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Amnesia

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He groaned as he slowly tried to claw his way back to consciousness. He couldn't remember what had happened; he couldn't even remember who he was! He tried desperately to get away from the swirling darkness in which he now found himself, to awaken, but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't.

Finally he gave up, trying instead to remember how he had gotten into this state. How had he been knocked out? How badly was he injured? Who had injured him? Who was he? Where had he come from? Questions, questions and more questions, but no answers. Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?

He couldn't even remember what he looked like!

"Luuuuuuuuukkkkkkkkkkeeeeeeeee?" a voice suddenly cut into his thoughts.

Who was that? Where was the voice coming from? Who was Luke? Was he Luke?

It didn't matter, there was somebody there. Somebody's voice whom he vaguely recognized, perhaps somebody who knew him, who could tell him who he was. Desperately he tried to fight his way through the mists and back to a conscious state.

Suddenly it seemed like the most important thing in the world that he awaken, not only to find out who he was and all the other answers to the questions he had, but just to be with this person, this person he felt some kind of connection with, some kind of bond.

"Luuuuuuuuukkkkkkkkkkkkeeeeeeeee?" the voice asked again.

Again he started struggling against the darkness that wanted to keep him where he was, away from the voice and its owner. He was Luke, he was now sure of that, and this voice, this man, knew him and obviously cared for him.

Even as the darkness tried to pull him back he, Luke, pushed forward. Then, just as he was about to give up, he felt pressure on his . . . on his shoulder! He could feel, he had done it! But no matter how hard he tried he couldn't open his eyes, or were they open and was he just blind? He slowly lifted his hand to his face.

As soon as he lifted his hand the pressure left his shoulder and a strong, leather-clad hand took hold of his wrist.

"No, Luke," the voice said softly but firmly. "Rest, you must rest now."

"M. . .m. . .my. . .my eyes," Luke stuttered as he became aware of another sound, the rhythmic sound of a breathing respirator.

"Shhhh," the voice said softly as his hand was placed back on the soft silk sheets of the bed he was lying on. "Your eyesight can be healed, but it won't come without some pain."

He wasn't blind! He didn't care about the pain, he wanted to see, to see himself, to see where he was, and to see this man who stayed with him and took care of him. Suddenly another question popped into his mind, who was this man? Was he a friend? A brother? A father?

"W. . .who. . .ar. . .are. . .you?" he asked.

"I'm your father, Luke," the voice said. "I'm Vader, Darth Vader."

Yes, the name seemed familiar somehow. Frantically he tried to place a face with the name, but no matter how hard he tried he just couldn't remember the man's face, his father's face.

"My son," Vader said, "in order for you to regain your eyesight I shall have to give you a special kind of eye drops, but as I said earlier it will hurt. Do you want me to do it now or later?"

"Now," Luke replied instantly. "I. . .I want to see you. I can't remember what. . .what you look like."

Did his father know about his memory loss, his amnesia? Did he know what had happened to him? He had so many questions but almost no answers. He desperately hoped that his father had some to give him.

"Very well," his father replied and Luke thought that he could detect a smile in that deep, rich voice.

His bed rose slightly as his father got to his feet. Listening intently he could hear footsteps and then nothing for a moment before hearing footsteps coming back towards him. Then the bed sank slightly as his father re-seated himself on it.

"Now," his father began as Luke felt a big, leather-clad hand on his face. "Remember that this will hurt quite a bit for a short while, but then you'll be able to see again."

He nodded his head slightly in reply before he remained still as his father put a few drops of fluid into his eyes.

At first he felt nothing and was just wondering if the medicine would work when he felt a sudden, terrible pain in his eyes. There was no way to describe the pain. He felt like calling out, like screaming, and yet he couldn't. Then he felt his father's hand once again take hold of his and he just squeezed it, thankful of the reminder that the pain would soon go away.

Just as the pain started to retreat, Luke became aware of his father's hand on his forehead. The hand was gently pushing back his hair. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain was gone. Luke released some of the pressure on his father's hand as he slowly blinked his eyes. As he did so he became aware that some of the fluid was still there.

"Wait," his father ordered as he released his hand.

Luke lay still, his eyes shut, waiting impatiently. After a moment he felt a wet cloth rubbing the liquid out of his eyes.

"Done," Vader stated after a few seconds.

Carefully Luke opened his eyes and was relieved to see blurry colors and shapes swim into view. Immediately he looked towards where his father should be. Finally he saw a black outline of a well-built man sitting on the side of his bed. As he regarded him, his vision slowly cleared and he saw that his father wore both black body armor and a breathing mask.

"Can you see clearly now?" Vader asked sensing both confusion and joy radiating from his son.

"Yes, thank you," Luke replied, realizing that he was staring and quickly lowering his eyes. "I'm sorry, it's just that I don't remember anything, I-"

"It's okay," Vader interrupted. "I understand. Your memory will return in time as the poison wears off."

"Poison?" Luke asked, remembering all of his questions.

"Yes," his father replied. "You were attacked by a horangi before I got to you."

"A horangi?"

"Yes," Vader stated nodding his head. "It's a large predator with six arms, long fangs, and claws. The claws are filled with a paralyzing poison, so the moment a claw punctures your skin the poison disables you, both mentally and physically, so that you'd become an easy victim. One of the side effects of the poison is temporary amnesia."

"Another being the blindness," Luke guessed correctly. "How long is this temporary amnesia?"

"That varies from person to person," Vader replied, knowing that if Luke were to touch the Force he'd instantly regain his memory. But he decided to keep that knowledge to himself. "Some people regain their memory in two months, for others it can take up to six months."

Luke nodded his head, disappointed. He'd have no clue as to who had been his friends and his enemies for at least two months. He couldn't even remember being in this room.

"How did it happen?" Luke asked, looking up at his father. "How did I get caught by the horangi?"

"I don't know," Vader replied.

It was true. He could guess, but he couldn't be sure.

"I only arrived on the scene just before it was about to eat you."

Luke shuddered at the thought of his close call. If it hadn't been for his father. . .

"Now you must rest," Vader ordered. "Tomorrow we can discuss things further."

"Okay," Luke replied, realizing just how tired he was. "Where did it claw me?"

"Your upper right arm," Vader replied as he got to his feet.

Luke quickly rolled up his sleeve and saw the twin scars running across his arm.

"Thank you, Father," Luke said as he turned around on the bed.

"Sleep," Vader ordered softly as he left the room.

When Luke first awoke he didn't know where he was, but then it all came rushing back to him, at least that what had happened the night before. His memory before that was still a big blank. Quickly he glanced at the chronometer on the bedside table and saw that it was half past seven. Sighing, he lifted the sheets before he realized that the sheets themselves provided him with a clue about his life. The sheets were made of a delicate black silk, meaning that he, and his father, were rich.

Now that he thought about it, he realized that he had only seen his father. Didn't he have any siblings? What about his mother? Where was she? Had she died, or had his parents split up? And how had his father gotten the mask and body armor? Frustrated, he threw back the sheets and got up. Looking around he saw that there was a single closet in his room, a desk, a shelf which was almost bare, and the bedside table.

Walking over to the shelf he scanned the objects on it. The thing that caught his attention was a long, cylinder-like object which seemed to be a hilt of sorts with a button near the top.

Picking it up he instantly knew that he had held one of those often before. It felt as if it belonged in his hand. Turning it away from him, he pressed the button and immediately a brilliant green-white blade appeared with a loud humming. Looking at the blade he instinctively knew not to touch it. How he didn't know. He just knew. After examining the blade for a moment he pressed the button once more and the blade disappeared. As he studied the hilt of the weapon he remembered seeing a similar device hanging from his father's belt the night before.

Putting the hilt back on the shelf, he turned around and walked over to the window and pulled back the heavy, black velvet drapes. Looking out he saw a pathway leading away from the building he was in, down to the sea which he could just make out in the distance. To the far left of his view and close to the building he saw a landing pad. On it stood a single shuttle with its wings folded up.

Turning away from the window he walked over to the desk and found a datachip lying on it. Sitting down in the chair, he inserted the datachip into the holo player installed in the desk. Almost instantly a miniature blueprint of a castle appeared in the air above the player. Seeing a landing pad on the holo he realized that the blueprints were those of the building he was in.

Studying the blueprints he smiled to himself, knowing that his father had probably left the datachip here so that he wouldn't get lost in his own home. He had to admit, from what he could tell from the holo in front of him, the castle was huge

and he'd definitely have gotten lost if he hadn't had those plans. As he quickly memorized the plan he noticed that it identified the planet he was on as Melca.

He got up and took a quick shower before he walked over to the closet and opened it. Looking inside he saw several pairs of clothes, some plain, and some long flowing robes. He also noticed that while most of the clothes were black there were some dark blue ones with silver trimmings. Looking over the clothes he quickly pulled out a black shirt and pants along with a dark blue robe with silver trimming. After putting on the clothes he reached back into the closet and pulled out a pair of black knee-high boots and a belt.

Glancing in the mirror, he smiled to himself. Whoever he was, he looked both handsome and important. Heading towards the door his eyes once again fell on the weapon lying on the shelf. Wondering if he had once worn it at his belt as his father did, he walked back over to the shelf and picked it up. Examining it once more he decided that he might as well carry it with him and then ask his father about it later. He hooked the weapon to his belt before he turned around and left the room heading downstairs for breakfast.

Using his memory the blueprints, he quickly found the dining room and had just seated himself at the large wooden table when a velvet-footed servant clad in gray entered the room carrying a tray with food. The servant silently set the food before him, after which he left the room as silently as he had come.

Looking at the food Luke shook his head as he wondered if he'd ever regain his memory. He didn't even recognize the food he was about to eat. Sighing softly, he began to eat as he studied the dining room. As he did so he realized that his father must be richer than he had thought. Although he didn't remember anything about the worth of the furniture and tapestries that decorated the room, he could clearly see that they were all very expensive.

He had just finished when the velvet-footed servant re-entered the room.

"Lord Vader requests your presence," the servant said as he stopped at Luke's right elbow. "He's upstairs in his chambers."

Luke nodded his head absently as he rose and exited the dining room. Lord Vader? Lord of what?

Shaking his head in frustration he stopped in front of the door to his father's chambers. Should he knock and wait, or should he go right in? Compromising, he knocked and entered. As soon as he entered the room he gave a small cough as the air that went into his lungs was different.

"It's pure oxygen," came his father's voice. "It will not harm you. It allows me to breath without my respirator."

Looking around Luke saw a big chair and, as he watched, the chair turned around to face him. Upon seeing the occupant's face he gasped involuntarily. His father was still wearing the body armor, but he had removed the mask, revealing a pale, bald, and scarred face. As he studied his father's face he noticed that he had inherited his father's ice-blue eyes. Suddenly realizing that he was staring, he quickly lowered his eyes.

"I'm sorry," he apologized as he felt his father's gaze upon him.

There was a moment of silence during which Luke shifted uncomfortably. He was wondering how badly he'd insulted his father when Vader spoke:

"That's all right," Vader stated, his voice emotionless. "I know it must be a shock to see my face for the first time."

"First time?" Luke asked looking up.

"First time since your accident," Vader replied as he studied his son. "I see you have your lightsaber with you."

"Lightsaber?" Luke asked looking confused. "You mean this?" He took the weapon hilt from his belt.

"Yes," his father replied, smiling. "It is the weapon of the Sith and the Jedi, although the Jedi are all but extinct."

"Extinct?"

"Yes, over twenty years ago I started the Great Jedi Purge. Now there is only one master and one student left," Vader explained, watching his son intently.

"Why?" Luke asked, moving forward and taking a chair close to his father. "Why the Purge?"

"There are several reasons, mostly political," Vader replied carefully. "But the two reasons that were most important to me was the fact that they opposed Palpatine and his reforms and the fact that it was a Jedi who pushed me into a lava pit causing these injuries you see now."

Vader was pleased to see the anger and hate appear on his son's face as he heard this.

"So there's only one master and one student left?" Luke asked angrily.

"Yes," Vader confirmed. "I have no idea where the master is, but the student is with the Rebellion."

"The Rebellion?"

"Yes," his father replied. "Over twenty years ago the Old Republic ruled the galaxy, but it became corrupt. One of its Senators, a man named Palpatine, had had enough of it and decided to bring order back to the galaxy. He established his Empire and proclaimed himself Emperor. He has a big military and fleet. However, a few people think that the Empire is taking away the freedom of the galaxy and they fight the Empire, claiming they want peace."

"They attack to achieve peace?" Luke asked incredulously.

"Yes," Vader confirmed. "They call themselves the Rebel Alliance, but they are known as the Rebellion to most Imperials."

"What's your position in the Empire?" Luke asked remembering how the servant had given his father the title 'Lord.'

"I'm second in command of the Empire and my title is Lord Vader," Vader stated proudly.

"Second in command?" Luke repeated, impressed.

No wonder his father was rich. He was the second most powerful man in the galaxy! Looking around the room he noticed that, although sparsely furnished, everything looked just as expensive as the furnishings in the rest of the castle.

As Luke studied the room Vader studied his son. Until Luke regained his memory he would be able to introduce his son to Imperial ways and ideas without the Rebel ideas clouding his mind and judgment. It was a shame that he couldn't train Luke in the ways of the Dark Side, but any contact with the Force would bring his memory rushing back. He couldn't have that as Luke would then deny his destiny once again. If Luke spent the next two and a half months with him he'd come to see the truth, namely that he belonged at his father's side. Once the boy realized that, then he'd accept his Dark Side training.

"Father?" Luke asked, turning back to face him.

"Yes?" Vader replied, smiling slightly.

"What are the Jedi and the Sith?" Luke asked. "I mean what makes them different from others?"

"The Sith and the Jedi are people who are trained in the ways of the Force," Vader explained carefully.

"The Force?" Luke asked, looking confused.

"The Force is an energy field that surrounds us and all living things," Vader stated, carefully watching Luke for signs of recognition, but found none. "The Force is everywhere for Force sensitive individuals to touch and manipulate. There are two sides to the Force, the Light Side and the Dark Side. The Jedi use the sickeningly weak Light Side and so deny their true power while the Sith use the Dark Side and are very powerful."

"Are you a Sith?" Luke inquired.

"Yes," Vader replied. "And you have inherited my ability to touch the Force."

At this Luke raised his head and sent him a confused glance.

"Then how come I don't feel it?" he asked.

"You have forgotten your training along with your memory," Vader explained. "It will come back to you when your memory does. Until then you wouldn't need the Force."

"Okay," Luke replied just as there came a beeping noise from the control panel behind his father.

Vader turned his chair around and saw that it was the call he had been waiting for. He pushed a button and his mask and helmet slide back down and onto his head.

"There is some business I have to take care of," he stated, rising to his feet. "If you'll excuse me."

"Very well," Luke replied as he too got up. "I'll go explore."

With this Luke walked over to the door and left the room. Vader stood still for a moment, contemplating his conversation with his son, before he remembered who was calling him. Quickly he entered a room specially designed for contact with the Emperor. He stepped forward and knelt in the middle of the projecting circle before he opened the connection. Immediately the larger-than-life image of Palpatine's face appeared in the air in front of Vader's kneeling form.

"So nice of you to finally acknowledge my call," Palpatine stated acidly and noticed Vader shift slightly.

"My apologies master," Vader replied, keeping his head low. "I was busy with my son."

"Ah, yes, young Skywalker," Palpatine said. "How is my future young apprentice?"

"Thanks to the horangi's poison he remembers nothing but what has happened since he first awoke last night."

"Good," Palpatine stated, pleased. "He believes everything you tell him?"

"Yes," Vader replied, stiffening slightly.

He had no intention of lying to his son. That would only make Luke mistrust him when he regained his memory. No, it was much better to tell Luke the truth and then point that out to his son when he regained his memory. He had felt the boy's longing to know him ever since Bespin, but Luke had held back, thinking him evil. However, if he could prove to Luke who he was now, then he was sure Luke would join him voluntarily, which was much better than forcing him to the Dark Side for both him and Luke.

"Bring young Skywalker to me in several weeks," Palpatine ordered.

"Several weeks?" Vader questioned, glancing up in surprise. "He won't even have regained his memory yet."

"No matter," Palpatine stated. "You shall bring him to me then. You may still keep him with you until he's ready for his apprenticeship, but I wish to see him in several weeks."

"As you wish my master," Vader replied, once again lowering his head.

Seconds later the enlarged image of Palpatine's face flickered and vanished. Remaining in his kneeling position he thought. He had been planning on keeping Luke here until he regained his memory, just to make sure his son didn't start getting suspicious when people stared at him, wondering what a Rebel was doing with Lord Vader.

After a moment of consideration he realized that taking Luke to see the Emperor could only strengthen his Imperial perspective, provided that he didn't leave the Imperial Palace. Smiling to himself, he rose while reaching out with the Force to touch his son's mind. Without the Force Luke's mind was completely open and he could clearly feel the confusion and determination radiating from it, but he could also feel a sense of belonging. His smile broadened at this as he knew that Luke had never truly felt like he belonged anywhere before today.

Walking down the hall, Luke wasn't exactly sure what he was going to find in the next room. As he neared, the door automatically opened and he entered the room. As soon as he saw what was in the room, he froze. Books. All four walls of the room were shelves full of books. Although he couldn't remember certain things, he did know that books were very rare. Yet here he was standing in a room filled with thousands upon thousands of books!

Approaching the nearest wall he looked at the titles on the old covers, noticing immediately that most of the titles were printed in languages he didn't know. He also noticed that of the titles that were in Basic most of the books were old encyclopedias and listings of planets. Walking along the wall he also noticed that all the books about the planets had a mention of the Old Republic somewhere on their cover.

Making a mental note to ask his father about this, he walked over to another wall and saw, to his delight, that most of those books here were about the Sith. Carefully taking one of the books off the shelf, he walked over to the couch in the middle of the room, sat down, and opened the book.

Two weeks later,

Standing on the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea, Luke sighed. His father had answered most of his questions, but there were several that his father had said were better left alone and remembered instead of told. He let his frustration melt away as a strong wind whipped against his face and played with the black cape he was wearing.

He had spent the past two weeks reading in the library and exploring his home and the surrounding area. He had become particularly interested in the Sith books and desperately wished he could remember how to use the Force. He had watched his father practice with his lightsaber in the sparring room, hoping for something to come back to him, but it didn't help. He could remember absolutely nothing. It was almost like he was seeing everything for the first time, which was ridiculous considering that this was his home.

Suddenly his anger flared. He was angry at the horangi for poisoning him, angry at himself for getting caught by the horangi, and angry at his father for not

answering all of his questions. He was just about to try to control his anger when he remembered what his father had told him the last time he had suppressed his anger: *'Let your anger flow freely my son, for anger helps the Dark Side.'*

Taking his father's advice he whirled around, reaching for his lightsaber as he did so. He lashed out at the nearest object, a huge boulder. He kept swinging at the boulder until all that was left of it was a pile of small rocks. He just looked at the small rocks for a moment, breathing hard, before he suddenly began laughing aloud. His father was right. It did feel better to let his anger free.

Smiling to himself, he headed back in as the sun started to set.

Sitting in his room meditating, Vader smiled as his son's anger washed over him. Over the past two weeks he had slowly but surely linked his mind to Luke's, meaning that he could now sense Luke's every mood as the boy was not shielding his mind. Even after Luke regained his memory, he'd still be able to communicate with his son no matter where he was, although Luke would be able to block him out if he chose to do so.

Getting to his feet, he turned on the com.

"Yes, my lord?" Marcus asked.

"Tell my son to come up here," Vader ordered.

"He is outside, my lord," Marcus replied.

Vader shook his head at this. After having served him for several years Marcus was one of few people who dared question his orders.

"Tell him when he comes back in," he replied.

"As you wish, my lord."

Turning off the com, Vader stood still, thinking. Palpatine had contacted him earlier, saying that he wanted to see Luke next week. It was earlier than he had expected, but it was probably good that Luke would be seeing more of the Empire. The only thing he feared was what Palpatine might say to the boy. He knew that the Emperor wouldn't hesitate to lie to his son.

Pushing the thought from his mind he sat back down as he relaxed. The Force would work everything out. Just as it had given him this chance to get to know his son and for Luke to get to know him without there being any barriers of conflicting

beliefs between them. He was still thinking of the Force and of how things had transpired since his first meeting with his son on Bespin when he felt Luke's approach.

When Luke reached the door to his father's he just entered without knocking, having learned that his father could sense his approach long before he reached the door.

"Yes, Father?" Luke asked as he approached his father and sat down in the chair he always used when talking to his father.

"I received another call from the Emperor this morning," Vader stated, turning to face his young son. "He wants to see you on Coruscant next week."

"The Emperor?" Luke repeated. "Why?"

"He wishes to see you," Vader repeated. "Probably to see what your condition is."

Luke just nodded his head. He really shouldn't be surprised, especially considering his father's position and the position he himself must have had before his amnesia.

"How long will we be on Coruscant?"

"That depends," Vader stated. "It could be a week or it could be three weeks."

Three weeks. He'd have three weeks to explore another part of his past and hopefully he'd be given some tasks to do to keep his mind off his accident and the results of it. Over the past few days it had become clear that the twin scars on his upper right arm wouldn't be going away, meaning that even after he regained his memory he'd have a permanent reminder of his run-in with the horangi.

"Luke," Vader said, snapping his son from his thoughts.

"Yes?" Luke asked, looking back up at his father.

"It would probably be best that you stay away from the Imperial Court as much as possible while we're on Coruscant as it is widely believed that you are dead," Vader said. "It would be most unfortunate should the Rebellion learn about the fact that you are still alive."

"Okay," Luke replied, seeing his father's logic. "Don't you trust the Court?"

"No," Vader stated flatly. "Besides, the news of your being are alive would spread like wild fire. Then, sooner or later, a Rebel agent will hear about it and inform the Alliance leaders."

