

## Chapter 24 - Revelations

As he passed Adriana and Ohann, two gas giants, Luke witnessed the phenomenon which was the basis of ancient local legend. He had heard them repeatedly while growing up; of travelers mistaking Tatooine for a third, smaller sun. Its silicate surface reflected the light of its two suns so intensely it appeared nearly as bright as a third star.

The X-wing fighter raced through the upper fringes of Tatooine's atmosphere, heading toward coordinates Leia had supplied him with. It was the same data her father had entrusted her with, and she in turn had embedded in R2's memory systems as a command control for seeking out Obi Wan Kenobi. A string of data scrolled along the bottom edge of his nav' panel display: **Southwestern edge of the Dune Sea, Alpha-1733-Mu-9033, First Quadrant.**

There was enough of the young farmboy left in him to want to go flying into Anchorhead, land his fighter in the sand outside Tosche Station, and stroll in to show his old friends where fate had taken him. Fortunately, there was also just enough of the fledgling Jedi apprentice not to. He knew if he was to have any chance at the task that had been handed him; he needed to keep a most serious mind, a focused vision. There was much he needed to discover about himself and about the Force. Above all, patience with his own shortcomings and inexperience was needed as he began the journey toward understanding and enlightenment. He had to avenge his father by facing and defeating Vader. He had to become a Jedi.

Slowly, the details of the surface mountains below rose up from the surrounding sands as he neared the coordinates for a humble knight's dwelling on the Southwestern edge of the Dune Sea.

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The wind lifted Solo's hair as he stared silently away into the darkening sky and clouds. Chewbacca stood at the bottom of the 'Falcon's boarding ramp behind him as Bria Tharen's father softly wept at the news of his daughter's death. The sun had disappeared below the Corellian horizon. Its brilliant, soft pink and orange glow had lasted but fleeting moments on the now-grey clouds overhead. Night was fast approaching as Renn Tharen tried to regain his composure a bit, his thoughts racing in a million directions. His daughter was dead . . . his lovely Bria, his little girl.

He looked up suddenly as if remembering something of importance, "Would you do something for me, Han?" Solo dropped his stare from the skies and turned to the old man, "Of course."

"Wait here, I'll be right back" he said, and hurried away into his home. Han noticed the clean smell of the air and the grass beneath his black boots, now fluttering in the slight wind as memories of Corellia blew through him. This place, the small town of Bela Vistal, nestled in the Corellian Mountains, was a far cry from his darker memories of this planet. Bela Vistal was quiet and serene with incredibly beautiful views in any direction. He thought of a possible far off future; perhaps settling here someday when he grew too old to play the game any longer. He would load up the contents of his various caches from around the galaxy, sell off what he didn't need and find a small quiet place here where no one knew him.

He was roused from his thoughts as Renn returned with something in his hand. Bria's aunt, Yané, gave her this when she was a child." He held out a delicate gold chain with a small pendant dangling from it. "Bria wore this always and thought of her aunt often. When Bria formed the *Red Hand*, she left it behind safe with me, planning to once again wear it when her fight was over and reason was returned to the galaxy. Will you please take this to Yané, on Naboo? I know Bria would want her to have it."

Han took the necklace and lifted his eyes to meet Renn's, "I'll make sure I put it in her hand myself." Renn was visibly relieved, new tears falling from the corners of his eyes.

"Where will I find her on Naboo?"

Renn wiped his face with a soft cloth, "The last I heard from her she was residing in one of the royal lake houses. Yané was handmaiden to several of the Naboo Queens over the years, and when she retired from service to the royals, was allowed to continue living in the lake house."

Han nodded his head slightly and reached for the other man's hand. Renn pulled him close, throwing an arm around Han, embracing him and speaking quietly, looking off into the gathering darkness, "Thank you for having the courage to come here and deliver the difficult news to me in person. I know this is hard for you too, son." He released Han and turned away, heading back into his home.

