



Memories of my Beloved Alderaan
By PadmeLeiaJaina

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Ever have a plot-bunny whisper to you and no matter how much you try to ignore it, it won't go away? This one kept whimpering like a lonely puppy and I have decided to give it a home.

This story is going to jump back and forth between EU era and Inter-trilogy. Most of the tale will be set in the Inter-trilogy era which is why I'm posting it in this forum. There will be a few passing references to characters/situations that occur in my post-saga epics, but you don't need to read them to get the gist of this story. They're mostly mentioned in passing to get to the meat of the story.

To better understand Leia's world of memories, you might want to visit my story [Alderaan Blessings](#) as it was the main inspiration for this piece. Things that occurred in that story will be expanded upon in this one.

Enjoy! 🇺🇸

Prologue

The setting sun ignited the fluffy clouds with brilliant color. Another beautiful evening had arrived on the planet best known for her natural wonders. Hugging her arms across her chest, Leia Organa-Solo closed her eyes and allowed the refreshingly cool, evening wind to caress her face, and toss about her long, loose, sable hair.

All around her, the bounty of unspoiled nature impregnated the Force. The pungently sweet smell of stargazer lilies filled the air. As the former Chief of State inhaled their floral scent, the white moonflowers unfurled their cavernously wide petals and released their soft fragrance into the evening's air. They added yet another enchantingly heady aroma to her garden of wonders.

Naboo.

The home of her mother, her real mother.

It was glorious. Yet until relatively recently, it hadn't always been this way. Several years ago her family rediscovered the forgotten planet that had been ravaged during the Clone Wars. The architecture of its grand and noble past had been shattered by missiles and Naboo's very land had been poisoned by the corrupting fingers of war.

Jaina had taken it upon herself to bring Naboo back to its former glory by rebuilding the capital of Theed and reseeding her scorched lands. Her daughter had done a marvelous job, and Naboo once again was a thriving world known for its culture, natural wonders, and high ideals of Democracy.

Padding her bare feet over the still warm terra-cotta tiles along the garden's path, Leia touched the slightly sticky petals of a stargazer lily and sighed with melancholy. To many, Naboo was a place without equal in the Galaxy. But she knew differently.

Once upon a time another planet existed that was as fair, and as richly delightful as Naboo.

Tears sprung to Leia's eyes as her mind relived the singular horrific event that was forever burned into her brain. Throughout her childhood, her father had taught her to fear the power of evil, but it wasn't until that day that she ever fully understood the true meaning of being heartless. Nothing had prepared her for the cruel nature of tyranny. As if swatting aside a gnat, Governor Tarkin gladly destroyed her heart in one single blow.

Alderaan.

Even though the land looked different than Naboo, Alderaan had been her sister planet. Covered in sweeping grassy plains Alderaan was a land of peace. The Alderaanians built their cities as close together as possible to disrupt as little of the natural unity of the land as possible. The buildings were also constructed and designed to resemble natural structures to help make them appear to belong in harmony with the land. Alderaan had no weapons, for war was not their way of life. They didn't even have their own militia for crime was practically non-existent there. Her homeworld had been utterly defenseless, had never done anything to anyone.

And Tarkin had ordered the destruction of the entire planet as carelessly as if he had ordered someone to throw out the garbage. Two hundred million souls were lost in a second. She brushed aside the wet trails from her cheeks with the heels of her fists. The wounds on her heart from that event had never healed. When Alderaan had exploded, a part of her heart had died along with her father.

Overhead the stars began to emerge from their daily slumber and the breeze turned cooler. Vigorously rubbing her shivering arms, Leia returned to her bungalow. Entering over the threshold she was immediately warmed by the temperate air that enveloped her body. Walking into the tiny living room, her eyes drifted towards the series of family portraits that lined the many tables and walls of the room. Images of her children, brother, and their beloveds filled most of the frames. One frame contained a few holo-images, saved by her Naberrie cousins of her parents...her natural parents. They were so young and happy, blissfully clueless that their lives would be ripped to shreds. Padme and Anakin remained unaware that their forbidden union would one day leave scars on the haunted souls of their heirs.

Nowhere did she have a single holoimage of the people she considered to be her true parents. It was almost as if they never existed. They now only lived in her memory.

Sitting down at her desk, Leia absently massaged her fingers over her scalp, through her mountains of thick, graying hair. A few weeks ago an off-handed comment from her youngest son, Anakin, had stuck in her mind and still weighed heavily on her conscious.

Do you know what I love so much about being with Tenel Ka? She's grounded. Her family has roots and traditions that we can pass on to our daughters. Our family has no real roots, we're all nomads in this Galaxy

Choking back a sob, Leia couldn't argue with that. Her son's words stung, and whenever she thought of them, she couldn't help but feel like a failure as a parent. The more she contemplated things, the more she realized that the Solos and Skywalkers were drifters, not having one singular place that they could unanimously call home.

Luke tried his best to forget Tatooine. And although her three children were mostly raised on Coruscant, the metropolis homeworld of the New Republic wasn't exactly a place that one would ever consider homey. Han came from Corellia, but little of his family still lived and he had never felt any real connection there to pass onto their children.

They all had unanimously adopted Naboo as their homeplanet, for it was where their family matriarch Padme Naberrie had been born and raised. Leia supposed that maybe in several generations, her great-great-grandchildren would consider Naboo to be home, but for now her own family didn't have such a place.

Drumming her fingers on the antique Nubian carved writer's desk, Leia puzzled over the dilemma. Her hand lingered to her waist and fell upon her lightaber. Inside the chamber held a small pinkish crystal that had been a shard of Alderaan.

Tears again threatened to fall as she thought about the wasted opportunity of being able to share her homeplanet with her children. They would never know its beauty, or learn to love the wonderful people who had inhabited the planet. The only place Leia's heart would ever call home no longer existed...

...except in her mind.

