

The Stormtroopers nod sagely and remarks. “It can be very difficult to deny the Emperor.”

It's strange the way they say it. For the last twenty years similar phrases have been uttered about Palpatine, but never quite like that. As though Luke is some kind and wise grandparent you cannot bear to disappoint or a beloved smallchild whom you cannot help but indulge.
Obi-Wan considers trying to explain why he's really here, but the Skywalker family history is such a snarled complicated tale that it doesn't seem worth the effort.

They lead him to the Palace and Obi-Wan's heart breaks again, as though for the first time.

This was the only home he's ever known.

It hurts to see it's familiar spires altered by it's years under Palpatine, the great statues torn down.

Luke is waiting flanked by even more Stormtroopers, all still with the bright blue stripe.

He smiles and jogs over. For a moment it seems like he might throw his arms around Obi-Wan in a fit of youthful exuberance like did that day on the Death Star but he checks himself at the last second and instead clasps Obi-Wan's hands between his own.

“Thank you for coming Ben.” he says emphatically. “I was afraid you wouldn't.”

Obi-Wan nods. “Ahsoka will not be coming.” he informs the Emperor.

Luke sighs and bows his head in disappointment. “Fa-Vader will be sad to hear it. He was hoping to see her again, before-” he clears his throat and looks away. “Before.” he repeats.


“I hope you are not alone in this Luke.” he says gently. “Is the Princess with you still? Has Korkie Kryze accepted your invitation to court?”

Luke nods. “They're all here. They think I've made an error in reconciling with Vader.”

“And what does the Force tell you?” Obi-Wan asks.
Luke sighs again and looks back towards the entrance of what to Obi-Wan will always be the Temple.

“Nothing much, I'm afraid. But, my heart tells me it is not a choice. I forgive him, how can I continue to torture him?”

They walk up the steps to the palace. There are cameras from the Holonet following them, Obi-Wan realizes, just beyond the cordon of the guards.

The Temple is exactly as he remembers it and completely different all at once, it makes him homesick with the sort of ache that he didn't know he could still feel.

He follows as Luke confidently leads him deeper into the building.

“They're housing him here?” Obi-Wan asks incredulously.

Luke smiles over his shoulder at him. “At my request. I don't trust that he would be safe under the care of any other guards but mine. And it would place an undue financial burden on an correctional facility to force them to accommodate Vader's medical needs, especially since-” he cuts himself off abruptly and his mouth forms a grim line for a moment.

Obi-Wan needs no help completing the thought: *Especially since it won't be for long.*

The Emperor, or whatever he is now that he has signed the new constitution placing power in the hands of interim government, may have made a few impassioned speeches about setting a new standard, sending a message to the galaxy about the value the new regime places on sentient life, no matter whose it is, but he is not so naive as to think it will make a difference.

Obi-Wan feels for the boy, though Luke's been a man for years.

Obi-Wan is more than familiar with single- handedly fighting desperate unwinnable battles.

“How is he?” Obi-Wan asks softly. “I have not seen him since he last came to kill me, which was not long before you took the throne I believe.”
Luke shrugs. “They've taken the mask. Something about it's symbolic potency, so he's confined to his hyperbaric chamber or his lungs will fail. He got an infection just before he was arrested, because of sloppy maintenance of his life support equipment. Force knows, I was always warning him about disinfecting the kriffing thing, but well, Vader will do what he wants, and the rest of us have to deal with the consequences.”

They are wandering deeper and deeper into the bowels of the palace, and the oppressive darkness in the Force that has infected what was once a place of light, grows only worse. Obi-Wan shivers and draws his cloak closer.

Luke notices and looks at him sympathetically. “You get used to it.” he informs him frankly. “You learn to block it out.”

Obi-Wan shudders. “I can't imagine how.”


They walk in silence together for a long moment.

“I do understand how hard this must be for you Obi-Wan, and I'm very grateful that you came. The Force showed me what he did here.” Luke admits softly. “After that it was very hard to be here for a while.”

Obi-Wan nods. “I can imagine.”

Luke glances at him shrewdly. “I'd have guessed you wouldn't need to. It was you that set the beacon wasn't it? Sent the message telling those few survivors to run? So you must have seen it for yourself. What he did.”

Obi-Wan nods. “Yes.”

They stop in front of a cell door, the only one that is already flanked by guards. Luke tries to force a reassuring smile. “The Medpod's inside. It should sense your presence and open to allow you to enter. You'll have to sit crosslegged. There's not much room in there.”
Obi-Wan nods heart in his throat. “I—” he hesitates to go in.

Luke looks at him compassionately. “I saw what he did.” he reminds Obi-Wan. “No one will judge you if you have changed your mind. That you came at all will mean something to him.”

Obi-Wan releases his fear and his hurt into the Force and straightens his spine.

“No. I will face him, one last time.”

Luke looks so grateful when Obi-Wan speaks those words that he worries just what sort of pain the young man is carrying that you can only see it’s presence when it has been lifted, even slightly.

The Stormtroopers enter a code and the door opens. One presses a small button into Obi-Wan’s hand. “In case you need us.” he murmurs.

Obi-Wan nods and steps inside.

The Medpod looks rather like a large black egg and opens along a crenelated edge in the middle.


Obi-Wan swallows and clears his throat before awkwardly climbing in to the Medpod.

“I'm afraid not old friend.” he replies.

He's caught off guard when he turns and sees Anakin face to face for the first time since Mustafar.

Anakin looks grotesque. His head is scarred, bald deathly white, and resting like a malformed egg against the black manufactured angularity of the armour that works his lungs for him, among other things. It seems completely out of place and disconnected from the seeming vitality of his cybernetic arms and legs.
Despite what Luke said, he is wearing a mask, though not the famous black one, this one is clear plastic with tubes running from it that a spherical floating med-droid is tending.

“Obi-Wan!” Anakin exclaims, his strong deep synthetic voice at odds with the condition he is clearly in.

Obi-Wan smiles tightly and nods. “Darth.”

Anakin smiles. “There's no need for mockery just now. You know that's not how Sith Titles work, and the Sith name never sounded right coming from you anyway.”

“But it was the name you chose.” Obi-Wan reminds him sharply. “The path that you chose.”

That is, perhaps, not entirely fair. Anakin had been a young man when he fell, younger than his children are now, and he was manipulated and betrayed by someone he trusted who was far more cunning and powerful than either of them.

But, all the same. The path was his own and Anakin had had many chances to turn from it.

“Is this the part,” Obi-Wan asks snidely. “Where you beg for my forgiveness?”

“No. This is the part where I thank you.” Anakin responds just as bitingly, as though they are still The Team who bantered in the face of death and quipped back and forth even as they landed half a Star Destroyer that also happened to be on fire without a singly civilian casualty.

“For what precisely?” Obi-Wan snaps "Cutting off your legs?"

Anakin rolls his eyes. “For Luke, what else? You cared for him when he was born and his mother died. Hid him from Palpatine. You gave him back to me when the rebels stole him and sheltered and you taught him when I sent him away. That's a debt I can never repay”

Obi-Wan curls his lip disdainfully. “If I'd had any sense at all I wouldn't have let the rebels ransom
him back to you. But, I foolishly believed he'd be safer with you than them.”

Obi-Wan tucks his hands into the sleeves of his robes and stares at Vader expectantly. While compassion and serenity are tenants of the Jedi way, there is a long distance from releasing anger and sadness into the Force and forgiveness.

“Is that all?” he asks finally.

Anakin looks up at him sadly. “I would ask your forgiveness, but I won't because I know I have done nothing to deserve it, and you are still a Jedi. I remember the Jedi believe in justice, not forgiveness.”

Obi-Wan inclines his head. “It is good to know you did not forget everything I taught you.”

Anakin smiles and it twists the scars on his face in a way that looks painful. “Of course, Master.”

Obi-Wan looks up as he feels his eyes well with tears.

“Well, I think I'll be going now—”

“I just wanted to say goodbye Obi-Wan.” Anakin blurts out. “Thank you for coming.”

Obi-Wan swallows and nods. “Yes, good. I—”

“Ahsoka's not coming? Is she?” Anakin sounds so hopeless, and so sad, that it almost makes Obi-Wan angry. What right has he to feel that way about a Jedi he has tried to kill?

Obi-Wan clenches her jaw. “No. She won't.”

Anakin's breath is a rasp.
“She's angry...she was always angry.”

Obi-Wan shrugs. “She has reason to be.”

Anakin nods. “She does.”

Obi-Wan sits awkwardly, the old habit of comforting Anakin apparently too ingrained to break. “She's angry with me too, if it's any comfort. Only she can't avoid me as easily.”

“I am very easy to avoid at the moment.”

Obi-Wan chuckles.

They sit in silence for a moment. “I am sorry, Obi-Wan.” Anakin finally admits. “If that counts for anything.”

Obi-Wan purses his lips and thinks for a moment. “Not really, but I appreciate the sentiment. I have a question for you, if you'll answer.”

“Of course.”

“What are you doing with this trial? You could escape, even if Luke wasn't willing to help you which I'd bet my lightsaber he is-”

Anakin mock gasps. “But, Master, your lightsaber is your life!” he exclaims.

Obi-Wan levels him with a very unamused stare.

“You've never been one to take responsibility for your mistakes, even before you fell you were always blaming the Council, the Separatists, or the Senate- anyone but yourself.” Obi-Wan continues.
“Yes, and look where that got me: limbless and friendless and about to die. Seemed about time I owned up to something. I can't make it right, but I think this is as close as I can come.” Anakin explains.


“'I know.”

Obi-Wan glares. “I wish I could have protected him from you.” He whispers. He stands and the pod begins to open.

“Obi-Wan!” Anakin calls after him.

Obi-Wan pauses and looks over his shoulder.

“You were my brother too, and I loved you as well.”

Obi-Wan remembers those words or something like them. He spoke them on Mustafar right before he'd left Anakin to burn.

He scowls. “I don't hate you Anakin, and I never will, but I wish I'd killed you on Mustafar.”

Anakin looks very sad. “Thank you again for coming, Obi-wan. Goodbye, may the Force be with you.”

Obi-Wan smiles sadly. “Goodbye, my very young apprentice. May the Force be with you as well.”

Chapter End Notes

I listened to Adele's When We Were Young, about a thousand times while writing this chapter. Does it show?
And hey look! Two updates in one week! If I can keep this up the fic will be done by the end of May or even sooner!!
Buckle up for continued sadness friends. The plot is dark and full of tears. Stock up on tissues, you may need them.
Luke scrambles to try and ensure his father get's a life-sentence. Leia struggles to make sure Luke makes it through this in one piece. Vader worries and accepts the inevitable.

Leia is worried about her little brother. He's worn and...hopeless like she's never seen him. Not even when he was just a kid who'd spent most of his life locked in his room and had left it only to be promptly kidnapped by Rebels.

The trial of Darth Vader is approaching and Luke is frantically trying to ensure a life-sentence.

It's a hopeless cause but, Luke's practically the patron saint of those these days. And the funny thing is that, sometimes, when Luke puts his weight behind them they stop being hopeless.

It would be easier if he would just admit to his own turmoil. But, Luke wears a serene public face and stands resolute, even in private these days.

Or at least with her. She should see if she can't track down that Mandalorian and make him talk.

She's contemplating exactly how she's going to capture- she means corner, the man when Luke glances up sharply at her from whatever he's been reading.

“Leave Korkie alone Leia! And for Force's sake, meditate once in a while! You're shielding in a travesty.”
She pulls a face.

“I'm sorry if I'm a little worried about you Luke.”

Luke sighs and rubs his hands over his head. “I'm just tired, Leia. I don't trust this new government.”

“Of course you shouldn't trust them! They're appointed but, the elections are only a few months away and then things will finally. FINALLY start to change.”

Luke rolls his eyes. “So you say.”

Leia glares at him. “I do say.”

He takes a deep breath. “The trial starts tomorrow.”

Leia looks back down at her work. “I know.”

“I want to tell him about you.”

She puts her datapad down so hard it almost cracks. “No, Luke.”

“The best case scenario is that he's imprisoned for life. More likely they're going to kill him. What are could you possibly be afraid he'd do with the knowledge that you're his daughter?”

“I don't know. But it's Vader so I trust him to come up with something.”

“Leia...”
“I’m sorry Luke.” She apologizes, and she really is sorry. She knows how much it means to him.

He nods and gets up. “I understand.”

“Where are you going?” she asks sharply.

He groans and turns around. “I have a meeting with the head of one of my charities, we're trying to negotiate our way through the changing laws that come with the new governmental structure that's being implemented. Is that alright? I didn't realize I needed your permission.”

Leia does not rise to the bait. “You're bringing your bodyguards?”

Luke makes a face. “Yes, though I shouldn't need to because I am no longer the head of state and-”

“You're still the Emperor, Luke.”

“And I still don't understand why you continue to insist on that. I should abdicate in favour of the democratically elected government that everyone is constantly promising me will materialize one of these days.”

“People are used to having an Emperor Luke, if you abdicate than some of those Imperial hard-liners who tried to kill you are likely to try and fill the position themselves.”

“Whatever. I'm late. I'm taking Deltan and Hidenoff and you need to find Han cause I haven't seen him in two days and that usually means he's about to do something illegal. You need to get on the holo and convince Chewie to get over his issues with my Imperial self because the two of us are both too busy to be constantly keeping an eye on Han to make sure he doesn't wander off and make an enemy of the biggest crime boss in Coruscant's underworld or something equally ridiculous.”

Leia's turn to make a face. “Han is fine.”

“Sure he is. Than you can tell me when you last saw him?”
Leia hesitates trying to actually remember the last time she'd seen Han in more than passing. It had been a few days and Luke was right— that did not bode well.

“I'll see you later Leia.” Luke says, sounding a big smug.

Luke takes a deep breath once the doors are closed and tries to think of something to make this okay.

It's hard, because in some ways it feels like he's finally got everything he ever wanted. He has a sister, he has friends, he's doing good in the world and has (nominally) restored democracy, Korkie’s okay, Han is okay, his father is okay for now.

But, none of them understand how he's feeling- what he's struggling with. Korkie tries but he's distracted trying to prevent Mandalore from breaking out into civil war along the old clan lines now that they're no longer under Imperial occupation and so much of their independent power structure is in shambles.

Han just stares at him in confusion whenever he tries to bring it up and Leia's reaction to any mention of Vader is almost always blind rage.

The only person who'd come close had been Obi-Wan when he'd visited. He'd seemed to understand how torn Luke was- the conflict within him that he couldn't seem to reconcile.

On the one hand he was happy and proud that his Father was finally trying to make things right, and no longer denying the man he'd once been.

On the other the idea of losing the closest thing to a constant he's ever had in his life is so painful and terrifying that Luke can't even meditate most days he's agonizing so much over how he'll possibly cope should the worst happen.

Obi-Wan had seemed to understand the whole heartbreak vs. Pride and joy thing that Luke was struggling with, though Luke had a sense that for Obi-Wan it was more stirring up old wounds vs. Smugness at being right, and annoyance that is took Vader so long to realize it.
So, not exactly the same but close enough.

Luke puts on his Jedi-face, collects his guards and heads to his meetings.

Afterwards he hesitates on the steps of the Palace. He can go up to his rooms and the court, or he can go down and sit with his father and get away from...everything else, just for a little while.

He heaves a sigh and goes up. He's not the Emperor anymore, not really, despite what everyone says, but there's still a lot of work to do.

First order of business is some information about the trial that the tribunal had sent.

Luke takes one look at it and considers taking a leaf out of his sister's book and throwing the damn thing across the room.

“Get me the head of the Tribunal for Crimes Against the Galaxy.” he says to his secretary, with all the quiet fury of a sandstorm on the horizon.

The Kel Dor female scurries like he'd shouted to high heaven and after a moment pokes her head in to nod affirmation of the man's presence on the holo-link.

“Your Imperial Majesty” the Rodian who answers call says slightly apprehensively. Luke is not as popular with the non-human citizens than the human ones, but he was still looked at more or less fondly

Luke levels her with a glare and she drops the pleasantries.

“I've received the most recent list of charges for the trial tomorrow and it's absurd. Why have changes been made? I and the defendant's counsel had accepted to those charges which were agreed upon earlier this week!”

“The Tribunal feels that it must lay charges where there is suspicion of wrong doing!”
“The murder of Emperor Palpatine?” Luke asks incredulously. “What sort of nonsense is that? If you want to damn Vader I'm sure you can dig up some atrocities he actually committed from Imperial Records or even the Records of the Old Republic from his time serving in the Clone Wars- It would take maybe half-an-hour. There's no need for fabrications.”

Luke does not miss the way the Rodian cringes at the mention of Vader's life as Anakin Skywalker.

“We do not all share your insight into the events which have so altered our Galaxy, Your Majesty and-” She begins to protest coldly.

Luke is not impressed by this and doesn't let her finish. “I was incarcerated during most of these events you claim I have such insight into and was in hiding fearing for my life for the rest of then-- along with the majority of the population. But, an entire squadron saw Palpatine die by blaster fire. Which Vader does not use!”

“Then you may produce these witnesses during the trial.”

“You're trying to make this a circus!” Luke accuses. “You know there's no contesting the majority of the charges and Vader's never made any pretensions towards innocence. So you add this ridiculous charge that you know he cannot accept just so he'll plead not guilty to something and you'll have your excuse to publicly crucify him!!”

“Not even the Galactic Empire crucified people.” the Rodian replies scathingly.

“Well, the Hutt's do. Perhaps you might consider trying to deal with them, rather than beating the dead bantha of the defeated Imperial war machine until you can convince yourself you killed it yourself and not the very man you're putting on trial!!”

The Rodian looks livid. “Not all of us have the benefit of your position to help us to forgiveness. We want justice and we will have it!”

“You want vengeance! There's a difference.”

“Not always...Your Imperial Majesty.”
The Rodian ends the call and Luke jumps to his feet. He's so angry all the time and it's terrifying. He doesn't want to fall to darkness.

He wanders out of his office, trying to pretend he doesn't notice when his guards fall into steep behind him.

He's wearing one of his everyday outfits- which are almost all modeled on the lines of the Imperial military uniform, but with nicer colours and fabrics, and sometimes just a bit of flair. They are simple and practical and allow him at least the illusion of blending in.

They also look very good on him.

For what he has in mind that won't do at all. With his Stormtroopers trailing behind as always he heads to his rooms. He locks them out and takes a minute to just be alone.

He takes a deep breath and reaches out for the Force. It's still dark here. But not as.

He turns and looks at the metal disks that hang on the wall. Old talismans of the twin suns. He'd had them brought from his old apartment.

*You can be brave. Sometimes that's what it takes to go on.* He reminds himself.

He heads to his closet. Mostly his clothing is impeccable but somewhat plain especially for someone of his position.

But, he has more than a few grandiose outfits, for balls and official public appearances, not to mention his coronation, and his time as an Imperial Prince.

He runs his hands over the ones that are kept in his room, before settling on one in particular.

It's red, which Leia has told him is not his colour, (and it's not, his colour is Imperial Blue- they named it after him and everything.)
But, red is dramatic, and has been out of fashion long enough that no one else will be wearing it. Today is not a day to fade into the background, to be humble and unassuming and likeable.

Today is a day to call down the furies of the old gods he only half remembers. The gods of the desert and the sandstorm. The mighty Sarlacc and the Krayt Dragon and the sun god Tatoo and his twin sister....kriff it, Luke can't remember the name! How can he not remember the name of one of the twin sun deities?!

Luke hesitates next to his mirror and glances at it, feeling suddenly ugly and uncertain. As though he is pretending to be something he's not... He could paint his face. He's only done it once and never by himself but it would send a message...

But then that would mean he was going as Luke Amidala, former Prince of the Naboo, not Luke Skywalker- Galactic Emperor.

Today is a day that calls for Emperors and the vicious sons of Sith Lords.

So, he contents himself with sliding on as many rings as he can get away with, and his second-best diadem for non-state functions.

The outfit in place all that remains is the mask he needs for the role. He tries to find the Jedi calm but it just won't descend.

He slowly collapses to sit on the floor surrounded by enough silk and stiff velvet to clothe the entire people of Tatooine, so long as you didn't include the Hutts.

Luke puts his head in his hands, feels the tears pricking at his eyes, and takes deep breathes.

He's not sure he remembers the desert anymore. At least not the one from Tatooine.

It's been so long. He was so young the last time he was there.
He remembers the sun, and the dryness, and the family graves, but he's not sure he's remembering the desert itself quite right.

He still has his name. He reminds himself.


So long as that's the case he can say he's the same boy who once bragged he'd thread the needle near Beggar's canyon, or who had liked noting more than taking potshots at womp rats.

He tries to remember his aunt's face, and it's difficult. He can call Owen to mind easily enough. It's as easy as picturing the way the man had looked when he'd explained about the Vaporators. But, Aunt Beru is harder. He remembers the feel of her more, the way she'd sounded. The way she'd been.

Owen is hardly more than a distant figure by the vaporators.

But, Beru had held his hand when he'd been afraid. Had told him stories about his grandmother and tried to remember *something* about his parents to tell him.

Luke clutches the heavy velvet. It pricks a little at his palm. He wishes he could remember what she looked like.

It was a long time ago.

Aunt Beru and Uncle Owen would not have raised him to be the sort of man who sat prostrate on the floor and let emotions get in the way of what needed to be done.

With some effort, Luke stands, checks himself in the mirror and heads for the door.

One of his bodyguards almost blurts out a question when he sees that what Luke is wearing but catches himself just in time.
Luke is not in the mood. Not today. Not wearing this particular mask.

The cases for the Tribunal for Crimes Against the Galaxy are each seen by a group of judges. The number varies slightly from case to case. Vader has seven. Not the most, but not the least.

They agree to see him of course. Luke is, as Leia said, still the Emperor in name if nothing else, and that carries with it a certain weight that most find difficult to resist.

Even the people who hate him are in awe of him. Or so Han drawls when he's losing at Sabbacc.

Luke glides in trying to channel the former Queen of the Naboo who had always treated him so disdainfully without ever technically being impolite.

The judges seen uncomfortable.

Luke gives them a cold smile, as his guards and protocol droid sort themselves out against the wall behind him.

“Hello, thank you for seeing me today.”

The lead judge clears his throat. “Yes, of course Your Majesty- Your Imperial Majesty- uh...we're just unsure of what exactly it is you're hear for.”

“The Death Penalty. Many individual systems have banned it, and the Old Republic was making moves in that direction before it's fall. This trial is the first act of the new government and I really feel it would benefit the public to distance yourself from...well from the previous regime.”

One of the judges looks rather dubious. “You mean your regime.”

Luke freezes and his smile develops a knifes edge but doesn't drop from his face.“Well, I wouldn't consider it mine, rather Palpatine’s which I began the process of dismantling, but, yes.”
“It’s all very well to speak of ideals, Your Majesty, but this is Vader. If ever a man needed killing he is it.”

“Well, I’d say Palpatine was the man deserving of killing myself, but all the same, if your values and rights only apply to those you feel deserve their protection than you're doing exactly what the Old Emperor did, you're just choosing to protect different people.”

Some of the judges look a little chagrined.

Some but not all.