A slight whimpering groan issued from far back in Chewie's throat as Han walked past him into the ship, "Let's get outta here."

As the Falcon rose away from Corellia, Chewbacca's hands moved over the comfortably worn controls, setting a course on the 'nav computer. He glanced over at Han, who studied the necklace in his hand, running his thumb over the pendant.

"Naboo, huh?" said Solo to himself.

The Wook howled and pulled back on the throttle, propelling their ship into the slipstream of Hyperspace.

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The flickering holoprojector went dim as the recording ended in static. Topolev and Etz glanced over at Holder, who was sitting on the edge of his own bunk now. Rogue turned to 4120, then to me, "Between that recording and the damaged lightsaber hilt we found in the carbon-freezing room, I would have to say . . . welcome to the group, Holder. You are now the newest member of the 104th Moisture Farm Patrol.

Danz nodded in agreement, as Etz sat down on Holder's bunk, "OK, I'm just going to ask, because I know everyone else is thinking it. What was it like being frozen?" 0600 shook his head, as several others shifted on their feet, but all turned to listen to Holder's answer.

“Well, I was conscious when I was frozen.” He paused. “I recommend NOT being conscious when you are frozen. Slicer opened the unit and pulled out what looked like a drawer and forced me to lie down in it at blaster point. The drawer was made up of a heavy Carbonite base plate and Carbonite side plates which contained the hibernation circuitry and monitoring panels. He then slid me into the complete blackness of the chamber. I remember feeling a quick blast of smoking, freezing gas sprayed out across my body in the small, dark space. My limbs tightened up and my skin froze immediately. As incredibly as it sounds it kept getting colder exponentially as the process continued on.

I couldn't move, I couldn't scream, I couldn't see. My lungs painfully crystallized and the blood in my veins was transformed from fluid to slush to ice in an instant as was my brain. Thankfully I blacked out at that point. I understand though, that once that happens, liquid carbonite is poured out onto the base plate beneath the freezing subject, filling up all around it and solidifying instantly.

When the fill level is reached just below the face, in my case, the filling stops and a thin layer of the metal is finally sprayed over the superfrozen flesh to seal the carbonite cocoon. Once the seal is made complete, the embedded hibernation systems kick in to keep the contained object or person frozen solid beneath the metal exterior. I remember nothing about the duration of my encasement. From that standpoint, I consider myself lucky. Awareness in that setting for any length of time would surely result in madness.

When I was released, it was just as painful, but in a reversed, different way. Coming out of the cold, the thin sprayed on metal melts and runs off the still-frozen object beneath. Once the thin carbonite covering melts away, your organs and fluids are pushed through a quick-thaw, which burns terribly, like being scorched and stuck with thousands of vibro-blades all at once. Your head is spinning and your stomach feels sick, like you need to vomit. On top of that, you are coming out of it completely blind and absolutely at the mercy of those who thaw you or are present when the thaw takes place. It's not something I'd want to go through twice.”

Etz finally blinked as Holder's description came to a close.

“But I'm feeling much better now. The seizures and hibernation sickness cramps seem to have stopped, and my memories are beginning to come out of the haze a bit.”

Rogue continued listening, then turned to Topolev and Falker, “You both have been in charge of small groups in your previous assignments. I want you to begin working with Holder on a physical rehabilitation program. His muscles will have atrophied and need reconditioning after such a long encasement.”

He turned to Ddraig and me, “Good work with the 'droid. It'll be nice having one around again.” Ddraig shot me a glance of accomplishment as Rogue and 4120 walked away into the front command center.

Holder stood up from his bunk and exchanged glances with Falker and Topolev, “Okay guys, where do we start?”

Topolev cut his eyes away from Holder, across to Falker, “Let’s take him out back in the courtyard and get him going on some physical activity.” Falker nodded, “We’ll start with walking and some basic exercises and stretching, but by the end of the week I want you running, trooper.”

Holder raised his eyebrows, “Yes sir.”