Closing her eyes an idea triggered as to how she could help to meld together a bit of her family's fractured heritage. Gazing at Anakin and Padme's photos, her heart longed to know what they were thinking on that day that they were taken. She wished someone had recorded their thoughts, and their dreams, so she and her brother could've learned more about those who had given them life, for holoimages didn't speak.

On Alderaan oral tradition and story-telling were the people's favorite ways to pass their time. It was also why that after Alderaan had been destroyed so much cultural information of her homeworld had vanished forever. She couldn't bring Alderaan back from the ashes, nor could she call upon the mighty, all-encompassing Force for assistance; but Leia could bring Alderaan's spirit back to life through the power of words.

Determined to show her children that they did not come from nowhere, that they weren't from a family of nomads, Leia stood up and strode across the room. There she rifled through her bookcases and extracted a beautifully bound notebook. One of the things she loved about the Naboo was that they cherished actually paper books for Leia thought them to be much more personal than any datapad. Selecting a pen from her desk, she tucked her feet under her body and curled into a ball onto a squashy couch.

Opening the front cover she placed the pen over front page and thought for just a moment of what to write. Then in long and even strokes, she penned:

Memories of my Beloved Alderaan, By Leia Organa-Solo

And as a smile spread across her lips, she chased away her tears and allowed herself to be teleported back in time to a place where every object was a potential marvel to a child. In her mind's eye the beauty of her beloved Alderaan flashed into vivid detail as words sprang to life onto her page.

Entry 1

The Fall Festival

Drifts of rich and hearty grass swept over nearly every surface of the four continents on Alderaan. The very soil itself was naturally as black as night and allowed nearly any seed planted into the rich earth to grow with very little care. The people of Alderaan were mostly farmers who tilled their lands and grew acres of grains and oats that at their peak would reach sky-high. Many cultures make heroes of their great warriors, yet on Alderaan we cherished the men of ingenuity who made leaping advancements in farming. Those who discovered new crops that acclimated to our planet's climates and which helped to bring in greater wealth to our people were seen as heroes; for what benefited one person on Alderaan, helped all.

Right before the time of the harvests, the planet glittered like a golden oasis. When the sun set the fields beyond the towns radiated and shimmered so brightly, you had to shield your eyes from the glorious glare. The rustling of the tall stalks were very calming. I can't smell wheat or cornna without thinking of home.

My favorite time of year was always fall at harvest time. The air was cooler after the intensely hot summers and the people celebrated the last remaining warmth before the cold winter's would arrive. For a child, even one who lived securely behind the protective walls of a palace, harvest time was full of joy and wonder. After the crops were harvested, our local town would celebrate by throwing festivals and street fairs.

For me that time of year was one of the few that my father would allow me to escape the confines of the Palace and mingle with the townsfolk. Father, Bail Organa, loved the Fall Festivals as much as everyone. The Royal House of Organa acted as the broker liaison with the Intergalactic Trade Federation. Every year, besides his Senatorial duties, my father would endlessly negotiate with the representative for the best prices for the crops. In turn, all farmers would then be paid the same wages. It wasn't until years later that I learned my father would hold aside a portion of the crops and he would negotiate to trade them with his allies who worked to establish the Alliance. Those allies usually paid above the going rates of the Federation representatives. The Trade Federation directly worked with the Empire, and many times they over taxed the crops in the name of the Emperor. Bail did everything he could to add as many extra hard-earned credits into the pockets of his people as possible. And they loved him for it.

The first Fall Festival that I can remember occurred my 5th year. My adopted mother, Dormé, was utterly terrified at the thought of letting me out of her sight. As a child I always figured she was just being over-protective. Little did I know the real reasons why. I had often wondered why I didn't have a nurse-maid. My mother doted on me constantly. I can only now assume that she maintained such a harsh vigilance because of my actual heritage. I've often wondered if she knew my real mother. Sometimes she would gaze upon me with eyes filled with so much sorrow and pain, that I even as a child, I feared her heart was about to shatter into a million pieces. Dormé was wonderful, she rarely scolded me and taught me the virtues of being a proper young lady – no matter how much I often resisted her lessons.

I can remember the first day of my first Fall Festival vividly. Mother dressed me in a tan pantsuit with a deep burgundy colored cloak resting over my shoulders. Sitting on the edge of my bed, waiting for her to meticulously braid my hair into a six connecting loops seemed to last forever. I whined continuously that we were going to miss everything. She would sigh and tell me to relax. When I was finally freed from her assault on my head, I tore out of my bedroom to seek my father.

He waited for us to arrive by the side door. Bail Organa looked every inch a Prince. He stood, holding a wide-brimmed hat in his hand and wore a silky deep blue shirt that was covered in rich embroidery. I remember spending many hours as a child resting in his arms in the evening tracing those intricately designed swirls with my fingertips. His pants were tucked into nearly knee height nerf-hide boots. His thinning, but meticulously groomed hair reminded me so much in color to my own that I never had a reason to doubt that he was not my natural father.

Racing through the Palace's halls I shouted out to him, "Daddy!"

Bending at his knees, he swept me up into his secured arms and planted a kiss on my forehead and asked, "And what do you wish to see today, Leia?"

"Everything!" I demanded.

“Everything? The festival will last four days, do you want to see everything all today and stay inside for the next three days? I suppose we could do that if you prefer,” he teased.

Pouting, I cried, “NO! I want it all.”

Bail Organa laughed heartily. “Of course you do, my Sweet. And have it all, you shall! But today we will just go to the street fair. Believe me, that will be plenty excitement for you for one day.”

Dormé approached us with her dress’s bell swishing along the Palace’s marble floor. Her smile was bright and full of love as she stared upon us both. As the sun shone through the windows I recalled how it warmed her dress and caused the area to fill with her spicy, floral perfume.

As father lifted me onto his shoulders we walked out of the Palace as a family unit. Our two faithful droids, See-Threepio and Artoo-Deetoo followed us from a safe distance behind. Royal bodyguards were evenly distributed throughout the market, waiting for our arrival.