“I think it's very inappropriate for you to be here. You renounced your authority. You have no jurisdiction over the courts! Yet here you are trying to influence our decision!”


“You are a still a very young man! Why should we care what you have to say?”

Luke does his best to channel Han at his most scathingly dismissive.

“I have some small experience.”

The judges shut their mouth chastened.

“And right now the galaxy wants to see Vader's head on a pike, but what they need is some assurance that things really are going to be different now that their living under an elected government and not an Emperor.”

“Well, you are still Emperor-” The judge begins.

“I have offered several times to renounce the title! I'm only trying to suggest that mercy and compassion matter always and not just when it's convenient for you!! If you treat Vader fairly it sends a message to the galaxy about how things are going to be from now on.”
“It also conveniently allows you to keep him alive.”

“I don’t pretend that I have known some kind of more profound suffering than Vader’s other victims, but I have not been unscathed by my contact with him and have just as much reason to hate him as anyone else. He killed my mother, he murdered my aunt and uncle in front of me when I was a child, kidnapped me, he almost killed me and abandoned me all alone in the Outer Rims, he arrested me, terrorized my friends—” Luke cuts himself off and glares at the judges.

“And I have made my peace with that.” he continues. “Killing Vader won’t undo those things, and the galaxy gains nothing by it. Vader knows more about the workings of the Old Empire than anyone else still living. We kill him we destroy that knowledge. If you are unmoved by appeals to mercy than perhaps logic will do it.”

The Judge continues to glare at Luke.

“Not to mention hypocrisy is so...” Luke searches for the word. “...weak. As I said before: If you say that sentient life is sacred, than that must hold true for all of it. Not just the forms you approve of. Otherwise, we're right back where we started.”

Luke rises to his feet and a number of the judges jump up instinctively.

Luke thinks he heard Feens stifle a laugh. For all the public talk about him being a parasitic Imperial relic, these judges still followed the etiquette of his authority.

“Good Day, Your Honours.”

“Good Day, Your Imperial Majesty.” they echo sullenly.

This time when he gets to the steps of the Palace he goes down without hesitation. He still hasn't gotten hardly any of the work done that he'd set out to do today, but he needs everything else to go away for a while.

He stalks down to the bowels of the Palace ignoring the growing unease in the minds of his guards. They, along with everyone else worry about him.
He reaches the cell and stands with his arms crossed while the guards at the door unlock it.

He pushes in and heads to sit down next to his father in the Medpod.

Vader looks up from where he was watching the Holonet with MT-9 when he hears the pod open and tries not to gape as his son collapses next to him in a huge pile of two types of red fabric, which from the look of things, might be thick enough to stop a blaster shot.

“Are you alright Luke?” Vader asks trying not to laugh at the spectacle when he can feel through the Force that Luke is genuinely upset.

From somewhere within the mass of fabric comes his son's voice.

“They’ve added more charges. They're saying you murdered Palpatine now.”

Vader laughs.

Luke fights his way free so that at least now his face is visible above the mound of clothing. He looks livid.

“This is no joking matter!” Luke protests “It's ridiculous! They know we're going to plead guilty on all charges so they go and find the one thing you're guaranteed to deny, just so they can have their precious trial. It enrages me!!”

“Luke, I have to plead guilty to killing Palpatine as well.”

“No! An entire squadron saw Detlan take the shot. You imprisoned Detlan for doing so and I freed him. People know you didn't do it! If you plead guilty when you didn't do it then you undermine the entire system.”

“Luke, I have to plead guilty.” Vader repeats more insistantly. “Because if I do not the trial will prove that it was Detlan that is the one who killed him, and then Detlan will be arrested. Since
apparently, now that it's been done your new government has decided killing Palpatine is a crime and not something they've been trying to engineer, unsuccessfully, for years.”

Luke looks at him in blank incomprehension. “But...why should you pay for something you didn't do?”

“Luke,” Vader says trying to suppress his laughter. “You can't get any more dead than dead. I've already done more than enough to earn that.”

“Father!” Luke protests. “Don't say things like that!”

Vader looks at his son and feels his heart break. He's hurt him so much for so long. Luke's a man now, but looking at him trapped under his ridiculous clothing and fighting back tears all Vader can see is Luke as he first saw him.

Tiny and twelve and covered in Tatooine sand, and looking at Vader as though he were the very devil himself.

He remembers holding his hand against Padme's belly and feeling the kick.

All he's ever wanted to do has been to protect Luke but all he's ever managed is to hurt him even more. Even now when he's trying to do the right thing he's just causing more trouble for him.

“Luke...It's going to happen. There's nothing you can do about it.”

“No! I'm the Emperor! There's got to be something! I can't just sit back and watch you die!”

“Luke...” Vader says gently “It's better than I deserve.”

“Well, what about what I deserve!” Luke yells back. “Doesn't that matter?! You're all I've got! You can't just give up!! How can you not understand that?!!”

Vader reaches out and Luke reaches back. Vader crushes Luke (and about 14 pounds of velvet) to
him and feels his son's tears slide down his neck. He's not sure the last time he actually touched Luke, but then contact becomes unwelcome when you've only got the cold durasteel of cybernetics to offer.

“Luke, don't you see!” Vader insists ”You're not alone! You have the stormtroopers, and Korkie Kryze and the Princess Organa, and that Corellian criminal...uh what's his name with the Wookie?”

“Han” Luke supplies. “Han Solo.”

“Right, him. They'll take better care of you than I ever have.”

“Shut up! I don't need to be taken care of!”

They sit in silence for a moment and then Luke leans away and wipes at his face.

“It really will be alright, Luke” Vader assures him. “You'll see...”

Luke shakes his head. “Nothing about this is alright Dad.”

Vader looks at Luke sadly. “Don't come to the trial Luke. It will be better if you don't.”

Luke looks at him askance. “I'll go where I like!”

Vader rolls his eyes. “Luke!”

“I need to go...I'll be back later. I just...” Luke shakes his head. “I'll be back later.”

Luke struggles to his feet and stumbles out of the room. Vader sighs and hopes that Luke really will be back.

Luke heads to his room. Locks the guards on the other side of the door, kicks off the majority of
his clothing and collapses face down on the bed.

He knows he's projecting and tries to reel it in but.. it's hard.

C-3T4 ambles over. “Are you quite alright, Master Luke?”

Luke shakes his head.

“Oh, are you malfunctioning in some way? Shall I fetch someone to help you?”

“No, C-3T4. My circuits are just over loaded. I'll be fine in a minute if I just power down for a second.”

He feels C-3T4 awkwardly pat his leg. “Well, alright. Let me know if you need anything.”

Leia paces her room. “I'm worried about Luke. He's taking this so hard...I just want to help him.”

Han glances up at her incredulously from where he is lounging on the bed reading a datapad. “Leia, his abusive fucking father is about to be ritually humiliated and then publicly executed. I really don't think there's a way you can make it better.”

“Our abusive fucking father.” Leia points out.

Han props himself up on his elbow and waves a finger at her. “Uh-uh Leia, doesn't count! First of all, you refuse to recognize him as your father. Second, I believe you met the man exactly once, granted it was the time he was accessory to the destruction of your planet. So, the whole 'not my father' thing make sense but.. still.”

Leia sighs. “I'm sorry. That was thoughtless.”
“I’m not saying I don't wish I could help Luke as well, I'm just saying I don't know if it's in our power to do anything.”

Leia collapses onto the bed next to him and leans on his chest. “I wish Korkie was here.”

Han snorts. “It's probably better he isn't, I think he'd have trouble preventing himself from skipping with joy whenever he thinks about what's about to happen to Vader. He might cheer during the executions. The Mandalorian's are a vengeful and vindictive people. They tend to hold a grudge.”

Leia nods in agreement. They are.

There's a buzz on her comm and she scrambles over Han to answer it. To her surprise it's C-3T4.

“Hello, Your Royal Highness. I was wondering if you'd come up and speak with Master Luke? Only he said he'd only power down for a second and it's been a number of hours and I'm quite concerned he's malfunctioned.”

Leia bolts to her feet. “I'm on my way.”

She dashes up the stairs.

The Stromtroopers are still standing at the door but they straighten in concern when they take her in, dishevelled with her hair down and streaming. She'd let it out to rebraid it for the evening and had been distracted by worry for her brother. She'd forgotten about it just now.

“Let me in.” She orders.

The Stromtroopers are at attention now, chests puffed out to proudly show the blue stripes they'd painted to mark their position as members of Luke's personal guard.

“The Emperor is not receiving visitors.” The one in charge informs her.
She glances wildly at them. She can't see their faces and she wishes she could, because she knows that they love her brother in the way that only soldiers can love their sovereign and if she could just look them in the eye she could make them understand.

“I received a message from his protocol droid expressing concern about his health, at least announce that I am here.”

They look at one another and then the one with three stripes nods to the one with two stripes who knocks on the door.

“Leia Organa to see you, Your Majesty.” he calls.

There's a very long pause and then Luke shouts. “FINE!”

Which is not exactly a yes but definitely not a no.

C-3T4 opens the door and she darts in as he closes it behind her.


“In here.” comes the resigned answer.

She runs through to his bed room, and finds him sprawled out under the covers on a bed large enough to fit most of a battalion with the blankets over his head.

He pulls the covers down long enough to glare at her. “You have proof of life, C-3T4 should never have commed you. I'm fine. Now go away.”

Leia sighs and kicks her shoes off to climb up onto the bed next to him. “You're not fine. How could you be?”

Luke twitches the covers back over his head. “Fine, I'm not fine, but leave me to mourn my murderous asshole father in peace! It's not like anyone else cares.”
Leia can't argue that. Luke is projecting enough that she's certain he would know the lie for what it was the second it left her lips.

“Look, I can't pretend that I'm sorry Vader is going to get what he deserves, because I'm not. But, I am sorry that no one's bothering to try and soften the blow for you.”

There's a long ragged sigh from the duvet.

“I appreciate that Leia.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

The duvet twitches. “I don't think so.”

Leia flops down on the bed and stares at the ceiling knowing that if she wants to cheer her brother up she only has one option.

“Would it make you happy...if I went and saw him?” she grits out.

Luke flips the blankets off and rolls over to stare at her in bewilderment. “You'd do that?” he asks.

Leia sighs and nods reluctantly. “Yes...but for you, not for him.”

Leia feels a tidal wave of joy and relief flow from Luke through the Force and she knows she's made the right choice even before Luke throws his arms around her. “THANK YOU! Oh, Leia, you don't understand how happy this will make him!”

He smiles at her and it is blinding.

He leaps out of bed, wearing nothing but his underwear and pulls on something that was discarded on the floor.
“C’mon, we'll go now!”

Leia stares at him blankly and then gestures to herself. “I can't go looking like this!”

“He’s a quadruple amputee with scarring on 98% of his body. You can look your worst and still beat him on his best day, believe me, and besides, if I let you go back to your room you might change your mind!”

He puts her hand in his and tows her out of the room.

“Feens, Darklighter, C’mon, we're going back to the detainment level!” he calls.

Leia knows it should be impossible with their helmets, but she's almost certain she heard the Stormtrooper's sigh when they hear those words.

“Alright Your Majesty.”

Vader looks up expectantly when he hears the door open. He smiles. “Luke!’

Luke looks nervous and is fidgeting. Vader's blood runs cold. He's supposed to have another day! But, he wouldn't put it past these snakes to go back on their word and move the trial forward.

“Is everything alright? Are you alright?”

Luke opens and closes his mouth and then sits down. He looks at his Father and his jaw works as he tries to find the words.

Vader leans over. “Luke, please, what's going on you're frightening me.”
Luke swallows. “When the Queen of Naboo had me arrested to be brought back to Coruscant, she made me take a DNA test first, to prove I was who the Empire claimed me to be...the Naberries asked for it...remember I told you they’d have preferred I was an imposter? That was how they knew I wasn't one.”

Vader frowns at his son. “What are you talking about? ...are you trying to tell me someone cloned you?”

Luke laughs. “No, Father, no one cloned me. I... uh.. they had my DNA and..uh well, by accident it got compared to the Princess Leia, of Alderaan's? And then we tracked down Obi-Wan and made him talk and...”

Luke trails off and Vader knows it's because his face must look terrible caught between five different emotions, but he needs Luke to finish that sentence.


Luke eyes him warily and takes a deep breath. “That Padme Amidala died giving birth to twins and General Obi-Wan Kenobi, Grand Master Yoda of the Jedi Order, and Senator Bail Organa of Alderaan were all there when she did. They didn't know what to do with the children. They knew we had to be protected and hidden. It was decided that we would be separated, as twin human infants would attract more attention than a single baby. Bail Organa offered immediately to adopt the girl, and not knowing who else to turn to Obi-Wan offered to take the boy to Beru and Owen Lars on Tatooine. Your family. Princess Leia is my sister. You have a daughter...” Luke trails off.

Vader can't breathe, his breath is coming out in a high reedy gasp despite the extra oxygen.

“Padme had a daughter.” he repeats.


“Bail took her?”

“How long have you known?”


“Since the-”

“She didn't want me to tell you. She's outside now though. Agreed to see you to try and cheer me up.”

“Oh.” Vader smiles hopefully and then cold dread fills his heart.

“She's never seen me without the mask.” he realizes.

Luke looks at him sadly and reaches out to take his hand. “She's not the type to be put off by a few scars. I'll go get her. Let the two of you have a moment.”

Vader thinks he might be sick.


The Princess comes in with a cascade of brown hair that hangs like curtains around her face. It's straighter than Padme's was, but almost the same colour.

She's wearing simple utilitarian clothes and a stern expression.

Now that he knows Vader can see himself in her, and Padme.

Vader tries to smile at her. It fills him with joy and pain to know he has another child. And it shames him, because he's relieved that wise heads managed to hide her from him.
“So, you were raised by Bail. That—that's good. Your mother would have liked that. He was always a good friend to her. A good man.” Vader babbles trying to think of something to say.

Leia glares at him and sits down. “He was. Though, I don't know what Padme Amidala would have liked seeing as you killed her.”

Anakin looks away. “I have always been told that I killed my wife by strangling her, but if she lived long enough to name you both, I don't understand how that could have been. I know I am responsible for her death, it seems so clear, the Force tells me it is so, but I...I just wish I knew how she died.”

Leia shrugs. “I can't help you there. I always used to think I remembered my birth mother faintly. Beautiful and kind and very sad, but that can't be...”

Vader looks at her sharply. “There is no 'can't' with the Force. It touches us all differently. And you're strong in it. As strong as Luke.”

Leia nods. “I'm doing this for him. Not for you. Force knows he needs something to get him through the next few days.”

Vader nods and bites at his lip. “You'll look out for him? Won't you?” he asks “I don't mind dying, but I'm afraid of what will happen to Luke when I'm gone.”

Leia smiles “The troopers will look after him. And Korkie, the Jedi, Me and Han as well. He won't be alone. I promise.”

Vader nods. “Thank you.”

They sit in silence for a moment.

“Did you say she was your wife?” Leia finally asks bluntly.

Vader jerks his head up. “What?”
“Padme Amidala, did you say she was your wife?”

Vader nods. “Yes...?”

“But, there's no record of her ever being married! The father of her child was a great mystery at the time and widely speculated on. I remember my father telling a story about how there was all sorts of gossip about it.”

“We married in secret on the eve of the clone wars. I was 19 years old and thought I knew everything there was to know about love. She was 24 and lonely I think. Force knows what she saw in a brash young Jedi not even knighted but she saw something worthwhile and we married on the shores of the Lake Country in Naboo.” Vader explains.

Leia blinks in shock. “That's very young. For both of you, but especially you.”

Vader smiles, happy to remember those good days, and to tell his daughter about them. “Well, we were both prodigies in our fields. Neither of us ever had the chance to really be children...It was our joint rebellion, something just for ourselves when we'd spent our entire lives serving others.”

“Did anyone know?” Leia asks curiously.

Vader chuckles, smiling at the memories of his foolish youth seen through older wiser eyes. “We thought ourselves so terribly discreet, that it was such a great secret, but... I think, in truth those closest to both of us...or maybe just those closest to me suspected. I was never good at hiding my feelings. Those who knew me even a little bit could always read them in my face.”

Leia looks at him like she's weighing his soul.

“And after you killed her no one ever saw your face again. Except Luke. And now me. Until tomorrow. You were 19 when you married- Tell me: How old were you when you burned?” She demands ruthlessly.

Vader looks at her with watery eyes and answers honestly, because he owes her that if nothing else. “Twenty-two. You think you can fix everything wrong on all the world's at that age.”
Leia looks at him coldly, remembering her days on Hoth. “I suppose.”

“You know when your mother was pregnant I thought—”

“My mother was Queen Breha of the Royal House of Alderaan, my Father was the Royal Consort Bail Organa, Former Viceroy and Senator of Alderaan. They raised me, they loved me. They were my parents. You're just...where I came from. How I came to be. You're not my father.”

Vader is resigned to this news, he expected it. He looks away and swallows. “I'm glad you had a good home.” He tells her hoarsely. “A good family. Luke didn't get that. Even with his aunt and uncle...He was never a son to them.”

Leia looks down at her hands. She unclenches her fists. “I know.”

“If I'm not a father to you, does that mean Luke is not a brother?” Vader asks desperately.

“Luke is still my brother, my twin, because I choose to accept him as such.”

“Good.” Vader's relieved to hear it. “It's good you found each other. It's good...neither of you will be alone.”

Leia looks at the wall and swallows back her tears. “I wish my family was still alive to meet him. They'd have liked him, he's very sweet. Was Padme sweet? Father used to talk about her, but...not-not those sorts of stories.”

“She wasn't sweet. She was kind, and compassionate, but much too regal to be sweet.” Vader explains. “In some ways she was very like you. Though she was gentler than you are. She was a strong woman. Very brave, and righteous in her fury and resolve, but she gave the impression of softness, delicacy, even though she was a very formidable woman, you wouldn't know it to look at her.”

“She sounds like a lesson in contradictions.”

Leia looks at him thoughtfully. “I never understood how he could ever even think about forgiving you. It just didn't make sense after everything you'd done. But I see it now. He was right- there is still good in you.”

Vader smiles at his daughter. “It makes me very happy that you say that.”

Leia stands and dusts herself off. “Goodbye...Anakin Skywalker. I do hope you find peace.”

“Goodby, Leia. Thank you. I'm glad we got the chance to meet.”

Leia steps out and after a moment Luke steps in. Vader smiles at his son. “Thank you for convincing her. It- it makes me very happy to know that she exists, and that she is well and that she was loved.”


Vader blinks as his eyes fill and sniffs. “I want to ask a favour of you Luke.”

“Of course, anything.”

“Don't come to the trial.”

“What?”

“I don't want you to have to go through that. Stay home. Sit with your sister or her smuggler or anyone at all. Go to the Opera or the Mon Calamari ballet, just...don't come. Please.”

Luke clenches his fists. “You can't ask that of me.”
“I don't want you to have to watch me die.” Vader insists.

“Well, I can't not be there! I... can't not know. Not knowing would be worse. And you're talking like everything is already decided. It's a trial not a summary execution. We still have time.”

“You say that, my son, because you've never seen a trial like this. You don't know what it is to hate. Don't come. I'll say my goodbyes now.”

“Father!”


Luke shakes his head and Vader gives up. Luke is a bit like he once was, and a bit like his mother too. There's no changing his mind once he's made a decision.

Vader stands and wraps his arms around his son. “Goodbye my son. I have loved you more that anything or anyone else I have ever known. You deserve every happiness and I hope that you will get it.”

Luke just stands there leaning on his father's shoulder.

Vader quickly removes his breathing mask and kisses the side of his son's head. He replaces the mask and closes his eyes to try and memorize every detail of this moment.

He will never hold his son again, and will never see him again if Luke would only listen to reason.

After a long moment Luke step back and looks Vader in the face.

“Goodbye Father.”
The next day when he is led into court Vader sees immediately that Luke did not listen. He's sitting next to his sister. Vader takes a deep breath and braces himself for the storm of fury.

He is not disappointed.

The prosecution begins by speaking of the devastation he has wrought. His innumerable crimes, the men, women and children who died under his blade. The Jedi who he betrayed. The soldiers he executed, the prisoners who suffered in his custody.

He describes Vader's role in the creation of the Inquisitors, he describes the terrible training they were put through and the crimes they went on to commit.

In fact, he talks of horror for so long that horror becomes dull to listen to.

Vader waits and finally he hears what he has been waiting for.

“But that is not all! No, what you have heard are only the crimes he committed after earning his title as Darth Vader as a Lord of the Sith. You see, before then, he had another name and it was Anakin Skywalker! And it was Anakin Skywalker who led the Imperial troops into the Jedi Temple and personally saw to the slaughter of every sentient therein. It was Anakin Skywalker who betrayed his close friend, Padme Amidala, the former Senator of the Naboo, nearly nine months pregnant at the time and killed her! And he may have adopted the name Vader by then but I dare say it was Anakin Skywalker who tracked down her child, killed his guardians and kidnapped him.”

Vader sits straighter in his seat in surprise. They've added more charges. He fights the urge to turn and look to see how Luke reacts to them. He had hoped they'd have the decency at least to leave him out of this.

“Who is to say whether it was Vader or Skywalker who having kidnapped the boy on the orders of the Emperor imprisoned him aboard his Star Destroyer for years, keeping him from his mother's family who were not allowed to even see him? But I don't think any of us care who it was that
crushed Luke Amidala's throat during his 22nd standard year in an attempt to murder him and abandoned him alone and injured on the edges of civilized space.”

There are murmurs of shock and horror from the crowd. There have been rumours about that, of course. But, many would not have heard them, and even those who had would be shocked to hear them confirmed.

“We have the irrefutable evidence of all his crimes. For these and the uncounted others that remain secret- the People demand the death penalty.”

The Chief Judge nods and looks to Vader's defense counsel.

The Judge flips a page. “And how does the defendant plead?”

“Guilty on all charges, sir.”

The court murmurs in surprise. They had all expected some resistance. But, Vader is determined to see this through.

The Judge looks at Vader's lawyer. “Does the counsel for the defense have anything else to add?”

The lawyer stands. “I would like it noted for the record that my client has been cooperative with the court and the law at every stage and indeed requested that certain charges be added so as that those victims might know justice.”

“That Vader has committed crimes uncounted is beyond refutation, but!- the prosecution would have you believe that he is a monster, and he is not! He is a man. And as such his life is as valuable as any sentient's, and he deserves mercy.” He turns to the judge.

“I would like to humbly request that His Imperial Majesty, Luke Amidala be allowed to address the court as a character witness for the defendant.”

The Judges confer. The lead judge finally nods. “I'll allow it.”
Vader grits his teeth. He wishes Luke were anywhere but here.

With careful elegant steps, Luke walks to the front of the court.

He looks up at the judges. “I cannot pretend not to know what Anakin Skywalker has done. He has wreaked havoc across the galaxy for twenty years. But if we say sentient life has value then it must hold true that all sentient life has value, and if we say that the bonds of family and love are sacred things than surely that also holds true no matter whose family it is.

The charges brought against Lord Vader are true, on all counts- he has never denied them, and I do not pretend that he is a good man. In fact I know he isn't.