Vader watched his son as he nodded, pleased that Luke accepted this explanation. It was getting harder and harder to phrase things so that Luke would assume that he was an Imperial without actually lying to the boy.

"How long will it take to reach Coruscant?" Luke asked.

"Two days," Vader replied. "We'll take a shuttle over to avoid any of the troops seeing you."

A week later,

"You take her down," Vader said as he got up from the pilot's seat and took the co-pilots chair.

"Me?" Luke questioned.

"Yes," Vader replied as Luke sat down. "You were a great pilot before your run-in with the horangi. It'll come back to you."

"Okay," Luke responded, a little doubtful but knowing better then to say so.

He looked at the controls before him and forced himself to relax. As he studied the controls he found that they did seem familiar. Quickly he ran the check he had seen his father do earlier, then he waited for the hyperspace clock to count down before he gently pushed forward the hyperspace levers.

Immediately the shuttle they were in jumped out of hyperspace and Luke saw Coruscant, the capitol of the Empire, lying before him like a brilliant jewel on a black satin cushion. Smiling at the beauty of the scene before him he turned his attention back to his piloting. As they neared Coruscant he began to wonder why they hadn't been hailed by the Coruscant traffic control.

"Why--?" he began, briefly looking at his father.

"The shuttle's identification beacon has my personal signal. They'll just work the other traffic around us," Vader explained reading his son's mind.

"Okay," Luke replied. "Which landing pad?"

"The south one," Vader stated as they entered Coruscant's night atmosphere.

Luke adjusted their course so that they were heading for the south landing pad of the Imperial Palace.

As he watched Luke manipulate the controls, Vader smiled silently behind his mask. Not only had his son inherited his ability to touch the Force and his lightsaber skills, but he had also inherited his piloting skills.

Quickly and smoothly, Luke set the shuttle down on the artificially lit south landing pad.

"Any other talents I need to know about?" he asked, looking over to his father.

Laughing, Vader shook his head no. It was obvious Luke enjoyed flying just as much as he did. Rising from his seat, he motioned for his son to follow him before he headed for the ramp. As he had expected, a messenger stepped out of the night and approached them as soon as they had descended the ramp.

"Lord Vader, Skywalker," the messenger said, bowing slightly. "The Emperor will see you first thing tomorrow morning."

"Very well," Vader replied, walking on past the messenger.

"Skywalker?" Luke asked as soon as they were alone in the halls of the Imperial Palace.

Looking down at his son, Vader cursed mentally.

"Yes," he stated aloud. "Before my own accident my name was Anakin Skywalker. However, once it became clear that I'd be confined to a breathing mask and armor for the rest of my life, both Palpatine and I decided that it was better for me to change my name and pretend that Anakin Skywalker had died. That way I'd have a small advantage over the Jedi for a short time at least. Over time the name stuck and everyone knew me as Vader, so I kept the name. Anakin Skywalker had no more meaning for me."

"Was this after I was born?" Luke asked. "Is that why my name is Skywalker?"

"No," Vader replied as they stepped into a turbolift. "Your mother was pregnant when I had my accident and she decided to name you Skywalker."

Luke nodded his head and Vader nearly gave a sigh of relief, glad that his son didn't press the matter any further. Then the turbolift door opened and they stepped out into a hallway that was completely deserted save for a few stormtroopers positioned at intervals down the hall. Silently Luke followed his father. Halfway down the hall Vader stopped in front of a door.

"These will be your quarters, mine are the next ones down," he stated as he stepped back to let Luke near the door.

Stepping forward Luke placed his right hand on the scanner next to the door. . . nothing happened.

"Use your left hand," Vader said softly. "Your right hand's a prosthetic."

"What?!" Luke exclaimed, looking first at his father and then down at his hand.

"You lost your right hand in a lightsaber duel in Cloud City, Bespin," Vader explained, carefully watching his astonished son.

Luke's astonishment quickly faded away into anger and hate as he opened and closed the hand a few times, trying to feel the difference between it and his left hand. After a few seconds he gave up, unable to tell the difference, but still, it was a prosthetic. Looking up at his father he opened his mouth to speak, to ask how he had lost his hand, but Vader cut him off.

"That is knowledge better remembered than told," Vader hastily stated.

Luke seemed to hesitate for a moment, anger and a need for revenge welling up inside him, but he knew that until he remembered how to use the Force he would be unable to do anything. Deciding to let the issue go for now he brought up his left hand and placed it on the scanner. Immediately a row of green lights went up and down the monitor before the door slid open.

Stepping into the room beyond Luke saw it was meant as a reception of sorts, a room where subordinates could receive orders. He also noticed the rich wine red carpet that covered the floor and sank beneath his feet as he walked on it.

"Meet me out here at eight tomorrow," Vader ordered from the doorway.

"Yes, Father," Luke replied as he turned back to face the door. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, my son," Vader responded before he left for his own quarters.

As soon as the door closed, Luke pushed up his right sleeve and studied his wrist. A few moments later he found the thin, almost invisible, line where his arm ended and the prosthetic began. Grinding his teeth in anger, he felt for the

access panel that he knew must be somewhere. Finding it, he hesitated before popping it open. It was, after all, a part of him now, and he knew that he must have seen it before. Inside he saw a bunch of electronics, some of which bent back and forth as he flexed and relaxed his fingers. Quickly, he slammed the panel back shut and pulled his sleeve back down.

Hoping for a distraction, he walked over to the huge window and looked out. He gasped in spite of himself. Although he had seen Coruscant while flying overhead, he had not seen the Imperial gardens. There were several cobble stone pathways meandering through different bushes which were blooming with exotically colored flowers and fruits. Towards one end of the gardens he could see a small stream winding its way through the bushes and flowers. The whole scene was being illuminated by several powerful lights hidden in scattered places throughout the garden. In the distance he could see the tops of the tall skyscrapers that covered the entire planet.

After a few moments he tore himself away from the window and walked over to the door at the back of the room. The door automatically slid open soundlessly as he approached. Entering the room he saw that it was his bedroom and, like his bedroom at home, it was totally decorated in black. To his right was a huge bed covered with similar black silk sheets as his own bed, and to his left was another window, also over looking the Imperial gardens.

Realizing just how tired he was, he quickly changed and went to bed.

Silently, Luke followed his father up the stairs towards the throne which held the Imperial Emperor. Knowing that the Emperor could use the Force Luke knew that he had to be aware of their presence, and yet Palpatine kept his throne turned away from them. Reaching the top of the stairs he imitated his father and knelt at his side, his dark blue robe falling in a pool around him.

As soon as they kneeled, the throne slowly turned toward them.

"Master," Vader stated, keeping his head low.

Palpatine briefly eyed Vader before he turned his attention to the Dark Lord's son. As he studied the boy, his future apprentice, he reached out with the Force and entered the now defenseless mind. He smiled to himself as he found Luke's anger and momentary loyalty to the Empire and to his father.

"Rise, my friends, rise," Palpatine ordered as he retreated from Luke's unsuspecting mind.

Luke stood and lifted his eyes to study the Emperor. . . his master. Over the past three weeks he had learned, or rather relearned, not to underestimate the Force, but even knowing that he was surprised to see the form of an old man sitting upon the throne.

"Still under the influence of the horangi's poison are you, young Skywalker?" Palpatine asked, looking at the boy.

"Yes. . . my master," Luke replied.

Palpatine nodded his head, pleased.

"At least you haven't forgotten your loyalties," he stated, watching Luke for a reaction but finding none.

Vader on the other hand stiffened slightly at the falsehood. He had known Palpatine would lie to Luke sooner or later, but he was still against the idea. He knew that the more Luke was lied to, the harder it would be for them to get him to join them voluntarily. Suppressing an angry sigh, he turned his attention back to what was happening.

"We recently managed to capture a Rebel cell operating on Tarsfior IV," Palpatine was saying. "All of them non-human slaves. I wish for you to interrogate them and see if any of them know the location of the hidden Rebel base. You will find Commander Drake with his men waiting in the detention area."

"As you wish, my master," Luke replied obediently.

Vader noticed that there was no hesitation in his son's voice this time as there had been before.

Luke bowed slightly to the Emperor, nodded to his father, then turned around, heading down the stairs and out of the throne room. Looking at his master, Vader waited silently. Palpatine watched Luke go and then turned his attention back to his waiting servant.

"How long until he regains his memory?" he demanded.

"Perhaps seven more weeks, perhaps several more months," Vader replied. "The poison varies from person to person, however I expect it to be closer to seven weeks."

"Until then, he is ours," Palpatine stated smiling with evil pleasure.

Having memorized a plan of the Palace over breakfast, Luke knew exactly how to get to the detention area. As soon as he entered the detention area an officer waiting there snapped to attention.

"Commander Drake?" Luke demanded.

"Yes Sir," Drake replied, eyeing the boy before him.

How had this kid gotten so important? Heck, instead of the standard Imperial uniform he was wearing black cloths with an expensive dark blue robe trimmed with silver. Yet he had been sent down by the Emperor himself to oversee the interrogation of the Rebels. Looking back at the boy before him, Drake noticed he was being watched himself, by the boy's ice-blue, calculating, cold eyes.

"If you'll follow me," Drake said, turning around and leading the boy to the interrogation chamber.

Suddenly Drake realized that all he knew about the boy was that he had the Emperor's favor and that he was higher ranking than him. He didn't even know what form of address to use. Then they reached the interrogation chamber and he stepped into the room.

Luke followed the commander in and quickly scanned the room. In the center was a single Ithorian tied to a scanning grid. Standing behind the controls of the grid stood a storm trooper with a second storm trooper stood behind the Ithorian.

"The other Rebels are in their cells?" Luke demanded turning to the commander waiting at his side.

"Yes, my lord," Drake replied, knowing that he couldn't go wrong with that title unless Darth Vader was in the room.

"Good," Luke replied. "What kind of slaves are they?"

The Ithorian, Luke noticed out of the corner of his eye, bristled at his choice of wording.

"A Wookiee, a Sullustian, and another Hammerhead," Drake replied gesturing towards the Ithorian who bristled even more at the name.

"At least we're only Hammerheads, but you're Imperials," the Ithorian stated. "You slaughter people for fun, you no good monsters--"

With three steps Luke stood in front of the Ithorian and quickly backhanded him across the face.

"Silence, slave," he ordered icily. "You will only speak when spoken to. However, since you feel like talking, tell me where the Rebel base is."

The Hammerhead immediately shut his mouth, but his eyes looked up at Luke and shone bright with defiance.

"Very well," Luke said after a moment of silence. "Commence the interrogation."

Instantly the two storm troopers sprang into action. As Luke stepped back, the one behind the Rebel stepped forward and tilted the plank onto which the Ithorian was tied. The other storm trooper checked the scan grid one last time before he activated it. The Ithorian flinched in pain as the interrogation started but remained silent.

"Bring the pain level up two notches," Luke ordered, seeing the Ithorian's reaction.

The storm trooper behind the controls nodded as he did as he was ordered. Standing next to Luke, Commander Drake looked at the boy in surprise. Never in all the interrogations he had conducted or watched had they brought the pain level up so fast. They generally started out slowly, to give the prisoner the impression that it wouldn't be too bad, before they started to intensify the pain slowly but surely. Drake turned his attention back to the interrogation as the Hammerhead cried out in pain.

"Where is the Rebel base?" Drake demanded, stepping closer to the prisoner.

The Ithorian just looked at him through narrow slits as jolt after jolt of pain washed over him.

"Give us the location of the Rebel base and we'll stop," Drake promised.

"Never!" the Ithorian cried out through clenched teeth.

For the next twenty minutes Luke stood and watched as the interrogation continued. Finally he had enough. This was obviously going nowhere. The Ithorian was not going to give away his friends. Perhaps there was another way. Quietly, he stepped forward and immediately Commander Drake stepped back.

"Tell me the location of the base," Luke demanded, an impatient edge to his voice. "Now."

The Ithorian remained quiet until the next jolt of pain came and then he only opened his mouth to scream.

"Double the pain level," Luke ordered keeping his eyes on the Rebel.

"My lord," Drake commented, stopping the storm trooper who was moving to obey Luke's order. "He will last but a few seconds at that level."

Luke whirled around to face the commander, his robe swirling out as he did so, momentarily revealing his lightsaber, before it was once again hidden by his robe.

"I gave you an order Commander," Luke stated icily.

"As you wish," Drake replied, indicating for the storm trooper to obey.

He had seen the lightsaber hilt at the boy's belt and had instantly recognized it as a similar weapon to that Lord Vader carried around with him. If the boy also carried one then it was likely he also had Lord Vader's favor as well as the Emperor's, which meant that if he valued his life at all he'd obey the boy. The storm trooper quickly adjusted the pain level and started the scan grid again.

"You're a cold-blooded, sadistic monster," the Ithorian mumbled to Luke as he turned to face him.

Luke's eyes narrowed in anger, but he refrained from hitting the being, taking his revenge instead from the nonstop scream of pain that issued forth before the Ithorian slumped forward against the restraints, dead.

"Free him but leave his body on the floor," Luke ordered the storm troopers before he turned back to the waiting commander. "Have the other Hammerhead brought in here along with the Sullustian."

"As you wish," Drake replied, wondering what the boy had in mind.

Luke watched silently as the storm troopers undid the restraints holding the Ithorian's dead body to the plank before they dropped him unceremoniously to the floor. Moments later the door reopened and Commander Drake entered the room with four more storm troopers who were holding two struggling Rebels.

"Resistance will get you killed," Luke stated, indicating the dead body on the floor.

"Granzig, no!" the second Ithorian exclaimed seeing his friend's body.

"He resisted," Luke stated simply. "And your Sullustian friend will suffer the same fate unless you give us the location of your hidden Rebel base."

Realizing what the boy had planned, Drake motioned for the two storm troopers holding the Sullustian to get him ready for the scan grid. Immediately they moved forward and, despite the Rebel's struggles, attached him to the plank.

"No!" the Ithorian exclaimed, horrified.

"The location of the base and we will end this before it gets anymore unpleasant," Luke tempted.

"Don't!" the Sullustian stated in broken Basic. "Think of all the people who will die if you give them the information they want!"

"But can you watch your friend here die slowly? Can you watch him scream in pain and know that you can stop it?" Luke taunted as the two extra storm troopers left the room. "You can watch him die if you want, but if you choose to do so, you will also watch the Wookiee die, slowly and painfully."

"Don't!" the Sullustian repeated.

"Very well," Luke stated. "Begin."

"No!" the Ithorian exclaimed as he struggled to get free from the storm troopers who were holding him.

Luke allowed the Sullustian's cries to go on for several minutes before he turned his attention back to the Ithorian.

"You can stop this right now if you want to," Luke repeated. "Just give us the location of the base."

"No!" the Sullustian pleaded between screams. "Don't tell them!"

The Ithorian's eyes flickered from Luke, to the Sullustian, to the body of his dead friend on the floor, before they came back to rest on Luke.

"Damn you Imperials!" he cursed and Luke could clearly hear his indecision.

Knowing that he could get what he wanted, Luke stepped back and let the interrogation continue. Standing next to Luke, Drake started shifting uncomfortably until Luke, finally irritated, turned to him.

"Get the Wookiee ready," he ordered, his eyes flashing with irritation at the commander's behavior. "The Sullustian won't last much longer."

The taunt had its desired effect.

"No!" the Ithorian exclaimed. "Stop, don't kill him!"

"Tell me what I want to know first," Luke countered.

"Walp," the Ithorian stated, lowering his eyes. "They're on Walp."

"Good," Luke replied as he signaled for the storm troopers to stop the scan grid.

Instantly the screams were replaced by heavy breathing as the Sullustian tried to catch his breath.

"Take the Sullustian back to his cell," Luke ordered the storm troopers before he turned his attention back to Drake. "You will interrogate the Hammerhead and the Wookiee for any further information."

"What?!" the Ithorian exclaimed angrily. "You said you'd stop if I told you!"

Luke just looked at the alien in disgust for a moment before he replied:

"That's why your kind are slaves. You lack intelligence."

At this the Ithorian tried to lunge at Luke, but one of the storm troopers anticipated his move and hit him in the stomach with his blaster before the Ithorian had even managed to take a step forward.

Taking one last look at the Ithorian, Luke left the room and quickly made his way back to the throne room. As he neared the doors to the throne room one of the Royal Guards, recognizing him, opened the door and Luke entered. Quietly, he ascended the stairs and knelt before the throne, silently wondering if the Emperor always turned the throne away when people entered the room.

"Almost always, young Skywalker, almost always," Palpatine replied, reading Luke's thoughts as he turned to face the boy.

Luke tensed as he realized what had happened. Seeing Luke's reaction, Palpatine began laughing.

"You will never be able to hide your thoughts from me young Skywalker," Palpatine stated coldly. "It would be best if you remember that."

"Yes, master," Luke replied obediently.

"Rise, my young friend, rise," Palpatine ordered as he studied Luke. "You have the information?"

"Yes, my master," Luke responded as he stood.

"Well?" Palpatine inquired.

"Walp."

"Good," Palpatine replied, pleased. "You obviously haven't lost your touch when it comes to dealing with Rebels."

Luke remained silent at this, not knowing how to respond. Palpatine smiled mentally. The boy could be made to believe anything at the moment.

"You shall help your father make the necessary plans for the attack on Walp," Palpatine ordered. "Tell me, what is happening to the prisoners now?"

"It was necessary to kill one of the Hammerheads in order to get the information and the Sullustian will be useless for a while, but the remaining two Rebels are being interrogated for any further information," Luke replied.

"Good," Palpatine praised, inwardly smiling at Luke's reference to the Ithorian as a Hammerhead.

The boy was quickly falling into the Imperial ways. Silently he wondered how the boy would react when he regained his memory and realized what he had done. Dismissing the amusing thought from his mind, Palpatine turned his attention back to Luke.

"You may do what you like for the remainder of the day," Palpatine stated.

"Thank you, master," Luke replied as he bowed his head before he turned around and left.

Several hours later Luke stretched as he got out of the chair he had been sitting in. It hadn't taken him long to decide that it was better for him to learn as much as he could about the Empire.

Learn? He must be more tired than he had thought. Everything, all the information about Palpatine, his father, and how the Empire worked, that he had just studied had been relearned. Sighing, he put the holochips in small stacks on the table before he left the small room in which he had been studying.

Using the back halls of the Palace, he quickly reached the hall with his room. He was just about to enter his room when he decided to see if his father was in his quarters. Quietly he walked over to the door to his father's rooms. He was just about to knock when the door opened.

"Come in, my son," Vader's voice called from near the window of the reception room.

Luke entered the room and the door automatically closed behind him. Walking over to stand next to his father he thought about the Force. It was one of the things he wished for the most. Not that he could remember what it felt like, but just to watch his father and the Emperor manipulate it made him want to use it. They seemed so powerful and the fact that he couldn't use it put him at a disadvantage that he didn't like.

"You will remember soon enough," Vader replied and smiled as he felt his son's anger at the remark. "You did well to get the location of the base from the Rebels. They generally don't give that kind of information, even when put through an interrogation."

"They have a great weakness when it comes to each other," Luke replied as he looked out the window at the Imperial garden. "They can't bear to see each other in pain, even if they can bear it themselves."

"Compassion is a great weakness indeed," Vader agreed as his mind went back to Bespin and how he had lured his son to him there. "Tomorrow we shall see to getting the attack plans ready."

"I know," Luke replied as he looked up at his father. "Palpatine told me. Will you be going with the fleet when the attack takes place?"

"Yes," Vader replied. "I cannot trust the admiral of the *Executor* to do it. The Rebels have a nasty habit of turning even a bad situation to their advantage."

"How long will you be gone?"

"A week, perhaps a little more, if everything goes well," Vader stated.

"Okay," Luke replied as he turned away from the window. "Goodnight, Father."

"Goodnight, my son," Vader replied as he watched Luke leave.

Vader smiled silently to himself as he adjusted the Star Destroyer positions on the holo in front of him. He and Luke had been preparing the attack plans for a couple of hours already. While Luke didn't remember his time with the Alliance, his knowledge of the Alliance's attack and defense techniques remained, meaning that his son saw holes that he might have missed.

"Is that what you mean?" he asked looking at his son.

"Yes," Luke replied after studying the holo for a minute. "Exactly."

"Very well," Vader said. "However, if we do that then we must move the *Executor* a little more to the right in order to avoid letting any Rebel transports out."

Luke just nodded as he saw his father's point. Watching his father make the suggested change, he realized how good it felt to be working together. As he thought about it, he realized that a kind of bond had formed between him and his father over the past few weeks, or rather had reformed.

Suddenly he froze as he thought of how close he and his father must have been before his run-in with the horangi. From the bond they now had, after a little over three weeks, he knew that they must have been extremely close. It must have been terrible for his father to sit on his bed that first day of his memory and have to explain who he was to a son who had previously been so close to.

Closing his eyes he tried to image what his father must have felt like, but quickly shook his head at the emotions the thought brought.

"Luke? Are you--" Vader began but stopped as the door opened and a senior officer entered.

Admiral Piett froze as soon as he entered the room, realizing his mistake.

"Lord Vader. . ." he began, but then his eyes opened wide as they fell on Luke and recognized him from the Imperial warrant for his arrest. "S. . . Sky. . . Skywalker?!"

Luke's eyes narrowed as he looked at the admiral. He was about to reply when the admiral's eyes opened even wider and he started to gasp for breath. Confusion briefly filled the admiral's eyes before they rolled back and the admiral dropped to the floor, dead. Luke looked at the body for a moment before he looked up at his father.

"The Force?" he asked.

"Yes," Vader replied, looking at the admiral.

He should have killed him after Bespin, but he hadn't. He'd been too upset about losing Luke when it had just seemed like he'd had his son. He'd been lucky that he'd been on Lavendosp to inspect the new Imperial outpost there just when Luke and his friends had come and had been attacked by the horangi.