The Royal Palace of Alderaan sat on top of a hill that overlooked our town. That day, we opted to walk through the long and winding paths through the many gardens that decorated the front of the Palace. The sun was pleasantly warm, but not hot and a refreshing breeze sent our capes flapping behind our bodies. I remember tightly gripping my father’s hand and trying to catch brightly colored flutterbugs that dipped and soared over the fading rosas. Fall flowers infused the garden with their heady aroma, and the closer we got towards town, the noises from below assaulted my ears.

My heart throbbed with excitement as a feast of colorful and exotic sights, sounds, and smells greeted my senses. Bugs long forgotten I kicked and shouted at every new and fascinating wonder that passed before my eyes; stalls filled with brightly colored spools of fabric, women wearing flamboyant hats, shrieking children running near the ground holding sizzling sparklers, jugglers, beautifully crafted paintings and hand-thrown pottery, cases filled with sparkling jewelry, and toys of every shape and size. I couldn’t see enough.

My nose tingled with confusion over the disruptive cacophony of smells that carried on the air from meats cooking over open flames, to the crackling vats of oil that fried cornna pops, to bushels of freshly fragrant fruits, to burning spiced incense, the occasional unpleasant scent of unwashed bodies, and floral perfumes.

The air also filled with sounds from minstrels playing cymbals, to singers incanting folk-songs, to people dickering loudly over prices, to babies squalling, to people laughing, and the general noises of industry and merriment.

It was fabulous...all of it. I couldn’t get enough.

As my father walked amongst the stalls, he stopped and chatted with nearly every other merchant, recalling each person’s name and occupation. I often wondered if the people wore hidden name badges on them somewhere which was how Bail could remember so many people’s names. Only later I found out that he made it his personal mission to know every person who lived in his surrounding town. He believed that those who resided in the Royal House should never forget the common people, for they were the reason that Alderaan thrived as a planet.

After about an hour of greeting people and exploring the bazaar, my father asked me to be on the

lookout for a toy that I would like to have, and that he would gladly buy it for me. My heart raced with excitement, so much so that I nearly dropped the sweet cornna pop that was clutched in my hand. Asking a child to pick only one toy was cruel. I recall wanting everything that I laid eyes upon. Then as we rounded a particular corner, a stall caught my attention. It was not the fanciest, in fact the old woman sitting in it had done very little to spruce up her booth's appearance. Her clothes were tattered, and her hair was long and unkept. I suppose most children might've thought she was frightening. But to me, all I saw was the kindly sparkle in her eyes and the honesty of her gnarled, bony hands.

On her small, rickety table sat four buckets filled with handmade stick puppets. The puppet hid inside its cone and you pushed upwards on a stick, causing the puppet to peek out and greet the world. Each one was intricately painted and detailed. I saw beauty in their simplicity. My father seemed very proud of me for selecting a toy from the old woman's booth. I didn't see anything noble about my choice, all I knew was that I had satisfied my craving for a treat. In later years, I would learn that Madam Hilgrant, the toy artist, had been on the brink of poverty. When word spread throughout the festival that the Prince of the House of Organa had purchased one of her toys, she sold out all of her stock. In her last years she lived comfortably as people finally recognized the skill that she put into her beloved puppets. Each year it became a ritual of mine to purchase a toy from her booth. When I was eleven I recall dashing through the crowds bee-lining towards her booth only to discover she wasn't there. Frantic, I searched high and low, but Madam Hilgrant was nowhere to be seen. I was in a near state of hysterics when my father found me. After some investigating he discovered that she had passed away during the heat of the summer. In that moment I had felt that my childhood had ceased and come to an abrupt end.

I didn't purchase a toy that year, nor ever again. I feared that by endorsing another artisan, that I would be spoiling her memory. I cherished my puppets from her. They were some of the rare toys that I had kept in pristine shape. I had always hoped that I could pass them onto my children...

Leia realized that she couldn't see the pages as they were blurred from her tears. She recalled that it had been years since she'd thought about those puppets. Setting the pen inside the book, she placed the journal onto a sidetable and stood up. Snorting back a sob, she ambled across her living room and snatched a tissue to dry her eyes and blow her nose. Just as she did so the door of the bungalow opened and Han arrived carrying a large cooler. His graying hair stuck out in all directions, and his face was crimson red from sunburn.

"Hey, sweetheart. You'll never guess how many fish I caught today," Han crowed as he set down the cooler and removed his vest. "Of course Rowlon caught more, but he gets to spend more time doing this in his retirement, unlike me who still gets sent off on adventures across the Galaxy..."

When Leia didn't respond immediately to his ramblings, he glanced in her direction and realized that she had been crying. His heart thundered in his chest, and he asked, "What's the matter, Leia? Is someone hurt?"

Shaking her head, Leia huskily responded, "No, it's nothing like that."

Fishing trip with his son-in-law's father momentarily forgotten, he crossed the room and engulfed his wife's diminutive frame in a bear hug. Han demanded, "Tell me what's wrong."

Resting her cheek against Han's scratchy cotton shirt, she inhaled his reassuringly masculine scent. Although Han liked to project an image of hardened masculinity to the rest of the Galaxy, Leia knew

him to be a man with the kindest, most generous heart. In him, she often saw traces of her father Bail. In moments like these that comparison never seemed to be more vivid and clear.

Han furrowed his bushy eyebrows and silently rocked his wife, waiting for her to finally speak.

Finally, she revealed, “I’m working on composing a notebook that I plan to fill with memories of Alderaan, as something I can pass onto our kids.”

Sighing, Han should’ve known. Leia often went through spells of melancholy where she lost herself in memories of her homeworld. Her intense love of Alderaan was something he never quite understood from a personal perspective. Growing up on Corellia, he never developed any deep personal attachments to his homeland. Spending time on the wonderful planet of Naboo he’d occasionally experience flashes where he might understand what Leia felt about Alderaan, for this planet was gracious and beautiful. From everything he’d ever heard about Alderaan he knew it was supposed to have been very similar.