He killed my guardians, and he kidnapped me. But perhaps that was the will of the Force, and it was always to be my fate to serve as one more ornament in the late Emperor Palpatine's collection. Who knows? But I do know that if Vader had not done it someone else would have. I know that from the minute I entered his care he protected me from the Emperor's moods, and cruel games. I know that the Emperor would have tired of me long ago and given me to the Inquisitors whose methods you have just heard so meticulously described had it not been for Vader. I know he would have burned the Galaxy to save my life, and I know that when the day finally came that there were no more deals to be struck, when the Emperor could no longer be evaded or distracted and called me a traitor and ordered my death, it was Darth Vader who stood against Palpatine and killed him before he could touch me.”

Luke slowly sinks to his knees before the court and bows his head. “I know that I have no family except Vader since the day he took me from my home and I humbly beg the court to remember these things when you sentence him. I beg the court to show mercy and not to take the only father I have ever known from me, but grant him a life-sentence.”

Luke slowly rises to his feet and returns to his seat, his eyes locked straight ahead staring at nothing.

Vader bows his head and wonders what he ever did to deserve that sort of loyalty. Not enough. That's for certain.

The head judge nods. “Very well, if that's all...?”
The two sets of lawyers not.

The judge smiles and continues. “Than, we have before us the list of charges and evidence supporting them, as well as the testimony of the prosecuting counsel, the character witness for the defense and the statement from the defendant counsel. We will deliberate on this matter, and return our verdict after the recess.”

The judges files out but everyone else stays in their seat.

They wait for hours, which surprises Vader. He would have thought the decision would be quick. But, it seems Luke must have won over at least a few supporters to argue Vader's case.

And so they wait, and wait.

And wait.

The day is almost over when the judges return and file back into their seats.

The lead judge stands.

“After hearing the charges and reading the evidence brought before us, it is the view of this court that despite the arguments for the sanctity of sentient life, the crimes of the defendant, Anakin Skywalker, better known by his title Lord or Darth Vader are simply too heinous for him to be allowed to live.

However the assertions of his character witness, his cooperation with this court and the pleas for mercy, do not fall on death ears.

Therefore, Anakin Skywalker, known as Darth Vader, you are hereby sentenced to death. This sentence will be carried out in private and will recorded as proof of your death for the official record but this recording will not be made available to the public.

May you be received in mercy by whatever gods you believe in.”
The court explodes into a hubub and Vader is taken away for his final night on earth.

This time he is kept in a cell in the justice building and Luke is not allowed to visit him.

If Luke has any sense at all, Vader will never see his son again.

It was just one more cruel irony in a life that had been almost entirely made up of them, but for as long as he could remember Anakin Skywalker had been willing to die for some noble cause greater than himself. He hadn't particularly wanted to but, it was an outcome he had accepted and even expected.

As with so many of Anakin Skywalker's dreams, the attainment of his dream is a twisted parody of what he had once imagined.

With his death he will signal the ultimate victory of the rebel cause. By dying at the hands of the court in this way he will demonstrate their impartiality, their justice and even their mercy.

He enters in wrist binders and allows them to shuck him of his armour like an oyster from his shell. He sees that Luke is here, despite Vader's final request.

Luke's wearing a demure robe in his favourite shade of bright blue, Vader can't help but notice.

It makes something twist painfully in Vader's chest looking at him. He's once scoured (okay he'd paid someone to do it) all the textile markets in the Outer Rim looking for that particular shade. He knows it's Luke's favourite colour.

They've started calling that shade “Imperial Blue” on the Holonet.

He wishes he'd had the chance to tell Luke not to wear it. He doesn't want something that gives his son such joy to become tainted by it's association with this... macabre pantomime.

He looks away from Luke. He doesn't want this to be any harder for his son than it has to be.
He sits in the chair.

They read off his name *Anakin Skywalker*, and it feels like a balm to hear it and know it for his own, as though somehow he has won back pieces of the people he lost when he wore that name before- his mother, and Padme, and Ahsoka, and Yoda, even Qui-Gon Jinn, and... Obi-Wan, who had loved him so well and tried so hard and who Anakin had served so cruelly.

If there are murmurs of shock or dismay at the revelation of his scarred and mutilated body Vader does not hear them. He is already sinking back deeply into himself, to the well-spring of his being, to the Force that surrounds him and inhabits him and makes him who he is.

They read his crimes, and he listens with a grim sort of satisfaction as the massacre of the Jedi Younglings and the murder of Padme Amidala are listed towards the beginning of the long droning litany that encompasses almost every major galactic event of the last four decades.

Finally they announce his plea of guilty, and their acquiescence to the Emperor's plea for dignity and clemency in their carrying out of the order- the actual event is to be witnessed in person by only a few.

That being complete they announce the means by which the sentence will be carried out- he will be put into a medically induced coma and then injected with a poison that should kill him instantly.

Which is ridiculous and unnecessary pageantry as far as Vader is concerned. All they need to do to kill him is turn off his ventilator and he'll be dead with the quarter hour.

The Twi'lek doctor approaches and injects the sedative that will induce the coma.

He meets Luke's trembling but resolved gaze for a moment and closes his eyes, thumbing through all his most precious moments one last time.

*Luke has been with Vader's custody for months, and today is the first time he smiled at him.*

*He has a son. He has a son who lived. A boy with Padme's nose and Anakin Skywalker's chin and blazing blue eyes that are all his own. And he will find this boy and make sure nothing ever harms*
He holds his hand against Padme's stomach and feels a kick and they've made life together and it is more precious than anything Anakin has ever known.

Obi-Wan steps onto the transport and leans down to call after him on the day they saved the Chancellor. His eyes crinkle in relaxed delight. “Anakin!...May the Force be with You!”

He sees Padme by the door and she leaps into his arms and he twirls her... Ahsoka smiles at him and calls him Skyguy-They stand hand in hand in front of the lake and the holy man and they make a promise he's won the race he won he's free he'll never have to come back his mother smiles at him QuiGonJinn'seyescrinklewithkindnessandjoyThere'sanangelintheshoptheSpacerwasn'tlyinghecuts hispada

He is covered in his mother's blood she reaches up to touch his face:

“I'm so... proud of you Anakin. I love you.”

He hadn't deserved that before now.

He'd done nothing worthy of her pride. She shouldn't love him after what he'd done.

What he'd become.

But maybe, now....he'd be worthy-

Luke sits tall and resolute as the monitors flatline and then stands with all the regal power he can muster. He glances disdainfully around the room.
Everyone he looks at can't help but squirm and feel ashamed under the weight of a gaze that makes the shifting of tectonic plates seem flitty and unresolved.

After all, this is their Emperor who has called only for peace and understanding and decried hate and violence. This is their Emperor who surrendered his own power for an ideal they have failed to deliver...who has done everything he can for them.

This is their Emperor who went down on his knees and begged the court to spare the life of the man who raised him.

This is their Emperor, who they refused, and who they, despite themselves, do not really regret refusing.

Luke doesn't say a word as he leaves.

The entire room lets out the breath they've been holding once he does though.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you guys are okay after that...

Notes on this chapter: I originally wasn't going to have Leia and Vader ever meeting but it seemed like that was something you guys really wanted so I decided to include that. Hope it's not a disappointment. Also, weirdly I wrote Vader's death scene way before I wrote anything else in this part of the story. The rest of this chapter was a pain to write though. No one wanted to get along.

In other news, we've passed the 20 000 hits mark which is mind boggling. So Thanks dear readers for your continued interest in my wild ramblings.
Interlude with Luke II: Nightime Wanderings

Chapter Summary

Luke mourns his father, and starts packing up his things.

Chapter Notes

OMG TISSUE WARNING!!! Seriously, if you're not here for the sadness just skip this chapter. It's just Luke wandering around feeling sad.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Luke is stone faced the entire journey back to the Palace. He sits staring straight ahead at nothing, his shields so firm that Leia has no idea what he's thinking.

She reaches over and takes his hand but it sits limply in her own.

She can see the Stormtroopers shifting nervously. One of them (she's never developed Luke's knack for telling them apart when they're in uniform) leans over.

“Will he be alright Princess?” he asks, his voice full of genuine concern.

Leia squeezes her brothers hand and he just bows his head. “He will. I'll look after him.” she assures the bodyguard.

The trooper nods, and Luke shakes his hand free as they land at the Palace.

He strides off the transport and Leia has to jog to keep up with his longer legs.

“Luke, talk to me.” she insists.

Luke shakes his head mutely.

They're flanked on all sides by the Stormtroopers.

The Palace is large and labyrinthine and many clerks, courtiers and well wishers stop them to give Luke their condolences. He nods to accept them but doesn't say a word, his face a mask of Jedi calm.

Finally after what feels like an eternity they reach Luke's personal quarters.

The Stormtroopers hesitate seemingly torn between following them inside or not.

Leia shakes her head. “I've got him. Don't worry.”

The Stormtroopers nod and reluctantly stay outside.

The minute the door is closed Luke takes a deep breath and turns to his sister. “If it's all the same to you...I'd like to be alone for a minute.” He struggles to keep his voice level and his eyes from overflowing.

“Please, Luke...” Leia begs. “Let me help you, I know what you're feeling and I...I just don't think you should be alone right now.”

Luke nods and sits down on his couch. “I understand and I'm grateful Leia, but...I can-” his voice breaks, he swallows and blinks which causes a few tears to slip out. “I can feel how relieved you are that he's dead and it's not...it's not really what I want to feel right now.”

Leia's stunned. “I'm sorry.”

Luke puts his head in his hands. “It's not your fault.”
Leia sighs and leans down to kiss the top of her brother's head. “I'm just a comm away, if you need me.”

Luke nods and reaches out to squeeze her hand. “Thank you...sister.”

Leia nods and pauses at the door. “C-3T4 is here right?”

Luke smiles weakly up at her through his exhaustion and his tears. His habit of exasperation at the constant worry everyone has over his safety winning out momentarily out over what just happened. “Yes, Leia. I'm perfectly safe. Please go.”

“Alright...if you're sure.”

“I am.”

He waits until she's gone and pulls on some pajamas and crawls into bed. He cries silently and stares at the ceiling until he falls asleep, even though it's the middle of the day.

Luke wakes up to the dim lights of the night cycle. He turns his head to see C-3T4 sitting next to his bed in power saving mode.

Stealthily he slips out of bed and grabs a robe from his closet which he throws on over his pajamas.

He pads on bare feet out of his bedroom into the living area. He stands at the window for long moment looking out over the city.

He hears C-3T4's familiar footsteps. “Master Luke, you're up!” the droid exclaims. “Is there anything I can do for you?”

Luke shakes his head.
C-3T4 hesitates. “Han Solo stopped by while you were powered down, and the Princess...Korkie Kryze commed and the head of your Stormtrooper charity, as well as the Nabberries. They all wanted to know if you were alright and the Nabberries invited you to come stay with them, if you wanted.”

Luke leans his forehead against the window and doesn't say anything.

“I'm going to go for a walk.” he announces.

C-3T4 brightens. “That seems like an excellent idea! I hear that exercise it quite emotionally beneficial for organics!”


C-3T4 deflates. “Oh, well...if you're sure.”

“I am.” Luke sighs and opens the door to the hallway.

There's only one Stormtrooper on guard now. Detlan who, Luke can feel through the Force, is not surprised to see him.

Luke frowns and looks around. “Where are the other guards?”

“This entire section of the palace has been closed off, and they're patrolling the perimeter. No one in or out. There were some fears that the...” Detlan hesitates at the word but says it anyway, and Luke's grateful for that. He doesn't want euphemisms right now “...execution today might inspire those Imperial Extremists to make another attempt on your life.”

Luke is disappointed to hear this. “Oh. So, I should go back inside.”

The Stormtrooper shrugs. “You can move within this area, just don't leave it. It's in lock-down technically.”
Luke nods. “In that case, there's somewhere I'd like to go.”

Detlan falls into step next to him.

The palace feels very strange deserted in the dark. But, not in a bad way. It's peaceful in a way it doesn't usually feel. The Force feels calm, and lighter than before. Luke wonders if this was the way the building had been back when it was Temple, not a palace.

“Did I ever thank your Majesty for releasing me from prison?” Detlan asks.


They walk in silence until Luke reaches a familiar door.

Detlan hesitates. “Are you sure you want to go in there?”

Luke nods. “Someone needs to go through my father's things, and I don't want...” he trails off. “I just don't want anyone else doing it.”

Detlan nods. “I think there are some cargo crates in there already. We shooed some workers out when we shut down the area.”


“Would you like me to come in with you, Your Majesty?”

Luke shakes his head. “I just want to be alone for now.”

“I understand sir- For what it's worth?” he adds tentatively.

“I don't know whether Vader was a good man or not.” Detlan begins. “But, he was a good commander. He didn't pull the stupid stunts other officers sometimes did, and when things went wrong it was the men in charge who paid- not the grunts on the ground. I didn't know him personally, but I was proud to serve in the 501st. It's a real shame what happened to him, and I'm genuinely sorry for your loss. There'll never be another like him.”

Detlan is genuinely sorry, Luke can feel it in the Force. He's sad that his commanding officer is dead, and he upset by the callousness the courts have shown Luke.

Luke nods and takes a few deep breath. “Thank you, Detlan.” he says, his voice cracking. “It really does mean a lot.”

Detlan nods and salutes, pleased to have helped, even in just a little way. “It's nothing, sir. I hope you know that all the boys are thinking of you today.”

Luke closes the door behind him and turns to look at his Father's rooms in the palace.

To call them minimalist would be an understatement. There's barely anything in his office except for the plain black furniture, and there's not even much of that, just two chairs and a desk.

Luke sighs, Detlan was right and there are a number of hover crates sitting by the door no doubt waiting for tomorrow when the rooms will be cleared out.

Luke pulls three of them over to the desk and designates one for items to be destroyed, one for items to be turned over to the new government and one for items Luke wishes to keep.

An hour later the only box with anything in it is the one for the government which is beginning to be piled high with data chips, and datapads that chronicle Vader's running and maintenance of the Imperial fleet.

With a deep breath Luke enters his father's personal chambers which are even more barren than the office since the Medpod had been relocated to his cell.

There's hardly anything here.
Luke hears a beep and then a small light turns on.

MT-9 flies out of the darkness to hover near him.

He puts his arms around her.

“Did he have anything that was his own? Or did it all belong to the Empire?” he asks her resting his forehead against her dome, screwing his eyes shut against the burning in his eyes.

She trills and flies over to the side of the room where an arm chair sits abandoned. It would have been hidden by the Med-pod when it was still in here, Luke realizes.

Curious he follows the droid. She's pointing at a drawer in the wall.

There's no way to open it except the Force.

Luke frowns when it slides open to reveal two memory cubes, one slightly bigger than the other.

“What do you want to bet MT- are they ship manifests or troop records?”

MT-9 makes a sad little beep.

Luke's face falls. “I'm sorry. I know you miss him too.”

He twists at the cubes fruitlessly.

“Urhg, how to you open these to view the data!?” he shouts in frustration.

Luke sighs and reaches out to try and open them with the Force. To his surprise it takes only a light
touch with the Force and the cube opens out into many piece of data circling around a glowing centre.

He selects one and is surprised when the projector brings up a holorecording of his own face, several years younger, and consumed with serious concentration.

*Your move Father.*

*The view tilts down to show a Holo-chess board.*

*And one of Vader's hands reaches in to move a piece.*

“*Aha!*” Luke's face fills the screen again this time beaming with delight as he moves his own piece in response. “*I win!*”

*His past self laughs. “I've never won against you before!!!” he crows delightedly. “The student surpasses the master!”*

*“Well done, my son” Vader's vocoder rumbles from off camera.*

Luke frowns and closes the clip, flipping to another data point.

This time it opens with all his school records everything from the tutor droids he'd had when he was young to the correspondence courses he'd taken with various academies and universities after he was kidnapped.

He swallows and opens up another piece of data.

This time the face that appears is so young it takes Luke a moment to realize he's looking at himself.

*Another data-file- holorecording of his coronation*
Another- him at the opening of the Hyperdrome

Another- a formal complaint complete with attached security footage, against an Imperial Prince abusing his authority in the Outer Rims. Luke gasps when he sees the footage. It's from when he swooped in to rescue Han and Leia.

He twirls the whole mess of data-points and selects another at random.

This one is an article written only a few weeks ago talking about Luke's charity work.

The cube is full of data-files of every type about him. Holorecording, grade reports, aptitude tests, public interviews, and even security footage. Vader had obviously been gathering these little pieces right up until he was arrested, the data-files even go as far back as when Luke first arrived and spent most his time hiding from his father.

He closes the cube.

Nervously he opens the smaller one. This one expands into fewer data-files.

He selects one.

It's an old and slightly corrupted holo-recording file from what must have been the old Senate.

A girl with a painted face is addressing them in a heavily affected Coruscanti accent.

Luke smiles to himself. It's not hard to spot a Nabooan Queen.

He flips another data-point open. It's a news clip about the heroics of Padme Amidala during the Clone Wars.

Luke's heart sinks. He flips another open. He recognizes this holo-recording.
It's the state funeral of Padme Amidala. Young, beautiful, pregnant and dead with flowers in her hair.

Luke sniffs and closes the cube. He's seen enough. His father had obviously tried to scrape together a few files and recording from public and imperial archives to remember his wife by.

MT-9 makes a small sad sound.

“Yeah” Luke agrees, clutching the data-cube close, trying to keep his shoulders from shaking.

“Did he keep these with him whenever he changed quarters?” Luke asks.

MT-9 whistles in the affirmative.

He pockets the cubes and looks around the empty room, trying to imagine what it must have been like trapped in by his own body and the machines that kept him alive, living in pain and regret with just a few cold images of the people he loved to keep him company.

He puts his head in his hands and sobs.

MT-9 circles him and her legs reach out to try and soothe.

“I don't know what to do.” Luke admits to the droid that kept all his father's secrets. “He's gone. He's dead and there's just...there's just a hole in the universe where he used to be. And it hurts.”

The droid chimes a small tune and projects a holovideo.

“I'm doing this for him. Not for you. Force knows he needs something to get him through the next few days.” Leia says.

Vader nods and bites at his lip. “You'll look out for him? Won't you?” he asks “I don't mind dying,
but I'm afraid of what will happen to Luke when I'm gone.”

Leia smiles “The troopers will look after him. And Korkie, the Jedi, Me and Han. He won't be alone. I promise.”

Vader nods. “Thank you.”

Luke laughs and wipes at his tears. “I guess that explains where my father got the footage from you dirty little sneak.”

MT-9 burbles in assent.

Luke sits there in the dark. He opens the strange date-cube and flicks through the files.

He sighs.

“He wasn't a very good father, was he?” he asks, voice breaking.

MT-9 makes a small angry noise.


MT-9 chirps. She remembers.

“Did I ever thank you for that?”

MT-9 burbles in the negative.

“Thank you...Han came and got me...after what happened. He'd only met me once but he came anyway.”
Luke's eyes fill with tears and he spins the data-cloud again before he closes it. After a moment he opens the second smaller data-cube and selects something.

The light from Padme Amidala's funeral paints the room in shades of blue.

Luke sits in father's chair next to his father's droid and watches his mother's funeral.

“Which do you think he'd prefer MT-9? A Funeral on Naboo or on Tatooine?...Though I don't suppose they'd let me bury him next to their queen, and he probably wouldn't want to be on Naboo if he wasn't next to her. The Jedi used to burn their dead... maybe that's what he'd want.”

MT-9 makes a small sad noise.

Luke wishes he'd known his mother. He wishes he'd known his father better. He wishes a lot of things.

He takes a long jagged breath. “I guess it doesn't matter, funerals are for the living after all...but if the assassins do get me MT-9, can you have C-3T4 tell them that I want a funeral like hers?...with flowers, lights and my favourite blue cloak.”

MT-9 squeaks in alarm and flies down to fuss over him.

“I'm not saying I'm going to die! I'm just saying, just in case. I never thought to ask Father what he-”

He can't stop crying but that's alright. He wraps his arms around MT-9. Sometimes crying can help.

Tonight, he cries for Anakin Skywalker and who he was and who he could have been. He cries for Padme Amidala and all the hopes and dreams she'd had which had died with her. He cries for the Aunt and Uncle who'd loved him and who Vader had murdered. He cries for himself.
Tomorrow he will get up in the morning, let Leia sit with him and send Korkie a message to reassure him that Luke is alright.

He'll wear black, say the right things and let the people who love him help him through this difficult time.

But, not tonight.

Tonight he'd rather be alone with the memories of a dead man.

Tomorrow he'll pick himself up, dust himself off and persevere like his grandmother before him had done.

But tonight he mourns.

Chapter End Notes

What's this? Early update!? Yeah, I had the week off, and am bored/will be busy tomorrow so I'm putting this up now.

Yes, Vader had a mildly creepy Luke scrapbook, because he's THAT sort of dad.

I promise the next chapter is much lighter, Luke just needed some time to be sad. In fact as a teaser I will say now that next update includes among other things: Luke jumping out a window, the return of Korkie, Han and Luke bestie bro hijinks, and a hungover Luke yelling at people because they're thinking too loud. So just hold on until Tuesday buddies, it gets better.
Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It's not difficult to engineer it so that Luke is never alone for more than a few minutes in the weeks following his father's death. As the Emperor, he's rarely alone much anyways, and it does not take much tweaking for Leia to make sure that he isn't alone at all.

Usually it's as simple as sending Han in his general direction if he has a gap in his schedule that Leia is herself too busy to fill. Which kills two birds with one stone since it keeps Han too occupied to get involved in anything illegal or dangerous.

The long promised election, the first in over twenty years is in progress and Leia is right in the middle of the political process supporting Gial Ackbar's campaign for Prime Minister, so her own time is at something of a premium.

Unlike both her brother and her lover who find themselves at loose ends for the first time in a very long time.

All of the political parties had contacted Luke for an endorsement and all were refused.

Leia isn't sure whether or not that's a sign of progress but it seems like the sort of thing Luke would make a point to do, so she's taking it as such.

He's meditating again as well, which would be reassuring except he's shielded his feeling so strongly since their father was executed that she can no longer depend on the Force to give her any insight into what her brother is feeling.

For all Leia knows he's been spending his meditation contemplating the best ways to wreak a
bloody vengeance on the galaxy.

Having spent a solid afternoon trying to crack her brother's cold Jedi facade to no result she flops face downward onto her bed in defeat.

Han laughs at her, because he's Han and he's like that. Impossible man. Apparently she inherited her mother's bad taste in men and oh, yes that is definitely a sobering thought. Thanks for that brain.

She props herself up on an elbow and glares at him. “You could be more help you know! You've known him the longest out of any of us! How did you cheer him up on Onderon?”

Oh, and now Han is sad. Wonderful, that's just what she needs.

He grimaces. “He was never sad on Onderon, Princess. He seemed perfectly content to lounge in the sun and tend his garden for the rest of his life.”

She scowls at him. “You're useless.” She drops her head back down onto the bed. “Do you think maybe if we got him some plants-..?” she mumbles into the duvet.

Han snorts and lightly pats her hair (she has warned him before about messing it up once it's been styled for the day).

“I think he just needs time, Leia. You can't rush him.” Han informs her consolingly.

Leia groaned. “But, he's so unhappy. I can't just sit by and do nothing.”