Motioning for Luke to move to the far end of the room, he walked to the door the late admiral had just come through and indicated for two passing storm troopers to enter.

"Take it away," he ordered, gesturing to Piett's body.

Immediately the storm troopers stepped forward, picked up the body, and left the room.

"Now, where were we?" Vader asked, turning back to his son and the holo.

Three days later,

Luke followed his father to the edge of the landing platform where a shuttle waited to take the Imperial Dark Lord up to his flagship.

"I should be back in a week or so if all goes well," Vader said as he looked at his son.

"Okay," Luke replied. He about to add 'good luck' when he remembered that his father didn't believe in luck.

"What's wrong?" Vader asked, probing his son with the Force.

"I don't know," Luke replied honestly. "I've got a bad feeling about something ever since I woke up this morning, but no matter how hard I try I can't figure it out."

As he said this Luke looked up at his father, hoping that he might know what was wrong. Probing Luke again, Vader frowned unseen behind his mask. Perhaps it was a warning Luke was receiving through the Force, but unless he showed his son how to use the Force he couldn't be sure.

"It might be nothing," he said aloud. "But just in case keep your eyes open and stay out of sight."

"I was planning on going back to the library anyway," Luke replied.

"Very well. Farewell my son," Vader said turning around and heading for the shuttle.

"Goodbye, Father," Luke replied as he watched his father board the shuttle.

Silently, he stood on the landing platform and watched the shuttle until it was no more than a black speck in the morning sky. Just as the shuttle disappeared from sight he felt a wave of unreasoning fear engulf him for a second, it was quickly followed by a sense of loneliness, before the feeling vanished altogether.

Shaking his head in confusion, he turned around with a swirl of his cape and re-entered the Imperial Palace. Using the back halls, he quickly reached the library and immediately headed for the area that contained the holochips he wanted. Walking there he realized that he was almost through the information on the general workings of the Empire and the brief history it included.

He smiled to himself as he thought of how easily Palpatine had become Chancellor of the Old Republic, and how he had then managed to gain total control. He knew that it must have been harder than the history records made it out to be, but still, the Old Republic and the Jedi must really have been weak for them to be swept away and forgotten so quickly.

Reaching the section with the information he needed, he took the holochips and quickly made his way to the room he had used ever since the second day he had been on Coruscant. Locking the door, he sat down and started to study the information before him.

Sitting back in his throne, Emperor Palpatine sighed. Although he enjoyed being the ruler of all the eye could see there were times when there was a lot of work. Especially with diplomats who always insisted that they had business that had to be dealt with by none other than the Emperor himself. Useless bureaucrats, all of them.

Turning his throne around so that he overlooked Coruscant, he turned his thoughts towards young Skywalker. The boy had lots of potential which, if manipulated correctly, could turn him into a very valuable asset, just like his father. It was too bad that Vader hadn't known that he had a son earlier, otherwise the boy could have been raised to the Dark Side.

Pushing that thought aside, he thought instead of the training Luke would require before he could become a Sith Lord. Perhaps it was better that the boy wasn't ready for his apprenticeship yet as he didn't have the time to train him at the moment.

Reaching out with the Force he brushed against his future apprentice's mind. The boy was in the library again. Good. Young Skywalker obviously understood the importance of knowledge. The more he learned about the boy the more he saw what a valuable asset he would be.

"Lord Vader," Captain Sigly said as Vader came down the ramp of the shuttle on board the *Executor*. "Admiral Piett has not yet returned and we've been unable to contact him."

"He will no longer be joining us, Admiral Sigly," Vader stated coldly.

"Th. . . thank you Lord Vader," the newly appointed admiral stammered.

"Set course for Walp," Vader ordered.

"As you wish, my lord," Admiral Sigly replied, silently wondering where in the galaxy Walp was.

"I shall be in my quarters should there be anything," Vader stated, his voice clearly indicating that there had better be no need for him to be disturbed.

Admiral Sigly nodded his head at which the Dark Lord left the docking, heading for his quarters.

Six days later,

Calling out in his sleep Luke tossed fitfully in his bed.

"Noooooooooooo!" he called out as he awoke and sat up, breathing hard and sweating.

Wiping the sweat off his forehead he quickly looked around for anything out of the ordinary. He found nothing different with the exception of his sheets which were all tangled. Forcing himself to relax, he tried to remember what the dream, the nightmare, had been about. But, try as he might, all he could remember was fear and pain. He wasn't even sure if it was something he had once experienced or if it had been just a random nightmare.

Wishing his father were back so he could talk with him, Luke got out of bed and took a shower, knowing that he wouldn't be able to go back to sleep again tonight. Letting the cool water wash over him he wondered if the nightmare had anything to do with the Force, a warning perhaps.

Shaking his head he quickly dried himself, got dressed, and re-entered his bedroom. Walking over to the com unit, he requested a connection with the *Executor*, adding a special code his father had given him. This way the communications officer on board the *Executor* would know to transfer the signal straight to his father's quarters. A minute later and a life-size image of his father flickered into view before him.

"Father," Luke said.

"Son," Vader acknowledged.

"How did the attack go?" Luke asked, knowing it should have finished a while ago.

"Not good," Vader replied. "The Rebels were warned and had started an evacuation. Our estimates are that we destroyed about twenty-five percent of the Rebel fleet and personnel. However, the leaders were among the first to be evacuated."

Luke nodded his head, disappointed.

"Are you coming back now?"

"No," Vader replied. "We are still following some leads we have, but how are you? I thought that I felt a disturbance in the Force earlier. I was busy at the time and was unable to probe it any further."

"A nightmare," Luke replied shaking his head. "But I can't remember anything except fear and pain."

"A nightmare?" Vader repeated thoughtfully.

"Yes," Luke replied. "Do you know what it might be?"

"It could be one of three things," Vader stated. "It could be that your memory is starting to return, it could be just a random nightmare, or it could be that you unconsciously picked up on the disturbance in the Force caused when we destroyed part of the Rebel fleet."

Luke nodded, all those reasons made sense. Not daring to hope too much he looked back to the projected image of his father.

"Which of those reasons do you think it to be?" he asked quietly.

"I would doubt that it is your memory returning at this point," Vader replied, knowing what his son must be hoping for. "I also doubt that it would be a random nightmare, although you never know. If I'd have to guess, I'd say it was that you picked up the disturbance in the Force."

"Okay," Luke replied, trying not to look disappointed.

"I must go now," Vader said as he briefly looked behind him at something out of Luke's sight. "Goodbye, my son."

"Goodbye, Father," Luke replied before his father's image faded away.

He stood silently in thought. If he had picked up on a disturbance in the Force, it meant that he still had his Force abilities, not that he knew if he could even lose them. Shaking his head, he left his rooms and wandered through the deserted halls of the Imperial Palace.

As he walked, he saw no one with the exception of a couple of storm troopers on guard duty.

Vader watched the image of his son flicker and fade before he turned around and walked over to his pod. Sitting down he pondered the conversation. If Luke was picking up on disturbances in the Force, then there was the possibility of him accidentally using the Force and regaining his memory sooner than the poison would normally allow.

Angrily, he pounded his fist against the armrest. Luke had only been with him for a little over four weeks and already he had grown used to having his son around him. So much, in fact, that he didn't want Luke to leave. Blast Obi-Wan for stealing his son from him and poisoning his mind with Jedi ideals.

Pushing the thought from his mind, he turned his attention back to the present. The past was the past and he couldn't change it no matter how hard he wished

he could. He would have to remind his son to leave the Force alone until he remembered how to use it. But he knew that would be hard for Luke, especially considering the fact that the boy saw the amount of power he and the Emperor possessed.

Suddenly a smile spread across his face. That was the only good point about Luke's attempts to touch the Force; he did it to try to quench his lust for power. The more he learned about his son, the more he saw himself in the boy. The smile broadened for a moment before it vanished as he got to his feet. He didn't have time to sit around. He had to lead the fleet in their search for the Rebels.

Several hours later,

Entering the throne room Luke walked forward and up the stairs. Reaching the top, he knelt before the throne, wondered about why he had been summoned. One of the Emperor's aides had come looking for him and told him that the Emperor demanded his presence right away.

"What is thy bidding, my master?" Luke asked as the throne turned to face him.

"There was a disturbance in the Force coming from your room last night," Palpatine stated angrily. "What were you doing?"

"It was a nightmare, master," Luke explained keeping his head low. "I was unaware that I was using the Force."

Palpatine glared at the form of the kneeling boy before him for a moment, feeling that his future apprentice was speaking the truth, but wanting him to know that he was still displeased.

"You are not to even attempt to use the Force until you have regained your memory," Palpatine ordered. "Is that clear?"

"Yes, my master," Luke replied lowering his head further.

Palpatine eyed him with a smile on his face. The boy would be so angry when he regained his memory and thought of this moment, of how easily he had been used.

"Rise," Palpatine ordered sharply and watched as Luke rose. "We managed to intercept a message sent from a Rebel cell on Jabralkan, however the message is in a code unknown to the Empire. You used to know a great deal about Alliance codes, perhaps you even had some knowledge about this particular code, so I want you to decode the message."

"As you wish, my master," Luke replied as he filed away the information Palpatine had just given him about his past.

So he had known a lot about Rebel codes? The more he learned about his past the more it seemed like he had known a lot about the Rebellion. Perhaps that was of some importance and maybe not. Silently he cursed the horangi, then he looked up at the Emperor, wondering if he had picked up on it.

Smiling silently Palpatine reached over and took a datachip from on the throne arm.

"Here is a copy of the message," he said as he held out his arm towards Luke.

Luke quickly stepped forward and took the datachip from his master's hand before he stepped back.

"Dismissed," Palpatine stated and watched Luke bow before he turned around and left the room.

Luke quickly made his way back to his room and sat down before the computer terminal, inserting the datachip into it as he did so. Calling up the information from the chip he scanned the encrypted message before him. Looking down the length of the message he frowned, the encryption didn't ring a bell, but then neither had anything else he had seen so far.

The frown quickly disappeared however as he realized that this might actually prove to be a challenge, his first real challenge since he had had his little run-in with the horangi. Settling back he called up a blank notepad on his computer and arranged it so that the blank notepad filled half the screen while the encrypted message filled the other half. Quietly he set to work.

Five hours later he got up with a sigh and walked over to the huge window. Looking out he ran a hand through his hair in frustration, he had looked at the message from every possible point of view but had been unable to decode even a single symbol. There seemed to be no consistency in the message, which meant that at certain intervals the code changed, making it almost impossible to decode.

Deciding to stop for the day he walked back over to the computer terminal and ordered it to shut down, but even as he did so he was determined to decode the

message, he would not face his master in failure. Even as this thought crossed his mind he suddenly knew that failure would not only mean a loss of pride, but it would also mean a severe, physical, punishment. He briefly wondered if he knew that from experience or just from the Emperor's behavior.

Not wanting to think about it he turned around and entered his bedroom.

Several hours later,

Luke tossed in his sleep as images of his past floated just out of his reach. Unconsciously struggling to reach them he heard voices of people he must have known but now no longer recognized. Suddenly a single voice broke through the low, unintelligible, hum of the other voices.

'The key to the code is that it changes every five words,' a soft, but commanding, female voice said.

He awoke with a start and lay still as the meaning of the words sunk in. Then, throwing back the black silk sheets, he got up and put on his black velvet bathrobe. Looking at the chronometer on his bedside table he saw that it was half past two.

Entering the reception room he ordered the computer to restart. He now knew that the code changed every five words, but he still had no idea how many codes were used, but it was a start. Sitting before the computer he ordered it to insert a carriage return after every five words. Looking down the list he began to check to see if the third set of five words matched the first.

Two hours later he yawned as he looked at the chronometer and decided that he might as well get some more sleep as he had barely slept the night before. Besides now that he knew that there were four different codes it wouldn't take too long to decode them.

Getting up he decided that while he slept he might as well let the computer check the four codes against all the codes the Empire had in its computer system. Although he didn't expect to get any results it didn't hurt to check. Ordering the computer to run the check he got up and headed back to his bedroom.

Three hours later,

Sitting back in his chair Vader thought of his son. The fleet had just found and destroyed the last Rebel ship they had chased and now they were heading back to Coruscant. As he thought of Luke he hoped that Palpatine hadn't lied too much to his boy.

Shaking his head he decided to get Luke off of Coruscant as fast as possible. Using the Force he reached out and touched his son's mind. He was surprised to find that the boy was still asleep. Pulling back he decided that his son was probably catching up on the sleep he had missed the night before.

Luke awoke when the sunlight shone onto his face. Grumbling to himself about forgetting to close the drapes he got up and gapped as he saw the time. Quickly he showered and had breakfast before he re-entered the reception room.

As he sat down in front of the computer he saw that, as expected, the search he had ordered had proven fruitless. Settling back he prepared to start the tedious task of comparing the symbols and trying to decode them.

Several hours later,

Looking down at the kneeling form of his future apprentice Palpatine smiled. From young Skywalker's lack of fear he knew that the boy had made progress with his assignment.

"Rise, my young friend, rise," he ordered.

Obediently Luke rose and regarded his master, excited but restraining his emotions. Quietly smiling to himself Palpatine entered Luke's mind and made sure that Luke wasn't regaining his memory. He was pleased to see that Luke had not only not regained any of his memory, but that he also still had enough of the poison in his system to block his memory for some time yet.

"How far are you with decoding the message?" he demanded.

"I've found that the message is encrypted in four different codes," Luke replied as he handed the datapad he had brought with him to the Emperor. "The first code is used for the first five words, the second for the next five words and so forth."

Palpatine nodded his head as he looked at the datapad in his hand.

"And you've already decoded four of the letters of the first code," he said as he saw the aurek, the esk, the nern, and the resk in several places on the datapad.

"Actually I'm only sure of three," Luke replied. "I was still checking to see if what I think is the nern is really the nern when you had me summoned."

"Very well," Palpatine replied as he handed the datapad back to Luke. "Decode the message and then bring it to me."

"As you wish my master."

"Also, decode it before your father returns," Palpatine added knowing Vader wished to take Luke away before he was recognized.

"Master," Luke replied bowing before he left the room.

He had today and three more days to decode the message, he'd have to hurry.

Three days later,

"You have decoded the message?" Palpatine demanded as Luke entered the throne room.

"Yes my master," Luke replied as he reached the throne and handed the datapad to the Emperor.

"Good," Palpatine stated as he took the datapad and started reading the message.

Luke stood quietly as his master read the message. Most of it was unimportant but, at the bottom, there was a stolen Imperial code for a project code-named 'A/-

kin.' Watching he saw the Emperor's yellow eyes narrow as he reached the part with the code, making him wonder what the project was, but he knew better then to ask.

"The code will be changed immediately," Palpatine finally stated before he was momentarily distracted. "Your father has arrived."

Luke looked up, confused for a moment, but then he dismissed it, knowing that the Emperor must have used the Force.

"Dismissed," Palpatine ordered and watched Luke bow before he left the room.

Luke immediately headed for the north landing platform where his father would arrive. When he reached the platform he stood and waited as he watched his father's shuttle descend and land. Once it had landed he walked forward while the ramp lowered.

Coming down the ramp Vader was pleased to find his son waiting for him. Smiling behind his mask he approached the boy.

"Father," Luke said as he fell in next to his father.

"Son," Vader responded as they entered the Imperial Palace. "Have you had anymore nightmares?"

"No," Luke replied. "But I have heard voices at night."

"Voices?" Vader asked. "What do they say?"

"Normally they're just a low hum, so low that I can hardly hear them, much less make out what they're saying. However, four nights ago a single female voice spoke loud enough for me to hear."

"And what did she say?" Vader inquired, a little fearful that Luke would regain his memory faster then he'd like.

"She basically said that the key to cracking the code was that every five words were encrypted in a different code," Luke replied.

"Code?"

"Yes," Luke stated. "Palpatine wanted me to decode a Rebel message that was intercepted."

"And you did it?" Vader questioned.

"Yes."

"Good," Vader praised. "Tomorrow we shall return home."

Three days later,

Luke smiled to himself as he pushed the hyperspace levers forward and brought the shuttle out of hyperspace. It felt good to be home again. They had been delayed on Coruscant for several hours as the Emperor had wanted his father to do a few more things before he left, but they had finally been able to go.

On the two day trip his father had told him exactly what had happened during the attack on the Rebel base and he had told his father what he had done on Coruscant during his absence. He still didn't know why, but just talking with his father about what he had done had made him feel extremely good. He had dismissed the feeling telling himself that he had just missed his father, but there was something more to it. Something that was just out of his reach, teasing him with closeness.

Shaking his head he turned his concentration back to his piloting. He was just entering Melca's atmosphere when his father entered the cockpit. He briefly glanced at Vader as he sat down in the co-pilots chair before he turned his attention back to the controls.

"What are you planning on doing now that we're back?" Vader asked watching his son's hands fly over the controls.

"I don't know," Luke replied. "Perhaps read some more of the books in the library."

"Very well," Vader stated. "I shall have to leave in two weeks time for a week and shortly after that I shall have to leave again."

"All right," Luke replied nodding his head as he set the shuttle down onto the landing pad.

As he looked out the viewport he noticed that there was a second ship sitting on the landing pad to their right. As he studied the ship he saw that it was a civilian ship with no Imperial markings on it.

"What's that ship for?" he asked turning to his father.

"When you regain your memory you will be able to use it and nobody will know who you are," Vader replied.

And it was true, should Luke choose to go back to the Alliance when he regained his memory he would be able to use that shuttle. Nodding his head in reply Luke got up and followed his father off the shuttle.

Two days later,

Vader awoke with a start and immediately reached out with the Force to find what had woken him. As soon as he did so he was assaulted by a mixture of emotions radiating from Luke. Instantly remembering the nightmare his son had told him about he got up, quickly put on his armor, mask, and helmet, and headed for his son's room.

As he neared the room he probed the boy and found that Luke was struggling against the poison in his system, unconsciously trying to regain his memory. The door to Luke's room opened automatically as he approached and he could see his son tossing fitfully on his bed. Quickly walking to Luke's side he sat down on the bed and took hold of his son's shoulders and shook him.

"Luke," he said softly but firmly. "Luke, wake up."

"Wha. . .what?" Luke exclaimed as he awoke with a start, breathing hard.

Looking around Luke saw his father sitting on his bed, hands on his shoulders.

"You had another nightmare," Vader explained, glad to see Luke didn't remember anything he might have seen during his dream.

"Do you think that was just another random nightmare?" Luke asked as he sat up.

"No," Vader responded getting to his feet. "The poison is very slowly starting to wear off and so you are getting brief flashes and feelings of your past, thus causing the nightmares."

"Will it happen often?"

"I don't know," Vader replied honestly. "However, with your Force abilities, I would guess so."

Luke nodded his head in reply as he got out of bed.

"Are you all right now?" Vader asked.

"Yes, thank you."

"Very well," Vader replied before he turned around and left the room.

Luke quickly took a shower before he decided to go to the library, perhaps if he didn't sleep anymore tonight then he'd be tired enough to get a good nights sleep tomorrow night.

Ten days later,

Luke followed his father out of their home and onto the landing pad where a third ship was waiting. As soon as they appeared the officer standing at the top of the ramp stiffened and stood still.

"I shall be back in a Standard week," Vader said drawing Luke's attention away from the officer.

"I know," Luke replied.

"Good," Vader stated as he studied Luke.

He wished that he didn't have to leave Luke. His son would be regaining his memory soon and even if he decided to stay straight away, which was highly unlikely, things would not be the same until Luke fully accepted the Dark Side. He had no doubt that Luke would turn to the Dark Side, but the boy might not realize his place right away and so he would go back to the Rebellion until he became unhappy and realized that his place was at his father's side.

He smiled behind his mask as he remembered how good it had made Luke feel to just talk with him. But then the smile turned to a frown as he thought about the increasingly bad nightmares that had been plaguing Luke almost every night for

the past few days.

"Try to get some sleep," he ordered softly as he noticed the dark smudges under Luke's eyes.

"You don't have to tell me," Luke replied forcing a smile. "I want to sleep, but not if I get anymore nightmares."

Vader nodded his head, tempted to show Luke how to prevent the nightmares by using the Force, but holding back, not yet wanting his son to regain his memory.

"May the Force be with you," Luke said, his longing to remember how to use the Force returning.

"Thank you," Vader replied placing a hand on his son's shoulder. "And you will remember everything soon enough."

Luke nodded his head and watched his father walk away, ascend the ramp, and disappear inside the shuttle. He quickly backed away and watched as the shuttle lifted off and finally disappeared out of sight. Sighing he looked at the darkening sky, night was once again approaching and he dreaded it. He kept getting nightmares, but he never remembered anything of them, only fear, pain, and recently he also awoke feeling angry and betrayed.

Shaking his head he turned around and headed inside.

Three days later,

Luke awoke with a start, sweating and breathing hard. With an angry growl he threw the sheets back and sat up before he froze as a memory flashed across his mind like lightening. A memory that wasn't from the past few weeks, a memory from before his run-in with the horangi!

Relaxing he sat back, closed his eyes, and concentrated on the memory. After a few moments it came back to him. He seemed to be in a huge, Imperial, docking bay and there were storm troopers and ships everywhere. Then, as he turned, he saw his father, blood-red lightsaber activated, fighting another man who was dressed in the robes his father had described as the robes of the Jedi. As he watched the Jedi looked in his direction before lifting his lightsaber and allowing

his father to cut him down. There was a loud cry of '*Nooooo!*' from somewhere before the scene faded.

Puzzled Luke sat still as he thought about the memory, but, try as he might, he could not figure out why the Jedi had allowed himself to be killed or from where the cry had come from.

Four days later,

As soon as he descended the ramp of his shuttle and saw Luke, Vader could sense that something had happened. His son looked even more tired than he had when he had left and the confusion radiating from the boy was so strong that it crowded out all of his other emotions.