He replied, “I think that’s a wonderful idea.”

“You do?” she hopefully inquired.

“Yes. I know our children and grandchildren would love to read that, Leia. Hell, I’d enjoy it also. We all know how much you miss it. I think that’s a great way for you to share your memories with them,” Han explained. “Frankly, I’m surprised you haven’t thought of doing that before.”

“I know, I guess work always got in the way.” Sniffling, she added, “I need to get it out of my head before I’m so old that I can’t remember things correctly.”

Flashing a lopsided smirk, Han retorted, “Princess, I think it’ll be quite some time before you have to worry about that. You’re far from going senile.”

Grinning and feeling a weight lifting off of her heart, Leia responded, “Maybe, but I think I may need to worry about you. You forgot to tell me how many fish you caught!”

Planting Leia a kiss on the forehead, Han said, “Not forgotten, you just deviated me off course from telling you, darlin.”

Laughing and taking his hand, Leia led Han to the kitchen where they unpacked, gutted, and prepped his catches for dinner. With her heart lighter, Leia knew that after dinner that she would be ready to face her journal again, and delve deeper into her memories.

Entry 2

Full from their evening supper, Han and Leia finished clearing the table and put away the leftovers. Leia gravitated towards the living room, back to her journal. Reaching his arms high over his head, Han stretched and yawned.

From her curled up position on the couch, Leia noted her husband’s expectant expression and asked,

“Did you want to watch the holovision?”

The right corner of his mouth curled upwards, and he answered, “No.”

“You want to go mess with the *Falcon*?” Leia supposed.

Feeling a bit guilty for wanting to leave his emotionally fragile wife, he sheepishly admitted, “Maybe.”

Leia chuckled, thinking that he sounded like one of the twins when they were young and had gotten caught trying to dismantle Threepio. She waved him on. “Go ahead, Han. I’ll be fine.”

“You sure?” he asked, taking a couple steps closer to the couch. “Because if you want me here...”

“Just go. I’ll be fine. I can guarantee you that you’ll probably see me bawling my eyes out for days on end while I’m embarking on this project. I can’t expect you to hang around me waiting to sop up my tears,” Leia explained.

Glancing around the room, Han picked up a box of tissues and delivered it to the side-table near the couch within Leia’s reach. Pecking her on the cheek, he replied, “I’ll have my comlink on, just call me up if you need me for anything.”

“I will. Thank you, Han,” Leia replied, caressing his muscular forearm. Amused, she watched him quickly exit the house afraid that she might change her mind.

Sighing, she opened her journal and reread her last couple of lines. *I cherished my puppets from her. They were some of the rare toys that I had kept in pristine shape. I had always hoped that I could pass them onto my children...*

Chewing on the end of her pen she decided where to turn the tide of her entry. Taking a deep breath she began to scribble...*Alas, thanks to the fortuitous events of history, that would not happen. My precious puppets, the Palace...my adopted father and mother...everything that I loved and was so dear to my heart was destroyed. The worst part of it all is the pressure that still rests upon my heart. It is the same oppressive feeling that is felt by the few other Alderaan citizens who happened to be elsewhere in the Galaxy when it exploded.*

Guilt.

Medics call it survivor’s guilt. We survivors wonder why in the Galaxy we would be spared when so many were not. Was I supposed to have a grander purpose in the scheme of things? Will one of my children, or children’s children do something extraordinary to ultimately save all of mankind? Who knows. Maybe this journal is the reason. Some needed to survive in order to speak for the dead...

The last evening of the Fall Festival was always a somber affair by activating the Procession of Lights. The mighty river of Pwellea ran through the center town and traveled clear to the end of the continent. At dusk each member of each family would line the banks of the river holding a carved out oonta root. The oonta roots had translucent, pale skins and when a small candle was placed inside each one, they would look like shimmering goblets of light. Each family would place their oonta into the water and the current would send the lights down river. Each light represented a star in the sky. As we watched them float downstream, they would eventually touch the horizon, and there the stars and lights would meet.

This meeting point represented the circle of life. Tradition believed that if the lights remained lit for their entire journey, if the waters were not choppy and burned them out, that the goddesses of nature had smiled upon us and next year's crop would be full and plenty. If the lights went out, we were assured of a hard year ahead. That year, my fifth year, the river was calm and the journey of lights was magical and beautiful. I'll never forget those glittering lights as they tossed about in the water, twinkling into the sunset.

The three days always passed in a frenzied blur, filled with parades, feasts, storytelling, and song. And as quickly as we longed for those days, they vanished into the harsher winter seasons. If the Goddesses promised us a fruitful harvest the following year, they were determined to make us long for the warmth of the sun. That winter, when I turned six, was the coldest that I can recall from my youth. Relentlessly frigid winds began shortly after the Fall Festival and did not cease blowing until five months later.

I did not step foot outside of the Palace once in those five months and thus began my pursuit to discover every nook and cranny of the ancient, Organa ancestral home. The home consisted of over two hundred bedrooms that spread across five floors. As one may guess, most of these were never used and they became a place of wonder for a child to explore. I spent my afternoons when studies were finished, dashing off to uncover hidden treasures. My mother haunted the halls calling out my name and would send Artoo-detoo to track me down. Luckily for me the little droid had no sense of smell and I easily slipped by undetected.

As a small child I had no friends. It wasn't because I was unfriendly, but because I lived a very sheltered life. My parents rarely let me out of their sight. I didn't attend public schools, although I'm certain, had I not been who I was, that they probably would've advocated my attending a local learning institution. So being alone I had to amuse myself. Eventually my mother figured out what I was doing and gave up in preventing me from my explorations.

One day when the wind howled and rattled the windows of Palace, I discovered a room with closets filled with vintage clothing. Oh, for a small and curious child the dresses were wonders to behold. I had no idea at the time that many of the ornate gowns and hats that I came across were priceless, and one-of-a-kind pieces, all I knew was that they were extraordinarily beautiful.