“You are certainly not doing nothing, but you know Luke, he's very sensitive to the feelings of others and he knows how literally everyone else in the galaxy felt about Vader so he's...not wanting to make a commotion of his grief. He'd have to be blind and deaf and stupid not to see that you are poised and ready to help if he gives you the slightest hint that he wants or needs it.”

Leia scowls. “But he does need it, he just won't ask for it.”
Han pretends to be unaffected. “He has the droids, and the Stormtroopers. Plus, the Mandalorian's coming back soon.”

Despite what Han would like to pretend he is worried.

Not just about Luke, though he is worried about Luke, a little bit, but honestly Leia's right: Han has known him the longest, and if Luke can dust off attempted murder, kidnapping and a coup conducted in his name than he can come back from this, maybe not unaltered, but definitely whole. He doesn't blame people for worrying, but he knows that under those soft smiles and talk of peace is something eternal and unbreakable. The Emperor is much much stronger than his looks.

No, Han's worried about the galaxy, or more specifically his place in it. He's thrived on chaos and found a niche for himself in a galaxy at war. Now that they're at peace he doesn't know what he's going to do.

He doesn't remember peace, and has no idea what it might look like. Chewie insists they'll be able to make a honest living but Han's not so sure, for all he's joked about Leia liking scoundrels he's honestly not sure he knows how to be anything but one. Which doesn't bode well for the future especially with circumstances being what they are.

He stares at the ceiling. “We could tell him. I bet he'd be downright gleeful about buying baby clothes.” he suggests.

Leia collapses next to him. “It's too soon.” she replies.

“He's a damn mind reader” Han points out. “We leave it much longer and he'll find out on his own.”

Leia shakes her head. “It's too soon. I don't want to jinx it.”

Han sighs. “Okay...we could get married. Luke seems like the kind of guy who'd get a kick out of planning a wedding. That might cheer him up.”

Leia smacks him. “Please, he's already got to plan the ceremonial transfer of power, with
delegations from thousands of worlds wanting to be included. If planning things made him happy, he’d be happy by now.”

Han stares at the ceiling his mind nothing but white noise. “Uh, so are you saying you do want to get married..? Cause that was unclear.”

Leia smacks him again and sits up. “No! You and I both know that’s not the right path for us.”

“Maybe it could be.”

Leia looks down and him and leans in for a kiss. It's sweet and gentle and unlike them. “No. I love you Han Solo, but I could never be your wife.”

Something twists painfully in his chest. “Okay, can't blame a guy for askin’.”

Leia smiles at him. “No you can't, and I like that you asked.”

Han rolls his eyes. “Women!” he gripes.

She laughs a little.

Luke drinks his caf and looks out the window in his rooms.

His secretary is managing his comm because it was just pinging non-stop with messages of condolence and support from just about everyone he’d ever given the frequency to.

The office is full of flowers, though where anyone managed to find flowers on Coruscant is a mystery.

It's a strange comfort that everyone is compassionate to his point of view even if they don't share it.
C-3T4 trundles over.

“Korki Kryze, Head of Klan Kryze, Mand'alor of the Mandalorian peoples and diaspora is here to see you, Your Imperial Majesty.”

Luke nods and C-3T4 opens the door.

Korkie is standing there in plain dark clothing and Luke realizes he's never seen his friend in anything but armour or the costume of an Imperial prince. These clothes leave the scar on his neck bare, unlike what the Empire used to make him wear.

Luke raises an eyebrow. “What's this about Korkie? You should know you don't have to go through official channels to see me...”

Korkie stands ramrod straight at attention. “That may be the case, but I'm here in my official capacity as cultural leader for my people.”

“Oh...that's official now?”

Korkie nods sharply, hands still folded behind his back as he stands at attention. “I have the honour to be Mandalore the Unconquered, the 31st Mand'alor of Manda'yaim.

Luke gestures to an empty chair and takes a seat.

“Well, then take a seat.”

Korkie smiles stiffly and does. “I don't know if you are aware of this Your Majesty-”

Luke gives him a withering stare. “Official Mand'alor or not, you don't need to pretend like we didn't spend four days hiding behind a sofa together, Korkie.”
“Sorry, Luke, but this is important, and I'm here as a delegate for my people. As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted: You're incredibly popular with Mandalorians, did you know that? Under the Empire returning to our old warrior was necessary as matter of survival, but, that doesn't mean we've forgotten about what my Aunt, the Duchess Satine, was trying to achieve. You're policies, and your commitment to her pacifist ideals have created new opportunities throughout the galaxy. It's given everyone another chance at a better world. So, the Mandalorian people feel we owe you a huge debt of gratitude.”

Luke knows where this is going now and smiles. “And the Mandalorian people do so hate to be in anyone's debt.”

Korkie grins. “*Exactly*. So I am here to begin settling it. We've held free elections for the first time in years, and my planet has a new Prime Minister. I have been officially proclaimed Mand'alor and Mandalorian traditional culture is no longer being suppressed. None of which would have been possible without you. So, really, it is a debt we will never be able to full repay.

Now, the prime minister wishes me to present these gifts to you during the ceremonial transfer of power which I will be taking part in as the representative for Mandalorians everywhere, but I thought I should show them to you now, so you wouldn't feel you had to accept them or risk an incident.”

On Mandalore the only resources that remain to us are ourselves. The most precious thing to any Mandalorian is our Clan and our culture. Therefore the government of Mandalore offers to have you adopted into the Clan of your choosing. As a member of a Mandalorian Clan you would be a full citizen of Mandalore and a dishonourable attack against you would be tantamount to an act of war against your Clan.

Of course, I know that your own culture and family is very important to you, and no offense would be taken should you quietly reject this offer. But the Mandalorian government and it's people very much wished to make a gesture to try and convey the extent of the respect and gratitude that we hold for you.

And this is the greatest honour we have. Really, the only honour we have.”

Luke gapes. “I wouldn't think the Mandalorians would consider me their sort of person. I'm a pacifist and you're a warrior culture! I don't know what to say.”

“I mean, people probably *are* much more willing to offer this gift to you after seeing you with your lightsaber in the Hyperdrome. Mandalorians have great respect for pacifists so long as they see that
you as having the strength to put your weapon down, as opposed to being too weak to pick it up.” Korkie admits. “Which brings me to the other gift...”

He opens his bag and very reverently places what is unmistakably the hilt of a lightsaber onto Luke’s desk.

“Clan Viszla begs you to accept this weapon as a gesture of peace.”


Korkie grimaces. “Well, presumably they got it from a Jedi they killed...”

Luke picks it up and ignites it and then nearly drops it in surprise.

Rather than a beam of light it seemed to produce a slice of darkness outlined in only the faintest glow. He closes it and puts it back on the table.

He looks at Korkie in amazement.

“I know this blade. This is the Vizsla Darksaber! Your father wielded it and his father before him... for generations! He died on it's blade! And your Aunt as well. I had no idea Mandalore even still had it, I thought it was lost when the Shadow Collective took control of the planet.”

Korkie nods. “Terrible things have been done with this weapon, but the men and women of Clan Vizsla who fought with it have also used it to perform amazing heroics. It's a symbol of the old ways, of Mandalore's ancient hatred for the Jedi. That's why we want to give it to you, because those days are gone and Mandalore can't fight for a future alone, so if you wield it, maybe it will one day come to symbolize Mandalore's commitment to it's allies and our desire to co-exist peacefully with the other sentient races of this galaxy.”

Luke smiles sadly to himself. “You know...Obi-Wan Kenobi said something very similar to me when he gave me my father's old lightsaber: Terrible things were done with it, but amazing noble ones as well.”
Korkie gazes at the weapon on the table. “That's the way of every weapon I believe. Good and bad, but you can't escape either.”

Luke lets his hand hover over the hilt of the sword, hesitates and then shakes his head.

“I'm not very good with a lightsaber, yet. I accept it, but I would like Clan Vizsla to keep it for me. Until I'm skilled enough to be worthy of such a weapon.”

Korkie smiles. “Alright, do you mind if I present it to you in the ceremony? So you can publicly accept the gift? Clan Vizsla would like that.”


“Thank you. My cousin is a terror, and was very insistent that I give that to you. So, that makes my life easier...” Korkie says in obvious relief, before looking at Luke expectantly and then down at the citizenship paperwork.

Luke bites his lip. “If I'm adopted into Clan Kryze...do I have to change my name?” he finally asks.

Korkie thinks about it. “If you are adopted into Clan Kryze, you would be allowed to use Kryze as your surname if you liked, but...I don't think you would have to change your own.”

Luke considers it. “Names are important on Tatooine.” he explains.

“Then you definitely wouldn't have to change it, but it's your choice Luke.” Korkie tells him. “You're my closest friend and I know this time has been hard for you. I just wanted to do something to show you that you're not alone. I care, and thousands of people across the galaxy care.”

Luke looks at the paperwork.

“What does it mean-” he asks. “To be a member of a Mandalorian Clan?”
“It means you're one of us. That you have a place in the galaxy that cannot be taken away and protection from people who might try and kill you or control you.”


“What about her?”

“By Mandalorian custom, will she still be my sister?”

“Sure, she won't be a member of the Clan, but she's still your sister.”

Luke thinks about it and then reaches out to sign the paperwork.

Korkie grins and leans across the desk to grasp Luke's hands. “I'm so glad you decided to accept. I owe you so much. I'm so happy I've finally been able to do something for you in return. Your sister will be pleased too. She promised your father she'd make sure you'd be alright.”

Luke looks up sharply. “I wouldn't have thought you cared about what promises were made to my father.”

Korkie looks at him blankly for minute, then sneers and looks away with a scowl. “Of course I don't and you know that! He was an aruetti shabuir osik. I hated the man and really really really really wish you would have let me try and kill him, but, I admire your sister very much and unlike Vader I have am capable of honour and decency, so I can respect the vow she made to a dead man, even if I don't care for the man she made it to.”

Luke glares at him. “He was my father and he's dead. Have some respect.”

Korkie crosses his arm and stares Luke down. “I do respect him. Darth Vader was as great a warrior as ever lived, but I'm not about to lie about who the man was. Just because he's gone now doesn't change what he did. But, I shouldn't have said anything, the courts gave him the justice they thought he deserved and he died well. It's done. The things he did to me don't matter anymore.”
Luke opens his mouth to argue, but can't help his gaze from flicking to the faint scar that still showed on Korkie's neck from where he'd tried to kill himself in order to destroy some of the hold the Empire had over the Mandalorians.

Korkie sighs and hold his hand up. “I'm sorry, I told myself before I came that I would be compassionate about your loss.”

Luke looks at him mutely. He runs his hand along the hilt of the darksaber in front of him.

“I'm sorry too.” Luke apologizes. "I was trying to pick a fight. I know how much you hate him and you're the only one I knew wouldn't lie. You're the only person I've seen in weeks where that wasn't the first thing out of your mouth wasn't some false condolence, and I'm sick of them.”

Korkie looks at him sympathetically. “I don't mind. After all you're a Mandalorian now. Picking fights is kind of what we do.”

That startles a chuckle out of Luke and he looks up. “I assure you Korkie, I'm not going to be that type of Mandalorian.”

Korkie just smiles. “Sure you're not, Your Imperial Highness.”

Luke swipes the saber off the table and shakes it at him. “I will use this to kill you, I swear.”

Korkie feigns nonchalance. “No can do my friend. You're a pacifist, remember?”


Korkie laughs and nods. “I'll keep that in mind.”


Korkie smiles smugly. “Why thank you. It's a family trait.”
“Really? In my family as well.”

“Oh, I know- I’ve met your sister.”

Luke laughs. He doesn't think he's laughed since his father died.

Korkie stands and puts the datapads and saber back into his bag.

“I'm sorry I was gone.” he apologizes. “Someone from Clan Wren stabbed someone from Clan Fett, and House Vizsla was threatening to start a blood feud over the whole thing.”


.“I'll see you for the ceremony, I guess.”

Luke gives a little wave. “Yeah, see you then.”


A government envoy visits to inform him that since he retains a few executive powers within the governmental structure, they would prefer if he kept a security detail with him and lived in some sort of designated official residence- off world of course. No one wants to give the impression he still has any real power, except in cases of a political emergency.

He nods and murmurs his assent.

The Ceremonial transfer of Power takes the entire day. Luke wears white and silver to it, just like
his coronation. In some way it's amazing.

People cram into the square in front of the palace. Dozens of people from various charities thank him for his work, and he understands maybe for the first time, why this was worth fighting for when he sees the elected representatives from nearly a thousand planets lined all in a row.

Many of them present him with formal gifts. It's overwhelming because almost every single one of these gifts is as significant to the people giving them as the darksaber was to Korkie and Mandalore. Honestly, he doesn't know what he's going to do with them all. It's not like he has somewhere to put them now that he's moving out of the palace. Unless you count his place on Onderon, which he supposes is still there.

It's wonderful because all he can feel in the Force is the hope and love of the people in the square and their bittersweet sadness at the end of his reign and their excitement at the first term of office for their newly elected officials.

Mon Mothma looks radiant in her joy, and Luke smiles next to her, his hand clasped in hers as they raised them together to the cheering of the crowd.

Then there's a party with the best Corellian brandy Luke has ever tasted and which he planned on getting thoroughly drunk on until Leia swooped in and set Han on babysitting duty. Which was unfair. Han had been quiet lately, and Luke could feel through the force that something was bothering him.

Luke stands next to him as Han leans on a railing looking out over the crowd in the grand hall of the Palace.

“This was once the Jedi temple.” Luke tells Han. “Terrible things happened here.”

Han shrugs and swirls his glass of whiskey. “Yeah.” he takes a swig of his drink. “And now one hell of a party is happening here.” Han straightens.

Luke glances at him, and Han sighs, relenting. “Terrible things happen everywhere kid, but today we're at a party. Let's eat, drink and be merry!”

“For tomorrow we may die.” Luke finishes the expression.
Han scowls. “Ye know, if you're just gonna be a kill joy, I should just let you get drunk on Corellian brandy and the royal dignity be damned. From what I remember it makes you a lot more chipper.”

Luke smiles and snatches a glass from a passing waiter, which he sips in a responsible and grown up manner.

“Why thank you Han, for realizing I am a grown man. How thoughtful of you.”

Han rolls his eyes. “Don't blame me. I'm just doing your sister's bidding.”

“Hmm. I know. Shes' really worried about me.”

Han grunts. “I told her not to be. You're a hell of a lot tougher than you look...maybe it's the hormones.”


Han turns to look at him bleakly. “Yup. She's pregnant.”

Luke gapes and grins at the same time. He slaps Han's shoulder. “Han! That's amazing! You must be thrilled!...You don't look thrilled, why aren't you thrilled?”

Han shrugs. “She doesn't want to marry me.”

Luke deflate a little. “Oh, I'm sorry... Are you still together?”

“Yeah. At this point I couldn't leave her if I tried.”

Han turns back around to watch the party, he points out Leia who manages somehow to look efficient and competent even in a traditional Alderaani Royal Party Dress.
“But, c'mon. *Look* at her! What's a guy like me got to offer the kid? Now that the Empire's done they don't need smugglers anymore.”

Luke leans against him. “You're more than a smuggler Han. You're a good man, and you'll try. Trying's enough.”

Han takes another drink. “Not always.”

“You care. Not a lot of people do. Even about things no one else bothers with. Like me, I don't know anyone else who would have swooped down to save an Imperial Prince lost and alone in the Outer Rims.”

Han waves him off. “C'mon kid, that doesn't count. You paid me.”

“No, it counts. Plenty of other smugglers would have taken my money and dumped me somewhere on my own. You made me go to a doctor and kept me from getting swindled.”

“I also fucking you. Let's not leave that out. Not exactly my finest moment.”

Luke leans back against the railing and grins impishly. “No, that's definitely true, your technique did improve with time.”

Han looks affronted and Luke laughs.

Han shakes his head. Luke's eyes are still the bluest he's ever seen.

“You are something else kid, you know that?”

Luke cocks his head and looks around. “This giant party thrown in my honour had given me a bit of an idea about that, yeah. Jury's back: I am amazing.”
Han snickers. “Particularly after half a glass of Corellian brandy.”

Luke wrinkles his nose. “I haven't had that much.”

They lean on the railing together watching the party swirl beneath them.

“I have to leave soon.” Luke tells Han mournfully.

Han nods. “You decided where you wanna go yet?”

Luke sighs. “There's Naboo, or Mandalore, or setting up a house pretty much anywhere on the Mid-Rim. It's got to be big enough to house the bodyguards.”

“So your house on Onderon is out then?”

“Yup” Luke pops the p.

Han frowns. “Leia and I should buy a house, I guess. If we're having a kid.”

“I hear Yavin IV is nice. I was thinking of buying a place there myself. You two could move in next door.”

“I'll tell Leia.” Han grunts.

Luke nods. “Yes, by order of the Emperor! You two should move in next door to me on Yavin.”

Han smiles. “Even she can't refuse her Emperor!” he jokes. “You know, I find it hard to picture you lounging about on Yavin surrounded by your loyal bodyguards and running your charities long distance. It just doesn't compute.”

Luke shrugs. “What else should I be doing?”
“I dunno, *something*. I could help if you want.”

Luke turns to smile at him in a way that is unnervingly like his sister when she's already gotten Han to agree to a favour and she's about to tell him she wants him to come and live on Hoth.

“You know, Han. I was hoping you would say that.”

Han looks nervously at the Emperor who is grinning at him in a most disconcerting way.

“I got a bad feeling about this.”

Luke is still smiling in that off-putting way and takes another gulp of brandy. “Aw, Han, don't say that.”

When they tell Leia the next morning what they've got planned she is not happy.

She glares. Han thinks there's probably something wrong with him that he finds her glares so damn sexy.

“First of all, this explains that clip the tabloids had this morning of Luke getting the giggles and not being able to stop.”

Luke looks up from where he was resting his head against the table. “In my defense- Korkie was trying to dance with a Gungan!” he groans and goes back to his quiet contemplation of the floor.

“Second, this is a stupid laser brained scheme on a number of levels and it's not even necessary!” Leia continues, ignoring her brother (and his hangover).

Luke raises a hand without raising his head. “It is so necessary! Do not doubt your Emperor! Or I
Leia levels Han with a very disappointed look. “This is why I told you to keep him away from Corellian brandy!”

“Well, if you wanted someone who'd actually do that you shouldn't have sent your pet scoundrel!”

Leia looks hurt. “Your not a pet Han don't be dramatic!”

Han glares at her.

She glares back. God, she is beautiful when she angry.

Luke groans and clutches his head. “Please stop thinking so loud! Both of you! Force, it must be exhausting to be you. Why do you have so many feelings?”

Leia takes a deep breath and turns back to her brother. “You must realize this isn't necessary! Vader's body has already been released to you by the courts. There's no need to steal it! I would have thought yesterday would have given you an idea of the respect and admiration you command! But apparently you still haven't gotten it through your thick skull that if you want something all you have to do is ask. There is no need to kidnap yourself or steal corpses or any of this nonsense!”

Luke peers up at her from beneath his hair. “As you said, I can't steal the corpse because it's technically already in my custody, and it's impossibly for someone to kidnap themselves, don't be absurd Leia! You're not making sense!”

Leia huffs, and turns sad eyes on Han. “Han what if you get caught? Or die?! The baby and I will be all alone!”

Luke waves his hand again. “As you said, I'm the Emperor and I can get away with lots if I just ask nicely.”

“Can't you just have him cremated?” Leia asks in exasperation. “I think that's what they Jedi used to do.”
“I can but I don't want to.”

Leia puts her hand to her forehead. “Look, do what you want, but try not to get Han killed. Mine is a delicate condition.”

Luke snorts from where he's still resting on the table. “You've never been delicate a day in your life big sister.”

Leia sniffs. “I'm sure as an infant I could have been described that way!”

Luke props his head on his hand and considers her before shaking his head. “Noooo, I think I distinctly remember you beating me up in utero.”

Leia narrows her eyes at him. “Don't test me Luke, I'd say I'm being very generous in letting you take my-my... my Han Solo on a whirlwind laser brained scheme.”

“But, Leia.” Luke whines. “If he didn't do my laser brained scheme he'd just come up with his own!”

“I said alright, okay? Yes, little brother you have my permission to take the future father of my unborn child on a joyride through the galaxy is that what you wanted to hear?”


“What.”

“Could you maybe make sure that Korkie knows I haven't actually been kidnapped when this goes down? Just so he doesn't ya know... kill anybody.”

Leia looks even less happy now. “No! Deal with him yourself you little coward.”
Luke winces at the noise and holds up his hands in defeat.

“Okay. Okaaay. I'll comm him. Later. After I have a nap.”

Han meets Chewie at the docks. It was one of the few places on Coruscant where a Wookie could pass without comment.

Chewie looks at him expectantly.

“Now, don't give me that. This is really an act of patriotism.” Han explains.

“You know how I feel about patriotism!” Chewie whines.

“Well, them, let's call it a personal favour and zip your lip.”

Chewie pouts but doesn't comment further.

They rent a transport and fly to one off the entrances of the palace on the detention level.

“You stay here Chewie, but be ready to take off the second I get back.” Han suggests. “If someone notices what we're taking the last thing we need is for them to remember seeing a Wookie hanging around.”

“That's speciest!” Chewie grumbles.

Han ignores him and hops of the transport following the instructions Luke gave him.

Two right, a left and a completely inconspicuous door with a keypad, that only Luke is supposed to have the code for.
Han takes a deep breath and presses the numbers.

The door opens and he steps into the room.

It's mostly empty except for a sealed black crate on a hover skid. Han grabs the handle and tows it out, locking the door behind him.

The entire walk back to the landing bay he's just one turned head away from confessing it all and throwing himself on the mercy of whoever catches him.

But, no one does.

He gets the hover-crate to the transport without any trouble at all. No one even bats an eye.

That thrill of getting away with something. It never gets old.

Chewie looks at the crate as though it will spontaneously combust at any minute.

“C'mon Chewie.” Han protests. “Don't be like that. We've transported way weirder cargo than this.”

“Do you think I could pry it open and spit on his face? Just a little bit? For Karshykk?” Chewie whines hopefully.

Han grimaces as they speed back towards the docks. “No. Luke is a mind-reader Chewie. He would know. Besides, the man's not getting any deader.”

Chewie pouts.

Han grits his teeth. “You're only acting this way because you've never seen the Emperor cry. I swear that's the real reason he ended up in charge of the galaxy and why everyone does what he
wants. It's like... *the worst.* Like watching an Ewok-puppy getting crushed by an Imperial Walker.”

Chewie just crosses his arms and continues sulking.

Luke gets off the very nice ship the Commonwealth lent him and smiles at his mother's family. Detlan, Feens and Hidenoff have agreed to accompany him into not-quite-exile as his bodyguards. He feels a bit guilty swooping down on the Naberries like this with full entourage in tow but...well.

The entourage isn't exactly optional and the Naberries haven't exactly been the most welcoming people ever.

He hesitates awkwardly standing probably too far away from his aunt and cousin as the Stormtroopers unload his things. It's actually not very much at all really, considering who he is. Just a couple crates of clothes, another of holo-videos, data-pads and cubes.

He twists his hands together nervously.