"What's wrong?" Vader asked as he neared the boy.

"I had another nightmare," Luke replied as he fell in next to his father.

"And you remembered it," Vader guessed.

"Yes," Luke said the word Vader had hoped not to hear.

"Tell me," Vader requested as they entered the castle.

"I seemed to be in some sort of docking bay and you were fighting an old man dressed in Jedi robes. Suddenly the Jedi looked up and allowed you to cut him down, then somebody called out '*Nooooo!*' from somewhere," Luke stated.

"That's all you remember?" Vader asked hopefully.

If Luke hadn't remembered anymore then he would be able to explain things without lying, if not. . .

"Yes. Who was that you killed and who called out?" Luke asked.

"The Jedi I killed was Obi-Wan Kenobi, my former mentor and friend, he is also the one who pushed me into the lava pit," Vader explained feeling Luke's anger as he once again mentioned his own injuries. "The person that called out was the Jedi student I mentioned earlier."

"If he was there, then why didn't we kill him?" Luke asked.

"I didn't know, he had barely had any training and I was distracted by Obi-Wan's death, as were you," Vader stated remembering how his son had nearly let himself be shot after Obi-Wan's death when he had been trying to shoot every Imperial in sight.

"Where did all this happen?" Luke asked.

"In the main docking bay on board the Imperial Death Star."

"The Death Star?"

"Yes," Vader replied. "The Death Star was a space station the size of a small moon with the capability to destroy an entire planet with a single shot."

"An entire planet?" Luke repeated amazed. "But then why didn't you use it to destroy the planet the Rebel base was on?"

"We tried to do so at Yavin IV, however, the Rebels managed to get a copy of the blueprints of the station and they found a weakness in its design. Then, during our attack, they had the Jedi student exploit the weakness and destroy the Death Star."

"Him again?" Luke asked. "I hope you kill him soon."

Vader just looked at his son but remained silent, if only he knew, if only he knew.

Six days later,

Luke released an angry sigh as he turned around and entered his home. His father had just left, again, and just when he was regaining more and more memories every night. Actually they weren't full memories, only fragments and images, but still. Just two nights ago he had remembered a young woman whom his father had identified as former Senator Princess Leia Organa of Alderaan when he had described her to him.

However most of the time his father would tell him that it was best that he remember everything himself instead of hearing it all, but that response had only

made him more frustrated. But now his father was gone, so, no matter what he remembered, he'd have no one to ask questions of.

Four days later,

Luke tossed fitfully in his sleep as images, voices, and emotions of his past fought to be seen, heard, and felt. One image after another bombarded his mind so fast that he thought that it would never end. One minute he was in what looked like a trash compactor with the former Senator of Alderaan, what was she doing there?, some man he didn't know and a Wookiee, the next minute he seemed to be hanging upside-down in an ice cave, and then he was hanging from a weather vane.

With a loud gasp he awoke, breathing hard and soaked in sweat. This had been the worst night to date! Slowly he sat up and closed his eyes, taking several slow breaths as he did so, forcing his whole body to relax.

Then, once calm, he reached back into his mind to look at the new memories the nightmare had brought back. Suddenly his eyes snapped open as he remembered. . . everything.

The moment his shuttle came out of hyperspace Vader reached out with his mind to touch that of his son, but instead of finding the comforting presence of Luke's mind he came up against a solid barrier. Vader frowned behind his mask as he probed the barrier, hoping to be able to pick up any of Luke's emotions. But it was no use, from this far away the barrier was doing what it was meant to do, it was concealing everything within his son's mind.

He wondered how long ago his son had regained his memory, it could have been the night he had left, or it could have been minutes before he had arrived out of hyperspace. The instant the shuttle ramp came down he descended it and headed indoors.

"My lord," Marcus said as he approached Vader.

"Later," Vader ordered.

Quickly he ascended the stairs, walked to Luke's room, and entered. As he entered he noticed Luke standing before the huge window, dressed in his black robes and cape. Smiling to himself he approached his son and saw that Luke half turned his head towards him before he looked back out the window. Stopping a few feet behind his son he waited.

There was a moment of silence which seemed to drag on forever for Luke, for although he seemed calm and controlled on the outside his emotions were like a black, raging, storm inside of him. He felt confusion, anger, disgust, horror, and love all at once. He was angry at the way his father had lied and mislead him to make him think that he was an Imperial, he was disgusted and horrified at the way he had behaved and what he had done since his run-in with the horangi. And yet the happiness he had felt with his father he had never felt before in his life, during the time when he hadn't known who he was he had at least felt like he belonged, like he was where he was meant to be. This was something he had never felt before in his life, not even with the Alliance. He had also come to love his father and known that he was loved in return, something else he had never experienced.

"You've regained your memory," Vader finally stated, shattering the silence.

"You lied to me," Luke accused as he looked out the window. "You said I was an Imperial."

"No," Vader denied. "Not once during your whole stay with me did I lie to you. On Coruscant Palpatine lied to you, but I never did. You merely assumed from my words that you were an Imperial like I am."

"No," Luke replied stiffening slightly. "That's not true."

"It is," Vader insisted as he reached out and placed a hand on his son's shoulder. "Think about it."

Quickly Luke shrugged the hand off of his shoulder. Thinking about the time spent with his father he couldn't find a single moment when he had been lied to, but that didn't mean it hadn't happened, he had after all been with his father for two and a half months! Two and a half months during which he had not only decoded a message of the Alliance and helped plan an attack on the base, but he had also tortured other Rebels and he had even ordered one of them killed! Closing his eyes at the thought of the torture scene he had so calmly stood through he leaned against the wall where it met the window.

"Luke," Vader said after a few moments. "Join me, stay here."

Slowly Luke opened his eyes, once again his father was asking him to join him, to stay with him, to learn from him, and to be with him; just like he'd always

wanted. The fact that he was wanted and would feel like he belonged pulled at him, urging him to say yes, to have his childhood dreams and longings come true. But then he thought of the Hammerhead he had tortured and killed, of how he had helped his father create the attack plans that had destroyed one fourth of the Alliance.

"No," he stated but, to his dismay, he heard his voice shake with the uncertainty he felt inside of himself.

Feeling the conflict within his son Vader took a step forward.

"Why not?" he asked.

"You're evil, you take pleasure in hurting people," Luke stated. "I'm not like you."

"Did you not enjoy helping me make the plans to attack the Rebel base?" Vader inquired. "Or did you not enjoy getting the information from those slaves?"

Luke flinched visibly at his father's words.

"I. . ." Luke began. "Only because I didn't remember who I was, I didn't remember what and whom I cared about."

"If you stay here I can show you how to be like that again," Vader offered.

"No!" Luke exclaimed, but even as he said it he could feel part of himself wanting to accept the offer, to learn from his father as he had always wanted.

"Very well," Vader stated knowing that he couldn't win with the method he was using. "Goodbye."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Luke asked instantly as he felt a sudden wave of panic wash over him.

Vader smiled behind his mask as he heard the fear in his son's voice, although the boy claimed that he didn't want to stay he didn't want to leave either.

"It means whatever you want it to mean," he explained as he placed his hands on Luke's shoulders. "It can mean goodbye until later today, it can mean goodbye for a couple of weeks if you chose to leave for a little while and then come back, or it can mean goodbye forever if you chose to leave for good and return to the Alliance and your life as an orphan."

Luke felt his whole body stiffen and go cold at the last word. Feeling Luke's muscles tense under his hands Vader continued:

"The choice is entirely yours, I will not force you to do anything," he paused for a moment to let this sink in. "When I first learned of the after effects of the poison I decided not to tell you everything immediately as I wanted to get to know you and I wanted you to be able to experience what life would be like if you decided to stay. For how can you chose what you want if you don't know all your options? Now, if you still want to leave, you may take the second shuttle and go. You will find everything you need on board and, should you change your mind later on, you may come back whenever you wish."

With this he reached over and briefly caressed Luke's cheek with the back of his hand before he turned around and left the room.

As soon as his father left the room Luke collapsed against the wall and began to tremble. Why did he feel so torn? His father was evil, was Dark, why did he feel like he needed to be with him? He had lots of friends within the Alliance, why did he feel this pull towards Vader?

'Because he's your father,' a tiny voice within himself replied. *'You belong at his side.'*

Pushing the voice away he thought about Leia, Chewie, Wedge, Lando, and all the pilots in his squadron. Where they still alive? Or had they died during the attack on the base? And what about Han? Was he still frozen in carbonite or had Leia and Lando rescued him already?

Looking at the second shuttle on the landing pad through the window he quickly made up his mind. No matter how much he longed to stay with his father he knew he couldn't. After all Vader wasn't the father he had longed to know as a child. . .was he? No, he wasn't.

Having made up his mind he quickly turned around and left the room. He made his way to the shuttle as fast as he could. He didn't want his father to change his mind and decide that he wasn't going to let his son go away. Besides he didn't want to give himself time to change his own mind.

Boarding the shuttle he closed the ramp and made his way towards the ship's cockpit.

Standing in front of one of the windows in his room Vader silently watched as the shuttle containing his only son lifted off. He watched it until it disappeared behind the clouds, then waited a few moments before he sent a final message to Luke:

'May the Force be with you child.'

Leaning forward in the pilot's chair Luke took hold of the hyperspace levers and was about to pull them back when he heard his father's voice in his head:

'May the Force be with you child.'

Quickly, before he could change his mind, he pulled back the levers and watched the stars streak into lines. Then he fell back into the chair. Why had his father done that? Why had he sent that message?

Frustrated he jumped to his feet and began pacing the cockpit. After several minutes he forced himself to relax by opening himself to the Light Side and letting it flow through him. Finally relaxed he walked out of the cockpit to explore the rest of the ship. Most of it was just like any other private ship he'd been on except for the fact that he found a change of clothes and a pile of credits in the bedroom.

Picking up the money he realized that he now held more money in his hands than he had ever seen before. Should he keep the money or not? His father had given it to him, but where had he gotten it from? The Empire? And where had they gotten it from? Probably taken from some hardworking individuals who had needed it for their own families. Disgusted he dropped the credits back onto the table, he didn't want money from the Empire.

Walking to the bunk he looked down at the clothes and blaster lying there. They were the kind of clothes Han and other space pirates liked to wear. A smile slowly spread across his face as he realized that if he wore those clothes when he returned no one would know that he'd spent time with Vader or the Empire.

The smile quickly faded however as he realized that the Alliance would probably put him through a heavy cross-examination when he returned and that he'd have to lie or else be sent straight to a detention cell. Sitting down on the bed in dismay he closed his eyes, he'd have to lie to Leia, Lando, Wedge, and maybe even Han just like Obi-Wan had lied to him about his father. If they were still alive.

Four days later,

Dressed in the pirate clothes, which had been exactly his size, Luke leaned forward and pushed the hyperspace levers forward, instantly bringing him out of hyperspace above Lantooine. Lantooine was one of the busier and more known Outer Rim Territory planets where he knew the Alliance often collected recruits. Which was why he was here, because as the Alliance base had moved he had no idea where it was now and the only way for him to rejoin the Rebels was to get in touch with one of the recruiters. They would then contact someone who could help him back.

"*Zorga's Pride* we now have you on our radar," a voice over the com stated. "Please state your destination."

"Mos Lispa spaceport," Luke nearly snapped, then blinked in surprise at his own attitude.

Why had he reacted like that? It was just a normal question, they had to be able to keep track of where all the traffic was going in the area. So why had he snapped at the person on the other end of the com? Then it hit him: he had gotten into the habit of being superior to almost everybody else.

Shaking his head he decided to think before he spoke, or else the whole lie he had made up to tell everyone would fall apart around him. After a lot of debating he had decided that, despite the way he hated to lie, it would be the best way to go about the situation. He had also decided that it would be better to use the money his father had given him then to throw it away, which would be a real waste. If he used the money to get back to the Alliance then the people whose money it had been hadn't given it up in vain.

"Okay," the voice replied stiffly. "Permission granted to land at docking bay 62 in Mos Lispa's spaceport."

"Docking bay 62, thank you," Luke replied and was sure that he had now completely confused the person on the other end of the com.

Guiding the ship his father had given him he quickly entered Lantooine's atmosphere and set her down in docking bay 62. Getting up from his seat he adjusted the blaster strapped to his right leg and made sure that the zipper on the pocket that contained his lightsaber worked well. Then he picked up the bag containing the clothes he had worn while with his father and the money he had gotten before he turned around and exited the ship.

Locking up the ship for what he knew would be the last time as well as the first he wondered again if his father had planted a homing beacon aboard it or not. Considering the fact that his father hadn't lied to him during his stay with him, and he was now sure that he hadn't, it was improbable that he would have planted a homing beacon on this ship. An honest Vader. If anyone had told him that before

his run-in with the horangi he would have laughed, but not anymore. His father had shown him that he wasn't completely full of deceit.

Quickly he pushed all thoughts of his father out of his head. His father was an Imperial and he was a Rebel. They were enemies. Yet he couldn't just leave it at that. He had come to learn to love his father during their time together and now he felt a strong sense of loss. Suppressing a frustrated sigh, he walked away from the ship. He had to do what he knew was right and fighting the Empire was right. Walking down a street in Mos Eisley he looked around for a cantina where he might find someone to sell the ship too.

A week and a half later,

Sitting in one of the cantinas in Mos Eisley, Luke sighed as he took another sip of the Corellian ale he had ordered. He had found someone willing to buy the ship almost immediately and, after that, he had found a storage area in the spaceport where people could rent lockers. He had gotten one of the lockers and put the bag with his clothes and a little over three-quarters of the money his father had given him into it. The remaining money, along with what he had gotten for the ship, he had kept to rent a room and buy food. What he had left after that he could say he had earned while working for the pirate who had found and then taken care of him while he'd healed, the lie he had created to tell everyone who asked where he had been.

Looking around the cantina he wondered how long it would take for the Alliance recruiter to approach him. During his time on Lantooine he had dropped several subtle hints that he was interested in joining the Alliance. He knew, through the Force, that he had been followed for the past four days, a precaution step taken by recruiters to make sure that a possible Rebel wasn't really an Imperial in disguise. Still, the recruiter should be approaching him soon.

Taking another sip of his ale, he looked down at the hand holding the glass, his right hand, his prosthetic hand. He felt anger rise within him as he remembered how calmly his father had sliced off his hand on Cloud City. It was hard to imagine that that was the same father that had loved and cared for him for the past ten weeks. True, he had hurt his father first, but he hadn't known that it was his father he struck. His father had known who he was. But then his father had only taken his hand and not his life, as he easily could have. Thinking of this he suddenly remembered how he had told his father that he hoped he would kill the

Jedi student soon. Pushing both unpleasant thoughts from his mind he took another sip of the ale.

He was just about to get up and go when he sensed the now familiar presence of the recruiter enter the cantina. Quickly he signaled for the waitress to come.

"Another Corellian ale," he ordered.

"Sure," the Twi'lek replied in heavily accented Basic as she left to get his drink.

Several minutes later the Twi'lek placed the drink before him just as a human came up and sat down in the vacant chair at his table.

"Hey," Luke said casually, just as if he knew the man well.

"Hello," the man replied as he quickly glanced around the cantina to make sure no one was listening to them. "I hear you're interest in joining the Alliance."

"Actually," Luke began as he took a sip of his drink. "I'm interested in rejoining the Alliance."

"What?" the man exclaimed as his right hand slid below the table to his blaster. "Rejoining the Alliance?"

"Yes," Luke confirmed as he probed the recruiter's Force aura, looking to see if he was planning on using his blaster or not. "The last mission I was on was a total failure. As if that wasn't enough, there were other complications and now I want to get back to the Alliance. Only the base has changed so this is the only way for me to get back."

It wasn't a total lie, it was only a brief overview of what had actually happened, minus all that he had done for the Empire. He felt a sudden chill go up his spine as he realized that this was exactly what his father had done to him.

"So, who are you then?" the recruiter asked.

"What?" Luke asked, snapping out of his thoughts.

"Who are you and what was your rank within the Alliance?"

"I am Skywalker, Commander Luke Skywalker," Luke replied, feeling like he was lying as he did so.

"Commander Skywalker?" the recruiter repeated skeptically.

"Yes," Luke replied, a little sharper than he had intended. "Look, take a retina scan and cross-checked it against the Alliance file. Although I wouldn't be surprised if my file is listed under the dead."

"Under the dead?" the man questioned, disbelief radiating from him. "Just how long ago was this failed mission?"

"Close to three months ago," Luke replied, getting annoyed.

Sighing, the recruiter seemed to hesitate for a moment, but quickly made his decision with a small mental push from Luke.

"All right," he said pulling out a small scanner from his pocket. "Hold this scanner up to your eye."

Nodding Luke took the scanner and quickly held it over his right eye.

"I will meet you here again some time this week."

"Good," Luke responded, forcing himself to remain calm.

Ever since he had left his father he had had problems controlling his anger, hate, and patience. He kept expecting everybody to instantly obey him and not to question him. As he watched the man leave he sighed inwardly and made a mental note of trying to rid himself of the bad habits he had learned while with his father. Closing his eyes he shook his head at the irony of it all. Once he had wanted nothing more than to have a father and to learn from him. Now that he had a father, he wanted to get away from him and unlearn what he had been taught by him.

Quickly he opened his eyes, finished his drink, and got up. Every time he so much as thought of his father his old feelings of longing and dreams unfulfilled resurfaced. Despite the fact that he knew his father was evil, even though he knew it would be betrayal, he still longed for his father, to be with him, to learn from him, to be loved by him, and to feel like he belonged, just like he had the past three months.

Leaving the cantina, he hoped that the recruiter would contact him soon. If he didn't he feared that he would find himself giving into his longing and return home. He froze at the thought. He had never really thought of any place he had been as home, not even Tatooine. Now he had spent ten weeks on a planet he had hardly ever heard of before and he was already thinking of it as home!

Clenching his hands in frustration he quickly headed back to the room he was renting.

Three days later,

Looking up from the Alderaanian ale he was drinking, Luke smiled as he saw the Alliance recruiter enter the cantina. As the man looked around he lifted his hand and the recruiter came right over to him.

"Commander Skywalker," he whispered softly as he took a seat opposite Luke.

"So I passed the test?" Luke asked as he took another sip of the ale.

"Yes Sir," the man replied nervously. "I'm sorry for my earlier skepticism and disrespect, but--"

"Never mind," Luke stated with a wave of his hand. "It was for Alliance security, I know all that."

"Yes Sir," the recruiter replied stiffly, making Luke realize that he had switched back to his demanding voice.

"Very well," Luke said softly. "What is your name and what am I to do now?"

"My name is Klyn, Lieutenant Santiago Klyn," Santiago stated, confusion at Luke's behavior radiating from him. "I've received direct orders from Mon Mothma to bring you to the new base."

"Which is where?" Luke automatically ordered.

"Aljabratar, Sir," Santiago replied after a moment's hesitation.

"Call me Luke," Luke stated, mentally kicking himself for his behavior as he took another sip of his ale.

Obviously he hadn't gotten rid of the bad habits as he'd thought he had. Reaching out with the Force he touched Santiago's mind and found that the man was beginning to doubt whether he was actually the Rebel hero who had destroyed the Death Star. The Death Star. A sudden, unexpected, wave of guilt washed over him as he remembered the Battle of Yavin. He had always felt bad that he had killed so many people, but this, this was real guilt, guilt that he had done something extremely wrong, something that was inexcusable. But that was ridiculous. He had done it to save his friends. . . to save the Alliance.

"Mon Mothma said that I was to bring you to the new base as soon as possible," Santiago said, pulling Luke out of his thoughts.

"Very well," Luke replied. "I'm ready when you are."

"Then I suggest we leave now."

"All right then," Luke agreed as he got up, finished his ale, and followed Santiago out of the cantina.

As he and Santiago traveled through the streets of Mos Eisley to the spaceport, he decided that the only way to rid himself of the bad habits he had was watching every word he said. This way might make it harder for people to talk with him as he'd be slower in responding, but at least he wouldn't snap at them or act superior, the way he felt.

"Well," Santiago said as they entered one of the docking bays. "Here's the ship. She may not be fast, but she looks like just another civilian ship, so she'll easily get past the Imps."

Luke just nodded his head and followed Santiago onto the ship.

Five days later,

"Luke," Santiago called out as the chronometer started its count down for when he had to push the hyperspace levers forward and bring them out of hyperspace. "We're almost there."

"Coming," Luke replied seconds before he entered the cockpit and sat down in the co-pilots chair.

After he sat down Santiago pushed forward the levers and the ship instantly came out of hyperspace. As Luke watched Santiago handle the controls he smiled, thinking of how well he had managed to control his behavior for the past few days. His smile quickly faded as he remembered that it wouldn't be long before he would have to lie to his friends and the Alliance high command.

Trying to push the thought aside, he turned his attention back to Santiago as the man opened a secured com channel to the base.

"Rock two point nine, this is eagle six point eight," Santiago stated.

"Eagle six point eight, we have you on our radar," a voice replied. "Do you have Commander Skywalker?"

"Yes," Santiago responded, looking over at Luke.

"Okay you have permission to land," the voice stated before the com channel was closed.

"Well," Santiago began as he descended the ship into Aljabratar's atmosphere. "Welcome home."

Luke flinched at the use of the word home and Santiago caught it.

"I'm sorry," he instantly apologized. "I didn't mean to bring up any unwanted memories."

"No," Luke replied, feeling guilty that he'd thought of his father's castle at the word and not of the moisture farm on Tatooine where he'd been raised. "It's not that. . . it's. . . something else."

Santiago just nodded his head as he lowered the spaceship into an empty space on the outside landing pad.

"Well, here you are," he said uncomfortably.

"Thank you," Luke replied as he got up. "For bringing me back."

"No problem, and good luck," Santiago replied.