I watched as they made their way to the back room and the loading dock’s door, throwing it open to the courtyard. As the room cleared out, I pulled the tracking unit from my belt and flipped it on. I was anxious to get back out to the Wastes and explore Kenobi’s home, but it would have to wait for now.

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The mid afternoon light created crisp shadows that fell across the stone floor of “Alpha-1733-Mu-9033, First Quadrant”. Luke sat quietly in the same space he had used to repair Threepio’s detached arm. It was as if he was now re-visiting that past moment as a third party. Closing his eyes, he could hear echoes of Ben’s voice revealing small glimpses into the man his father had been. The brief words painted a faceless picture in his head of a heroic Jedi warrior pilot from the Old Republic. He wondered about his mother. Kenobi had made no mention of her. Who had she been, and what role had she played in his father’s life? He knew Vader had murdered his father and now Ben as well, but what happened to her? Had the Dark lord come for her as well?

Anger rose within him as he rolled these thoughts over in his mind. Somewhere inside, though, it occurred to him that anger was probably not a trait the Jedi Order would have taught or embraced, and he calmed his rage as his eyes opened. Vader did not begin this life as an evil person, he rationalized. Something or someone shaped who he became and fostered in him the darkness to do such things. Luke tried silently to forgive Vader for the sins the fallen Jedi had committed against him and his family. The journey to become a Jedi must be a long and arduous one, he thought, because he could not find the forgiveness he searched for within his heart. More discipline and maturity than he currently possessed would be needed for that. He did, however, seek a place in his heart and mind to move past it for the moment, and focus on finding a way to rein in the darkness that had descended upon the galaxy.

As he looked around, he realized everything was as Ben had left it as they hastily fled to Mos Eisley. Given Ben’s age, he assumed there would have been far more possessions and belongings than he saw as he looked around the room. Was that perhaps another Jedi trait, to live with great purpose, possessing very little? Three small statues sat on the low, round table before him, where he and Ben had watched Leia’s urgent, pleading message.

Leaning forward, he picked one of them up, turning it over in his hands. It was deceptively heavy for its size, and appeared to be an artful rendering of an exotic bird. The first birds he had

ever seen were in the jungles on Yavin IV. They were like smaller, tamer, feathered versions of the scale-covered Skettoes here on Tatooine. He returned the statue to the table and stood up, walking over to the upright chest from which Obi-Wan had pulled his father's lightsaber. He felt the weight of the weapon on his belt now as he reverently placed his hands on the lid of the chest, pausing slightly, then opening it slowly. There were several articles of clothing on top. Moving those aside, he uncovered a small set of fine tools wrapped up in a cloth case and tied with a strip of leather. Beside them was a small bag of rough stones. He traced the bottom of the compartment with his hands to make sure there were no more loose articles. When he was sure he had seen everything, he took out the tools and stones and closed the chest.

There must be something here, some information or scrap of flimsy with some type of direction in which he should go. Luke placed the tools and stones on the table beside the statues and made his way toward the rear of Ben's home where he slept. There was a modest bed of sorts, another small table and a chair. Over the back of the chair was draped a poncho similar to the one Luke had worn when he first met the old Jedi. He ran his hands over it as his eyes swept over the room. Several larger tools hung on the wall here, tools used to prepare and work leather. A small pile of leather and half completed projects lay beneath them on the floor.

Try as he might to discover something, nothing seemed to jump out at him as overly unusual or important. He moved back into the small hallway and was headed toward the main living space when he saw something on the floor sticking out from beneath a rug. He knelt down, flipped the rug back out of the way, exposing a narrow trap door. Slipping his finger into the recessed ring, he lifted the hatch out of his way and stepped down the stone steps into a small room which housed a small power furnace and several large water holding tanks. He ran his hands over the solid stone walls looking for some secret hiding compartment, but nothing was there to find. Frustrated, he climbed the steps back into the house and closed the hatch.