See-Threepio happened upon me as I stood tiptoed on top of a chair that I had shoved in front of the large closets and was in the process of yanking items of clothing off of the racks.

Immediately he scolded me, "Princess Leia, I am certain that you are not supposed to be playing with those dresses!"

"But they're all so beautiful, Threepio!" I stated. With my usual methods of persuasion, that generally included copious quantities of whining, I convinced the protocol droid not to tell on me.

Leaping onto the bed while holding a large, lilac colored skirt I threw it over Threepio's head. As he wailed out in confusion I cinched it tightly around his waist. I then found a ruffled, orange sheer shirt and dressed him into it.

Threepio of course was not amused. He cried out, "This all seems very undignified, your Highness."

After decorating him with strands of beads, and topping his head with a wide-brimmed hat, his garish outfit was complete. Threepio waddled over to a long mirror and examined his appearance. As he was

readjusting his hat, Artoo rolled by the door and loudly hooted in disbelief. Backing up, he did the droid equivalent to laughing uncontrollably by emitting a long stream of high pitched whistles and hoots.

“I don’t know what you mean, Artoo. It is my belief that this outfit is quite stylish,” Threepio countered.

Artoo bleeped back.

“What do you mean these are GIRLS clothes?” Threepio howled in horror and turned towards me for confirmation. Unable to control myself any longer, I collapsed backwards onto the bed squealing with laughter.

In my defense, I explained, “I’m sorry Threepio, but I can’t get pants on you.”

Threepio still appeared utterly befuddled as I launched off of the bed and selected an opulent gown to try on for myself. My eyes were naturally drawn to one of golden fabric that had a long, bell-shaped skirt, off the shoulder sleeves, and the bodice was covered in tiny silken flowers. I remember stroking the beautiful dress and for some reason I vaguely detected the scent of wildflowers. Pulling it off of the hanger I put it over my head. Standing on the chair the skirt pooled towards the floor. From across the room I could see myself in the mirror. The bodice was way too large, and I ordered, “Threepio, can you grab the back of the dress?”

Still dressed in his finery, he came around the chair and tugged on the dress. “Not so hard, you don’t want to rip it Threepio!” I scolded.

My white long-sleeved shirt that I wore underneath the dress looked horrible, but I loved the dress. I reached up over my head and grabbed the hat off of Threepio’s head and placed it on my own. The hat should’ve fallen below my ears, except for the fact that my hair was twisted into two large buns, gathered around each ear. They increased the overall size of my head and gave extra support to hold up the hat.

As I was adjusting the hat, my mother happened by the door. She was not as amused at Artoo.

“Oh Mistress Dormé I do apologize, I did try to stop her from playing with the clothing,” Threepio said, immediately selling me out to save his own hide.

My mother pursed her lips tightly and rapidly approached the droid. Quickly she took the clothes off of him and laid them out on the bed. “You may go now,” she ordered. Threepio couldn’t waddle out of there fast enough.

I refused to undress. I loved the wonderfully rich fabric on the gown. As I swayed from side to side on the chair I pictured myself running through wide, sweeping green meadows and laughing under a golden sun.

Suddenly, I realized that my mother was standing behind me. I pouted and apologized, “I’m sorry Mommy, but it was too beautiful not to try on.”

My mother’s expression was not cross. In fact, she appeared downright sad. Lightly, she caressed the

fabric and stared at our reflections in the mirror. Gently, she took off my hat and hoarsely she said, "You look just like her."

"Like who?" I wondered.

My mother's brown eyes appeared very uncertain as to how she should answer my inquiry. Then exhaled a large breath and whispered, "Your mother."

Confusion gripped me. For a moment I had no idea what my mother was talking about. Her delicate white hands that rested on my shoulders were trembling.

Somehow, in the corners of my young mind, I knew. A memory, long buried resurfaced. I saw in my mind's eye a vision of a woman who looked very similar to the woman behind me. Her delicate features were sad. Her soulful brown eyes were filled with immeasurable amounts of sorrow. She also appeared to be in pain. That was all I recalled, but in that moment as goosebumps erupted over my arms, I knew that the woman in my vision had been my real mother.

I surprised my adopted mother by not denying what she had just said. I asked, "What happened to her?"

Mother's voice was thick with emotion as she responded, "She died, darling."

"But Daddy's my Daddy, right?" I wondered.

She hesitated for a moment and replied, "Yes."

Somehow I sensed that Dormé was worried about what I thought of her. I turned around on the chair and promised, "You'll always be my Mommy."

Tears streamed down her eyes and she crushed me against her breast in a tight hug. When we finished embracing, she flicked aside a few of her tears and asked, "Why don't we get this dress off of you and put it away so it doesn't get torn? You wouldn't want to ruin your Mommy's dress, would you?"

"No," I agreed and raised my arms. As she pulled the dress off I glanced back towards the closet and wondered, "Are any others of those hers?"

"They all were her clothes, Leia," my mother replied. The rest of the evening she spent presenting the clothes to me and explaining a little about how and when my mother wore them. She didn't tell me much about her beyond that my mother, whom she referred to as "Milady" had been in politics during the days of the Old Republic and that many of the dresses were ones she wore out to her public appearances. Most of the dresses fully covered a body from head to toe, revealing no skin. The one golden dress was the only true exception.

I did ask her one last question about my mother as we closed the room for the evening. I inquired, "What was she like?"

Dormé took my hand and walked me down towards my bedroom on the third floor and explained, "She was smart, pragmatic, brave, and courageous."

“Did she love my father very much?” I demanded.

I could tell that my mother was fighting back tears, again. She nodded her head and gushed, “She loved him with all of her heart.”

I was very happy with that explanation. Being so young I didn't grill her about other details, such as my mother's name. I will also admit that over time, my real mother slipped from my memory only resurfacing occasionally. When Luke asked me about her on Endor, I'm ashamed to say that it had been years since she'd even crossed my mind. Only with his one inquiry did my curiosity become piqued again. I thank the Force every day that we were able to locate her family here on Naboo. Although they were only able to fill in tiny pieces of her puzzle, at least her life is no longer a complete and absolute mystery to my brother and myself.