"The same to you," Luke stated as he exited the cockpit and made his way towards the ship's ramp.

"Luke!" Leia called out as she rushed up to him just as he reached the bottom of the ramp.

"Leia," Luke replied with a smile as he embraced her.

"You're alive!" Leia whispered as she returned his embrace. "You're alive!"

"Of course I am," Luke replied as he stepped, keeping his hands on Leia's shoulders.

"After the team vanished without a trace we thought everyone had died or been captured. Especially when we didn't hear anything after two weeks," Leia said, happiness and joy radiating from her.

"The others are dead," Luke stated as his smile vanished at the memory of the horangi attacking and killing his companions.

Leia's hazel brown eyes studied him for a moment before she spoke.

"I'm sorry Luke," she said softly. "What happened? What went wrong? And where did you get those clothes?"

"Well--" Luke began.

"Luke, kid!" Han exclaimed as he suddenly appeared behind Leia.

"Han!" Luke exclaimed incredulously before the pirate pulled him into an embrace.

"I knew you weren't dead kid," Han stated pulling back. "I knew it!"

"How?" Luke questioned. "How'd you know and how'd you get out of the carbonite and away from Jabba?"

"Leia, Lando, and Chewie got me out," Han informed his young friend.

"You'll have to tell me all about that later," Luke stated.

"Yes," Leia agreed. "But now tell us what happened to you."

"That's a long story," Luke said, not wanting to lie but knowing he had to.

He couldn't let them know the truth about his heritage. Who knew what would happen then, or what would happen when they learned of what he had done? Looking into the waiting eyes of Han and Leia, he opened his mouth to lie to them when, suddenly, two huge furry arms grabbed him from behind and lifted him off his feet.

"What?!" Luke exclaimed as he instinctively fought to get out of the grasp of the alien holding him.

As soon as he lashed out, the arms holding him released him and he dropped back to the ground.

"Luke," Leia said, stepping towards him with a funny look on her face. "What's wrong? It's only Chewie's way of welcoming you back."

"Chewie?" Luke repeated as he turned around and looked up at a hurt and confused Chewbacca. "I. . ." he began as he fought to push aside the revulsion that he felt. This was his friend! "I was just surprised. I didn't mean anything, Chewie, honestly."

Standing still he held his breath, wondering if Chewbacca would accept the lie. Looking at him Chewie gave a short soft growl, saying that he understood before he reached out and engulfed his young friend in another hug. As Chewie's arms wrapped around him again, Luke fought down the feelings of revulsion, superiority, and guilt that threatened to overwhelm him and make him react in a way he'd later regret. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, he pulled back.

"I can't breath, Chewie," he lied.

Chewie instantly let go of him and gave a short amused bark as he reached over and tussled Luke's hair.

"Hey!" Luke exclaimed stepping back and reaching up to smooth his hair. "You're messing up my hair!"

Han roared with laughter and Leia brought her hand up to her mouth to hide a smile. Chewie looked at him for a second before he started laughing softly and shaking his head. Luke felt a wave of relief wash over him as his friends relaxed. His first confrontation was over, but it had shown that he had overlooked a major thing: his newly acquired revulsion for aliens. He should have thought about it before, but he hadn't. And since he hadn't come into contact with any aliens since he had left Melca it hadn't not occurred to him. However Chewie was bound to both touch and hug him so he had to make sure that his instincts didn't kick in and make him pull away. The surprise lie had worked once, but it wouldn't work again.

He sighed inwardly and mentally cursed his current position.

'You don't have to be here you know,' the small voice in his head said. *'You could go back to your father, you could go back home.'*

Instantly he shook his head and pushed the voice aside. His father was evil and he couldn't betray his friends. . . could he?

"I'm sorry to end your little reunion, but the Alliance high command wants to see you, Luke," Lando said as he walked up to the group.

"Lando," Luke replied as he shook Lando's hand.

"General Calrissian to you," Lando replied proudly.

"General?" Luke asked, pretending to be impressed.

"Yes," Lando confirmed. "But Mon Mothma said you were to come right away."

"Okay, okay," Luke replied, a hard edge to his voice. "I heard you the first time."

"Sorry," Lando said, raising his hands in a defensive gesture. "Just wanted to make sure."

Sighing out loud, Luke shook his head.

"No, I'm sorry," he stated. "I've just been through so much lately and I've not quite recovered yet."

"I suggest that we go to the conference room and you can tell your story once instead of two or three times," Leia said, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder as she started to walk towards the conference room.

"Good idea," Luke agreed, smiling at Leia. "But what about Han and Wedge?"

"Han's a General now too and Wedge has taken your place as a Commander, so they'll both be there," Leia informed him.

"A General?" Luke asked, looking surprised.

"Yes," Han replied simply. "Now I outrank you."

Luke stiffened at the comment and was already reaching out with the Force to strike Han with his anger before he stopped himself.

"I guess you do," he stated, his voice empty of any emotion.

Han gave him a quizzical look and was about to reply when they reached the doors to the conference room and entered.

"Luke!" Wedge exclaimed as he got up and walked over to embrace his friend. "It's great to have you back, even if it might mean me being bumped out of the position of commander."

Luke let out a short laugh as he returned his friend's embrace.

"Wedge," he said. "It'd great to see you."

"Commander Skywalker," Mon Mothma said as soon as Luke pulled out of the embrace. "It's good to have you back. However, I would like to know why you

didn't return immediately after the mission, where the other members of your team are, why the mission failed, and where you have been since the mission."

Luke slowly turned away from his friends and faced Mon Mothma, head of the Alliance and a woman he had never really liked. His anger rose at the tone she had used to address him with. The tone had been full of authority, full of superiority, full of assurance that he would answer her. He was tempted to refuse, to say she had no right to know, to show her who he was, to strike her down with the Force for her disrespect, but he pushed those thoughts aside and lowered his eyes.

"It's a long story," he said as his eyes drifted over the other people seated at the circular conference table.

Sitting to Mothma's right was a Mon Calamari he hadn't seen before, but the insignia on his chest said he was an admiral. Sitting next to the admiral was General Rieekan who nodded to him when their eyes met. Sitting to Mothma's left was General Madine, a man whom he hated and who hated him.

"Then take a seat and tell us," the admiral ordered.

Luke nodded and sat down opposite of Mon Mothma while Leia and Han took a seat on either side of him. Wedge sat down next to Leia while Lando took a seat next to Han.

"Before I start," Luke began. "I have one question."

"Which is?" General Madine asked sharply and Luke could clearly feel the hostility radiating from him.

"I would like to know who the admiral is," Luke stated, meeting the General's gaze.

"He is Admiral Ackbar," Leia informed him. "He joined us shortly after you left on your mission."

"Exactly," Admiral Ackbar confirmed.

"Okay," Luke replied as he returned his gaze to the admiral.

"Now if you'll tell us what happened," Mon Mothma said with a slight edge to her voice.

"Certainly," Luke replied suppressing his anger. "We had just landed and were making our way towards the Imperial outpost when we were attacked from behind."

"By Imperials?" General Rieekan asked.

"No," Luke replied. At least he wasn't lying yet. "It was some sort of creature."

"What kind of creature?" Mon Mothma demanded.

"A horangi," Luke replied and heard Lando gasp in horror.

"How did you survive that?" he questioned.

"What's a horangi?" Admiral Ackbar asked.

"One question at a time," Luke said, holding up his hands. "A horangi is a large predator that has six arms, claws, and long fangs."

"And the claws are filled with a paralyzing poison," Lando said as Luke stopped to take a breath.

"I'm getting to that!" Luke snapped impatiently.

"Commander Skywalker!" Mon Mothma said sharply. "General Calrissian, let him finish."

Luke clicked his tongue in annoyance.

"Commander Skywalker, please continue," General Rieekan said.

"Well it came from behind and managed to take out our rear guards before they had a chance to warn us," Luke said. "We were completely caught off guard. And, as Lando said, the horangi has poison in its claws, so the moment the claws puncture the skin its poison totally paralyzes its victim."

There was a moment of silence as everyone thought of what must have happened.

"What happened next?" Wedge finally asked.

"I'm not sure," Luke replied honestly. "I was reaching for my lightsaber when the horangi lashed out at me with one of its arms and clawed me."

"Where?" General Madine asked instantly.

"Right here," Luke responded as he rolled up his right sleeve to show the skeptic general his twin scars.

"Oh, Luke," Leia said as he touched his arm.

"How did you survive the confrontation if you were paralyzed?" Han asked.

"Yes," Admiral Ackbar stated. "And how come none of the others survived?"

"Well, as I said, I was paralyzed," Luke said as he sighed mentally. From here on in he'd have to lie. "So I don't know for sure. I can only tell you what I've been told."

"Who told you what you're going to tell us?" Leia asked.

"A space pirate by the name of Jason Tyren," Luke lied. "He happened to be nearby and he heard our startled screams, so he came to see what had happened. When he arrived on the scene he found me lying against a rock."

"What about the others?" Mon Mothma inquired.

Luke turned to face the Alliance leader and was quiet for a moment.

"The horangi eats meat," he finally stated quietly.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a few moments as everyone thought about this. Shifting in his chair, Luke quickly reached out and probed the Force auras of everyone in the room. He was relieved to see that they all more or less believed what he had said so far.

"What happened after you awoke?" General Madine finally demanded. "Why didn't you come back then?"

"One of the aftereffects of the horangi's poison is blindness," Luke replied. "Another is temporary amnesia."

"Amnesia?!" Leia exclaimed, horrified.

"Yes," Luke replied as Leia took hold of his right hand. "For ten weeks I had no idea who I was or what my life had been like. Once I regained my memory I went to Lantooine and waited until Lieutenant Santiago Klyn contacted me and brought me here."

"You said another of the aftereffects was blindness," Leia said. "How come you aren't blind?"

"The blindness can be cured with the right medication and Jason gave me that medication," Luke explained.

"Why?" Wedge asked. "Why would he give you the medicine?"

"Once he realized that I had no idea who I was and didn't have a place to go he offered to let me stay with him," Luke lied, avoiding eye contact with everyone. "And in return I worked for him, helping him smuggle goods past the Imps."

"Is that where you got those clothes?" Mon Mothma asked eyeing him.

"Yes," Luke lied as Han stiffened at the comment.

"Commander Antilles, could you show Commander Skywalker to his room while we discuss this matter?" Mon Mothma asked after a moment of silence.

"Right away, ma'am," Wedge replied as he got to his feet.

Luke probed everyone once more before he got up and left the room with Wedge.

"So, how's the squadron?" Luke asked as Wedge lead him through the maze of halls that made up the base.

"Not too good," Wedge replied sadly. "At least not the people you mean."

"What?"

"Well we lost Silyrn, Kylost, Mgrozon, Dacklyn, and Jowalski during the Imperial attack on the base at Walp," Wedge explained.

"What?!" Luke exclaimed, coming to a sudden stop as the faces of his dead squadron members flashed across his mind along with a tidal wave of guilt.

Five of his squadron members, his friends, who had flown under his command, who had joked and laughed with him, were dead, and it was all his fault! He had gotten the location of the base from the Rebels captured by the Empire, and he had helped his father make the plans to attack the base. Luke felt the world spin as he thought of how much fun he'd had while doing things that had lead to his friend's deaths.

"Luke?" Wedge asked as he grasped Luke's arms, thus preventing him from ending up on the floor. "Are you all right?"

"Huh?" Luke asked, snapping back to the present.

"Are you all right?" Wedge repeated as he looked into his friend's eyes. "Do you want to see 2-1B?"

"No," Luke replied, shaking his head as he gently shook Wedge's hands from his arms. "It was just the shock, along with the lack of sleep and the nervousness of the past few days."

"Are you sure?" Wedge inquired, clearly unconvinced.

"Of course I'm sure!" Luke snapped.

"Just checking," Wedge said taking a step back. "I wanted to be sure."

"I'm sorry, Wedge," Luke apologized, bringing a hand to his forehead. "I just haven't been quite myself lately."

Wedge looked at him for another moment before a small smile appeared on his face.

"Hey," he said. "No need to be sorry. You've been through a lot and just need a little time to relax."

Luke just nodded his head in agreement as he returned Wedge's smile.

"Yeah, probably," he lied.

He knew that relaxing wouldn't solve anything. He'd have to work to turn back into the boy everyone was expecting, the boy everyone knew. But could he be that boy again? Could he just rid himself of all the habits he had learned while with his father, like a snake shed its unwanted skin? Could he just forget the love he had felt for his father and the love he had felt from him?

Shaking his head he turned and followed Wedge down the hall as he gave another mental sigh. He had so many questions but practically no answers. He needed someone to talk to, someone, but who? Wedge? Glancing at his friend walking slightly ahead of him he dismissed the thought. Wedge might be a close friend, but what would he understand of his problem? Nothing. Wedge hated the Empire as they had killed his family and friends. Luke could never explain his feelings for his father, for Vader, to him.

Leia? No, she hated Vader as much, if not more, than Wedge did.

Han? Well, Han didn't hate Vader that much, although after what Vader had done to Leia and after his carbon freeze experience that was doubtful and not worth the risk. Besides, Han didn't believe in the Force, so he wouldn't understand the Dark Side. And even if he did, did he want to speak to a space pirate about his problems? Quickly, violently, he shoved that thought aside. Han was his friend and no higher or lower than he himself was.

Lando? No, he hardly knew the man. Besides hadn't he sold Han and Leia out? There was no telling what he might do if he learned Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith, was Commander Luke Skywalker's father.

Yoda? Well. . . maybe he could talk with Yoda. Wait, what was he thinking? Hadn't Yoda lied to him just as Ben had? Hadn't Yoda just cast him totally blind and unprepared before his father? Hadn't Yoda wanted him to kill his own father?! No, he couldn't talk with Yoda, but that left no one.

'No one but your father,' that small seductive voice inside him whispered. *'He'd sit down with you and answer any and all questions you have.'*

Quickly he blocked the voice from his mind, even though he knew that what it said was true. His father would sit down with him and explain everything to him. He would listen to what Luke had to say and he'd give advice, perhaps not the kind of advice he'd like, but still the fact remained that his father would do it. His father understood him as none of his friends did.

"Well, here we are," Wedge said as he stopped before a door in the hallway they were in.

Stepping forward, Luke placed his left hand on the scanner and stepped into the room when the door opened. Looking around the room he felt his heart sink. The room was small with a closet, a chair, and a bunk. But then, what had he expected? A two room suite with a huge bed, a computer terminal, a water shower, tables, chairs, and a huge closet? Actually, now that he thought about it, that was exactly what he had been expecting. The Alliance didn't have enough money to waste it on unnecessary luxuries, but still he wanted them.

"--lucky," Wedge finished.

"Excuse me?" Luke asked as he blinked and turned to face his friend.

"I said that you're lucky to get a separate room. We don't have too much space," Wedge repeated, a concerned look on his face.

"Oh," Luke replied absently as he turned around and sat down on the hard bunk.

"Do you want to go to sleep?" Wedge inquired, trying but failing to hide his concern. "I mean, I can tell Mon Mothma that you weren't feeling too well and decided to rest."

Luke thought about this for a moment. He really didn't feel like going back to the conference room and making up answers to any questions his friends and the Alliance high command had come up with.

"Please," Luke said as he lay back on the uncomfortable bunk.

"My pleasure," Wedge stated as he exited the room.

"And Wedge," Luke called out before the door closed behind his friend.

"Yes?" Wedge asked as he popped his head back into the room.

"Thank you."

"No problem Luke," Wedge stated. "Now sleep."

With this Wedge disappeared and the door closed, leaving Luke alone in his small room. After a few minutes he got up and paced the room, counting the footsteps between the walls.

"Eleven by twelve," he said to himself. "Not bad, only six times smaller than my room at home."

As soon as he realized what he had said he froze and felt ice flow through his veins. Home, he had done it again! Undressing, he quickly got into the bunk and tried to sleep, wishing that this was all some kind of bad dream that he could just wake up from.

Two weeks later,

Luke sat in the cafeteria, eating his dinner, and thinking. The day after he had returned Mon Mothma had insisted that he take a medical scan before he returned to his regular duties. He knew that Wedge must have expressed concern about his health, but he hadn't said anything. Although he had gotten a perfect score on the medical scan, Leia had insisted that he take a few days off.

'Just to get back into the swing of things,' she had said, but to Luke it had seemed like just another hint that he should return to his father.

However, he had stayed and things had gotten slightly better since then, but only slightly. He had managed to keep snapping at people to a minimum, but no matter how hard he tried he couldn't control his Dark emotions or thoughts, nor had he felt any real joy or happiness.

"Hey kid," Han said as he placed his tray on the table and sat opposite him. "I thought you didn't like vangitongue."

"What?" Luke asked before he put another piece of meat into his mouth.

"I thought you didn't like vangitongue," Han repeated, pointing to Luke's plate.

Confused, Luke looked at his plate and his eyes opened wide in horror. Han was right. He was eating vangitongue and he hadn't even noticed it! He'd detested vangitongue from the moment Han had first introduced him to it and now here he was, eating vangitongue and not even realizing it! Forcing the mouthful of disgusting tasting meat down his throat he looked up at his friend and smiled.

"What can I say? I learned to eat it while with Jason," Luke lied, again.

That was the excuse he used each and every time he did something he would never have done before his run-in with the horangi. Jason taught me this. Jason showed me that. Jason. Jason. Jason. When he had recognized a new Imperial weapon it was because Jason had smuggled it. When he had known something about Vader he shouldn't have it was because Jason had told him about it.

"Sounds like this Jason was quite a fellow," Han joked. "He managed to do the impossible. I mean you swore you'd never eat vangitongue again."

"Yeah," Luke stated as he stuffed another piece of the tongue into his mouth and forced himself to swallow it. "He was quite a fellow."

"I'd like to meet him some day," Han continued as he began to eat his own vangitongue. "If for nothing else, then to thank him for taking care of you."

"As if I didn't already thank him," Luke snapped, bristling.

"Hey, I didn't mean anything like that," Han replied. "You're like a little brother to me, Luke. I can't help but feeling kind of protective of you."

"Oh," Luke replied, lowering his eyes to his plate.

There he went again, snapping at his friends when all they had in mind were good intentions. And he thought he was getting better about restraining himself! A sudden growl pulled him out of his thoughts as Chewie sat down next to Han, barely acknowledging him. He didn't blame the Wookiee. He had often snapped at Chewie when they were alone together. He had always tried to apologize, but it had happened so often that Chewie knew that there was something more behind it than the excuses he had used.

"What?" Han asked and listened as Chewie barked a reply before he got up. "I'll be there as soon as I finish my dinner," Han stated before Chewie turned around and left the cafeteria.

"What is it?" Luke inquired, pushing the remaining vangitongue around his plate.

"Chewie says he's having trouble with the hyperdrive," Han replied as he studied his young friend.

"You mean he's having more trouble with the hyperdrive," Luke teased, uncomfortable with the look Han was giving him.

Han seemed to be judging him, his attitude, his personality, his behavior, and anything that he could judge. Luke quickly decided that he didn't like being judged. It made him feel like a slave or an animal.

"What's going on?" Han finally asked.

"What do you mean?" Luke asked nervously as he ate another piece of the vangitongue.

"What's going on between you and Chewie?" Han demanded, then held up his hand to stop Luke before he could reply. "And don't tell me there's nothing going on because that's what Chewie said. I'm not dumb and I can clearly see the tension between the two of you. Not to mention the fact that you two have practically ignored each other for the past few days. At first I thought that you'd had an argument, but then I remembered that you don't understand a word of Wookiee!"

"So?" Luke snapped, irritated.

"So I want to know what's going on," Han replied, seemingly undisturbed by Luke's tone of voice. "You're both my friends and I don't like to see you fight or ignore each other's existence."

"Whatever happens between Chewie and me is between Chewie and me!" Luke declared angrily as he got to his feet. "And it's none of your business, so stay out of it and quit nosing in on what I do!"

With that he picked up his tray and stormed out of the cafeteria, throwing his tray in the trash as he passed it, and leaving an astonished and hurt Han behind.

"What happened?" Leia asked as she approached Han, Wedge at her side.

"I don't know," Han replied as Leia and Wedge sat down. "One minute I'm asking him what's going on between him and Chewie--"

"Something's wrong between Luke and Chewie?" Wedge interrupted.

"Yes," Han stated. "There's a tension between them and they hardly acknowledge each other's existence anymore."

"Yes," Leia agreed. "I've noticed it too. Did he tell you why?"

"No. The moment I asked he got angry, said it was none of my business, and you know the rest," Han replied. "There's something different about him. He's changed somehow."

"Amnesia will do that to you," Wedge stated.

"No, it's not that," Leia disagreed. "I've noticed it too. Luke gets angrier much faster and often he has this look on his face that clearly states that while he's physically in the room his mind is elsewhere."

"Well," Wedge said. "I've heard of people who just totally changed after they'd had amnesia. Or it could just be that he doesn't feel like himself anymore, just the way you temporarily felt like a different person, Han."

"True," Han replied as he thought of how lost he'd felt after Leia had freed him from the carbonite. "But I didn't start yelling at people."

"Yes, but you didn't spend two and a half months not knowing who you were," Wedge replied.

"Still," Han replied. "There's something wrong with Luke. He's been acting extremely strange. One minute he's talking with you and the next minute it seems like he's somewhere else or he's snapping at you."

"Now that I've noticed," Wedge agreed. "And talking about things being wrong, he's been doing really bad on the simulator. It's almost like he hesitates before firing on a TIE fighter."

"What?!" Leia exclaimed.

"He seems to hesitate before firing and that generally gets him killed," Wedge repeated, his voice full of concern. "I fear the day when we have to do an actual battle."

"I say we go and talk to Luke," Han suggested. "Find out what's wrong. Something must have happened to him other than the horangi attack and the amnesia."