He was feeling very discouraged when he felt a slight tingling in his neck and faintly heard something whispering to him, "Your eyes can deceive you, don't trust them."

With the tingling sensation still cascading down his neck, Luke drew in a deep breath, letting it out slowly and evenly as he closed his eyes, calming himself. In his mind's eye, he remembered the journey to Alderaan, and the time spent with Obi-Wan learning basic lightsaber skills aboard the Millennium Falcon. He remembered the feel of the gridded deckplates beneath his feet, the new lightsaber hilt in his hands, and the smell inside the musty helmet with the blast shield lowered. As he moved ahead through his memories he heard the muffled sound of Ben's voice calmly speaking from across the room, "Let go your conscious self, and act on instinct. Stretch out with your feelings."

Suddenly, a calm washed over him and the darkness he saw within his closed eyelids got considerably darker. As this happened, the size and scope of the darkness now stretched on to infinity and it began to feel contoured to him somehow. He felt a sort of invisible recognition of the dark room around him, not unlike the echolocation vision that Mynocks and other sightless, cave-dwelling animals used to navigate in their surroundings. The nearby areas of the endless darkness now had a feel, a shape, and he could see Ben Kenobi's hermitage as if his eyes were open wide, with one exception. Now he could see things his eyes had kept hidden from him.

“Your eyes can deceive you, don’t trust them” he whispered. Now within the dark terrain around him, there was a faint glow beneath the poncho that lay draped over the chair. The same glow emanated from the three statues on the table and from within the chest he had already inspected.

He opened his eyes slowly and the tingling in his neck subsided. He exhaled, completely in awe of what had just happened. “It penetrates us, and binds us” barely escaped his lips in a whisper as he moved back to the poncho. He lifted it from the chair back, feeling the texture of the fabric in his hands. As he held it, another different voice whispered in his ears, “Feel, don’t think. See things before they happen. Fear not, boy. Obi-Wan was my padawaan.” Then the voice was gone. The cloak was obviously important to Obi-Wan, although Luke was unsure what a padawaan was. With his eyes still shut, he moved to the chest and again raised the lid. He lifted out the clothing and saw one of the side walls giving off a slight glow. Running his finger over the tooled wood, he pressed ever so slightly and the bottom of the compartment sprung up slightly on one end. He slipped a finger under that end and lifted the false bottom to reveal a small compartment beneath.

From within the small hidden space, he withdrew a small, clear cube with strange symbols and markings on it. As he did, the glow within the chest disappeared. Holding the cube in his hand, he turned toward the last point of light in the room coming from the statues on the table. Their glow had nearly faded completely and as he moved closer clutching the poncho in one hand and the cube in the other, their dim light faded away entirely.

He sat once again in his familiar spot with the newfound items cradled carefully on his lap and opened his eyes. The Tatooine daylight streamed in as he did causing him to squint as his eyes readjusted to the light. The small cube in his hands was made up of several layers of clear cubes within the clear outer cube. All had different patterns of etched markings on their surfaces.

Luke was amazingly relaxed after coming out of his Force vision, and sat motionless as he studied the cube, running his index finger over the detailed surface etchings. Suddenly and silently, a bright light flashed out from inside. As quickly as it had appeared it was gone, and then he could feel something moving, shifting within the box. The etchings were sliding, rearranging, realigning. As the movement stopped, there was a barely audible click, like a delicate locking mechanism releasing . . . surrendering its protected wealth.

A flickering recording opened, projected upward from the cube, about a half meter into the air. He set the cube on the table beside the statues as the image of a young Obi-Wan Kenobi, standing on a Tatooine ridge top appeared and began to speak:

“Hello Luke. If you are viewing this message, I am already gone, and unable to pass on this information to you in person. There is much to be covered, and I know you have questions of me, young one. I will reveal the answers to you in time as your destiny unfolds.” Luke sat mesmerized by the youthful image of his mentor.

“First, the most obvious question I’m sure you have is regarding why you were raised by your Aunt and Uncle and what happened to your parents. Tragically, they both died on the same day and never knew you either. Your mother died in childbirth, shortly after you were delivered.