As a side note, I cannot help but think that Padme was a clothes-junky. That closet back on Alderaan held at least two dozen gowns. When we reconnected with the Naberrrie family, they owned another two dozen gowns of hers – including several of her Queen Amidala gowns that are now on display in Theed.

Maybe I'm just too pragmatic having been raised in a time of war and darkness, but clothing was never all that important to me. I guess that is one trait that I did not inherit from my mother, my daughter either for that matter. Of course my granddaughter Lynnina loves clothes. Maybe the fact that her middle name is Padme has something to do with it and perhaps my mother lives on in my granddaughter. The Force certainly works in mysterious ways.

A smile stretched over Leia's face. Replacing the cap on her pen she set aside her journal and wiggled circulation back into her fingers. Standing up from the couch, she decided that she'd traveled down memory lane enough for one day and retreated to her refresher to take a long hot bath. As she sunk into the bubbly, hot water she cleared her mind, confident that tomorrow more memories would spring to life onto her pages.

Entry 3

As the morning sun bathed the Nubian valley with its brilliant rays, Leia settled onto her outside settee holding a steaming mug of caff and her journal. Han had already taken off at dawn for another day of fishing with Rowlon. Leia had been glad to see he had remembered to take his tube of sunscreen today, hopefully he'd just remember to use it and stop his sunburn from deepening.

Overhead a cluster of tiny blue songbirds twittered to each other in the boughs of the Rynacca trees. Their cheerful calls brought a smile to Leia's face. Inhaling the crisp morning air, she opened her journal and readied her pen.

After exploring all of the bedrooms that winter, I moved onto the service tunnels that intricately wove their ways throughout the Palace. Many of them were concealed behind hidden and false doors. One series of tunnels began at the back of the Palace and were used exclusively for the staff and droids to deliver wood to the two hundred fireplaces that were distributed throughout my massive home. It was through these passages that the soot from the fireplaces was carried away from, in order for it not to soil the Palace's marble floors. I first discovered those tunnels when one day I was curled on a couch

in my father's study and yelped aloud as a panel behind the fireplace opened and a cleaning droid whisked into the fireplace, swept out the soot, and placed a fresh pile of logs onto the tray. My curiosity was piqued. There wasn't a way to trigger the switches from inside the fireplace, so I had to find an entrance elsewhere.

Wandering in the great dining hall a couple of days later I approached a large statue of the Harvest Goddess. In examining her pedestal, I noticed that she had illuminated rectangular designs surrounding the rounded base. Small circles lined the inside of the rectangles. I pressed as many of the circles as I could reach, when suddenly I jumped as one of the panels slid open. Leaping quickly inside I located the device to shut the secret door in fear of being discovered. The room held the bright spotlight that shined through the frosted duraglass edgings around the bases rectangles. Beside the light was a door. Hissing it open, I stepped into the passageway. I knew that must've been for delivering firewood because it smelled faintly of smoky wood and a thin layer of soot lined the floor. I spent many days wandering those tunnels, acquainting myself on which doors led to which rooms.

One day my father returned from the Senate with a fellow female Senator from Chandrila named Mon Mothma. Upon arrival at the Palace they hurried into his study. My father, whom I hadn't seen for weeks, didn't even say hello to me. Hurt by his dismissal, and curious over what could possibly be so important that my father would outright ignore me, I raced into the dining hall and entered the secret tunnel.

Running up three flights I counted off the doors and squatted next to a panel. I waited to catch my breath and then deactivated the auto entry codes. Squeezing my small fingers into the manual override system, I silently cracked the panel door open.

"...he has gone too far this time. It's one thing to be callous, but it's entirely another to be utterly cruel to people!" I heard my father exclaim. Peering through the slim opening I saw Mon Mothma sitting on my favorite couch watching my father angrily pace back and forth. I thought the Senator was rather ordinary-looking with her vibrant red hair being her best feature. What she lacked in beauty, she made up for with strength. Her eyes blazed sharply like unbreakable steel.

Mon Mothma softly replied, "I don't understand it either, Bail."

"How? How can he refuse aid to the people of Wayland after his own troops went in and destroyed the city of Urjanie? That was an urban center, it wasn't a military target! It was filled with women and children and cultural centers! There were no hidden weapon caches found – NOTHING! He was completely wrong. Even though he was wrong that paranoid tyrant won't even allow any aid workers to go in to assist with the wounded," Bail ranted. "It's unforgivable!"

From my hidden position, my heart thundered in my chest with confusion. Who could my father possibly be talking about? Who would be that cold?

My father's guest stared down at her long, white fingers and softly answered, "I have no answer for you. I don't know what happened to him. Once, long ago, he actually seemed to care about people. Now it seems that all he cares about is his own image and reputation."

My father's jaw was clenched tight. His dark eyes were filled with fury as he sneered, "His precious reputation is that of a murderer! A coward! A tyrant!" Darkly he added, "And with that...creature...at his side doing his bidding there's no stopping him."

“Palpatine has been in power much too long. He’s gotten himself so tangled up in his lust for sovereignty that he’s completely forgotten about why he was originally elected in the first place,” Mon Mothma responded.

From my hiding place I sucked back a gasp. They couldn’t possibly be talking about Emperor Palpatine, could they? Every year we celebrated Emperor’s Day to honor the Galaxy’s leader. He’s not a murderer...is he?

Crossing the room, my father collapsed next to Mon Mothma on the couch. He buried his face shamefully in his hands. “It’s all my fault. I just stood by and stupidly allowed him to gain power.” He laughed sardonically. “I actually encouraged it, believing that by granting him emergency power over the Senate that he would be able to end our conflict with the Separatists.”