“Thank you for letting me stay with you for a little while.” he says. “It's only until the government gets my official residence is in order. I swear we'll try not to be too much of an imposition.”

His Aunt watches him uncertainty. He wonders if it was her who offered, or whether the government ordered her to house her estranged nephew until it decided what it wanted to do with him.

She smiles hesitantly and walks forward her arm out. “It's a pleasure and no bother at all. We were hoping, actually, that you might choose to live on Naboo, so we might have a chance at getting to know you.”

Luke can feel that she means this. That she longs for a connection to him, and through him to her dead sister. But, he can't say he feels the same. This woman is a stranger to him. He's only met her
once and it was probably the third worst moment of his life.

He forces a smile. “Thank you, but I'm going to be living on Yavin IV. It's a mostly uninhabited little world with a former Rebel base, relatively... neutral, politically speaking. The Parliament doesn't want me making any statements with my choice of residence.”

Sola's smile holds, but she looks disappointed all the same. “Well, we'll just have to make the most of this visit then.”

She glances nervously at his bodyguards, though her eyes move over C-3T4 as if he isn't there. Protocol droids are not meant to be remarked upon.

Luke pauses and turns to introduce his shadows. These men have been his constant companions for so long that even though he's giddy at the idea of being free his heart squeezes painfully at the thought of leaving them behind.

“This is Detlan, Feens and Hidenoff.” Luke says pointing them out by turns. “They've all been members of my security detail since I was brought to Coruscant. After being arrested here.” he can't help but add.

Sola winces. “I apologize for that it wasn't...” she trails off. “It wasn't very familial of us.”

Luke forces a smile. “Apology accepted.”

Sola is still staring at his guards. “Do they have to wear the helmets?” she asks nervously.

Luke turns to them. “It's their choice. I have no problem either way. I hardly think I'm likely to be assassinated in the lake country of Naboo!” He exclaims.

Sola smiles. “Come in and meet your grandmother.” she offers.

Luke doesn't mention that he's met her before and she became hysterical over his existence, but Korkie must be rubbing off on him because for a moment he really really wants to.
He thinks back to his time as an Imperial Prince and pastes on a smile. It's only a couple days. He can make it through a couple days, right?

This is put to the test that night at dinner when the entire family gathers and everyone stares at him. He supposes he can't really blame them, after all he is the Emperor of the Commonwealth even if it is just an empty title now.

But, he's gotten used to people who see him so much that the title becomes a non-issue.

He has never enjoyed people holding him in awe. He's even less a fan of people staring at him, or strangers touching him.

And his Grandmother has hugged him twice already, without asking.

At least he doesn't have to try and make conversation. They're all absolutely full of questions.

“That was a beautiful ceremony.” his Aunt says.


“Will you miss Coruscant?” his grandfather asks.

Luke shakes his head. “No, it was never really home. And I hated living in the Palace.” he gives an exaggerated shudder. “Too big and empty and full of ghosts for my liking, but of course size has it's benefits. Right now I have nowhere to put anything!”

One of his cousins laughs. “And you just got all those lovely gifts during the ceremony!” she jokes, though there's an undercurrent of bitterness and resentment running through her that Luke can feel with the Force.

“Did you have a favourite?” his grandfather.
Luke smiles. “Well, I thought Korkie- uh that is, the representative for Mandalore- I thought it was very sweet of him to go through all that trouble with getting me official citizenship somewhere. We were neighbours when the pair of us were still Imperial Princes you know, and he's my closest friend. He understood how afraid I was to be alone in the world after-” he cuts himself off. “well, it was very kind of him adopt me into the Kryze Clan. The Mandalorian idea of family is so wonderful, they say that family isn't even about blood at all- it's about who you choose, and that”s....”

He's gotten caught up in the retelling, and doesn't realize his gaffe until it's too late.

They're all staring at him stonefaced. In Naboo family is the centre of life, and blood is the centre of family.

“But you already have a family.” Jobal suggests softly.

Luke nods, trying to figure out how he can talk his way out of this one. “Yes, but, my sister has was all for it. She worries about me constantly for reasons I honestly don't understand and-”

The entire dinning room freezes.

Luke winces. “...And I'm guessing she has not been in contact since we found out...about...that.”

He grimaces. “I'm very sorry. I thought...when you talked about family that she'd been in contact. I know she was here a number of times when she was fighting for the Rebellion, and that she'd even met some of you during that time... I just assumed...” he trails off.

“Padme had twins?” Sola whispers staring at her plate.

Luke bites his lip. This is officially a disaster. He should have just brought Korkie along, and let him shout to the high heavens about the blood of the covenant being thicker than the water of the womb, or whatever thoughts he might have about the Nabooan definition of family.

It would have been better than this.
“Yes.” Luke opens and closes his mouth desperately trying to think of something that will make this better. “My sister and I were separated by the Jedi. She grew up on Alderaan with one of Padme's friends, and was off world when the planet was destroyed.”

“A daughter.” Jobal wails, and covers her face.

His grandfather stands with a huff and stomps over to comfort his wife glaring at Luke the entire time.

Luke stars down at his plate, ashamed. These are good people. It's not their fault terrible things happened to their daughter.

He swallows and rises to his feet. “I'm very sorry to have upset you like this, I'll just...excuse myself.”

He can feel the anguish of these people in the force and their frustrated rage.

He walks out of the dinning room. Detlan who was stationed outside follows him and puts a hand on his shoulder.

Luke appreciates it.

He goes to the room he's been loaned and sits down. Luke looks up at Detlan hopelessly. He's made such a mess of things. These are his mother's people and he wants to have a connection to them, he does, but every time they meet it seems to end in disaster and tears.

Detlan hovers in the doorway and after a moments hesitation takes his helmet off.

Luke's not sure he's seen Detlan's face before. He's affable looking and middle aged. He looks like someone's doting father.

Actually, from what Luke knows about him, he is someone's doting father. He has two daughters with a wife he's became estranged from due to the psychological strain of serving in the 501st caused their relationship to deteriorate. He sees them occasionally. One of them received a
scholarship from one of Luke's foundations, he thinks.

Detlan sighs and shakes his head.

“Sometimes...” he tells Luke gently. “Things are too broken to be fixed.”

Luke nods. “I know that, but...”

Detlan crosses his arms and nods. “But, you thought it would be better that it is. You thought there was still a chance.”

Luke sighs and leans back. “I thought Vader's trial might have given them some closure.”

Detlan is sympathetic. “I think there was just too much hurt for too long, and every time they think they've moved past it they learn something new about what was done to them. About what they lost.”

Luke looks up. “Yeah. I guess.” He groans and rubs his hands over his face. He rests his elbows on his knees and his head on his hands.

“Detlan, I'm going to be honest about something with you.”

“Okay.”

“I have every intention of climbing out that window tonight and running off with my ex-lover to go bury my father's body in secret. I wasn't going to tell you. What do you think of that?”

Detlan crosses his arms and looks disapproving. “I think it's very good you did tell me, because I can help cover for you, Your Imperial Majesty.”

“Of course, but you're bringing the droid aren't you?”

“Yes.”

“Then what's the worst that could happen? And honestly, I can't blame you: You're a young man whose been under guard most of your life.”


Detlan quirks his lips and then nods at the window. “You need some help getting out of here?”


He pulls his bag out from where he'd hidden it.

“Can you have the rest of my things sent to my official residence on Yavin? Whenever they get it done?” he asks.

Detlan salutes. “Will do sir, I'll get the boys to lie for you, even. We'll pretend you've been with us the entire time.”

Luke hesitates with one leg thrown over the sill. “You're not going to get in trouble for this are you?”

Detlan shrugs. “Only if I get caught, sir, and even it I do it's nothing I can't handle. Once you've been on the receiving end of Vader's rage everything else just seems sorta...cute, in comparison.”

Luke smiles widely at Detlan.

“I'll see you on Yavin in a few months.”
Detlan grins back. “See you on Yavin.”

Luke jumps out the window and runs off into the dark to find Han.

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie: I did spend like four hours reading the Mandalorian section on Wookieepedia while I was writing that chapter. I thought the adoption aspect of the Legends-verse Mandalorians was pretty cool, so here we are!

Korkie pretty much calls Vader a piece of shit traitor jerk. Yes, Luke gets the darksaber because the darksaber is cool AF and Luke deserves nice things.

I went with the Galactic Commonwealth instead of the New Republic because 1) Luke does not believe in the Republic and has said so during this fic. I believe he called it the rotting corpse of democracy at one point, and so he would not have been interested in reinstating it or a system like it. 2) The new government is in many ways an evolution of the Empire rather than a new entity so Commonwealth is the only word I could think of that sort of conveyed that, especially since Luke is remaining Emperor in name if nothing else. 3) 'Republic' is a word with a lot of baggage and idealism attached to it, 'Commonwealth' has slightly less. The Commonwealth is not supposed to be a perfect government but they're trying and it's meant to suggest that the entire structure of the government is different now.

Also, the poor Naberries just cannot catch a break.
Luke heads back to Tatooine with Han to bury his father.

Han leans against the door of the refresher with his arms crossed eyeing Luke dubiously.

“This is never gonna work.”


“I don't know how about: literally anything else!?”

Luke shoots him a glare.

“Luke, you're the Emperor. You really think some hair dye and colour contacts are gonna keep people from cluing in to ?”

Luke eyes himself in the mirror and shrugs. “That and not shaving for three days should do it.”

Han looks at him blankly. “You shave?!”

Luke looks at him incredulously. “You don't?”

“Of course I do! But you're blonde! I just figured you didn't grow facial hair! You're face is always so smooth.”

Luke rolls his eyes. “Sometimes I really do worry about where you get your information Solo. And
I'm only blonde if I lie in the sun for a week. I haven't actually been blonde since Onderon.”

“Hey don't blame me!” Han protests defensively. "I was practically raised by Wookies. Besides, I know that in your heart you're still a blonde!”

“Besides,” Luke adds, ignoring Han. “Unless Tatooine has changed a whole hell of a lot, the Empire was something they were only aware of in the most uninterested and peripheral way possible.”

Han does not look convinced. “I can't say I'm happy about this. I figured the one perk of going legit was never having to go back to that dustball.”


Han give Luke a disappointed look and starts ticking points off on his fingers. “Well, let's see. We're transporting you, the Emperor, leader of a system that destroyed his homeworld and brutalized it's people. You're technically a fugitive, so that means we're dodging feds again. We're technically transporting stolen contraband goods. Those goods happen to be the corpse of a man he hates, and to top it all off we're going to a planet where he literally cannot step outside during the day without getting heatstroke, so I'd summarize his mood as: very unhappy.”

“He gonna rip my arms off?”

“Probably not.”

“So, really, what I'm hearing is, we're still fine.” Luke pokes his head out of the refresher. “How do I look?”

Han does not feign his gasp of horror. It is 100% genuine. Luke has not just dyed his hair black but he's put in contacts that darken his eyes to a dark. It's very very strange to see him like this.

Luke smiles his smuggest smile. “Just what I was going for.” He leans back into the refresher to
glance at himself in the mirror. “This plus some nondescript clothing in a place no one would ever even think to see the Emperor? No one will ever look twice.”

Han honestly cannot stop staring at Luke. It's like there's some weird stranger on his ship. With identical bone structure to his best friend.

“This is horrifying.” he whispers.

Luke turns to Han, and waves the towel at him. “This is not horrifying. Korkie's biological father got decapitated by his own sword, and Korkie decided to give me that sword. That's horrifying.”

“Oh my...-NO! He didn't.” Han gasps.

“He did.”

“That's just...why?! And you accepted it! I remember you did, during your ceremony! What is wrong with you?”

Luke sighs. “It meant a lot to him and his people that I accepted it. From a certain point of view it was a very sweet gesture.”

Han just stares at him. “Not from this one.”

Luke nods. “I told them to keep it for me until I'm worthy of it. I'm hoping if I leave it long enough they'll just forget they ever gave it to me in the first place.”

“Yeah, Mando's don't forget. It's something they're known for.”

Luke turns his face towards the suns as he steps off the ramp onto Tatooine sand and takes a deep
The air is just as dry as he remembers. He sighs and looks around.

Everything seems so much smaller than he remembered. The domes really are tiny.

He wanders over and crouches down to look at the entrance. The sand has blown in and drowned the steps. He thinks about going down anyway, revisiting old ghosts, but..well he has enough ghosts to look after without adding more.

Han trundles down the ramp tugging the hovercrate, he looks around with an unhappy sigh.

“I wasn't kidding about this dustball. It's the worst planet, I swear.” he complains. “Where am I taking this?”

Luke waves him off. “You're not taking him anywhere. The entire point of this exercise was to bury him in secret, so no one can desecrate the grave or turn it into a shrine or some other kriffing thing. So you can just stand by the ship and wait for me.”

Han looks surprised, but nods and leans back against the ship.

Luke tows the crate away. They landed by the main living pit, and the stones that mark the Lars family graves are behind the east vaporators, some distance away.

The oldest ones that were set up by Cliegg Lars' father back when Tatooine was still a planet with a hopeful future.

Luke sighs in relief when he sees them. Someone had buried his aunt and uncle and marked their graves with stones. He lets go of the crate and walks the last few steps to kneel by the stones that mark their graves.

“Uncle Owen,” he whispers as he carefully wipes the sand from his grave stone. “I'm so sorry for what happened. I know you only ever tried to keep me safe, and it got you killed. You were a good Uncle, the best uncle a little foundling orphan could ask for.”
His uncle's stone is clear now, so he turns to the one for Beru and repeats the gentle motions of cleaning it off.

“Aunt Beru. You were the kindest woman I've ever known. You taught me how to persevere. You told me the stories I needed to know and I carried them with me. I'm sorry that loving me got you killed. You both deserved so much better than you.”

Luke swallows and stands, trying to blink away the tears welling in his eyes. One slips out and trails down his cheek. He laughs to himself and swipes it away.

“I guess I really am an Outlander now.” he tells the graves. “Only an outlander would waste water crying over people long dead.”

He sniffs. “I hope you'll forgive me for burying Anakin near you. I know you didn't like him even before he became who he became. But, I hate to think of Grandmother still waiting for him.”

Luke pulls a long sheet out of his bag and unlatches one side of the crate releasing a small hiss of cold steam. He takes a deep breath, gets the other side and then gently lifts the lid off.

His father doesn't look like he died in pain. He seems peaceful. That's some small comfort. He hopes his father found peace in death, which he never could in life.

Luke uses the Force to lift him up and wrap him in the shroud and then ties it carefully himself.

He swallows and looks over his shoulder at the suns.

He turns back to the line of graves, still holding Vader's body in the air using the Force and tries to decide where to put him. He'd planned to put him next to his mother but Cliegg is already on one side and Beru is on the other. Putting him at the end near Cliegg or Owen just seems inappropriate.

In the end he clears a trench a little bit behind of Shmi Skywalker's headstone with a flick of his hand and a push of the Force.

Finally, Luke gently lowers his father's body in and starts pushing the sand on top, spreading it
Luke walks around and kneels near where his father's head is. “Father, Anakin... I hope wherever you are now, you've found peace and the forgiveness of those you love who you wronged. I forgive you. In so many ways you made me who I am, and I will carry that with me always.” He puts his hand on the sand. "Goodbye."

He takes a deep breath, stands and starts dusting himself off. He slowly walks back to the Falcon.

Han is leaning up against it with his arms crossed.


Han looks at Luke expectantly. “That was it?”

Luke looks at him in confusion. “What do you mean? This is Tatooine! What more do you expect?”

Han opens and closes his mouth. “I don't know! Something! We stole him and dragged him across most of known space. I figured there was some reason he had to be buried here, and not any one of a hundred thousand other worlds that were a hell of a lot closer and less filled with Hutts, where you could have buried him in secret much more easily. I didn't think you were honestly just gonna plant him in the sand and call it a day.”

Luke shakes his head. “It was important he come back here.” he mutters, feeling embarrassed.

Han looks at him in complete incomprehension. “Why? I'd understand if you said it was important for you to come back here, but no one's ever mentioned Vader had any fondness for the place he grew up. From the sound of things he couldn't care less what the funeral arrangements were, so why-”

Luke hunches his shoulders and puts his hands in his pockets. “My grandmother is buried here. She was killed by Tusken raiders when my father was 19. It was the only time my Aunt and Uncle ever met him. He came back because he was worried about her, but it was too late. He rescued her but they'd had her for a month and she died anyway. He brought her body back.”
Han stands silent, taken aback by the violence of this place.

“My father loved his mother, and she loved him. But, she was a slave, and he won his freedom when he was 9 years old and went away. I don't know if they ever actually got to see each other again. Uncle Owen used to tell me that Shmi would stand over there—” he points to a spot just outside the entrance to the house. “...and look up at the star imagining he was on one of them and hoping he'd come back one day.”

Han looks sadly out at the empty desert wastes. “So you brought his body back to hers?”

Luke nods, but then frowns. “Yes, but it's not just that...Families get split up all the time on Tatooine. Kids go off world to make their fortune and never come back, or are sent away to live with richer relatives if it times are hard. And, ours wasn't the only one that had a former slave in it, so people were always afraid that, something might happen: Someone might go into debt with the Hutts, or make a bad bet or just get kidnapped, and then you'd never ever see them again.

So, name are important on Tatooine. You're not supposed to change them. Because, if you do, how will your family ever find you again if you get separated? And, even if you never meet again in life, they say that that no matter where you go, or what you look like, or what you're forced to do, or who they turn you into so long as you remember the name your family gave you then their spirits will be able to find you and watch over you. When you die you don't have to worry about not recognizing someone in the afterlife, because you'll know their name and they'll know yours.

My father turned away from his name, and pretended it belonged to somebody else for a long time. I was worried his mother's spirit wouldn't be able to find him if I had him cremated on Coruscant.”

Luke sighs and rubs at his arms. “I know it seems silly, but when he died that was all I could think about- if they kill him as Vader how will his mother find him?”

He shakes his head. Han walks over to him and puts a hand on his shoulder.

“It's not silly Luke.” he tells him firmly. “I don't know about that kinda stuff myself. But, it's good you tried.”

Later on they sit on the dome and watch the twin suns set.

“You know kid.” Han remarks. “I really can't picture you in a place like this.”


“Yeah, but you're not the person you were when you lived on Onderon anymore. Besides, there's stuff on Onderon. This is just space, and sun and lots and lots of sand.”

Luke nods. “I only missed the sand on the really bad days.” he admits with a quirk of his lips.

Han looks over at Luke. “Can I ask you something?”


“Why did you get me to come here with you? I mean, I know there's the transporting a body angle that I'm uniquely qualified for, but Leia or Korkie or anyone else could have rented a cargo ship. Hell he was in a standard shipping crate you could have just shipped him on a regular transport and taken a passenger berth yourself. So, why am I here?”

Luke thinks about it. “I didn't want to do this alone, and honestly, you were the only person I could think of who didn't hate him.”

Han narrows his eyes at him. “I wasn't his biggest fan either.”

“No, but you, honest to Force, did not care at all whether he lived or died.”

“I used to hate him for what he did to you.” Han admits. “But, then we weren't... whatever it is we were anymore, and you forgave him and...hating takes soo much energy.”

They wait until the suns disappear below the horizon and then Luke hops down. “C'mon Han, let's get going. Leia will be waiting for you.”

Han touches down on Matao and turns to look at Luke whose standing nervously in the cockpit of the Falcon.

“Well...” he says. “I guess this is your stop kid.”


“Thanks for the ride, Han. I appreciate it.”

“Hey, anything for you kid.”

Luke makes a skeptical face at that. “Sure, Han, whatever you say.”

Chewie yells something about getting a move on and not staring at each other like a couple of creepers. Han glares at him, but he does have a point.

He presses the button to lower the ramp.

“Goodbye Han, I'll maybe see you in a few months when I come back to the Core for a state visit.”

Han snickers, it's never going to not be funny that Luke is the stoic figurehead for the nation-state of the Galaxy and Han has seen him naked.

“Yeah, sure, maybe.”
Luke nods, forces a smile and gives a little wave.


Luke smiles that blinding smile, that still after all these years can still probably power at least two suns.

“Bye Chewie!” he hears Luke yell before he raises the ramp.

Luke turns to give another wave before disappearing, bag and droids in tow, into the crowd of the spaceport.

Chewie clamors back into the cockpit from where he was tweaking the hyperdrive and lets out a sad little whine. “I hope he's going to be okay. He's really not so bad once you get to know him.”

Han smacks Chewie at that. “Really?! WHAT A BRILLIANT OBSERVATION YOU FURBALL! The rest of the galaxy came to that conclusion ages ago, nice of you to join us FINALLY!!”

Chapter End Notes

So, I finally explained the whole 'Names are important on Tatooine' thing that has been coming up throughout this fic. It started as my personal explanation of why the Lars' didn't change Luke's last name when they took him in, and I've had it in the back of my mind throughout the fic, though I wasn't super sure whether I would out and out explain it. but I did. So. Hope you guys enjoyed it.

Anyway, we're really beginning to wind the story down now. Only 3 chapters left! And I'm not even sure if I'm going to post one of them cause it's pretty rambling since I mostly wrote it whenever content from the last few chapters was making me too sad. Part of me's actually tempted to end it here and call the rest epilogue. Anyway, comments are always welcome! I hope you all like the beginning of the end. :)


Luke finally returns to finish his training with Yoda. Jedi Slice of Life

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Luke lands his ship on the planet that Obi-Wan had named as the new Jedi base.

It's lush and green and there's a winding stone path that snakes up into the trees away from the landing pad.

MT-9 beeps apprehensively where she hovers in the air behind him.

Luke smiles at her. “It'll be alright, after all C-3T4 is with us, what could happen?”

He adjusts the bag on his shoulder and takes his first steps onto the path.

It comes out at in a bustling dusty construction zone. There's a transport docking station, and Luke understands now why it had been so calm and quiet down below, most of the Jedi don't have the credits for their own ships- so they hitch rides on the supply drop offs.

There's a woman at a desk just a little ways away who's clearly signing people in as they come and go, though how she could possibly hope to keep track of everyone seems a mystery.

Luke wanders over, feeling nervous in a crowd for the first time in a long time.

She glances up at him sharply.
“Are you a student, a parent, a trained Force user or a tradesman?” she asks flipping to a fresh set of forms on her datapad.

Luke gapes at everything. “Uh...a student? I was apprenticing with Master Yoda for a while...”

That makes her pause. “I'm sorry to tell you that Master Yoda has not been well for sometime.” she tells him regretfully as she makes a note.

Luke nods. “I know, that's part of why I was so eager to get back. I didn't want to be too late, I still need to finish my training.”

She nods. “Very well, all visitors must be registered for security and safety purposes. Name?”

Luke hesitates. “Shmison Kryze”

She doesn't blink and fills in the appropriate sections. “and you're a mature student.”


“Do you have your own lightsaber you are bringing in?”

“Yes.”

She nods seems surprised by that, but says nothing as she carefully marks that down.


That takes her by surprise. “What? Oh. Yes. There's no trouble with that.”

She waves him along and yells “NEXT!” in the general direction of the line that formed behind him.
Luke clutches his bag close and dives into bedlam.

“Excuse me?” he grabs a passing human man with a lightsaber clipped to his belt. “Do you know where I could find Master Kenobi?”