"No," Leia replied instantly. "If he wants to talk to us, he will. Look at what just happened when you confronted him. He might just need more time to readjust."

"I don't think it's that," Han insisted. "I'm going to talk with him later."

"Han--" Leia began.

"No," Han interrupted. "Something is wrong with him and I want to help."

Seeing that he had made up his mind Leia sighed and looked at Wedge who just shrugged at her.

"Just don't push him," Leia warned.

Walking down the hall towards the simulator room, Luke suppressed the urge to pound his fist against the wall. Why did Han have to stick his nose into other people's business? Chewie had come to realize that he didn't want to be touched by him, even if it was just a friendly hug, and he had stopped doing it. True, he had hurt Chewie's feelings, he had felt that, but at least he didn't have to lie every time he instinctively pulled away or snapped at him. But Han! The pirate didn't know when to back off!

Entering the simulator room he saw Tyson getting into one of the simulators.

"Hey, Tyson," he called out. "Do you want to go up against each other?"

"Commander," Tyson replied as he looked at Luke. "Sure, I'll be the TIE."

Nodding, Luke walked over to one of the other simulators and climbed in. As he sat down he quickly opened a connection to Tyson's simulator so that they could practice against each other. Taking hold of the controls, he waited until the blank screen before him changed into a space scene. Smiling to himself he turned his X-wing so that he was facing the direction Tyson would be coming from. As he looked at the TIE he saw that Tyson had programmed his simulator to give him the latest model TIE, namely one with shields, weak shields, but shields nonetheless.

Suddenly the TIE pulled into a spiral turn for no apparent reason. Instinctively Luke reached out with the Force and entered Tyson's mind to see what he was planning to do. Not entirely fair, he knew, but if it kept him alive in an actual battle then he wouldn't hesitate to do it, so why not do it in a fake battle?

As soon as he saw what Tyson had in mind his anger shot up. The former Imperial had come up with a new maneuver that he was sure would work and later, after he had defeated Luke, he would brag about how swiftly he had defeated Commander Skywalker. As the rage boiled up inside of him, Luke reached out and turned the X-wing so that Tyson couldn't pull the stunt he wanted to. Then, for the first time since he had gotten back, he didn't suppress his anger. Instead he let it guide his fingers across the controls and, seconds later, Tyson's ship disappeared in a ball of flame.

"Ha!" Luke exclaimed just before the full impact of what he had done hit home.

He had used the Dark Side! Forcing himself to calm down he pushed the Dark Side away just as the screen before him turned blank and his score appeared. He just looked at the score in astonishment. That was his best ever. Heck, it was the best score anyone had had in the Alliance so far! Could it be true? Could the Dark Side be stronger? Shoving that thought aside, he quickly got out of the simulator only to find Tyson, Wedge, and Han waiting for him.

"Commander Skywalker, you broke Alka's record!" Tyson exclaimed.

"What?!" Wedge asked, instantly interested.

"He wiped me out in seconds!" Tyson explained. "I didn't even have time to try to fire. He just moved too fast!"

"What?" Han asked turning to his young friend. "Luke?"

Luke just shrugged as he probed Han and Wedge with the Force, pushing away the anger that had risen at seeing Han again. But even after he had pushed it aside he could still feel the Dark Side nibbling at the edges of his soul, waiting for him to summon it so that it could once again fill him with its bleak unclean energies. Was that what his father wanted for him? Yet hadn't he enjoyed it just moments earlier?

Knowing that he was treading on dangerous ground, especially with what had just happened, he turned his attention back to probing his friends. As he did so he read the conversation Han, Leia, and Wedge had had about him and Han's determination to speak with him and make everything right. He suppressed the urge to laugh at Han's naivete. According to his pirate friend everything could be healed with words. How could his longing be healed with words? How would he make it clear to Han that he couldn't help? It was better to make his friend think everything was okay.

"So what's your secret, Luke?" Wedge asked with a smile.

"Secret?" Luke asked as a sudden wave of panic washed over him.

"Yeah," Wedge replied. "I mean, Tyson learned to fly in a TIE fighter and he's a damn good pilot, and yet you just wiped him out like he was a first timer."

'And you've been doing really bad lately,' Luke picked up from Tyson's mind.

Giving a small smile he shrugged.

"There's no secret," he lied. "I guess I've just readjusted from my absence."

There! He caught the quick, slightly surprised, glance Han and Wedge sent each other. He had purposely used those words as he had seen that that was what Leia had used to explain his behavior. He smiled inwardly. Leia was so quick to believe in the good of her friends, exactly the way he had once believed in the essential good of everyone. But not anymore, no. He had seen the Dark, seen what others were capable of, seen how much Darker Palpatine was than anyone thought. He'd seen how Dark his father was, and he'd even seen how Dark he could be, had seen how much evil he himself could commit.

"That's great, Luke," Wedge replied. "I didn't want to say anything earlier, but your simulator results were your worst ever."

"I was distracted," Luke replied honestly.

"Well, welcome back," Wedge joked before he and Tyson left.

"So. . .?" Luke began, looking at Han.

"Well," Han replied, looking for a good place to start. "To be honest, I'm worried about you."

"Worried about me?" Luke asked innocently as he began to walk out of the simulator room.

"Yes," Han replied trying to keep his frustration under control.

Why was Luke doing this? There was clearly something wrong with the kid and yet he was avoiding every confrontation. If only he would talk about it, then he could help the kid solve his problem. Kid. . . ever since Luke had returned from his amnesia he seemed different, older. He was no longer the innocent, naive kid he had met on Tatooine.

"You've been acting. . . well different," Han said choosing his words carefully.

"What do you mean?" Luke asked looking forward.

Hopefully, Han didn't press the matter too much, for if he did, he'd have to use the Force to persuade Han that he was fine. He had no intention of telling Han about what had actually happened or how he felt about it all, how he felt about Vader.

Suppressing the urge to grab Luke by the collar and look him straight in the eyes, Han stopped midway in the hallway, forcing Luke to stop as well. It was the closest he could come to looking in Luke's eyes. For if he did anything else, Luke would totally close himself off from him, as he had done earlier.

"What do I mean?" Han repeated. "Your simulator results for one--"

"I already said I was distracted," Luke interrupted.

"--you've been acting distant--" Han continued.

"Same reason," Luke stated.

"--and you have gained quite a temper," Han finished taking a step towards Luke and looking him straight in the eyes.

As he did so he saw a flash of nervousness before it disappeared and a strange emptiness filled Luke's ice-blue eyes.

There was a short silence during which Luke was tempted to hide behind his anger, as he had done earlier. Yet he knew that if he were to convince Han he would have to make it seem like his behavior was a result of confusion, which in turn was a result of his amnesia experience.

"Well?" Han asked as he looked away from Luke.

The look in the young man's eyes was unnerving. He could detect absolutely nothing in the empty stare. Besides, there seemed to be an authority in the stare, something that commanded him to look away. But that was ridiculous. This was Luke. Luke didn't care about power. Hell, he had been extremely nervous and uncomfortable with the prospect of being a commander of a small squadron!

"Han," Luke began, pulling Han out of his thoughts.

"Yes?" Han replied, looking back at Luke, thinking his friend would finally open up to him.

"Han, I've been feeling really confused and out of place since I got back," Luke stated.

And it was true, it just wasn't the full truth. If he played this right he'd be able to convince Han that it was similar to what he had experienced after being freed from the carbonite.

"I didn't know what to do. I felt like I wasn't myself, like I had lost something as a result of the amnesia," Luke lied and caught the glimpse of understanding and compassion in Han's eyes. "So instead of confronting those feelings, I hid from them and hid from everyone else behind my anger. I felt vulnerable, Han."

As he said this last he added a small undertone of pain to his voice and used the Force to persuade his friend that he was telling the truth. He had only used a little Force persuasion and yet he felt all of Han's suspicions fade and then he felt compassion replace them.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Han asked, being careful not to show too much of the compassion he felt as he knew Luke didn't want to be pitied.

"I was still in the habits I had learned while with Jason," Luke lied with a small smile. "Showing emotion is showing weakness."

Han winced as he thought of that rule which had been a major part of his life until he had joined the Alliance. And, although he had lived with it for most of his life, he really hated the thought of Luke living that way. It just wasn't in Luke's nature. Luke was kind and gentle, but all that seemed to have disappeared. No wonder he had acted differently!

"Okay," Han finally stated. "But promise me that the next time you need help you'll talk to me, okay?"

"Hey, Han," Luke replied, placing his hand on his friend's arm. "I've lost the habit."

"So you'll talk with me?" Han pressed, looking back into Luke's eyes, pleased to see the light back in them.

"Why wouldn't I?" Luke questioned, giving Han another nudge with the Force.

Han gave Luke a smile, sure that his friend was back to normal.

"Okay," he stated. "I've got to go help Chewie now. See you later, Luke."

"Bye, Han," Luke replied as he turned around and started to wander aimlessly around the base.

Things were really starting to go bad. He had just needed to use the Force on Han twice! He had never done that before on his friends. Heck, he had never even thought of doing it!

Exiting the building he walked over to the wooded area at the edge of the landing pad and leaned against a tree, closing his eyes. Things had not gone well today. First he had had an argument with Han, then he had not only let the Dark Side fill him, but he had used it as well, and then he had used the Force on Han. Briefly he wondered if that last had been an act of Light or Dark. Not wanting to know, he quickly pushed the thought aside, opened his eyes, and, despite all the warnings he had heard, walked further into the woods until he could neither hear nor see the base anymore.

Once he was sure that he was alone, he sat down in a clearing and leaned against the blue-brown bark of a tree trunk. Looking up at the darkening sky through the red-green leaves he sighed. It was so peaceful out here. He could sense the calm of his surroundings, the peace that hung over the place like a warm soft blanket. Once, he had been able to let that peace and calm flow through him, to make himself a part of it, but not anymore. Now he could only sense its presence without actually feeling it. His own inner turmoil prevented him from becoming one with his surroundings as he had been taught.

But what did he want? Did he want to be a part of the peace and calm that was the Light Side, or did he want the power that was the Dark Side? Did he want his friends or his father? There were things that were pulling him in both directions.

He wasn't sure why, but at first he hadn't sensed the change in the air around him. Perhaps it was because he had been too lost in his thoughts to notice it, or perhaps it was just because he wasn't able to completely open himself to the Light Side anymore. Whatever the reason, he had definitely missed the slow change in the aura of the environment until it was almost too late.

There was a sense of foreboding in the air, an aura of power that was radiating from somewhere in the surrounding area. As he concentrated on it he noticed that all the birds and animals in the area had stopped making sounds, leaving the twilight forest silent. As he slowly, silently, rose to his feet he knew that the smartest thing for him to do was get out of here as fast as possible, to go back to the base. But another part of him wanted to stay, wanted to see the creature whose aura of power he was feeling, the creature that all the others in the area feared to the extent that they tried to hide themselves and stopped making their usual chatter.

As he stood there, waiting, his hand slid down to his belt, to where his lightsaber was. He reached out with the Force and searched the surrounding area for the creature. He finally pinpointed it as being to his right and just out of his sight. He turned in the direction of the creature and waited, watching the light in the forest

dim. Then, suddenly, he could make out two gleaming circles of golden-brown a little above one of the branches of the tree he had been sitting against earlier. Smiling to himself, he stared at the eyes of the creature, daring it to come out of hiding.

There was no sound in the forest as Luke and the creature stared at each other for so long that Luke lost track of time. Then, suddenly, a loud snarl echoed through the forest moments before the creature leaped forward, straight at Luke.

Sensing the attack before it came, he jumped aside, as he pulled out and activated his emerald-green lightsaber. The creature sailed past him and landed in the middle of the clearing. Studying the animal, Luke saw the powerful muscles in both its front and hind legs as it stood frozen in place, its black and orange striped tail swinging from side to side. The creature's piercing golden-brown eyes were drilling into him, studying him, judging him.

Looking at the creature, a tiger he believed it was called, he couldn't help but admire its commanding presence, its muscular body, its graceful movements, and its beautiful coat. After several minutes the tiger looked away and then, as quickly as it had appeared, it jumped away into one of the nearby trees. Waiting until the tiger was far away Luke finally turned off his lightsaber and headed back to the base, thankful for the long twilight.

As he walked back to the base he thought about how the tiger reminded him of his father in several ways. There was the same commanding presence, the powerful, muscular body, the graceful movements, and the cold stark beauty they both possessed in their own way. He stopped as he came across a patch of dark purple wild dewberries. Tasting one of them he smiled. It was sweet, just the way he liked them. Picking a handful of the biggest, most plump, berries he continued on his way back as the last light of the sun disappeared and was replaced by the dim glow of the millions of stars that littered the dark sky.

He finished the last berry just as he reached the end of the forest and the beginning of the landing pad. As he walked onto the landing pad a pilot working on his Y-wing not far away looked up in surprise. He couldn't blame the pilot. Everyone had been advised not to go out into the forest as there were many large predators, and yet, despite the warnings, he had gone out. And not only that but, to anyone who didn't recognize a lightsaber, it seemed like he had gone out unarmed.

"Good evening," Luke said as he nodded his head at the pilot.

"Good evening, sir," the pilot replied seeing his rank.

Then the pilot quickly turned around and went back to work. Luke stopped and hesitated for a moment but then, not wanting Han and Leia to find out that he had

gone into the forest alone, he reached out with the Force and promptly erased the memory from the pilots mind. He then turned around and headed inside and back to his small room.

Several days later,

Luke hurried through the halls of the base on his way to the conference room as he mentally cursed Joranus, a member of his squadron. He had been on patrol above the base with Joranus, Tyson, and Liza when Joranus had gotten into trouble. It hadn't been anything too serious, but it had been time consuming and now, as a result, he was going to be late to an important meeting. He wasn't sure what the meeting was about, but Leia had stressed that it was very important. And he had gotten curious. After all, he was only a commander in the Alliance. In the Empire he was more, and so he was surprised that he'd been ordered to attend a political meeting. And now he was late!

Approaching the door to the conference room he slowed down and quickly scanned the room with the Force. Two steps away from the door he froze in his tracks as he realized that three of the people in the room were Hammerheads. It wasn't really guilt that stopped him, because despite his hardest efforts the guilt for what he had done had vanished completely, but his surprise stopped him.

He knew beforehand that there would be several aliens at the meeting as two of the other high ranking commanders on the base at the moment were aliens as well as Admiral Ackbar, but he knew none of them was a Hammerhead. Quickly recovering from the surprise, he stepped forward and entered the room as the door slid open. Glancing around he saw the three Hammerheads sitting in between General Madine and Commander Gropo, a Rodian.

"Commander Skywalker," General Madine said looking at him. "Finally."

"I'm sorry I'm late," Luke replied, eyes flashing in annoyance to the general. "We had some problems while on patrol."

"Anything serious?" Mon Mothma instantly asked.

"No, ma'am," Luke replied. "Just time-consuming."

"Very well," Mon Mothma stated, pleased. "Take a seat, Commander. As I said before you entered, Ambassadors Linska, Georga, and Urau here are--"

"Hammerheads, I know," Luke replied as he took the free seat in between Leia and Wedge.

He was so annoyed that Mon Mothma was just repeating info for him, info which didn't really matter and which he already knew, and making him feel guilty for something that hadn't been his fault that at first he didn't notice the nervous and uncomfortable silence that had fallen over the room. When he did notice it, he also realized that everyone was looking at him and that there was both anger and hate radiating from the three Hammerhead ambassadors, anger and hate clearly aimed at him.

What. . .? And then suddenly it hit him. He had called the ambassadors Hammerheads instead of Ithorians and, judging from the reaction of the Ithorian Rebel he had ordered to be killed on Coruscant, that was some kind of Imperial insult or nickname for the species. Although he had to admit to himself that they did look like Hammerheads with their flat, hammer-shaped heads.

"What?" he asked looking around at the other people in the room, knowing that he'd better make this look like he had no idea of what he had just said or else he'd be in deep trouble. "What did I do?"

"You mean you don't know?" Leia asked, a relieved expression appearing on her face.

"Know what?" Luke repeated, using the Force to mold his voice.

"Hammerhead is a racial nickname used by the Empire when referring to Ithorians," General Rieekan replied calmly, believing that Luke had no idea of what he had just said.

In response to the explanation, Luke let his face quickly shift through looks of confusion, horror, and finally regret as he turned to face the ambassadors.

"Where did you hear that term, Commander?" Admiral Ackbar demanded before Luke could speak.

Looking at the boy across the table from him, Ackbar wondered what he was like. Ever since Luke's return from the dead he had heard many stories of what the boy had done for the Alliance and what he was like. And, although he hadn't known the Commander before, he couldn't help but notice how different his behavior was from what people had told him.

"Jason Tyren used the term when talking about Ithorians," Luke lied smoothly. It was practically second nature to him by now. "And I picked it up, not knowing it was offensive."

Silently shaking her head Leia sighed mentally. Jason again. How often had she heard that name in the past few weeks? The pirate certainly seemed to have greatly influenced Luke. He seemed to be the one from whom Luke had picked up a lot, both good and bad. But there was something about this Jason. She wasn't quite sure what, but something about him bothered her. He seemed to be unreal somehow. But that was ridiculous. Luke wouldn't lie to them, would he? This was getting crazy. Sure, Luke acted differently since he had gotten back, but that didn't give her any right to mistrust him, did it? Shoving the disloyal thoughts aside, she turned her attention back to the things at hand.

"I'm terribly sorry for any offense I may have caused you," Luke was saying. "I had absolutely no idea that the term I used was offensive."

The lead ambassador just nodded her head and then turned her attention back to Mon Mothma.

"As I was saying," Mon Mothma began. "The ambassadors are from Ithor and are here to see whether they want to openly join the Alliance or not."

Luke cringed slightly as he heard this. They were here to consider joining the Alliance and he had just called them an Imperial insult, not a good way for them to start seeing what the Alliance was like. Obviously General Madine thought so too as he constantly shot disapproving looks full of hatred in his direction. He purposefully avoided the general's gaze and sat quietly in his chair, listening to the conversation and hoping that the three Ithorians ambassadors would forget him and his comment.

But as time dragged by it became clear to him that they weren't just going to forget what had happened as one of them shot a look at him every ten minutes or so. From the looks on their faces and eyes it seemed like they weren't all that offended, but probing them with the Force showed a great anger and dislike for him. All he could do was sit there as Mon Mothma, General Madine, General Rieekan, Admiral Ackbar, Leia, and the others explained the Alliance, how it worked, and why they should join and hope that what he had said wouldn't make them not join the Alliance.

He had also hoped that he would be able to remain quiet for the rest of the conference, but as he should have known, that didn't happen.

"We have heard the Imperial side of the story of how and why the Imperial Death Star was destroyed," Ambassador Linska said. "Now we'd like to know your side of the story."

Feeling Leia stiffen at the reminder of how her homeworld had been destroyed, Luke silently shifted so that he could squeeze her hand. Leia looked at him and flashed a quick smile.

"Well," Mon Mothma began as she looked at Leia. "We destroyed the Death Star for two main reasons, the first being that it was going to destroy our base on Yavin IV, and the second was so that the Empire couldn't use it for any more sadistic power demonstrations like they did with Alderaan."

"How do you know Alderaan was just a power demonstration?" Ambassador Linska questioned.

"Princess Organa was there when the order for Alderaan's destruction was given," General Rieekan stated quietly.

"I'm sorry, Princess," Ambassador Linska apologized.

There was a short silence during which Luke shifted uncomfortably.

"How was the Death Star destroyed?" Ambassador Urau finally asked.

"Well we had the blue prints of the Death Star and, after a quick study of them, we found a weakness in the Death Star's design," General Madine explained. "There was a two meter thermal exhaust port in the trench leading to the reactor room. After we discovered this we sent several squads of snub fighters towards the approaching Death Star--"

"Snub fighters?" Ambassador Georga interrupted.

"Yes," Mon Mothma replied. "We knew it was dangerous and that the odds of failure were high, but it was all we could do."

"And," General Rieekan said. "We were lucky. Commander Skywalker was able to fire two proton torpedoes into the exhaust port. He and Commander Antilles, sitting to his right, are the only two survivors of the Death Star run."

Luke felt the ambassadors' gazes on him as they studied him once again.

"And how did you manage to hit a two meter target with proton torpedoes, Commander?" Ambassador Urau asked.

"I used the Force," Luke replied simply, glad that for once he didn't have to lie.

Briefly he wondered whether he would have to explain the Force to the ambassadors, but when he felt no confusion from them he knew that they must have heard of the Force before.

"If we could have some time to discuss things among ourselves?" Ambassador Linska finally asked. "We need to weigh the odds and see if joining the Alliance is worth the risk of probably losing our bafforr forests."

"Definitely," Mon Mothma replied as she stood up. "If you will follow me, I'll show you to a room where you can take all the time you need."

"We'll only need half an hour," Ambassador Linska replied as she stood. "If we haven't decided soon, then we won't be able to come to an agreement any time."

Nodding her head silently, Mon Mothma led the way out of the conference room to another room down the hall. As soon as the door closed behind them Han turned to face Leia.

"Bafforr forests?" he asked, looking confused.

"Yes, what are they?" Luke asked as he too moved closer to Leia.

"Well they're a kind of semi-intelligent forests that exist only on Ithor," Leia explained.

"Semi-intelligent trees?" Han murmured under his breath. "What next? Walking and talking rocks?"

"Han!" Leia hissed as Luke hid a smile. "Don't you dare say a word like that before them! They consider their bafforr forests sacred and it's a sacrilege to touch the trees."

"So, what do these trees look like?" Luke quickly asked before Han could get off another remark.

"They have glassy, smooth trunks," Leia stated turning to face Luke. "People often describe the forests as being aquamarine and crystalline and the forest is said to have a glow."