“Little did any of us know that he had orchestrated the entire war,” Mon Mothma sullenly stated. “It’s not your fault, Bail. Even the mighty Jedi were duped. Even they were unable to see the future and they were blessed with the power of Sight. You are a mere man who was just trying to find a way to save the Galaxy from destruction.”

He snorted, “Little good I did.”

“We can’t do anything about the past. What is done is done. It’s time that we moved forward with our plans. I think this last attack will be more than enough fuel to bring Senator Yusaf Balli of Dantooine over to our cause.”

“That’s still not enough and you know it. We’d need at least three-fourths of the Senate to side with us in order for a ghost of a chance of taking Palpatine out of power. Thanks to attacks like this one on Wayland the chances of anyone daring to risk his wrath are slim to none!” my father stated.

Mon Mothma gripped my father’s hand. I could see her iron-clad strength and will in her eyes as she reported, “We must be patient, Bail, and never let go of our dreams to restore Democracy back to the Republic. Our intelligence officer Ackbar has acquired for us a fleet of Y-Wings...”

My father barked a laugh. “Snub fighters? How many?”

“A dozen...”

“Twelve single-manned fighters to go against the Empire’s massive armada of Star Destroyers? We’ll never defeat Palpatine with that few ships. Besides, Y-Wings were ancient even before the Clone Wars,” my father complained.

“Which is precisely why it’s such a coup that we obtained them. Palpatine’s sources will never go looking for twelve ancient Y-Wing fighters that have been removed from the Imperial junkyards on Correllia. They’ll probably think it’s a blessing that they’re gone. Ackbar has a team of loyal mechanics who are working round the clock to get them cleaned them up. One day they will be in perfect running order and will do what we need,” Mon Mothma stressed.

“We might as well try to locate some X-Wings while we’re out antique vessel hunting,” my father cackled.

“There you go, that’s the spirit!” his guest said, smiling.

“I was joking,” he countered.

“X-Wings maybe old, but they are fast ships and have a tight turning radius. They could easily outrun and out maneuver the Imperial Tie-fighters. If we fill their cockpits with exceptional pilots those ships could be the key to taking down the Empire,” Mon Mothma explained.

Bail shook his head and laughed. “You certainly are an optimistic woman, aren’t you?”

“I have to be. Dreams of victory are the only things that get me up in the morning,” she stated.

A noise down the hall caught my attention and a cleaning droid pushing a cart filled with ash roared past my hiding space. Before I had time to shut the grate to mask my hiding place, some of the ash fell into the air around me and I sneezed. Paralyzed with fear, I stared into the study. My father and Mon Mothma were both on their feet looking around the room. My father glared right into the fireplace. I yelped. Not daring to alert attention by closing the grate I took off at a dead run and flew towards the dining hall. Leaping out of my hiding place I bolted for the entrance to the servant’s linens tunnels. I caused several of the laundry ladies to scream and throw their neatly stacked piles of fresh sheets into the air with my mad escape. Shouting apologies over my shoulder I tore towards the third floor and exited the servant entrance. Dashing down the empty hallway I raced into my bedroom. Clamping the door shut behind me, sides heaving, I closed my eyes and breathed a sigh of relief.

I made it.

The sound of a throat being cleared nearly caused me to pee my pants.

“Hi Daddy,” I said, brightly, hoping that maybe he had just left his meeting to come look for me.

When I opened my eyes and saw the determined set to his jaw, I knew that I’d been caught. He sat down on the edge of my bed and patted it.

“Come over here,” he commanded.

Dragging my feet I trudged beside him and climbed up onto the bed. I turned the sides of my mouth down into the most pathetic of pouts and hoped that my eyes looked sadder than anything he’d ever seen in his life.

He arched a brow at me. “Pity will get you nowhere, young lady so you can wipe that expression off of your face right now.”

I scowled and bounced my feet up and down off the edge of my bed waiting for my punishment.

“Honey, I’m sorry I didn’t say hello to you when I came home. But Mon Mothma and I had important adult things to discuss. You’re too young to be hearing the things we were talking about,” he advised.

“Is the Emperor really a bad man?” I wondered. “Did he really kill children?”

My father clutched his fingers over his face and slowly dragged them down from his forehead to his chin. He was obviously deciding what to tell me.

“It’s wrong to kill people, particularly especially little kids,” I stated.

“You’re right, Leia. It is very wrong to kill...anyone...not just kids,” my father admitted. He stared at me, hard.

Twisting around on my bed so I faced him, I asked, “If the Emperor’s such a bad man, why do we celebrate Emperor’s Day?”

Bail’s eyes were filled with sorrow as he replied, “If we did not honor him, he would send his troops here and they would destroy Alderaan.”

My eyes grew wide with horror. “Why?” I squeaked.

He grabbed my hands and stared at me hard. “Leia, this is why you shouldn’t be spying on adults. You’re too young to be burdened with hearing these things.”

Still distressed over the possibility of someone destroying my home, I demanded, “Why would he destroy Alderaan? We wouldn’t be doing anything wrong!”

“We’d be defying our Emperor. That would be reason enough for him to punish us, Leia. This is why we have to honor him and celebrate him on his day,” my father explained.

I stared towards the window, almost half expecting to see a fleet of ships materialize out of thin air and start firing upon the golden fields beyond. Tears fell down my face as I whispered, “I don’t think I like the Emperor, Daddy.”

“Don’t fret little one, he won’t hurt you. I won’t let him. That’s my job,” Bail promised. Any anger my father may have felt for me spying on him vanished as he grabbed me and cradled me in his strong arms. Burying my face in his cotton navy shirt, I inhaled his musky cologne. From that day forward that scent always reminded me of security and the strength of his promise.

Sniffling, I asked, “You’re going to do everything you can to make things safe for little kids everywhere, right Daddy?”

Bail Organa’s haunted eyes examined my face closely. Perhaps in my plea he heard my mother calling out to him. Any doubts that he may have expressed to Mom Mothma earlier vanished as firmly he promised, “One day Leia, we will make things safe for all children. One day.”