The Jedi points towards the edge of the construction. “Back that way.”

Luke nods and rushes off. He hears C-3T4 start complaining about people's rudeness.

Someone grabs his wrist, and Luke's first instinct is to punch them in the throat and go for his lightsaber when he realizes it's Obi-Wan smiling at him with that knowing twinkle in his eye.

Luke is so relieved. He drops his bag and throws his arms around the old man. “Old Ben!”

Kenobi chuckles and hugs him back.

“Well met my friend. How are you? You're looking...different.”

Luke blushes. Tatooine had tanned him dark, but the dyed hair, full beard and coloured lenses on his eyes were all his own doing.

“Yeah, I...was worried about causing a commotion.”

Kenobi smiles fondly at him.

“What?”

“Just...you're very different from both of your parents. They were both rather addicted to dramatic entrances. Now, come along. Yoda's dealing with some spaces to get us added to their supply routes at the moment, but there's a room for you near his hut. He's been telling everyone who'd listen he had a Force vision about his last apprentice returning.”
“Is he disappointed I didn't make it sooner?”

“No, dear boy. He feels *I'm* entirely to blame for that.”

Luke narrows his eyes. “Are you?”

“Oh yes, completely.”

Luke laughs. “You and my father must have been quite the terrible team back in the day.”

“Oh, yes, quite.” Obi-Wan agrees unrepentant, “though I would have denied it at the time. So, how are you and what name are you traveling under?”

“I'm fine, Korkie wrangled me induction into Clan Kryze and with it Mandalorian citizenship, so I'm traveling as Shmison Kryze,”

“Oh. That's nice, how's Leia?”

“She's pregnant? Had you heard?”

Obi-Wan stops in his tracks a look of horror on his face. “And it's that Corellian...*person's*?”

Luke nods a bit taken aback by Obi-Wan's reaction. “Yeee-ah”

Obi-Wan sighs dramatically. “The galaxy is truly doomed.”


Obi-Wan stops in front of a small hut far enough away from the transport dock that it's actually quiet. He apologetically opens the door to show Luke the small room with a bed, a desk and a door to what is presumably the fresher.
“Meals are served in the mess hall when the bell rings...I'm sorry I know it's not exactly the Old Temple, but we're trying to build something new here.”


Obi-Wan smiles back. “I'll let Yoda know you're here, but he'll probably want you to have at least a few days to settle in before he decides what to do.”

Luke nods and drops his bags next to his bed. MT-9 zips around the room beeping excitedly. C-3T4 totters in and begins bemoaning their reduced circumstances.

“The droids aren't going to be a problem?”

“On the contrary, I have a pair of droids myself. I'm sure the four of them will be fast friends once they meet. I'm afraid I have a class to run...I'll leave you to settle in.”

Luke nods and glances around. It's nice, almost reminds him of his old room on the Death Star-

...the minute the thought crosses his mind he can't breathe and has to get out of there.

He stumbles out into the sunlight and takes a deep breath. MT-9 wobbles out after him with an inquiring beep.

“I'm alright.” he assures her. “Just went funny for a minute.”

A bell rings in the distance.

Food.

How long has it been since he'd thought about food?
He cautiously follows the crowd and heads towards the big building in the distance. He’s nervous and unsure of himself like he hasn’t been in years. As much as he hates to admit it he’s gotten used to his escort, and would give anything for the familiar feel of Detlan’s mind- alert and watching his back like always.

He falls in line, grabs a tray and sits down at an empty out of the way table. He frowns at a pair of protocol droids in the distance, trying to work out if one of them is C-3T4.

There’s a clang nearby that makes him jump and he finds himself looking up at a blue haired man about his own age. Which is odd. Most of the people here are either a generation older or a generation younger.

Not many Force-sensitives of Luke’s age managed to slips past Imperial nets.

The blue haired fellow smiles in a slightly duplicitous way. “Hi! You're new.”

Luke forces a smile, clears his throat and nods. “Just got here.”

“Huh. Where'd they put you? I didn't see you arrive.” he asks gesturing with his fork.

Luke shrugs and waves in the general direction of his hut. “Over way at the edge of things.”

“Really? That's right near general Kenobi and Master Yoda. They usually don't put new arrivals there.”

“Oh. Well, I think Kenobi wants our droids to be friends so that's probably why.”

The blue haired man laughs and eyes Luke. “So what's your story? How did you slip the Imperial snares? You don't see too many Force-sensitives our age around.”

Luke shrugs uncomfortably. “My father's people live way out in the Outer Rim on Tatooine. Way out there the Empire's something you can ignore. And my father was a spacer, so when I got a bit
older he came and got me and I lived on his ship. He had agreements- he made deals with people so they'd look the other way, but I still hardly left the ship. I don't know that my feet touched the ground more than a couple times a year until I was already grown.”

Ezra nods. “That's one way of doing it. It was the spacers that saved me too. That and the fact I was a street rat. No one knows you exist, no one can come to kill you.”

Luke nods. “I don't think I've ever had that option. But, you're right about the spacers. They're the ones that kept the Alliance going too, and Mandalorian culture...everything.”

The blue haired man nods and smiles proudly. "Yeah, we're what you call hard core."

Luke glances up nervously. “So, have you finished your training? Or do you still have a master?”

The blue haired man rolls his eyes. “My master hasn't trained me in years, he says I'm ready, but now that things are getting more organized and standardized around here Yoda and Kenobi are trying to decide whether I should train some more before I try and pass the new exams, so they officially grant me the rank of Knight. Personally I think I liked things better when we were all scattered across the galaxy and could do what we wanted...What about you?”

Luke shrugs. “I was training with Yoda for a while, but I got arrested when I went to get my lightsaber so...I never finished.”

The blue haired man is gaping in undisguised shock. “YODA!? Yoda? Are you serious? But he only just came out of hiding! How's that even possible?!”

Luke shakes his head. “I don't know. I had something like a force vision and I just...knew I needed to go to a particular planet, so I did and Yoda was there and...he trained me.”

“Force Vision? Whooa. Hey, what did you get arrested for?”


“That sucks. Prison's pretty rough.”
Luke shrugs. “Eh, my Dad had a real knack for knowing which people to bribe. It wasn't too bad and he got me out pretty quickly.”

“Hey...what is your name?”


The blue-haired Jedi shakes it. “Ezra Bridger. Pleasure to meet you.”


Luke glances over his shoulder to see the Jedi he'd asked directions from coming his way looking very angry indeed.

“Good Luck.”

“Thanks.” Ezra says with a grin as he gets up. “I'll definitely need it.”

Luke waves hesitantly after him, Ezra pauses after two steps and turns around with an inquisitive look on his face.

“Kryze? Isn't that one of the Mandalorian Clans?”


Ezra looks impressed. “Whoa.”

“EZRA!” someone screeches.
Ezra gives a wave and dashes off.

Luke looks down at his plate and smiles to himself. That seemed to go well.

Luke's days fall into a familiar rhythm. He trains with Yoda or Obi-Wan in the mornings, and in the afternoons he works in one of the gardens, in the evenings he does other school-work for classes he's taking through the University.

It's..nice. Peaceful. He's starting to feel like himself again, and not like the amalgam of all the different masks he was forced to wear.

One day a teenage padawan he doesn't recognize sticks her head into the greenhouse and says there's a visitor here for someone called Kryze.

Luke hurries to the central building.

He speeds up when he sees a man in armour with some very familiar painted patterns standing outside on the porch.

“Korkie! So, your still alive!” Luke yells

Korkie turns around. “I see you've been reading your Mandalorian phrase book.”

Luke smiles smugly. “Yes,” he leans against one of the porches support beams. “Fascinating reading. Really. Yours is a forthright people.”

Korkie pulls off his helmet. “Yeeesh. This is just what I need. You being fluent in Mando'a, as if you and the people of Mandalore don't cause me enough trouble seperately.”

Luke grins and takes the last few steps to give Korkie a hug.

“It's good to see you, ner vod.”
Korkie leans back looking impressed. “You have been reading your phrase book.”

“I’m not sure whether I should be insulted by how surprised you are that I managed to learn a phrase Korkie.” Luke gripes.

“Korkie?” a voice asks from behind them. “Korkie Kryze?”

Korkie frowns and leans to look around Luke. His face melts into a mask of shock.

“Jedi Tano?!”

Luke turns to see a female Togruta who, judging by the size of her lekku, was about the same age as Korkie.

Korkie smiles. “I had no idea you were still alive.”

Ahsoka smiles back. “Well, I'm pretty tough. It was inevitable. What about you? Last I'd heard you were a captive of the Empire.”

Korkie blushes. “Not my finest moment as Madalore, let me tell you.”


Korkie glances between the two of them and Luke shakes his head minutely.

“An adopted member of the Clan. I was in the area, thought I'd stop by.” He turns back to Luke. “I'm afraid I can't stay long, but I promised your sister I'd get a look at you and make sure you were alright.”

Luke rolls his eyes. “You'd think I was as fragile as a kitten the way she goes on.”
Korkie laughs. “Yeah, well, she doesn't know you like I do.” He flicks a strand of Luke's long dark brown hair. “I'd say Jedi life suits you, despite the fact you've decided to wear your hair like a ruffian and grow a tribble on your face.”

Luke blushes and runs his hands over his beard. “What can I say? I wanted a change.”

Korkie glances back at where Ahsoka is still lingering nearby and nods to her. He hands Luke a satchel. “Care package from the Core, and Tatooine. Your friend Darklighter insisted I include some of that vile blue milk.”

Luke smiles softly. “That was sweet of him.”

“He's sweet on you if you ask me.”


Korkie's smile fades and he looks at Luke carefully. “I'm glad you're happy here, cyar'ika. You deserve it. I'll tell your sister you're looking well, even if you aren't looking like yourself.”

“Hey! If you hate it so much I'll dye it blue, as that seems to be the thing to do around here.”

Korkie scoffs. “You wouldn't dare.”

Luke freezes when he catches sight of a new long scar along Korkie's jaw. He tilts his friend's head up. “Hey, what's this?”

Korkie winces and bats his hands away. “Nothing, some fool decided he wanted to be Mandalore. I took care of it.”
“You killed him?!”

Korkie sighs. “That's the way it works Luke. The Empire did a lot of damage to the Mandalorian people and culture, people have turned back to the old ways because of it.”

Luke glares at Korkie and hugs the bag to his chest. “You are better than that Korkie.”

Korkie stares him down unapologetically. “I am my father's son, as well has my aunt's nephew. You know that.”

Luke slings the bag over his shoulder, crosses his arms and looks away. “Whatever. It's not like I can change your mind about these things.”

Korkie pats Luke's arm. “You really can't.”

“Wait, who is your father?” Ahsoka pipes up.

“Pre Vizsla.” Korkie admits ruefully.

“What?! The Death Watch nut job?! How did I not know this?”

Korkie shrugs. “I don't know. Non-Mando's tend to find our families confusing. You probably just never looked in to it. After all you were busy fighting a war when we knew each other.”

Ahsoka smiles softly at him. “Yeah. I suppose. It's good to see you again! We should catch up sometime, when you're not in such a rush.”

Korkie nods to her and smiles sadly. “It is a relief to see that someone from those days made it out alive.”

Ahsoka nods in understanding and waves. “I'll see you again.”
Luke levels a somewhat half-hearted glare at Korkie and pokes him in the chest. “No more duels to the death! You hear me?”

Korkie smiles. “I make no promises.”


Korkie puts his helmet back on and lifts off with his jetpack.

“Hey, kid. Careful is my middle name!”

Luke laughs and shakes his head. Korkie sends him one last wave before zooming off.

Luke ambles back to his hut clutching the bag of goods and smiling to himself.

He's just finished putting it away and is locking up his hut to ward against inquisitive younglings when Ahsoka takes him by surprise.

“So what's your real name?” she asks softly.

Luke squawks in surprise and clutches his chest. “Don't do that!”

“A true Jedi wouldn't have gotten snuck up on like that.”

Luke scowls. “You have excellent shielding. And I'm not a full Jedi, yet.”

“So what's your name?”

Luke frowns in feigned confusion. “I have a lot of names. The ones you know are as real as any other.”
The Togruta crosses her arms. “Don’t try and pull that bantha poodle with me kid.” She stabs her finger at him. “I know who you are- I just don't know your name.”

Luke glances at her from the corner of his eye. “Oh? And who do you think I am?”

Ahsoka bristles and then looks away sadly. “Anakin Skywalker’s son.”

Luke blinks and frowns at her. “If you're expecting me to congratulate you on the magnitude of your detective prowess you are going to be sadly disappointed.”

Ahsoka laughs and points. “That you got from Obi-Wan” She peaks behind him to try and get a look at his house. “Or maybe from Korkie, he could be imperious back in the day when the mood struck him.” she concedes.

Luke glares at her. “If you have a question you want to ask Jedi Tano, I suggest you ask it.”

Ahsoka leans back and crosses her arms. “Your Anakin Skywalker’s son aren't you? Which makes you Vader’s son.”

Luke looks at her, nervously. “Obi-Wan and Yoda know exactly who I am. If they don't have a problem with me, than neither should you.”

“That's not what concerns me.” Ahsoka bites her lip. “Obi-Wan said that he thought Anakin had had a change of heart because of someone he loved. Because he's always loved so fiercely. I told him he was crazy, that there could never be anyone Vader cared about...but I was wrong, wasn't I? It was you. You're his son and he cared about you.”


Ahsoka smiles sadly. “Th Kryze clan wouldn't just adopt anyone, but for Obi-Wan? They'd do anything...and you look like him a little bit, underneath that beard or how he used to be, but, you smile more, it threw me off. I never would have put it together if I hadn't seen you glaring at Korkie about his scars. Anakin used just look like that.”
Luke sighs and leans back against the door. “He didn't smile much with me either, but that might just have been the mask.”

Ahsoka chuckles. “So, I'm right? You're his son?”

Luke nods. “…Yeah.”

“So...what is your name?”

Luke gapes at her incredulously. “I thought you said you recognized me?”

“You look like Anakin, kind of, and I know your his son, but I don't know your name.”

Luke laughs, and doubles over he's laughing so hard. He tries to catch his breath but every time he takes in Ahsoka's bewildered expression he just starts laughing again.

Finally he managed to get a breath and, keeping his face turned away so he won't start laughing again, he answers.

“My name,” he manages to get out between gassp. “is Luke Naak’ad Skywalker Amidala Naberrie Kryze, Second Emperor of the Galactic State.” he can't help the chuckle that escapes.

Ahsoka's eyes go very wide. “Oh. That...that seems obvious now that I know. I'm guessing you dyed your hair?”

Luke risks another look at her, and nope, that sets him laughing again. “Yeah, pretty obvious.”

Ahsoka sputters. “It's silly- I knew they were in love! Of course if Anakin is your father than Padme must be your mother. It’s just...I thought the Emperor was an imposter- a puppet king that Vader had put in place.”
Luke grimaces. He tired of hearing that. “Yes, well *not* an imposter. I think the puppet king part was the plan, but I didn't much like that plan and” he shrugs. “Vader always did spoil me.”

Ahsoka grins. “It would be just like Anakin to give the Galaxy as a gift.”

Luke smiles. “Well, things with my father were never quite that simple...” He hesitates and nods towards the door. “Would you like to come inside?”

Ahsoka thinks about it and nods. “Thanks, I would like that very much.”

Luke sits on the bed and lets Ahsoka take the chair.

Ahsoka opens her mouth, closes it and then asks. “What was he like?”


“Vader...I just, I wonder...I only met him a couple times and he was busy trying to *kill* me...”

“Did you know? I mean, did you know who he was before?” Luke asks.

“I...suspected. I had no proof but, yes...I knew.”

Luke nods and pulls his knees up to his chest. “That must have been terrible.”

Ahsoka shrugs. “It was. Until then the rumour was that Anakin had died trying to protect the temple and that was a terrible loss but I could live with it, but once I realized the truth, that was so much worse. I left the order, I left him, and he fell. Maybe if I had been there-”

Luke makes a noise of annoyance. “Oh, Shut Up. You and Kenobi and Yoda are all the same. Always going on about how if was *your* fault. If you'd stayed with the Order, if Kenobi had reassured Anakin, if Yoda had kept him from training.” Luke throws his hands in the air. “It seems the only person *not* responsible for the fall of Anakin Skywalker is *Anakin Skywalker!* Let me tell you this: for every moment where if you had taken a different path you might have prevented what
happened, there were a thousand moments where my father could have. He could have told the
truth. He could have left the Order with you, he could have trusted Padme, or Kenobi or anyone at all.

My father made his choice, Ahsoka Tano, and he lived with it. I suggest you try and do the same.”

Ahsoka makes a face. “I'm sorry. I don't mean to burden you-”

Luke laughs. “It's not that. Force knows no one else cares whether or not they burden me, but, my
father made his choices. He fell and he found himself again, and he did that on his own.”

“To hear Kenobi tell it he had a little help from you with redemption.”

Luke quirks the corner of his mouth up. “Fine. He may have had a little help from me.”

Ahsoka nods. “So- what was Vader like?”

Luke shrugs. “I don't know- he was Vader, he was my father. For years his was the only human
face I saw. He was quick to anger and terrifying, but he thought it was funny when I'd beat him at
Holochess? He built me a protocol droid out a MagnaGuard?...I don't know what to tell you.”

Ahsoka nods. “It's not that I necessarily have regrets...it's just I hate to think of him alone and filled
with hate and fear. That's why I asked.”

Luke looks at her sharply. “You could have seen him for yourself. He asked you to come. He
wanted to see you again before he died.”

Ahsoka purses her lips. “It was too hard. I was too angry. I still am angry kriff it! I don't understand
how he could have been so stupid!”

Luke shrugs and thinks for a second.

He reaches under his bed and pull out a data-cube.

“Here.” He says trying to hand it to her.
Ahsoka just stares. “That is a holocron.”

“Oh? Is that what it's called? I thought it was just a weird data-drive thing. Anyway, if you want to see Vader as I knew him you can look on there. It's mostly just where he kept documents about me—school reports, test scores, birthday holo-stills that sort of stuff. But...he's in a few of the holo-videos. You can take a look at it if you think it will make you feel better.”

Tentatively Ahsoka reaches out and takes it. “Are you sure?”

“I'm not giving it to you to keep- that's one of only two personal belongings my father had- other than his lightsaber. I will be wanting it back.”

Ahsoka stands. “Thank you...Luke- uh, what is your preferred last name?”


Ahsoka grins. “I used to call your Dad 'Sky Guy'."


“Yeah.”

Ahsoka smiles at him and goes to open the door. “What was the other thing?”

“Huh?”

“The other thing he had when he died?”

Luke gives her a strange look and then reaches down and pulls out a smaller holocron, which he tosses to her.
Ahsoka looks at it. “And what's on this one?”

“Padme Amidala. I'm guessing it's just whatever he could find after she... you know.”

“After he killed her.” Ahsoka finishes.

“Yeah.”

Ahsoka cradles them in her hands, all that's left in the galaxy of what were once two bright wonderful people.

“Thank you for lending them to me.”

“You're welcome. I have no idea how those are organized, but if you've seen them before maybe you'll have a better time finding them than me.”

Ahsoka nods.

She steps outside, stops to think and pokes her head back in. “Did I hear Korkie mention something about you having a sister?”

Luke grins. “Yeah, I have a twin sister, and I'll be an uncle soon.”

Ahsoka whistles. “Anakin would have been a grandfather!” she looks down at the holocrons. “Crazy to think.”

Luke scoffs. “Please. Leia would have never let him anywhere near that kid.”

Ahsoka twists her mouth. “I guess not.”
“Are you actually going to go this time or are you just going to loiter in my doorway all night letting the bugs in?”

Ahsoka laughs. “Alright, alright. I’m really going this time. I’ll see you around Skyguy!”

Luke smiles at her and gives a little wave.

Back in her own room in the dormitory (and doesn’t it make sense now that Yoda would have given a new arrival his own space over her, he probably wants as few people to recognize the kid as possible).

Ahsoka catches that thought and groans. When had she gotten so old that a man in his mid-twenties was a kid?

Carefully she levitates the larger of the holocrons and opens it.

She flicks through a couple pages of data and then giggles. “Oh Master, a scrapbook? How cheesy.”

With the layout understood it doesn’t take her long to find a holo of just Vader.

It looks like it’s security cam footage. A bedroom with a fold-down bunk, a few piles of belongings and no one else.

Ahsoka frowns in confusion as Vader walks in carrying a plate of food and sits on the floor next to the bed.

_You don't need to hide under there. I told you before. You're my son, I took you away from those people because they were bad people who stole you from me. No one is going to hurt you._

_There's no response._

_Vader slides the food towards the bed._
At least eat something.

A small hand darts out from under the bed and grabs a nutri-pack from the top of the pile on the plate.

Those are usually very dry. Do you want so water?

Vader stands and walks out he comes back with a very tall very full glass of water which he slide over to the bed.

Yes, you can have all of that. I wouldn't give it to you just to take it away.

Very slowly a boy crawls out from under the bed. It's hard to tell his age because he's small and skinny, but he looks pubescent, anywhere from 12 to 14 standard years. He's tanned dark and has sun-bleached blonde hair. He sits and takes a deep drink from the glass and another bite of the nutri-bar watching vader warily the entire time.

There's a small note attached to the holo-video: Day 3- Luke came out from under the bed today! And sat next to me for the rest of my visit! Still doesn't talk much, blood work came back and medroids assure me he is not malnourished and his size and weight is within healthy limits. His focus on food and water is concerning, though. Have consulted experts on appropriate diet.

Ahsoka takes a deep breath and closes the holocron very carefully. She doesn't want to see any more. She holds it in her hands like it is something precious and fragile.

“Oh, Master.” She whispers regretfully. She looks at the other cube sitting on her table. She puts the larger one next to it. She leaves it closed.

The next day Luke finds them carefully wrapped up and left by his door.

He puts them away and doesn't ask her about it.
Ahsoka is relieved.

She doesn't talk to him very much. They move in different circles. He's a gardener, a mechanic and a scholar. She's a warrior, first, last and always.

But, she notices Ezra has mounted a serious campaign to befriend the only other human Jedi of his generation.

So, she sits with Kanan and snickers at Luke's blank and mildly alarmed confusion at Ezra's determined and rambunctious overtures of friendship.

One day, she accidentally calls him Luke in the mess hall when she's letting him know that Korkie's left another holo-message for him on the main channel.

Every one whips their heads around to stare at Luke and Ezra looks betrayed.


By now more than a few of the other Jedi have put together just who exactly he is, so no one (except Ezra) says anything.

People get used to calling him 'Luke' after a while though Ezra and a few of the other younger students stubbornly keep calling him Shmison.

He completes the exams to be a Jedi knight easily.

Ahsoka is proud of him, in a distant kind of way.

Yoda dies, Obi-Wan takes up the rank of Grand Master without anyone voicing the slightest peep of protest and Luke takes over teaching the littlest of the younglings. The ones whose parents gave them up to the Jedi in the hopes that they would have a better life, even though the Jedi no longer asked that infants be surrendered to the Temple.
As far as Ahsoka can tell Luke spends quite a bit of time teaching his tiny students how to garden, work a droid and understand the complex governmental structure of the Commonwealth complete with historical context, but almost no time actually teaching them about the Force.