At this Han made another remark and Leia turned back to face him, leaving Luke to his thoughts, leaving him to worry. How much damage had he caused with his remark? He knew that the Alliance needed all the support they could get. How could he even have called the Ithorians Hammerheads? Why hadn't it clicked inside his head that that was an offensive Imperial nickname? Because he had seen why they had gotten that name and he had agreed with it, had thought that it fit the species.

"Luke," Wedge said as he leaned towards his friend. "How did Leia react to the mention of Alderaan's destruction?"

"Pretty well," Luke replied. "I mean, she was upset, but she knows that it's over and done with and that she can't change the past now."

"Okay," Wedge replied just as the door opened and the three Ithorians ambassadors reentered the room.

With a surprised start Luke looked at the chronometer hanging on the wall and realized that he must have been lost in his thoughts for longer than he had thought as half an hour had past.

"Ambassadors," Mon Mothma stated as the Ithorians took their seats, making Luke wonder just when she had reentered the room. "Have you made a decision?"

"Yes," Ambassador Linska replied, looking at each person in the room.

Luke felt the hostility in the Ithorian's stare as she briefly looked at him.

"We have decided that, despite the fact that we agree with your cause, we shall not join the Alliance," Ambassador Urau stated.

Luke felt his heart sink. He could clearly feel the disappointment from everyone in the room save the three Ithorians. He could even feel that General Madine blamed him for the decision.

"Could we please know the reason for your decision?" Mon Mothma asked, completely disguising her disappointment.

"Certainly," Ambassador Georga responded. "First off, we are certain that the Empire will destroy our bafforr forests if we openly join the Alliance, and we simply don't see the Alliance worth that high of a sacrifice."

"I don't mean to be rude or anything," Han said. "But why did you even come here then? I mean, you must have known beforehand that joining the Alliance would mean the destruction of your forests."

"True," Ambassador Linska replied. "But we had thought that the Alliance might be worth that sacrifice. However, after seeing how the Alliance works, how things are done, and a few other reasons, we have decided that it isn't worth our sacrifice."

Luke flinched at the statement, knowing all too well that '*a few other reasons*' meant his comment. And he couldn't blame them. Although he had apologized and although everyone had been surprised when he had made the remark, the

Ithorians had no way of knowing that that hadn't all been an act. He had actually helped the Empire! Unintentionally, true, but the fact remained.

The rest of the meeting was a haze. If asked he wouldn't be able to say whether Mon Mothma and the others had tried to persuade the Ithorians to change their mind, or if they had talked about something else altogether. All he could think of was the fact that he had helped the Empire, that he was miserable, and that he wanted to be with his father, to love him, to be loved by him, and to feel like he belonged.

When Mon Mothma, Admiral Ackbar, General Rieekan, Han, Lando, and Leia finally lead the three ambassadors out of the room he let out a small relieved sigh. His relief immediately vanished as he saw that General Madine had remained seated.

"Commander Skywalker," he said as the other commanders got to their feet. "Please stay here."

Knowing what was coming, the others quickly gathered their stuff and left the room. Wedge sent Luke a sympathetic glance before he too left. Looking over at the general, Luke struggled to control the rage boiling up inside of him, knowing that it wouldn't be long before the whole base knew about what had happened and of how he had been reprimanded by General Madine.

"Yes?" he asked, purposefully forgetting the proper title and keeping his voice toneless.

"Commander, you may be fooling the others, but you are not fooling me," General Madine stated coldly, all formality having disappeared.

"Excuse me?" Luke asked, struggling to keep down the wave of panic rising within him.

Had he given himself away? Had he said or done something that showed he had spent his amnesia time with the Empire instead of with a space pirate? Well, his Hammerhead remark had partially given him away, but he had recovered from that.

"I don't buy your story of having amnesia and about staying with some space pirate," General Madine stated.

"I have given you no reason to doubt me," Luke replied.

"No?" General Madine responded. "First, you disappeared for several months after the disastrous Battle of Hoth, then you claim to have faced Darth Vader and

yet you survived the confrontation with only the loss of your right hand, not to mention the fact that you have this bizarre religion."

Unable to control his anger at the accusations, Luke felt his face harden and his eyes turn into twin points of ice-blue steel instead of the unemotional orbs he had started the meeting with. And, although the general didn't show it and would never admit it, Luke could feel a fear of him appear in the general's Force aura at the transformation.

"As I have said before, I was getting my Jedi training during my absence after the Battle of Hoth--" Luke began, his voice cold and hard, just like it had been on Coruscant during the interrogation of the Rebels.

"Says you," General Madine interrupted.

"--I did face Lord Vader," Luke continued, his eyes flashing in irritation. "And the Force isn't a religion."

"How did you survive Vader?" General Madine challenged.

"I have already given the Alliance a report," Luke nearly snapped. "I suggest you reread it if your memory is failing you and you can't remember it."

"Commander Skywalker, remember that you are speaking to a superior officer," General Madine stated leaning forward in his chair.

"Am I?" Luke questioned, rising to his feet in a show of defiance.

General Madine was about to reply when the door opened and Mon Mothma entered the room.

"What's going on in here?" she demanded, feeling the tension in the air.

There was an awkward silence during which Luke looked back to General Madine, knowing that since he was technically the higher ranking officer he'd have to explain things.

"I was just asking Commander Skywalker if he cared to change his report about what he did during his absence," General Madine finally stated.

"Why would he?" Mon Mothma asked, looking to Luke.

"My response exactly," Luke replied.

When General Madine didn't respond Mon Mothma nodded to Luke, dismissing him. Quickly he left and headed back to his own room, his thoughts in turmoil.

Why did things have to turn out like this? Why hadn't he just been able to return and pick up where he had left off? Because he had changed, that was why. Why had his father done this to him? Why hadn't he just given him his memory back? He was sure it could be done with the Force, so why hadn't he? Because he had wanted to spend time with him, to love him, and to get to know him. What was he thinking? Did Vader want to get to know him or had it been to use him? But he had clearly felt his father's love for him, hadn't he?

Frustrated, he stormed into his room and ordered the door to lock behind him, making sure he wasn't going to be disturbed. Leaning against the wall, he closed his eyes, resisting the urge to take his anger out on the furniture in the room. Suddenly he began to tremble as he was unable to keep his frustration, unhappiness, and longing down anymore. Forcing tears back he sat down on the bunk, leaned against the wall, and pulled his knees to his chest, trying and failing to bury the feelings he had kept hidden ever since he had left his father. Finally he gave in, letting the feelings wash over him, knowing that it would lead to trouble, but unwilling to hide and run from his feelings any longer.

Finally, unable to stand it any more, he mentally called out for help before he could stop himself.

'*Father,*' he cried, wincing at the fact that he had actually called out, and at how broken his voice had sounded.

He was just about to close his mind, to put up his mental barriers so that his father couldn't talk with him, when he felt a sudden warmth filling him. He froze at the feeling, wondering where it had come from, before he realized that his father was sending it.

'*Son,*' Vader's voice spoke softly into his mind. '*Why do you choose to be unhappy?*'

Twitching, Luke ignored the question as he pressed into the warmth, which he had now identified as his father's love for him, knowing that it would probably lead to bad consequences. But what was the definition of bad anyway? At the moment he didn't care. All he cared about was knowing that he was being loved. As if in response, his father seemed to make a warm soft blanket out of his love and wrapped it around him. Luke sent his gratitude as he shifted to a more comfortable position on the hard bunk.

'*Sleep,*' his father commanded.

Yawning, Luke wondered if he should. It would mean less time with his father.

'*I'll still be here when you awaken,*' Vader softly reassured him. '*But now you must sleep.*'

Nodding his head, Luke relaxed and let himself drift off into a deep slumber.

Luke slowly awoke to the sound of someone knocking on the door to his room.

"Luke?" came Han's voice. "Luke, are you in there?"

"Just a moment," Luke replied as he got off the bunk, stretched his limbs, and realized that he had forgotten to change his clothes last night. '*Father?*' he asked mentally as he reached out with the Force and opened the door.

"Hey, Luke. . ." Han began but stopped short as he saw Luke standing next to his bunk. "How'd you open the door?"

'*Son,*' Vader responded sending his warmth through Luke once again.

"The Force," Luke replied simply, smiling as his father's love washed over him.

"I should have guessed," Han stated. "But your Force doesn't seem to be as all-powerful as you sometimes make it out to be."

"Huh?" Luke asked, feeling the anger rise in him at the comment.

"Well, the Force doesn't seem to have an alarm chronometer," Han explained, amused. "You missed breakfast."

"What?" Luke asked, looking over to the chronometer next to his bunk.

Seeing the time he realized that he had indeed missed breakfast.

"Perhaps the Force does have an alarm chronometer," he snapped at Han.

"Perhaps I just felt like sleeping in."

"Hey," Han replied, holding up his hands as a hurt and confused expression flashed across his face. "I was just joking."

"Joking?" Luke demanded, feeling his father's approval. "The Force isn't a joke!"

"Hey, kid, calm down," Han said, astonished at the young man's sudden mood change. "Is there something wrong? Do you want to talk about it?"

"I'm not a kid, so stop calling me that!" Luke ordered, feeling his father's surprise and disapproval of the nickname. "And if there's anything wrong with me, then it's my business and not yours!"

"Of course it's my business," Han replied, feeling his frustration well up in him. "You're my friend. I'm worried about you."

What was wrong with Luke? He thought that they had worked things out days ago.

"Well, you shouldn't be," Luke replied angrily, using his anger to cover the confusion he was starting to feel inside of him. "Besides, what makes you think that I'd talk to you? What makes you think that you'd understand?"

"Luke--" Han began.

"No, you listen to me!" Luke interrupted stepping closer to Han, his eyes ablaze. "There are things far beyond the mind and power of a space pirate, things you'll never understand!"

Stung by the words, Han stood speechless for a moment, anger, confusion, astonishment, and pain all fighting inside of him to be the dominate emotion. Seconds later the age-old emotion of anger won the conflict.

"You've sure come a long way from the idealistic boy I met on Tatooine," Han stated angrily. "You've come a long way from the wide-eyed farmboy. . . a long way down!"

As he finished he began to feel a twitch of doubt within himself, doubt and guilt. That had been a little harsh, but then hadn't what Luke had said been harsh as well? But did that give him the right to say what he had just said? Of course it didn't! How could he have said that to Luke? Sure, the kid had purposefully said things to hurt him, but then there was clearly something wrong with his young friend, despite the assurances he had given otherwise. Something that had happened during his amnesia that he hadn't told them about, something so terrible that he chose to avoid the subject, no matter the cost.

Looking at the young man, barely more than a boy really, he noticed the strange raging fire in his eyes that he had never seen there before and it frightened him. He opened his mouth to apologize when it suddenly felt like a durasteel wall slammed into him. The next thing Han knew he was literally flying out of Luke's room and right into a tech who had the bad luck of being in the hall. He lay in a daze on the floor, unsure what had just happened.

"Get off me!" a voice exclaimed.

Suddenly, he realized that he was laying on top of somebody. As he rolled off of the tech he also realized what had happened. Luke had used the Force on him!

"I'm sorry," he quickly muttered to the tech as he got to his feet.

The tech just nodded his head as he hastily continued on his way down the hall. Turning around, Han looked towards the door leading to Luke's room only to find it closed. Feeling the anger well up uncontrollably inside of him, he marched to the door and pounded his fist against it.

"Luke!" he called out. "Open up, open up right now!"

Silence. Luke obviously had no intention of speaking to him any further. He briefly considered ordering Luke to open the door, but he knew that if Luke did open the door on command that he'd act the way he did around General Rieekan, General Madine, and Mon Mothma and he didn't want that to happen. And that was if Luke opened the door at all and, considering the fact that he had just used the Force on him, that didn't seem likely.

Just thinking of what Luke had done made the rage swell in him until he stormed away from Luke's door, not caring if Luke needed help or not.

Feeling Han walk away Luke finally relaxed, still angry at Han's comments and his refusal to leave him. Why hadn't he just left him alone? Why couldn't Han just let him go about his own business?

'Luke?' Vader inquired.

Hearing his father's voice made the anger swell in him again. This was all his fault! If he had just showed him how to regain his memory when he had first awoken, he wouldn't be in this mess right now! Or if he had never lured him to Cloud City, then he would never have known that his father was alive at all. He would have continued his Jedi training without any doubts, and then his relationship with his friends wouldn't be like this!

'Is that what you truly want?' Vader asked, reading his son's thoughts.

'Leave me alone!' Luke cried out, feeling his fragile hold on certainty slip. 'Just leave me alone!'

'Very well,' Vader replied much to Luke's surprise. 'I shall leave you for now, but remember, I will always be here for you, my son, all you need do is call.'

With this Vader closed the link between them, causing Luke to shiver as the warmth vanished. Luke was instantly thrown back into confusion and doubt as the warmth vanished. He longed for more of his father's warm presence, surprised at how his father had left him alone when he had asked, something no one else had done in the longest time. Everyone else had to help him, they pretended to know him, to think that they could heal any wounds he had like he was a small child.

But not his father. No, his father let him decide for himself what he wanted. He didn't intrude where he wasn't wanted, and he didn't pester him with questions. Just like last night. He had simply comforted him, sensing that he didn't want to talk and leaving it at that. His father understood his needs, his desires. . . What was he saying? His father, Lord Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith, second-in-command of the Galactic Empire was evil and Dark! Gritting his teeth and clenching his fists in frustration he stormed from his room like a raging black storm and headed for the landing pad, knowing that he had a shift soon.

"Han, what's wrong?" Leia asked as Han stormed into the room, his features contorted in anger. "What happened?"

Silently she was thankful that Mon Mothma had just left the room. Having been rejected by the Ithorians yesterday had left the Rebel leader in a sour mood, a mood in which she would probably have snapped at Han. And, seeing the mood Han was in, that would probably have caused a tremendous non-diplomatic argument.

"Luke's what happened, that's what!" Han growled. "That little brat used the Force on me!"

"What?!" Leia exclaimed, not knowing what to be more shocked at, Han calling Luke a brat, or Luke using the Force on Han.

"You heard me," Han snapped, turning to face Leia. "That. . . that ignorant whelp used the Force on me! He sent me flying out of his room, and I'm not using figurative language here!"

"Luke sent you flying out of his room?" Leia asked ignoring how Han was addressing her.

"Yes," Han replied a little more softly. He had no reason to be yelling at Leia. She had done nothing wrong.

"What happened?" Leia asked, concerned. If Luke had used the Force on Han then it was serious. "Why were you in his room?"

"Well you know how Luke and I generally have breakfast together, right?" Han asked.

"Yes."

"This morning he didn't show up. At first I wasn't worried. I mean, everyone sleeps in once in while," Han explained. "But then they stopped serving breakfast and I began to get worried, so I decided to go by his room and make sure everything was all right. When I reached his door, I knocked a couple of times before I got a reply, seconds before the door was opened, by the Force."

"Luke used the Force to open the door?" Leia asked as Han nodded in reply. "He generally doesn't use the Force for such trifle things."

"Exactly," Han agreed. "Anyway, I made a joke about the Force and the fact that he had slept in and suddenly he just became really defensive. He snapped at me, telling me the Force was no joke."

"Just like that?" Leia asked confused. "Are you sure nothing else happened?"

"I'm sure. That's why I was so surprised," Han stated. "I asked him if something was wrong and if he wanted to talk about it. He replied by saying it was his business and not mine. When I said I was concerned about him, he said there were things *'far beyond the understanding of a space pirate.'*"

"HE WHAT?!" Leia exclaimed loudly. "No! I don't believe that. You must be mistaken. Luke would never say anything like that."

"You have no idea how hard I wish you were right, but that's what he said," Han replied sadly.

"What did you do next?" Leia asked, knowing Han's temper and pride.

"I replied with an equally insulting remark," Han stated avoiding her gaze.

"Han!" Leia sighed bringing her hands to her forehead. "What happened next?"

Looking at Leia, Han could feel the dread radiating from her.

"I was about to apologize when Luke slammed the Force into me and sent me flying into the hall right into a passing tech," Han replied, remembering his astonishment.

"I have to go talk with him," Leia stated as she started heading for the door.

"Leia, don't!" Han stated grabbing hold of her arm, turning her around to face him. "Leia, he really frightened me with what he did. I don't think that it's wise for you to confront him."

"What do you want me to do?" Leia demanded. "Stand by and do nothing when something is clearly wrong with Luke?"

"No, I. . ." Han began and stopped, knowing that no matter what Luke done to him earlier, he couldn't just abandon the kid.

Only Luke wasn't a kid anymore. The boy he had known had disappeared some time during the time he had last seen him on Hoth and when he had returned to the base. He seemed to have suddenly grown up, too fast for his own good, and into something that he was not. Whatever had happened it probably wasn't pretty, which was probably why Luke was unwilling to talk about it. Which was exactly why they had to get him to talk, so they could help him get over it.

"At least wait a bit before you go talk with him," he finally stated. "Give him some time to cool down, then we can go speak with him."

"Okay," Leia replied reluctantly. "However, considering what happened this morning, I think it might be best if I go talk with him alone."

"Why--" Han began.

"You have a short temper," Leia quickly interrupted. "Besides, it will seem a lot less threatening if only one of us confronts him."

"Okay," Han finally replied. "Just be careful."

"Hey, this is Luke we're talking about," Leia said.

"It may be Luke Skywalker, but it's not the Luke Skywalker we know, Leia. It's another Luke Skywalker," Han stated. "Just promise me that you won't push him as far as I did."

"I promise," Leia replied. "But I seriously think that you're exaggerating."

"I hope so, Princess," Han stated. "I certainly hope so."

Walking towards the cafeteria for a late lunch, Luke mentally cursed himself. He had snapped at the other pilots under his command and he had neglected to praise them when they had done something good, a thing he really should have done to Zalum. Shaking his head he sighed. He was acting worse than when he had first returned! Perhaps he should return to his father. Last night had after all been the first time he had truly felt happy since he had recovered from his amnesia. Perhaps. . .

"Luke?"

He had been so absorbed in his thoughts that he hadn't noticed Leia until she was standing next to him.

"Yes?" he asked absently as he stopped walking.

"I need to talk to you," Leia replied as she took hold of his upper arm, surprised at the muscle play she felt there.

"About what?" Luke asked suspiciously, ignoring the fact that Leia was standing really close to him.

Had Han said something about their earlier meeting? If so, what was going to happen now? Should he lie to Leia and say he had things to do? But what if she checked and found that he had lied? Should he use the Force on her? Damn, this was all so frustrating!

Dark/Light,

Right/Wrong,

Good/Bad,

Happy/Unhappy. . .

"I'll tell you, but not out here," Leia stated, gesturing to the other people in the hall.

"Okay," Luke agreed reluctantly, despite the bad feeling he had.

Letting Leia guide him he quickly found himself in one of the lounges on the base. Only this one was completely empty, a rare occurrence as there were always pilots and techs off-duty who liked nothing more than to come to one of the lounges to talk.

"Well?" Luke demanded, a little harsher than he had meant.

"I'm worried about you. No," Leia began holding up her hand. "Don't try to deny that something's bothering you because I know there is. I talked to Han earlier and he told me about what happened this morning. I'll admit he said some things he shouldn't have, but so did you. Luke, we're just worried about you. We can clearly see that there's something bothering you. We just want to help."

Hearing the genuine concern in Leia's voice left Luke speechless for a moment. Somehow it seemed a lot easier to snap at Han than at Leia, somehow. . . but he didn't know why.

"I'm touched by your concern," he replied honestly. "But I'm fine, really."

"Luke," Leia continued. "Please, tell me what's wrong."

"Nothing's wrong," Luke lied as he sat down on one of the couches and looked up at her. "Really."

Looking into the strangely empty eyes of her friend Leia realized that she'd have to change tactics. She'd put a lot of thought into Luke's behavior and the only thing that made any sense to her, although she didn't want to believe it, was that Luke, as General Madine had suggested, had lied to them about what had really happened to him. She knew for sure that he'd been attacked by a horangi and had had amnesia. The scars and the medical scan had proven that. But perhaps this Jason Tyren didn't exist.

"It wasn't some space pirate who took care of you while you were suffering from amnesia, was it?" Leia asked, studying her friend closely.

"Excuse me?" Luke asked, looking away from Leia and fighting down a wave of panic. "What are you talking about?"

Had he said something to give himself away? Leia wouldn't listen to General Madine, would she?

"I'm talking about the way you've been acting since you've come back from the dead," Leia continued seeing Luke's face twitch before he had conveniently turned away from her. "Who really took care of you after you were attacked by the horangi?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Luke lied as he got up from the couch and began to pace the room restlessly.

"Yes, you do," Leia pressed, noticing his restlessness. She had definitely hit a sore spot. "The way you've distanced yourself from everyone, the way you act around Chewie, the Hammerhead remark at the conference the other day, the way you used the Force on Han this morning, I could go on forever! Luke, you've

changed a lot since you've returned. You're no longer the innocent farmboy we used to know. Luke, please, tell me what's happened. Who took care of you?"

"Of course I've changed!" Luke snapped, irritated. Couldn't Leia see that he didn't want to talk about this? "I've gotten involved in a war! I've killed!"

"Luke," Leia sighed trying to ignore his temper but unable not to be hurt by it. "I know you. This sudden abnormal behavior isn't just stress from being involved in a war, it's from something that happened to you since the day you were attacked by the horangi."

"You do not know me!" Luke declared angrily, losing any control he had over his temper.

How could she possibly think she knew him? How could anyone possibly know him save his father? He didn't even know himself anymore! Leia, Han, Wedge, Chewie, and all the others were just trying to help him, but they couldn't give him what he wanted. He wanted to feel like he belonged, like he was important. He wanted to feel his father's hand on his shoulder, to hear him call him 'son', all things that his friends couldn't provide. The only place he had found all of that was at his father's side, and he had forsaken it all for. . . for what? For someone else's definition of what was right? Yet did he think that what his father did was right? Hadn't he enjoyed what he had done while under the influence of the horangi's poison? Was he really that different from his father?