Your father, my Padawaan, or Jedi learner, grew into a Jedi Knight just as I was . . . am. He was an amazing pilot and a good friend who found himself in the Jedi Temple when it was gutted by the Emperor's troops in what later became known as the Great Purge. He was betrayed and destroyed, as we all were . . . by a Jedi that had fallen victim to the trappings of the Sith's lust for power.

Tragically this fallen Jedi, Darth Vader, betrayed and murdered your father on the day of your birth. Anakin's life was cut short that day, and he was unable to be with his wife when you were born. He wanted children and would have loved you and spent the time with you that I know you craved from a father.

After your mother's passing, I brought you here to live with your Aunt and Uncle. I tried to watch over you as best I could, but your uncle allowed me little contact which was ultimately cut off entirely. He felt if he could keep you sheltered from the past, he could keep you safe from the forces that took your parents. His methods may have been hard to swallow, but his intentions were always for your safety and well-being.

Your father was a great Jedi. I knew it would be my final assignment to stand guard over you until you could reach an age where with a free will, you might be trained as he was. Anakin was strong in the Force, as are you. It is you and your untapped abilities and skills that are the best hope this galaxy has of ever reversing the malignancy of the Empire. You are the last hope of restoring the freedoms of the Old Republic that were taken from us all."

Luke was staring, eyes wide, at the recording as Ben continued.

"I know this a lot to take in all at once, but the training that I had anticipated for you was never allowed. You must be strong and trust that I will lead you on a responsible training path. I know your instinct is to be angry at Darth Vader and want revenge for what he took from you. I can not stress this enough, young one; you must let go of those feelings altogether. Anger and fear are the first steps on the path to the Dark side. Release them and it will make you stronger than he could ever hope to be.

The next piece to reveal is a bit of history. I'll begin with the military forces which were used to implement the Emperor's twisted power play. In a period of unrest, when many in the temple felt that such a coup might someday transpire, a Jedimaster set out on his own to put in motion a protective measure which ultimately was our undoing. Master Sifo Dyas, seen here in an archival holo, solicited the creation of a Clone Army which he felt would be a way of assisting the Jedi in protecting the Republic during a struggle for control."

Unfortunately, his vision of a protective presence was distorted by the Emperor and used to implement martial law throughout the galaxy as his plans to seize control of the Republic were put into motion.

The new Emperor's strike team, led by Darth Vader and his 501<sup>st</sup> Legion, stormed the temple killing everyone in their path. It was their intention to completely extinguish the flame of the Jedi Order forever, so that the Sith might rule the galaxy unopposed. As part of their scheme,

they sent a beacon from the Temple, recalling all Jedi assigned elsewhere to return to the Temple and their deaths.

My master's master and I discovered this signal, and returned to the Temple to alter it, warning other Jedi to stay away and hide. It was on my way to do this that I carefully made my way to the surface of Coruscant, to the only person I knew I could trust. He told me troops had already been in his diner looking for me, and that it wasn't safe to be there. I said goodbye to him, knowing I would never see him again.

I was working my way through the surface streets on my way to the temple when I came upon the broken and bloodied body of a Jedimaster who lay dying in an alley. He was near death when I came upon him. His arm had been severed by a lightsaber, and the ravages of the Emperor's Force lightning had robbed him of all but the smallest traces of life, to which he clung fiercely. In his dying breath he told me of several small statues in his private chambers which held embedded information about the Jedi Order.

He made me swear to take them when I reached the Temple. He said it was information he had compiled for just such a catastrophic event that could help rebuild the Order someday. I kept that promise, and if you are viewing this message, you already have the statues. When the time is right, I will reveal to you how to retrieve the information in them."

Luke glanced from the holo image to the three statues on the table.

"Now I will guide you to my first Tatooine home, a cave among the cliffs where there is still more information hidden there for you . . ."

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