When she brings these concerns to Obi-Wan he just looks at her and frowns.

“I’m quite sure that Jedi Skywalker has things well in hand. Isn’t there a slave revolt in Zygerria or something that you’re meant to be covertly supporting?”

There isn’t, actually, which Obi-Wan knows, but she takes the point and goes about her duties.

Ahsoka keeps an eye on Skywalker when their paths cross.

He's good with the little ones. He seems happy.

She was wrong. He doesn't look much like Anakin did at all. It must have been the Force that led her to recognize him. Though, maybe that's just because he really does smile so much more than his father ever did.

Chapter End Notes

This is long and rambling, sorry about that, but I couldn't think of a way to fix it that wouldn't mean I had to re-write the entire thing, and therefore miss today's update. So here we are and the next two are better.

Luke calls Korkie ner vod which is Extended Universe Mando'a to mean special friend/brother, and Korkie calls Luke cyar'ika which is the same for darling/sweetheart.
Epilogue II: Ben Solo

Chapter Summary

Ben Solo grows up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Luke throws his bag in through the open window and then Force-jumps up to grab the ledge. Once he's got the ledge it takes some awkward scrambling and swinging to get up onto it and inside but he's relatively confident no one saw him, so what does it matter if he's not quite mastered this particular Jedi trick?

Once inside he takes a look around. He's not actually sure whether or not this is supposed to be his room. The house is big enough that it probably has several large bedrooms and, despite what his bodyguards have been leaking to the media, Luke hasn't ever actually ever laid eyes on the house he had built on Yavin IV to serve as his official residence.

He dusts himself off and wanders to the closet which is full of his clothes so he guesses he must have had the Force on his side and jumped into his own bedroom. Or what's supposed to be his bedroom.

He leaves his dusty Jedi-robes on the floor and puts on one of his everyday Emperor ensembles. Then he wanders down the stairs and follows the sound of conversation to find his guards arguing enthusiastically about sports while eating breakfast.

They're all out of uniform and helmet-less which is a pleasant shock.

They look up at him in surprise when he casually wanders in. He nods to the one frozen by the caf-machine. “Hidenoff.”

Hidenoff gapes. “Your Imperial Majesty.” he responds automatically. After a moment of silence he follows that up with. “How did you sleep?” which makes the entire room dissolve into laughter.
Luke takes the cup of caf Hidenoff has just pored out of the man's frozen hand and takes a sip, just to see if he'll react. “Oh, pretty well...” He glances around the room casually. “Has there been any trouble with the media or security during my...sabbatical?”

Hidenoff shakes his head furiously.

"Well there was one journalist sniffing after you but, we gave her the run around. And there's been no security breaches at all." Detlan clarifies.

Luke smiles, and puts Hidenoff's mug of caf down on the counter. "Excellent, I think I'll go see my sister today. So hop to it whichever one of you is on escort duty.”

“Who's the cutest baby in the galaxy?” Luke coos as he tickles his nephew's stomach. “You are, yes, I think it's you.”

Leia rolls her eyes.

Luke stares at his nephew besottedly.

“He has your eyes.” he tells her.

She nods, because he does. Her babies eyes are huge and dark enough to almost be black.

Luke babbles baby talk at his nephew and shakes a toy at him.

“He's adorable really Leia.” he continues to gush.
Leia nods. She looks exhausted and worn thin. Han is away for the first time since the birth and Parliament is not in session so she's here with the nanny-droids and a baby.

He looks at her in concern, noticing her reticence and feeling her exhaustion through the Force. “How are you managing?” he asks cautiously, knowing there is nothing

She sighs wetly and drags a hand over her face. “I know they always tell you it will be hard. But I never thought it would be this hard.”

Luke scoops his nephew up. “Do you need help? I can delay my return to the Core if that would-”

Leia shakes her head. “No. You...need to do that.”

She stares at her son sadly. “It's just hard. Because, I was so excited. I wanted to start a family so badly, but now he's here and all I can think about is how I should be able to leave him with his grandparents on Alderaan if I know the Parliamentary session will be demanding and Han is away. I shouldn't have to worry about whether he's being rocked too much by a nanny-droid instead of a person, because he should have a thousand Aunts to coo over him and spoil him.”

She sits down heavily next to Luke and holds her arms out for her baby. Luke carefully passes him to her.

“He should be a Prince of the house of Organa.” She says looking down at him. “But there isn't a House Organa, there isn't even an Alderaan anymore, so he'll never understand what that means. What he lost and will never get to have.”

Luke looks at her sadly. “I'm sorry Leia.”

Leia up at her brother. “I know, and I know you'll look after him.”

Luke smiles down at the tiny person who's stolen his heart. “Of course I will!”
Luke glances back up at his sister cautiously. “So...you've settled on Ben for the name?” he asks.

Leia nods. “Ben Solo- let him be a smuggler and a rogue like his father, and leave the tragedy of the Skywalkers and the legacy of the Organas in the past.”

Luke grins down at the baby and makes a face. “Ben Solo.” he repeats. “I like it. It has a nice ring to it.”

There's a long pause. "Does Han realize you've named him in honour of Obi-Wan Kenobi?"

Leia gives Luke a scathing look. "No. And you are never ever going to tell him, little brother, or I will END YOU."

Luke laughs and tickles Ben's tiny foot. "Of course not, Leia. You think I'd do that to you?"

For the longest time Ben didn't realize who his Uncle Luke really was. He was just one of many different relatives. Less constant a presence than Uncle Chewie, but more constant than Uncle Lando, and less fun than either, but nicer than both.

Luke had a house next door to them on Yavin so Ben saw him pretty often, almost always with his Darklighter and Detlan in tow, who were fun and always willing to play with Ben, unlike Luke who tended to like sitting quietly and doing things rather than jumping off couches pretending to be Anakin Skywalker the Hero with No Fear!

Luke wasn't exactly fun though but his house was Ben's favourite place because the world got quiet around his uncle in a way that Ben couldn't really explain, but which caused him to make a habit of
curling up with his blanket under Luke's desk to nap while his uncle was working - at least when he was quite small. When he got over he'd sit on the couch he used to jump off of and do his reading for his correspondence courses.

He realizes now that it was Luke's influence through the Force that he was feeling, but at the time it seemed a wonderful magical aspect of who his uncle was.

Ben was relieved by it honestly, home was sometimes too exciting. Mom and Dad didn't always get along. Luke told him that was just their way, but it didn't make Ben like it any better.

Looking back it seems remarkable that Ben never questioned the strangeness of his Uncle's life, though perhaps that was just because of the strangeness of his own.

Ben grew up a little nomad, sometimes traveling with his Dad and Uncle Chewie on jobs, and sometimes staying with him Mom in the Core when Parliament was in session. In between he stayed on Yavin with one or both of them, if they weren't busy.

That Luke came and went with similar frequency to, though not in sync with, Ben's own travels didn't seem remarkable. It was just a fact of life, like the fact that Mom was terrible at Chyriwook, and the Falcon was the fastest hunk'a'junk in the galaxy.

Whenever Luke came Detlan and Darklighter (or occasionally Feens and Hidenoff) would start standing up straighter and occasionally wore armour, and Ben always knew when he was going to leave because he'd start getting a beard, when the beard was grown in that was when Ben knew his uncle wouldn't be there anymore, and the house would be empty again except for Detlan and Darklighter, who'd have gone back to slumping and civies, and would usually be bored enough to help Ben with his homework if he asked nicely.

He sees now that his uncle was cleverly cloaking his movements from the Galactic government with a little help from his guards by pretending to spent all his time there between Imperial duties on Yavin, but really only staying to see Ben and his mother before flitting off on Jedi adventures.

At the time it was just another facet of who his family was. Mother was Important in the Core, Father was Trouble, Uncle Luke came and went and sometimes was blondish with close cropped hair and a clean shaven face, and sometimes was brunette with a wild mane and big full beard, and Uncle Chewie was a Wookie but the most sensible of the bunch.
The first time Ben remembers realizing who Luke was was when he accompanied his mother to the Core one time.

They went to a party and Ben was excited to go because Mom had promised Uncle Luke would be there, and Ben was disappointed because it was less a party and more of a ceremony and it was long and boring, and he couldn't see Uncle Luke anywhere but it wasn't until the terrifying and Majestic man in blinding white and a galactic blue cloak winked from under his silver headdress that Ben realized his Uncle was the Emperor.

Which is sort of embarrassing.


Luke pokes his head out from behind a trellis and stifles a smile. Kindo was one of his students who had been left with the Jedi as an infant, and he had recently developed a powerful hero-worship of Grandmaster Kenobi. So, someone (and as yet no one had admitted to it but Luke's money was on Jedi Jarvuss) had made him a tiny replica of Kenobi's usual outfit complete with an itty bitty brown Jedi cape.

It was adorable but Kindo had a bad habit of tripping himself up on the cape and falling flat on his face.

“What is it Kindo?” Luke asks, catching him with the Force before he connected with the ground.

“There's someone here to see you?”
“Oh really.” Luke says, Force jumping over the Fence that surrounds his garden and scooping the little Rodian up.

“Who is it?”

Kindo shakes his head. “I don't know. It's not Mister Korkie because he usually wears a jet pack and it's not the right ship.”

Well, that's somewhat ominous, and really only leaves Leia or Han, but if they're visiting him here instead of comming and asking him to come back to the Core or Yavin than that means that something has gone wrong.

Very very wrong.

When he rounds the corner to the landing pad and sees Han pacing around the Falcon with Ben standing by the landing gear, he gently puts Kindo down and breaks into a run cursing his Jedi cloak for getting in the way. Kindo's tendency to faceplant was making a lot more sense now. Why couldn't they just wear coats like normal people?

“Han! Han, what happened?” Luke asks. “Is Leia alright?”

Han nods slowly and his eyes flit to where Ben stands in a cloud of anger, resentment, hurt and pain. “Leia is alright, but I think Ben should stay with you for a while. Learn some Jedi tricks.”

Luke glances at Ben, and back to Han. “That's not how things work here, Han. You can't just drop him off! There are procedures, and assessments and three different programs of varying intensity to choose from based on his interest in Jedi studies and his abilities.”

Han crosses his arms and leans in to whisper. “He's become fixated on Vader.”

Luke leans back in confusion. “So? It's not uncommon for children to get...stuck on things they have trouble processing. I'd keep an eye on him but he's not-”

“No, he admires the man Luke.” Han explains.
Luke takes a deep breath. “Oh.” he looks back at Ben who is pretending he can't hear every word they're saying but can and every one is a like a blow landing to him.

"And not just Anakin Skywalker Jedi General, Luke." Han clarifies. "Vader Vader, the Emperor's Fist, Scourge of Nations Vader."

Luke clicks his tongue. “Fine, I'll talk to the pair of you. C'mon-” he waves them closer, but neither moves. Han gestures to the ship. “I'm on a run, I'm already off schedule.”

Luke reaches out with the Force. Han's not lying and Ben really does need help.

“Then you shouldn't have come here on a run. Come along now.” Luke cajoles. He snaps his fingers at Han. “As your Emperor I command it.” He says with mock- sternness holding his friend's gaze.

Han throws his hand up but relents. He knows there's no changing a Skywalker's mind when they've made a decision and are in a mood.

Luke takes Ben by the elbow and steers him back away from the landing pad, scooping up Kindo on the way.

“Kindo, this is my nephew Ben, Ben this is Kindo, he is being raised by the Jedi. He's one of my students.”

Ben glances between them. “I thought the Jedi didn't take children that young any more.”

Luke smiles at Kindo. “We don't take them, but sometimes they are given to us, and it would be terribly rude not accept such wonderful gifts.” Kindo giggles at Luke's exaggerated voice.

Han jogs up and fall in step with them. “Did ya hear they're making anther Holo-drama about you?” he asks, trying to make conversation.
Luke nods. “My secretary did tell me that an interview was requested. I'm guessing they asked you too?”

“Nope” Han replies glibly. “It's based on Darklighter's memoirs, ya know- 'bout how he grew up next to you on Tatooine and ended up serving in your protection detail. But, they uh, took some liberties with the source materials. It's a love story now.”

Luke turns in surprise. “Really? So, are you Darklighter's romantic rival or is Korkie?”

Han sighs. “Korkie, and they got Fret Zazz to play him, so I can't tell you how smug that Mandalorian's gonna be. I'm just a side note on the way to glory. Vader's the villain, of course.”

Luke laughs. “Of course. And Darklighter, the simple idealistic farmboy, thinks he is no match for Korkie the worldly and cynical Imperial Prince?” he guesses.

Han nods. “That's about right from what I hear.”

Luke looks down at Kindo. “That sounds fun to me, I may have to see that, what do you think Kindo? Are you a fan of torrid romances?”

Kindo sputters in annoyance and squirms to be let down. Luke sets him on his feet and walks hand in hand.

Ben scowls. “You shouldn't let them tell lies about you. You're the Emperor, you should be respected.” he mutters darkly from where he's trailing behind them.

Luke raises his eyebrows at Han who shrugs.

“Hmmm...respect is overrated, and being underestimated just keeps saving my life.” Luke answers.

Ben just rolls his eyes and Luke smiles to himself, remembering his own adolescence spent pouting at a Sith Lord.
They get to his hut and he can feel Ben's outrage that this is how his incredible amazing Uncle is living like this. Luke gives Han a look and nods towards Kindo.

Han nods. “I'll just take this little scrap back where he belongs, why don't I?”

Luke smiles. “Thank you Han that's very thoughtful. I believe he's supposed to be with the other younglings having their morning snack in the Mess Hall. Kindo? Why don't you ask Mr. Han here about the time he made the Kessel Run in 12 parsecs?”

Kindo blows a raspberry. “Nah! Ships are bo-ring.”

Luke thinks for a minute and then smiles. “Why don't you ask him about the time he and Obi-Wan Kenobi rescued the current minister of defense from an Imperial Space Station?”

Kindo perks up and looks at Han in awe. “You know Master Kenobi?”

Luke answers for Han. “More than know him, Han here worked with Master Kenobi almost the whole rebellion.”

Kindo lights up like a Life Day tree on Kkashykk.

Han shoots him a sarcastic salute and ambles off, the little Rodian skipping along next to him holding his hand.

Luke turns back to his nephew. “Do you want to talk in here or in the garden?”

Ben shrugs, and Luke takes him to the garden.

Luke sighs. “Would you like something to drink?”

Ben hunches his shoulders and shrugs.

Ben sits.

Luke looks at the boy intently.

His nephew has Han's nose and Leia's eyes, and something that approximates Lukes own over-generous mouth.

He's a painfully shy awkward looking kid without even taking into account the mass of untameable hair and the jug-handle ears.

It must be hell for him growing up with two parents who, even setting aside their good looks, could probably seduce the galaxy on charm and charisma alone.

“Are you alright, Ben?” Luke asks. “Do you need me to do anything for you? Do you want me to talk to your parents or get you into the Jedi academy or anything?”

Ben shakes his head. “They want to send me away. Dad would have just left me here if you hadn't stopped him.”

Luke sighs. “Just for a couple of days, and it wouldn't be the first time. He used to leave you with me all the time when you were little.”

Ben scowls and crosses his arms. “I remember. But he wasn't leaving me with my Uncle this time was he? He was leaving me with the Jedi Master who turned a Sith Lord back to the light.”

Luke scoffs. “That is not what happened. And your father wasn't leaving you with the Jedi, or your Uncle, he was leaving you with the person who knew Darth Vader best, because he tells me you have an interest in him?”

Ben softens a little. “It's not an interest it's just...he was amazing! He had the highest midi-chlorion count ever recorded! Did you know that?”
Luke raises his eyebrows. “I might have. I'm not sure. I'm surprised you know it.”

Ben smiles. “One of my friends told me about it. There's a lot of people who have an interest in Imperial things.”

Luke takes a second. “Is that all it is? An interest in recent history?”

Ben shrugs. “I don't know. I just...I want to be like him! He was a Jedi and a warrior, and the strongest sentient force user ever! The most powerful! No one could make him do anything he didn't want to do.”

Luke takes a deep breath and reaches over to take his nephew's hands. “Ben,” he says slowly and clearly, making eye contact the entire time. “I think it's great that you have an interest in galactic politics and history. But, when you say that you want to be like Vader? That scares me.”

Ben looks betrayed and yanks his hands away. “I thought you'd understand! Everyone knows the story about how the Emperor begged for his father's life! But, even you are afraid of the darkside! Your like mom! You're afraid of me! Do you think I'm going to go dark?!”


Ben nods tentatively.

“I grew up on Tatooine, where it is absolutely devastatingly scorching hot and you know what the best feeling in the universe is? It the minute the suns slip below the horizon and it starts to get dark. The relief of the cool night air. There's nothing better. So believe me when I say, I am not afraid of the dark. Because, you're right: I loved my Father very very much, but his life was a sad sad story and he lived with terrible pain and regret for most of his life. And you are my nephew. I love you. I don't want to ever see you in pain.

I don't know if it was the dark side that made my father do the things he did. Sometimes I think the only demons he had came from himself, but, I do know that I don't want you to have to suffer the way he suffered. He lost everyone he loved.”

“Except you.” Ben points.
Luke leans back. “That's not true, he lost me lots of times, it's just he found me again too. He destroyed everyone he loved, and everything he valued. Obi-Wan raised him, and was everything to him, and the last thing he ever said to my father was how he wished he killed him. Can you imagine that? I...I don't want you to live to regret your choices the way my father did.”

“You are very very strong in the Force.” Luke confides. “I'm sure you know that already, given what you've said about your parents, and you have some basic training. If you wanted you could choose to join the Jedi Order and explore that part of yourself. But it's a choice. Your life does not have to be about the Force. I don't know if you know this but your mother is as strong in the Force as I am. She even trained with Obi-Wan before I'd started training with Yoda. But that wasn't what she wanted to dedicate her life to. If you want to learn the Jedi way I'd be happy to help you, if you just want to take a couple courses to have better control over your force abilities, I can help you there, and if you want to do nothing, then I promise, I will fight your parents for to make sure they let you, okay?”

Ben nods. “Okay.” he says in a very small voice.

Luke reaches over and hugs him. “I don't blame you for admiring him.” Luke whispers. “But he was a man who was trapped and used and manipulated by everyone he ever met. He was born a slave, and then rescued from that only to live the restrictive life of a Jedi- a life he always resented and then he was manipulated and used by his Sith Master into destroying everyone he ever loved, until he didn't even know how to love anymore. He longed for freedom his entire life, but he lived and died controlled by other people. I don't want that to happen to you. Alright Ben?”

Ben nods.

Luke smiles “Because between you and me? I think you are like Vader, but only the good parts and maybe the best parts of your dad. Plus you have your mother's eyes.”

Ben ducks his head in embarrassment. “I'm nothing like my dad.”

Luke laughs. “Are you kidding? You're a Solo through and through. You've even got the nose!”


“What?”
“I think I’d rather be like you?”

Luke laughs. “What a broken down old man living in a garden and teaching little ones about star fighter engines and galactic politics until they beg to go back to one handed meditation?”

Ben smiles, and Luke can't help but notice that his adolescent awkwardness melts away when he does.

“I can think of worse things.”

Ben loves his Uncle. He's not alone in this. They say that Mandalore the Unconquered cooperates with the Commonwealth only because of the respect and admiration he has for it's Emperor. The Wookies as well. Across the galaxy sentient beings light candles, hang flags, and write sacred codings into temple mainframes asking their gods and spirits to protect and safe guard the Emperor Luke.

If anything were to ever happen to him. There would be hell to pay.

His Uncle is not wise or all knowing. When the Jedi Grandmaster Kenobi dies there is no question of him ascending to the title and becoming leader of the Jedi. Instead that role falls to a fierce warrior. Luke is no warrior and he is not what you'd call fierce.

But he is kind, strong, brave and generous.

And he saved the galaxy, by loving someone who maybe didn't deserve it.

Ben hates the people who did that to his grandfather, but he agrees with what the Holonet says: If Luke could forgive Vader than maybe there is hope for us all.

But the thing that Ben has always thought of as defining his uncle is that he is happy. And Ben can sense emotions sometimes, so he knows it's not an act or a front. His Uncle Luke is genuinely happy. He's the happiest most content person Ben knows.
Chapter End Notes

Early update cause I'm gonna be busy tomorrow and this is finished anyway.

Second to last chapter. Sniff. So sad to see this story end, I'm gonna miss spending a few hours a week messing around with these characters.

Anyway, I hope everyone enjoys this! Comments are always appreciated. For those looking for a purely happy ending I'd stop here since the next one is bittersweet and roughly The Force Awakens in-universe equivalent sorta-kind maybe ie: bad stuff happens to people and there is sadness.
Chapter Summary

There's a story in the galaxy about an Emperor who disappeared.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There is a legend in the galaxy about the Lost Emperor, who was born from darkness and so the darkness could not touch him. Who wore white, and fought for peace and was brave and strong and all the other hundred contradictory things a great legendary hero always is.

Like all great legends it's not really one story, but a thousand stories that twist together into a larger tale, and every planet and every system has it's own version of each of those stories.

Some of them are even true.

How they reach the end is always different. Sometimes he looks to the stars and disappears, sometimes he considers his good work done or promises to return when he is needed most or blesses the child in the mother's arms.

But the ending of the legend is always the same: he disappears and no one knows where.

But here's why:

One very early morning Luke walks out of his hut and finds a young man standing outside waiting for him. His hair is red enough to be memorable, he's got a very particular way of holding his face and he's in his twenties. The connection is apparent immediately.

Luke raises an eyebrow.
“You must be Brendol Hux's boy.” he remarks. He remembers Hux, a particularly nasty Imperial hardliner who'd been forcibly ejected from his academy and stripped of his rank on Vader's order not long after Palpatine's death.

He's currently serving a life-sentence for attempting to steal government ships and transport them to the Unknown Regions.

Luke had known he had a son, an infant at the time of his father's demotion, but he never learned the boy's name.

The man raises his blaster. “And you are coming with me, Your Majesty.”

Luke crosses his arms. This is very not good. Technically his location is a secret known only to his closest family, and the highest ranking members of the Jedi Order.

“No.”

The man unclicks the safety on his blaster.

“I'm afraid that wasn't a request.”

Luke reaches out with his mind. There are strangers here, dozens of them all filled with the fire and certainty of zealots.

He looks around. It's still early. First bell hasn't rung, almost everyone is still asleep. As far as Luke can tell none of the Jedi have yet realized what happened. They are a religious Order now, and take no official role in the politics of the galaxy. They enjoy the patronage and support of the various important dignitaries, but mostly they are ignored and left alone. It hasn't occurred to any of the Jedi to be afraid in years.

“And if I come with you, the people here are left alone?” Luke asks.

“Yes.” the man replies with absolute fervent certainty.
He's lying.

Luke puts his hand on his saber.