Frustrated, he shook his head and suddenly realized that Leia was standing next to him, a worried expression on her face.

"Luke, are you all right?" Leia questioned worried, hurt, and scared all at once.

She was hurt at the way he had yelled at her, worried about his peculiar behavior and about what had triggered it. What could have changed Luke so completely that everything he had once cared for now seemed expendable? She was also scared by the sudden, terrible, dark need that she had seen in his eyes. However, the look had faded almost the instant she had noticed it, making her wonder, and hope, that it had only been a figment of her imagination.

Suddenly, Luke seemed to snap out of the trance he was in and his ice-blue eyes met her hazel brown. In that moment Leia could see a small and helpless child standing before her instead of the strong and strong-willed Jedi that had been with her only several months ago.

"Luke?" she asked again, her voice full of concern.

In that instant Luke snapped. He quickly he tore his eyes away from Leia as he sank back into the couch.

"You're right," he whispered softly, unable to lie anymore. "It wasn't a space pirate who found me. It was an Imperial."

"An Imperial?" Leia asked cautiously. "Didn't he recognize you?"

Luke looked up at her and let out a short, un-amused, laugh.

"Of course he recognized me," Luke stated sarcastically. "It was Vader!"

"VADER?!" Leia exclaimed, horrified as the implications of what Luke had said hit home. "You mean Vader found you when you had no idea of who you were?!"

Luke just looked at her and nodded before turning his head away from her, but not before Leia saw the pain on his face.

Vader! Vader had found Luke when he had had no idea of who he was, or what he had stood for! What had he done to Luke? Actually she didn't want to know the answer to that question as she knew Vader's personality far too well. He had probably taken full advantage of the situation and had done all he could to ruin Luke. No wonder he was acting so strange! She was surprised that he had even managed to come back after what he had undoubtedly suffered at Vader's hands. Suddenly everything made sense, the Hammerhead remark, his strange behavior around Chewie, his unease every time Vader was discussed. . .

Shivering, Leia reached out and embraced her friend.

"It's okay, Luke," she whispered softly as she felt Luke's muscles stiffen beneath her arms. "It's okay. You're safe now. He won't hurt you anymore."

She thought she had just reached him when he suddenly pulled back out of her embrace and got to his feet. Looking at the princess, Luke felt a wave of disgust wash over him. She thought that she had figured out what had happened and that it could all be healed, but in reality she didn't know the half of it.

"Luke?" Leia asked moving towards him again. "It's okay."

"No," Luke denied shaking his head. "He. . . I. . ."

"He what?" Leia asked, knowing that once she knew exactly what Luke had experienced she could help him.

"Nothing," Luke replied, turning away from her.

She couldn't understand how he felt. Not only did she hate Vader, but she had grown up with her own parents and friends. She didn't know what it felt like to

know that you didn't belong where you were, to know that you didn't fit in. Growing up she had had her parents and her friends to help and guide her. Now she had Han and Mon Mothma. She didn't need him. No one needed him. No one truly loved him. No one save his father.

"Luke, please, talk to me," Leia said as she once again embraced him.

"You don't want to know," Luke whispered.

"Yes, I do," Leia replied. "Remember, I've been at his mercy myself and, believe me, the only way to get past the memories is to get them out."

He hadn't been at his father's mercy, had he? At least not in the way Leia meant. Briefly he thought of what his father had done to her on board the Death Star and what he had done to Han on Bespin and was surprised to find that he felt nothing, no anger at his father, no sympathy for his friends. It was like the way his guilt for what he had done had faded away into nothingness.

Suddenly her embrace felt wrong. He wanted his father to be holding him, not Leia. Without thinking he quickly, harshly, pulled himself out of her arms.

"Luke?" Leia asked, startled by the wild expression on his face. "Luke, are you all right?"

Luke just shook his head as he slowly backed away from her, his mouth opening and closing.

"Luke? What's wrong?" Leia asked, puzzled as she took a few steps closer to the young man. "Are you all right?"

"Stay away from me!" Luke suddenly exclaimed. "Just. . . just leave me alone!"

With this Luke turned around and hurried out of the lounge, leaving a confused and bewildered Leia behind.

"I wonder how Leia's doing," Han remarked to Lando as they looked at some maps of potential bases in case they needed to flee again, like they had had to on Hoth and Walp.

"I'm sure she's all right," Lando replied as he trashed one of the potential planets as it was in an area that had too much traffic. "She knows how to handle situations like this much better than you do."

"Thanks a lot, pal," Han replied, shooting Lando an evil look.

"I'm serious, Han," Lando stated. "You have too much of a temper and not enough patience for this kind of thing."

"As if Leia has--" Han began and stopped as the door opened and a bewildered, worried, and confused Leia entered the room. "Well? Did he talk?"

"Yes," Leia replied. "Sort of."

"What?" Lando asked, immediately knowing that it was serious. "What did he say?"

"Basically that Jason Tyren doesn't exist."

"Huh?" Han said. "Then who found him and took care of him?"

"Vader," Leia stated, once again feeling the hairs on her arms and neck rise at the thought.

"WHAT?!" Han demanded after a short, stunned, silence.

"You heard me," Leia said. "Vader found Luke after he was attacked by the horangi."

"Great Sith of all Siths," Lando swore. "Literally! No wonder he's been acting differently."

"I know," Leia replied. "However, the worst part of it is that Luke refused to tell me anymore. He refused to let me comfort him. If he doesn't let his emotions out, he'll ruin himself!"

"How did your talk with him end?" Han asked.

"When he stormed out of the room, telling me to leave him alone," Leia replied.

"I think we better go talk with him before he does anything rash," Han suggested. "Especially now that the truth is out in the open, there's no telling what he's been through or what he might do!"

"There's just one thing that doesn't make sense in all this," Lando suddenly stated.

"Just one?" Leia asked, looking at him.

"Yes," Lando replied. "If Vader had Luke, then why doesn't he have Luke now or why isn't Luke dead?"

There was a short silence during which the three friends just looked at each other, unable to come up with a reply.

"There's only one way to find out," Han finally said as he headed towards the door. "And that's to go and ask Luke."

Entering his room, Luke quickly walked over to his bunk, lifted the hard mattress, and pulled out the pouch that contained the remaining credits he had. He wasn't exactly sure at what moment he had made up his mind, but he had left the lounge knowing what he was going to do. He was going to return home, to return to the father who had patiently waited for him, who hadn't rushed him into making a decision.

Momentarily he considered the fact that at the moment he was the only man alive in the whole galaxy who could find safety and shelter on both sides of the Galactic Civil War. Thinking of that he thought of how he would change the odds of the Alliance winning the war by going to his father, but he quickly dismissed the thought. It was time he started thinking of what he wanted and needed and of not what others wanted or needed. And now he wanted, no, needed, his father.

Checking his room one more time to make sure there was nothing left, he exited his room and quickly headed in the direction of the landing pad and his X-wing.

When they reached Luke's room, Han reached out and knocked on the door. When he got no response he tried again.

"Luke," he said. "Please open up."

When there was no response, Leia looked around, saw the corridor was empty, and then hesitated before she used a special override code that opened the door. Stepping into the small dark room Lando ordered the lights turned on.

"I've got a bad feeling about this," Han stated as he saw the mattress lying sideways on the bed, like someone had taken something out from underneath it in a hurry.

"Me too," Leia replied before the three of them turned around, exited the room, and hurried down the hallway towards the landing pad.

"I don't believe Luke would just leave without saying anything," Leia said as they made their way through a crowded section of the hallway.

"I wouldn't have thought that he'd just outright lie to us either," Han replied. "Whatever Vader did, it was bad."

"Knowing Vader that's no surprise," Lando stated.

They reached the landing pad just in time to see Luke's X-wing lift off.

"The *Falcon*, quick!" Han yelled, heading towards his pride and joy.

Boarding the ramp Han quickly ran to the cockpit and dropped himself into the pilots chair as Lando took Chewie's regular place.

"Let's hope we don't have a burn-out!" Leia commented as she too entered the cockpit.

"Don't worry," Han reassured her as he started flipping buttons. "Chewie and I completely fixed her."

"Still," Leia said skeptically. "Better warn Wedge. He's on patrol right now. Maybe he can stop Luke."

Nodding his head, Han turned on the com just as the *Falcon* lifted off.

"Wedge?" he said.

"Han, is that you?" came Wedge's voice over the com.

"Yes, you should see Luke approaching you soon," Han stated. "Don't let him enter hyperspace!"

"Excuse me?" Wedge asked confused. "Why?"

"That's an order, Commander," Han stated, knowing that he didn't have the time to explain everything to Wedge right now.

"Yes Sir," Wedge replied.

Changing com channel so that he could talk to the others with him, Wedge sighed. He wished he knew what Luke had done, but he also knew that Han must have his reason for ordering what he had.

"I've just received orders from General Solo that we are not to let Commander Skywalker enter hyperspace," he said into his com.

"Why, sir?" Tyson asked.

"I don't know anymore than you do, Rogue Nine," Wedge replied.

"Yes, sir," Tyson replied. "I have just one question, if Commander Skywalker decides that he does want to enter hyperspace, what do we do then?"

"Fire at his engines," Wedge ordered reluctantly. "But aim to cripple, not to kill."

"Yes, sir," Tyson replied, nervousness evident in his voice.

"Heads up," Wedge ordered as he spotted Luke's approaching X-wing. "Here he comes."

Seeing the patrol X-wings move to block his path Luke instantly knew that Han and Leia were trying to stop him. Stop him and then make him talk so that they could heal him! Well, he'd had enough of their talk. He wanted to go home! Hoping that Wedge and the others weren't too serious about blocking his route to hyperspace he changed his course slightly. To his dismay, he saw the X-wings ahead of him move to block his path again. They had no right to keep him here! It was his life and he could make his own decisions!

"Wedge," he said opening a com connection to his friend.

"Yes?" Wedge replied nervously.

"I'd like to get through," Luke stated as he noticed that there was a ship coming up behind him.

"I'm sorry, Luke," Wedge responded. "But I've got orders not to let you through."

Recognizing the ship behind him as the *Falcon* Luke quickly closed the com connection with Wedge as his anger flared up inside of him. They were trying to trap him like some animal! Remembering what he had been able to do in the simulator with his anger, he instantly let it flush through him as he decided on where to go. He couldn't just make a hyperspace jump straight to Lantooine.

They'd figure out where he went and follow him. Quickly glancing at a chart of nearby planets he felt strangely drawn towards the last one on the list, Naboo.

Ordering the R2-unit in the back of his X-wing to set a course for the planet, he took a deep breath. Then, determined to get past the X-wings blocking his path, he locked his S-foils into the open position so that they formed the X that gave his craft its name.

"What the heck is he doing?" Lando demanded as the S-foils on Luke's X-wing separated.

"I have no idea," Leia replied. "Maybe he thinks that he can scare the others into moving and so giving him a chance to enter hyperspace."

"Well, he'd better think again," Han stated. "They know he'd never fire on them. They're his own squad members!"

The words had hardly left Han's mouth when twin daggers of red laser fire escaped from the X-wing.

"WHAT?!" Han and Leia exclaimed simultaneously, both completely shocked as they watched the laser fire hit the shields of one of the X-wings blocking Luke's path.

"He. . . he. . . he just fired," Leia finally stammered, still stunned. "Please tell me I imagined that!"

"I wish you had" Lando replied. "Now what?"

There was only silence in reply to Lando's question.

Realizing his advantage, Luke quickly fired a few more shots, weakening the shield of the X-wing that was his target before the others finally started to move. The X-wing he'd been firing at responded by returning fire, but he easily avoided the shots and noticed that Han had to turn the *Falcon* to avoid getting hit as well. A smile spread across his face at this. Neither Han nor the X-wings could fire without the risk of hitting each other.

Letting his anger guide him he easily avoided the fire aimed at him. But, although it was missing him, just the fact that they were firing at him made his anger grow

by the second. Watching the X-wings begin to group in an all too familiar pattern, he quickly pulled his X-wing into a strange dive, firing at his target X-wing as he did so. The craft he was targeting was that of the newest and most inexperienced member of the squad. It was piloted by Zalum, someone whom he didn't know as well as the other pilots, making it easier to fire on him.

Cursing as he was hit, he realized that there was only one way he'd get out of this mess and reach hyperspace. He'd have to destroy one of the other X-wings and fly through the resulting debris. It was the only way. Sure he was a great pilot and he had the Force, but he wasn't fully trained and the odds against him were just too high. Taking a deep breath he cleared his mind of everything save for his desire to get to his father and his anger in order to be able to do what he was about to do.

Using the Force, he lined up his X-wing so that his proton torpedoes would hit his target before he switched from lasers to torpedoes and fired instantly. This way his target would barely get a split second's warning before the torpedoes hit, not enough time for him to do anything.

Leia swore under her breath as one of the X-wings disappeared in a ball of flame. Then, as they watched, Luke's X-wing leapt forward, through the debris of the X-wing, and into the freedom of space beyond. Seconds later the X-wing disappeared from sight as it entered hyperspace.

"He. . . he just. . ." Han began in stunned disbelief. "He just killed one of his own squad members!"

"I know," Leia replied watching the debris of the destroyed X-wing float about. "But why? What's come over him? What did Vader do to him? Where is he going? And why wouldn't he talk to us?"

There was a heavy silence in the cockpit as everyone thought of this, but were unable to come up with any answers.

"What direction was he heading in?" Lando finally asked. "Maybe we can still find him."

Han and Leia just looked at him, all three of them knowing that the chances of finding Luke again were almost nonexistent. He was gone. Why they didn't know, but unless he chose to return they'd probably never see him again.

Arriving out of hyperspace two hours after he'd entered it, Luke cast a quick glance at the planet of Naboo. The planet was deserted now, totally barren of any form of life, intelligent or otherwise. But it hadn't always been so, he knew. Once it had teemed with life. It had been the proud home of the Naboo and of the Gungans, two different people who had lived peacefully together in a symbiotic relationship until the last days that life had been possible on the planet. In one of the books in his father's library he'd read about how a strange disease had wiped out all life on the planet.

Pulling his thoughts away from the planet, he ordered the R2-unit to calculate everything for the hyperspace jump to Lantooine. Once there he'd ditch the X-wing and the R2-unit, get his money and clothes, and then buy a new ship to return home in.

Smiling at the thought, he realized that it would only be a two day trip in his X-wing as he had a top of the line hyperdrive unit.

Two days later,

Skillfully landing his X-wing in the docking bay on Lantooine, Luke quickly ordered the R2-unit to shut down. Knowing that an X-wing would quickly attract a lot of unwanted attention, he left it locked in the docking bay. Walking over to the lockers where he'd left his stuff he quickly paid the owner a huge amount of credits before he opened the locker he'd used and got out the bag containing his clothes and the rest of the money he had.

"Come back any time," the owner called after him as he left.

Ignoring the comment, he headed straight to the busiest cantina in Mos Eisley where he was sure to find someone willing to sell him a ship for the money he had to offer.

Three days later,

Boarding his new ship, Luke dumped his bag in the hallway as he entered the cockpit. It was a small cargo instead of a civilian craft, but he'd gotten it at a reasonable price and it was fast, which was all that he cared about at the moment. Sitting down in the pilot's chair he knew that he'd better head straight for Melca. In the past few days doubt had started to enter his mind about what he was doing. He was, after all, thinking of joining Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith. Returning to Melca would almost definitely mean joining the Dark Side of the Force and he wasn't sure he wanted that.

He'd heard Yoda talk about the Dark Side and what he had said didn't sound too good at all. Yoda had said that people who used the Dark Side had been consumed by it and that they were its slaves. But then his father used it, didn't he? And he wasn't a slave, nor was the Emperor. On the contrary, Palpatine was the most powerful man in the galaxy! Besides, his father loved him and he wanted it for his son, so it couldn't be bad. . . could it?

He'd also begun feeling guilt about killing Zalum. The boy, for that's all that he'd been, a sixteen-year-old boy, had trusted him, had looked up at him, and had admired him. Briefly his mind went back to when he'd first met Zalum. He'd only just returned to the Alliance and the boy had come up to him and he'd begun talking about how honored he was to fly in the same squadron with 'the famous Luke Skywalker' as he'd called him. He'd also said that it was because of the victory at Yavin that he'd joined the Alliance.

Shaking his head, Luke pushed those thoughts aside. Zalum was dead and that was that. Reaching forward he began to flip switches and soon the ship became airborne.

"Besides," Luke spoke aloud to himself as he flew up into Lantooine's atmosphere. "I can't go back to the Alliance now, even if I wanted to. They'd arrest me and then try me for treason and murder before they'd execute me."

But he didn't want to go back. . . did he? No, he didn't. He'd made up his mind when he'd first headed for his X-wing. He was going home which was exactly what he'd always wanted to do. True, it was different from what he'd imagined as a child on Tatooine, but the outcome would be the same. He'd be with his father, he'd be loved, he'd feel like he belonged, and he'd be able to learn from his father.

Entering the coordinates for Melca into the computer, he waited until the computer indicated it was ready before he reached forward and pulled back the hyperspace levers. Watching the stars blur into streaks of yellow-white as the ship entered hyperspace he sighed.

Three days later,

Exiting hyperspace, Luke tensed, his mental shields raised, ready to ward off his father should he try to enter his mind. He briefly felt Vader's presence as he checked to make sure it was him, but then his father retreated, seeing that his son didn't want to talk. Looking at the planet before him, Luke hesitated. During the course of the past few days his doubts had increased. But just the fact that his father respected his wish for no mental contact at the moment made some of his doubts melt away. His father had never pushed him the way Han and Leia had. He'd respected his wishes, plus he understood him, something not even Owen and Beru Lars had been able to do after twenty years.

Guiding the ship into Melca's atmosphere, he sighed. Why did life have to be full of hard choices? Why couldn't he just have been born into a normal family? Or why couldn't Ben have left him with his father in the first place? Those what if questions were starting to take up more and more of his time, even though he knew that they were totally useless. What was, was.

As he landed the ship, he saw his father was waiting for him at the edge of the landing pad. Leaning back in the pilots chair, he looked out the viewport at the black-clad figure standing there, then he looked down at the similar black clothes and cape he was wearing. He had only changed into them shortly before he'd exited hyperspace. He could still go he knew. His father had let him leave once so he was sure he'd let him go a second time. Although he could never go back to the Alliance, he could always go to some remote, out-of-the-way planet and live there. He could get married, have children, and live a calm and peaceful life there, never looking back.

Shaking his head, he briefly wondered what was wrong with him. He knew he'd never be able to spend his life on some backwater planet and never wish for more. All he had to do was look at his past to confirm that. Looking out of the viewport again he saw that his father hadn't moved. His father wanted him and yet he respected his choice.

Standing, he headed towards the ramp, only thinking of the longing he felt. As he let down the ramp he hesitated once more. As soon as he descended this ramp his choice was as good as made. Was this really what he wanted? He wasn't sure, but then that's what he had thought when he had last left this planet, this man, and here he was again. Closing his eyes for a few seconds he gave a sigh and then started to descend the ramp, heading towards his waiting father.

As soon as he left the shelter of his ship the wind hit his black cape and started playing with it. He didn't notice it as he reached the bottom of the ramp and walked towards his father. Stopping before him he looked up into the expressionless black mask.

"Father. . . I. . . I," he stuttered unsure of what to say and what he was doing.

Looking down into his son's eyes Vader smiled. Luke had returned to him and of his own free will, too. He had known that he would miss the boy when he left, but he hadn't expected it to be as bad as it had been. He had been extremely pleased when Luke had called out to him last week as it had only strengthened his belief of how unhappy his child had to be.

Seeing confusion and uncertainty in the murky depths of his son's eyes, he reached out and placed both of his hands on the boy's shoulders. Seeing the flicker of joy in Luke's eyes only broadened his smile. They stood there for a moment, the air thick with expectation. Then, suddenly, Vader pulled Luke into an embrace.



Startled, Luke tensed slightly but then relaxed as he realized what was happening. Smiling, he rested his head against his father's massive chest as he lowered his mental shields and let his father in. Feeling his father's arms tighten around him in reply, he didn't flinch as his father gently entered his mind. Instinctively knowing that he was safe, he closed his eyes as his father tried to sort through the jumble of his emotions. Feeling understanding radiate from his father he wondered what would happen next. He waited and then he felt all his remaining doubts melt away like ice in the sun as his father reached up and started to softly stroke his hair with his hand.

Finally Vader pulled back and held Luke at arms length as he opened his own mind to his son. Realizing what his father was doing, Luke reached forward and entered Vader's mind. He was instantly surprised and amazed by the amount of power his father held. He was also overly pleased with his father's feelings for him. After having sorted through the pride and love he found there, he retreated, looking up at his father.

His decision was made. All his doubts were gone and already he felt like he belonged. True, it was slightly awkward as he was feeling the Light Side of the Force more than the Dark Side but it was there, around him from having used it on several occasions. It was hovering at the edge of his soul and slightly inside of it, inside of him. But his father would soon fix that, his father and the Emperor. Together they'd show him the Dark Side, and he'd accept, if only to please his father. But even as he thought of it he realized that he truly did want to learn how to use the Dark Side. Yes, he'd used it before, but he knew that he'd only been skimming the surface of the power that was available to him.

"We must inform Palpatine of your return," Vader stated hearing his son's thought.

And what he heard truly pleased him. Luke had tremendous potential and now he and his master would teach the child how to turn that potential into real power.

Nodding in agreement Luke followed his father as Vader turned around and headed towards the castle, towards their home. Feeling everything he had only hoped, dreamt of feeling in the past, he smiled. He was now where he belonged, where he was meant to be.

Entering the castle, Luke knew that, despite his time as a Rebel, he was now an Imperial at heart.

The End

May 1999

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