*Many legends don't have a real villain. Those are for fairy tales and holonet dramas. Legends don't always work that way. Often the heroes problems are of his own making or his opponents are no more malicious than the tides.*

*But this story hinges on betrayal, and betrayal stings no matter the motivation. After all to be unintentionally betrayed means that someone you trusted gave so little thought to you that they destroyed something important by accident and didn't even realize it was important when they did it.*

*Sometimes people make mistakes, but, no matter how unintentional the outcome, actions have consequences.*

This isn't what Ben wanted. He doesn't know what he thought would happen, but looking at the chaos of the Jedi compound he knows it wasn't *this*. It had all seemed so reasonable when they were planning this.

But now...

The mess hall is burning despite the rain. People are running everywhere.

He can hear screams.

The calm sunlit sanctuary of his childhood is being destroyed. Because he was stupid enough to trust the promise of a Neo-Imperial.

They'd promised him they just wanted to talk to the Emperor, to beg him to return to a more active role in the galaxy.
He sees Ahsoka Tano's twin white lightsabers flashing and whirling in the distance. He hears his uncle yelling something and Luke stumbles out of the rain with his students huddled around him and C-3T4 in front and MT-9 buzzing around them like a protective wasp.

When Luke locks eyes with Ben at first he is relieved, and then suddenly he knows.

He knows Ben told these extremists where they could find the Emperor, he knows he did it on purpose because he stupidly wanted to impress them and he is furious.

“C-3T4! GET THE YOUNG ONES TO MY SHIP!! FIRST PRIORITY IS THEIR SAFETY! LETHAL FORCE IS AUTHORIZED!! CONSIDER BEN SOLO A HOSTILE! GATHER ANY OTHER STRAGGLERS YOU MEET ALONG THE WAY! WAIT FOR ME IF YOU CAN!!!” He shouts still frozen in place, trying to process what he has learned. Trying to understand why. He reaches out with the Force towards his nephews oh so shielded mind.

“Of course, sir!” C-3T4 responds calmly, and to Ben's shock the metal plates slide back as an electrostaff unfolds from one arm and a high-power blaster from the other.

Luke herds his charges towards the droids without breaking eye contact with Ben. “MT-9?” he says softly. “Please look after them.”

The med-droid beeps and begins guiding the children away as C-3T4 whirls his staff to deflect stray blaster bolts.

Luke has his hand on the saber he always wears but which Ben has never seen him draw.

“Don't do this Uncle! You need to stay here! I'm sorry!! The galaxy needs you!! You have to stay! You have to defend the Temple! The People need their Emperor!” Ben hisses, his own blade hanging lax in his loose in grip, already ignited and painting the darkness with shades of green. “You can't run away! You don't have a chance on your own.”

Luke laughs in his nephew's face.

“Just because I don't like to fight, and you've never seen me fight, doesn't mean I don't know how.
After all...I taught you everything you know, didn't I?"

He has his blade up and ignited before Ben can move, and Ben's never seen anything like it. It's a slice of darkness outlined in blue, and a different shape than any other lightsaber Ben has seen.

“You're a fool, my nephew.” Luke tells him sadly, pointing at his face with his strange dark blade. “But, perhaps this is your path, and you need to walk it no matter the cost... This saber has been wielded by more great warriors than you will ever know or ever meet, and I did not begin to carry it until I was worthy of the blade.”

Ben tightens his grip on the handle of his own lightsaber. “Please, Uncle!” Ben begs. “You should at least let me come with you for extra protection and to help with the younglings.” he adds trying to sound confident.

But, all of Ben's bravado is deserting him now and he's not sure he can breathe, because his Uncle Luke is looking at him with all the coldness of a dead star and he's always known that no matter what, even when his mother was furious and his father gave up, Luke would look at him with gentle fondness and everything would be okay. But, he's wrong, because he's made Uncle Luke's peaceful sanctuary into a dangerous place and it occurs to him that his Uncle may never forgive him for that.

He didn't mean for this to happen.

“You should not have done this, Ben. You will live to regret bringing these men here.” and Luke's words have the ring of certainty, or maybe even prophecy.

He closes his saber and disappears into the pouring rain.

Ben hesitates a moment, closes his saber and runs after him.

_In some places, the tale of the lost Emperor does not end with his disappearance. Sometimes there is a quest undertaken by those in power, or those who love him or sometimes just those whose hearts are true and pure._
This is also true, depending on your point of view, but the difference is that sometimes in those versions of the story the searchers find the Emperor and bring him back to rule in glory.

Leia is furious beyond words. She refuses to believe what she's hearing.

“What do you mean?!” she hisses. Han is in the corner with his head in his hands and has not moved since Grand Master Tano gave them the news.

“I know it's difficult to hear.” Ahsoka tells her sympathetically over the holo-call. “But yesterday evening a contingent of men we believe to have been working for the First Order or to at least be in line with their ideological principles entered the Jedi Compound and, as far as we can tell, attempted to kidnap his Majesty the Emperor before mounting an all-out attack against the Jedi. They were unsuccessful on both counts as far as we can tell, but most disturbing of all we believe the location of our Compound and the information of the Emperor's whereabouts to have been provided to them by your son Ben Solo.”

Leia shakes her head. “That can't be! Ben wouldn't do that! He adores Luke! He practically lives for stories about the old days there's no way~”

“I'm sorry Prime Minister, but he confessed everything to me.”

“Is he okay?” Leia's not even sure who she's asking about- her son or her brother.

“We believe your son will make a full recovery. The burns are superficial and the broken leg will heal in time.”

Leia sits down, relieved. “So it's alright then. The perpetrators were caught and will be punished and everything can continue as it was. This was a blow but, you'll recover. Can you put Luke on the line?”

Ahsoka sucks her teeth. “I'm afraid he's gone. We believe he left of his own volition. He took his few treasured possessions with him, along with his most vulnerable students and the droids. So.”
“But, where has he gone?!”

“We don't know, he has his own ship and in the chaos of the attack he slipped away...he could have gone anywhere.”

Leia will not accept that. She ends the call to Ahsoka and immediately enters Korkie's frequency.

“Korkie!” she shouts when his face appears. “Where is my brother?”

Korkie looks at her blankly. “...Why are you asking me?”

“Don't give me that! Luke is missing! He left Ben with lightsaber burns and a broken leg. I need to find him and if anyone knows where he has gone it's you!”

Korkie raises his eyebrows. “Don't you give me that. I will bet anything you want that if his leg is broken it was C-3T4 that broke it and the little shit probably deserved it. Luke isn't missing: he left. He left me a message to tell me he hadn't been kidnapped. He's a Jedi Master, Leia. He'll be fine.”

“You know where he is!” Leia roars in accusation.

Korkie pretends to think exaggeratedly. “Hmm...No, no I don't. But, I'm sure he'll comm me if he needs anything. The Kryze Clan looks after it's own.”

“Korkie-!” Leia shouts.

“If he wanted you to know where he was, you'd know where he is. But, there are radicals in your government Leia Organa, so you can't know because your son is one of them and he sold out your brother and nearly got the Jedi Order exterminated for the second time in century. Leave it. He'll comm you when he's ready.”

Korkie ends the connection.

Leia is glad she is not trained in the Force, because if she were she'd be trying to reach across the
stars to strangle that man.

Han finally raises his head. “How did this happen?” he asks in a hollow voice. “How did we let this happen?”

_The Lost Emperor is not a happy legend. It begins in blood and sadness and death. It begins with the loss of hope and the end of an age. Parts of it are happy, of course. The Emperor is crowned in glory and ushers in a new age of peace and prosperity. But, in legends at least, such ages never last as long as it seems they should._

_Not that it is a tragedy._

_After all the Emperor is the one who leaves, and like all great partings that is saddest for those left behind._

Ahsoka rushes to her comm when it rings. “Master Skywalker.” she greets him, with a quirk of her lips.

“Grand Master Ahsoka, I will be returning to the Jedi Compound with my students, before I go into hiding and exile. I'm afraid that I would only put them in more danger by having them stay with me.”

“Luke, no one is going to betray you. You can return to to your life and stop hiding. If nothing else this incident should have proven that the Jedi can protect you!”

“Ahsoka, think about why I'm doing this. If they catch me and kill me, or even if they catch me and pretend they have my support what follows would be...” he trails off at a loss for words imagining the carnage of his influence, rank and knowledge turned against the galaxy.


Luke nods. “My location from now on is going to be a secret I share with no one.”
“There are other options Luke.” Ahsoka protests “You don't need to take such drastic measures. Keep your students with you, at least. I'm sure you still have much to teach them.”

Luke laughs hollowly. “Yes, like how to give up. How to be a coward.”

Ahsoka looks at him reproachfully. Luke shakes his head and continues. Self pity is not the Jedi way. “Besides, most of them are approaching the point where they will need more qualified teachers to pursue their studies anyway.”

Ahsoka sighs. “I do understand why you feel you must do this, but I think you're making a mistake Luke. At least keep Rey with you, you've been caring for her since she was brought to the temple. You're the only family she's ever known and she's still young enough that you are the best teacher for her.”

He looks away. “Opinion noted and ignored Grand Master.”

When Luke lands Ahsoka is there to meet him. It is difficult to say goodbye to his students, but they are all old enough to see it is for the best, and in most cases it is Luke who sheds more tears over the goodbyes then the younglings.

Except for Rey, the youngest a girl of only four who has been in his care since she was two, who clings and cries and screams if anyone tries to take her away.


Ahsoka shrugs. “The entire point of what we've been doing with the young ones in the New Order is to allow them to choose their own path. It looks to me like she's choosing her's.”

Luke pries Rey off and sets her on her feet in front of him. He crouches to look her in the eye.

“Sweetheart, you won't be safe if you come with me. You know these people, you've known them since you were a baby. You'll be better off here. With me, who knows what will happen?”
But she's got that stubborn look on her face and just shakes her head and throws herself back into
his arms with a scream of “But I wanna stay with you Master Luke!”

Ahsoka laughs and crosses her arms.

“It looks to me like she's made her choice, and as Grandmaster of the Order I give you my
permission to take the girl and raise her if that's what you desire. I know you will love her, care for
her and protect her.”

“If you do not think you are capable of this responsibility, or if you do not wish it, say no more and
she will be returned to the Temple to be raised with the other children that are given to our care,
but, if you are...”

Luke wraps his arms around her and stands. “I am.”

Ahsoka smiles. “Goodbye Master Skywalker. I pray you make better choices than your family
seems prone to in the raising of her.”

He nods to her over Rey's head as he stands at the ramp of his spaceship. “May the Force be with
you.”

She inclines her head. “And also with you, Luke.”

She watches him fly away, and it's the end of something, but the start of something as well.

*In the stories when the Emperor disappears it's usually sudden and shocking. The galaxy descends
into sadness and longing. That is not quite true, though really whose to say?*

*But, ask a historian instead of a storyteller and they would answer that The Emperor had faded
away from the public eye over the course of two decades. When he finally disappeared completely
he hadn't made a public appearance in two years though his invisible involvement in the goings on
of the galaxy was well known, and when he disappears it takes the galaxy at large a while to
notice, but when they do life goes on. The elections cycle round, the races run at the Hyperdrome,
and the Stormtrooper Academies churn out fresh cadets as always.*
Leia Organa is elected Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, by the skin of her teeth.

The First Order, considered by many to be Neo-Imperialists masquerading as political radicals is narrowly defeated to become the official opposition.

If either of these two camps know about an attack on the Jedi Compound, neither of them mention it.

In the less exciting realm of history, that is the story that accompanies the disappearance of Luke Amidala, Last Emperor of the Galactic State.

Ben's leg heals, and Leia is allowed in to see him.

He looks at her with big black eyes, and Luke's voice echoes in her ears from a long time ago: *He has your eyes.*

He has her rage too.

“I didn't realize what would happen.” Ben tries to explain. “I didn't know. They...thought he'd been kidnapped or was under house arrest. I was trying to impress them. I didn’t think it would do any harm telling them he lived with the Jedi Order. They said they just wanted to talk to him.”

Mind healers have been talking to him, Leia knows. She's not sure what would be worse, that his mind is injured, that he was hurting and sick and needed help and she never noticed, or that there is nothing wrong at all and he did what he did with a clear head and a sound mind.

She should have realized he'd befriended the ever growing Neo-Imperialist faction. Their support throughout the galaxy has only grown the last few years, and as she told Ahsoka- Ben adores his Uncle and had once idolized Vader, it shouldn't be a surprise that he would think reinstating the Empire, and Luke's place as Supreme Ruler of the Galaxy was a good idea.

But, Ben had been studying the Force with his uncle and had been considering making the commitment to join the Jedi Order so as to further that education. So, Leia had foolishly thought he'd finally put the ugly interest he's always had in the Empire behind him. It seems she was
wrong. She hates to be wrong.

Han leaves with Chewie to go look for Luke.

He goes to Takodana and talks to Maz. She tells him to go home. He ignores that and tells her he's looking for someone. She pretends she doesn't know who he means, but no one can resist a Wookie's sad eyes so she gives in eventually.

She takes them down to the depths of her castle and opens a box.

“He did come. He sold his ship and bought another and left this here.” It's the hilt of a familiar looking lightsaber. Han stares.

“That's his lightsaber! And it was his father's- it was Anakin Skywalker's...he'd never-” Han protests, but he looks at Maz and the words die on his lips. Luke would never, but he did.

She closes the box. “The Emperor carries many burdens. He felt responsible for the attack on the school. He also feels that those vermin targeted your son to get to him. He already carries more lives and deaths on his soul than he should. Leave him be, Solo. Go home.”

Han stares at it. “You're saying he doesn't want to be found.”

Maz shakes her head. “I'm saying he is not lost, you fool! You are no Jedi, but you are not as blind and deaf to the Force as you would like to pretend. If you would but-”

Han cuts her off. “Listen Maz, I don't mean no disrespect but, I ain't an adherent to the Force mumbo-jumbo that's gotten my family so spectacularly broken. So if you're not going to say anything helpful I'll be taking that-” he reaches for the box and she slaps his hand away. Hard.

“He did not leave it here for you.” she informs him.
“Fine! Chewie! We're going.”

He wanders aimlessly after that. Checking in with Korkie on Mandalore, and Ahsoka whose duties take her to a dozen different planets, even with the estranged family of Luke's mother, the Naberries. They haven't heard anything either.

He calls Leia.

The trial for the attacks on the Jedi temple has come and gone. Due to his age, and the lack of criminal intent Ben has gotten off easy, probation and a mark against his record, but no jail-time or house arrest. He's been asking about his Uncle.

Leia doesn't say anything about Han's absence but there's a silent reproach in her eyes.

She has lost her brother, her son is the one responsible for that loss and now her husband has abandoned her to face both of these things alone.

He doesn't need reminding of these facts, because Chewie does remind him. Daily.

It's months later, when finally exhausted and out of hope, Han gives up. He leans against the dashboard of the Falcon.

“Damnit Luke.” he whispers. “How could you do this? Don't you know it wasn't your fault? We need you, you nerf-brain.” he knocks his head against the dashboard. “Where are youwhereareyouwhereareyou-”

He sits bolt upright in shock, because suddenly he knows. He knows exactly where Luke is and he feels stupid for not thinking of it before.

*The thing about legends is, even when there's an ending, there isn't really an ending, because when a story is that beloved you can guarantee that people will not be content with it being over, not forever, and in time someone will come along to add a new chapter.*
In the case of the Legend of the Lost Emperor it is inevitable that he will not stay lost forever, because what storyteller could resist the temptation of having something so lost be found?

It feels like Onderon shouldn't be the same, but it is. The little house, and the shallow sea and the desert in the distance is all as unchanged as it was twenty years ago.

The gardens are a bit bigger, and grander but other than that it's exactly the same.

“Oh! Master Solo!” a familiar voice trills. “What a pleasant surprise!”

C-3T4 even trundles over happily, and for a moment Han feels like he's 30 again and come to woo an Imperial Prince.

Right up until the droid hooks his leg through Chewie's to yank him to the ground and jams a built in blaster at his friend's head with one arm and swings the other arm in an unfolding arc that leaves an electrostaff hovering a centimeter from Han's throat.

“I have informed Master Luke you are here. He will be along shortly. Until he arrives, I strongly advise you not to move.”

Han barely breathes as he stands and waits.

When Luke finally emerges Han feels that familiar jolt of surprise. In his mind Luke is always the smooth faced Emperor he knew best, but Luke has always had a talent for personal reinvention and it's the Jedi who greets Han, not his old friend.

Luke's beard has grown in full and he wears it longer than anyone in the Core would ever dare. He's wrapped in a brown Jedi cloak but his eyes are still the bluest in the galaxy.

Luke doesn't smile when he sees them. “Stand-by mode.” is all he says, a clipped order directed at his protocol droid/bodyguard, and it's funny, Han had known about the droid's hidden functions at one point he's sure of it. But he'd forgotten.
Looking at Luke, Han can't help but feel like he's forgotten lots of things.

Luke crosses his arms and looks at Han tiredly. He's got two lightsabers on his belt now.

“I honestly didn't think you'd remember about this place.” Luke admits. “You're actually the only person who knows it exists.”

“I feel stupid for not remembering earlier. 'Course you went home.”

Luke shrugs. “I have lots of homes, Han. This is just one of them.”

There's a sound from the garden behind him and a little girl peaks out. After looking between Luke, Han and Chewbacca she boldly runs over to stand beside Luke.

“You were right, it isn't Mister Korkie.” she says, obviously disappointed by Han.

Luke puts a hand on top of her head. “I already told you. Mister Korkie doesn't know where we are.”

Han eyes the little girl and looks up at Luke. “Ahsoka lied about not knowing where you'd gone, didn't she?”

Luke shakes his head. “She doesn't know where I am, but I comm her every week to go over the my former student's academic and Force studies, and to give her updates on Rey's progress. It's very civilized.”

Han takes a deep breath. “Does Korkie get the same privilege?” he asks.

Luke shrugs. “Don't pretend that if you ran away you'd leave Chewie behind.”

Han sputters. “That is insulting both to me and to Chewie.”
Luke is unrepentant.

“You have to come back.” Han begs. “Ben is sorry. He's so damn sorry that if you don't come back and forgive him he just might die of regret. Leia misses you. I miss you, kriff it.”

Luke picks up the little girl who happily latches on to him. “I wish it was that simple Han, but it's not. I can't come back. Not now and probably not for a very long time.”

The little girl is looking between Han and Luke with very bright eyes, and Han has the uncomfortable feeling she understands everything they're discussing.

“The hell you can't!” Han protests. “You convinced a lord of the Sith to put aside his power and bring back democracy! You saved the galaxy! You're Luke Skywalker, you can do anything!”

Luke jerks his head, as invitation for Han to follow as he ambles back into the garden.

“I'm sorry, Han. I really am, but this is just the way things are for now.”

“He's just a kid and you're going to abandon him?!”

Luke's gaze is so full of anger that for a minute Han thinks he's going to put the kid down and punch him in the face.

“I'm not abandoning him but I can't trust him. This isn't about you.” Luke hisses. “Or him. It's about the political party that he sold me out to who wants to either use me or kill me so they can send the galaxy back to the dark times. Whether I like it or not, I am not just Ben's uncle or your friend, or a Jedi Master, I am the Emperor of the Fucking Galaxy and a political symbol to billions of sentients. If they find me, if they kidnap me or kill me? That could send the Galaxy sliding back into war. And you know how I feel about war. So, I took myself out of the equation.”

“And you couldn't tell me this? You couldn't tell Leia?”
“No. Because Leia was running for office, and now she's Prime Minister. She has her own agenda, and her own concerns. She has an obligation to her electorate to do the right thing. To try her best and I don't deny that the easiest way to deal with the Neo-Imperialists is with the Emperor himself because my authority is the only one they even come close to respecting, so she'd want to bring me back to publicly support her government and oppose these extremists. She'd want me to help fight her battles, even though if I were to win it would undermine the entire democracy we've tried to build. She'd never accept that I don't want to fight, or that I don't believe in what she does. And you know Leia, if she encounters a reality she cannot accept than she alters that reality.’”

“C'mon Luke, you're her brother. You can't just...abandon her.”

“I wouldn't have to abandon her if I didn't know that she would use every hint I accidentally dropped in any conversation I had with her to hunt me down. Which would be fine, if she weren't Prime Minister and didn't have all the resources of the Commonwealth Military to bring to bear on hunting me down. As things stand if she had the slightest hint of where I was there'd be a squadron here within the day to escort me back to the Core.”

“You're not being fair.”

“Life isn't fair, Han. I'm surprised it's taken you this long to notice.” Luke snaps. He sighs and looks away. “Look, you can tell them you found me and I'm okay, alright? If you can get her to agree to absolute secrecy then have her comm Ahsoka and I'll get in touch. But, no one can know where I am, alright? Maybe one day, but for now? This is the way it has to be. No one can know.”

Han takes a deep breath and looks around.

The garden is beautiful and bigger than it used to be. There are toys next to the sun chair, and flowers blooming.

The house is open to the air, and there's a dry wind coming from the desert.

“Alright kid,” Han relents, though Luke is so far past being a kid it's a silly thing to call him. But standing in this garden Han remembers who he used to be, that sweet kid he'd met on Matao who even with a crushed throat somehow trusted that Han would never hurt him and Han can't betray that trust.

Luke smiles looking relieved, with his spare hand he reaches out and gives Han's shoulder a
“Thank you. I swear it won't be for long.” Luke says, his voice so grateful and relieved it hurts Han to think that Luke must have expected him to refuse.

*Like I said, no legend ever really ends, and there are parts that come after this one. There are always new monsters for the heroes to fight. New wrongs to right and loves to win.*

*The Emperor's daughter does no grow to be a princess but something rather more and rather less than a Jedi. Ben Solo searches for a way back towards the man he wishes to be. There are other heroes, legends in the making that join their stories to these and together it continues.*

*But, for the Lost Emperor it ends like this:*

*He turns his face to the sun, smiles into the wind, holds his daughter in his arms and walks out legend into life. One that he lives happily, peacefully and without regret.*

“Papa! *Papa!*”

The voice is clear, and full of annoyance. Luke opens his eyes from where he'd fallen asleep in the sun and blinks at his daughter.

“Yes, dear?” he asks squinting up at her where she stands next to his chair with the sun behind her.

“Yes, dear?” he asks squinting up at her where she stands next to his chair with the sun behind her.

“People are here.” she tells him in exasperation. It's obvious to Luke that she must have said this to him half-a-dozen times trying to wake him up.

He nods, and yawns, still half asleep before he looks behind him back towards the landing site. The ship is familiar, and the figures around it more so.
He beams at her, and then moves to stand up. “You know, darling, I think it's time you met your family.”

She doesn't seem impressed by the idea. Luke laughs and puts an arm around her shoulder.

"C'mon. Let's go say hello."

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Well, here we are at the last update. I hope everyone enjoyed it and has enjoyed the ride. I certainly enjoyed writing it.

A big big thank you to everyone who has left kudos, and commented and subscribed to this story. It's been so encouraging and gratifying to have that sort of response to a story, and it's given me so much more confidence in my writing. I can't believe I finished a story that I had planned at such an ambitious length! We finish at 31 chapters and 120,00 + words!! I also can't believe how many of you seem to like it!

So THANKS!

And look at that I managed to squeeze almost every cameo I wanted in here! The only one that didn't make it was Qui-Gon Jinn: Lamest Force Ghost Ever.

Anyway, thanks again to you all. I'm just sorry I made you cry so much, but I hope the happy ending was worth it.

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