Thinking back on it now, that winter when I was six years old was when I first learned of the seeds of the Rebellion. It was that afternoon of spying that triggered my lifelong pursuit for justice in the Galaxy. Why my parents put so much trust in me and allowed me to be privy to such important secrets, I’ll never know. What I do recall is that from that day forward, they ceased to censor their conversations around me. Although most of the time, I failed to understand what they were talking about, I slowly began to comprehend the devastating power of the Emperor’s stranglehold over the Galaxy. I learned that the Emperor was not a good man and that he was to be feared.

On that day the dreams of victory that Mon Mothma spoke of took hold of my subconscious. At night I dreamed of tiny ships taking out gigantic destroyers. Children always dream big, but who would've known that one day those visions of mine would one day become reality?

Entry 4

Although my father scolded me for spying on him that didn't stop me from constantly remembering what I heard during that private conversation. If anything, his lecture served as a reminder of this new terror and only further provoked my already over active imagination. Visions of the Emperor destroying crops, people dying, and misery swirled in my brain at night. These nightmares manifested themselves into a long bout with insomnia. After enough nights of being awakened in the middle of the night, I soon stopped sleeping altogether.

I took to napping in the afternoon with bright sunlight streaming over my face. Somehow I rationalized that sunlight would keep the demons at bay. My mother tried to help me but could never quite come up with a way to get me to sleep regular hours. She tried giving me sleeping pills...I spit them out. She even tried giving me brandy and that failed to do the trick. Even long days filled with intense exercise couldn't make me sleep.

I began to lose weight and looked drawn. Not knowing what to do my mother called for my father to return from his Senatorial session to help me.

The Emperor could've cared less if my father prematurely left the Imperial Senate. My father was viewed by the Imperials as a quarrelsome malcontent. They were more than happy to be rid of him and his continuous shouts for the restoration of Democracy to the Empire. I've often wondered why my father was never killed during those early years. He never did anything to hide his obvious hatred for what the Emperor did to the Republic and he only begrudgingly supported the man. I can only suspect that they allowed him to live because they feared that his death might have marked him as a martyr. When I got older I read through many of the news reports written by the Imperial-run press and they painted my father as a disturbed man. They openly questioned his sanity. I'm proud to say that my father never stooped to their level. He took the insults like a man, raised a glass to honor the Emperor, and worked behind all of their backs to organize the Rebellion.

Where was I?

Oh yes, when he returned home he immediately came to see me in my bedroom. Concern marred his handsome features as he asked, "What is troubling you, little one?"

"The Emperor is going to kill us all," I answered in a small voice. "I have seen it happen in my dreams. I see fire, Daddy."

Cradling me in his arms he rocked me back and forth. I could tell that he was worried and didn't seem to know what to do. My mother stood in the doorway with tears in her eyes.

Finally he pulled away from me and said, "Do you know what, Leia?"

"What Daddy?"

“I have those same nightmares too. The Emperor is a very bad man. But do you know what I do? I try not to think of the bad things that can happen and I remember good things like cornna and flowers, and the sound of children laughing. As long as these things still exist in the Galaxy, the Emperor has not succeeded in crushing all joy out of the universe,” Bail said, wiping aside a stray tear from my cheek with the tip of his well manicured finger.

“But he is bad, Daddy,” I insisted.

“Yes he is and he feeds off of people’s fears. The more people who are frightened of him, the more powerful he becomes,” my father explained.

I thought about his words for a moment and replied, “So if we do not fear him, he will lose his power?”

Slowly my father nodded his head. “Remember darling, he is still just a man. He’s as mortal as you and I and can be killed.”

“But how can he be killed if he has no heart?” I asked.

My father flickered a small smile at me. “Once long ago he possessed a heart, or at least he gave a good impression of having one. He has long ago forgotten what it is like to care for anyone or anything other than himself. He has been in power for too long. All he cares about is his own well being and making men do what he wants. This is why he needs to be stopped and taken out of office.”

“And you would kill him?” I asked, fear gripping my heart.

Slowly my father nodded his head. “If it came down to it, I would do so.”

I whispered, “But it’s bad to kill people.”

“Yes it is, Leia,” he agreed and stroked my unbound hair. “However, sometimes the death of one person is necessary. The Emperor is a very powerful and strong man. He cannot just be arrested because he has too much influence on those who are weaker than he. This is why Mon Mothma was here. We are working together with a group of other people who also believe that the Emperor needs to be stopped and we are joining together our forces to hopefully one day get him out of office.”

“And then what?”

“Before the Emperor ruled, we lived in a Democracy. Do you know what that means?” I shook my head. He continued, “A Democracy is a government where people are free to express their opinions in the open and not have to live in fear of being killed for disagreeing with a single ruler. The majority of people decide the rules and laws of the land, not one individual. One day we hope to reinstate Democracy throughout the Galaxy – to rid it from tyranny and evil.”

I didn’t understand what he had said for I was much too young. But I could tell from his impassioned words that whatever Democracy meant that is must be very important.

He smiled at me and said, “I do this for you, Leia. So that one day you will live in a Galaxy where you

can openly speak your mind.”

“No one will ever tell me what I can or cannot say,” I stubbornly stated.

My father laughed. “Yes, my child you certainly do speak your mind.” Sobering he said, “Now although I appreciate that about you, you must promise me that you will never tell anyone about what you have heard me say, is that understood?”

“Yes, Daddy,” I uncertainly agreed.

He pointed his finger in my face and stressed, “This is vitally important, Leia. You can talk about this to your mother and to me, but NO ONE else. Not to a servant and not even the droids.”

“Why not, Daddy?” I asked, wondering what harm it would be to talk about it to See-Threepio or Artoo-Deetoo.

“The Emperor has spies everywhere...even here on Alderaan. Although our servants are very trusting and loyal they may talk to a spouse, who may talk to a co-worker, and suddenly the wrong ears could overhear and the news would be passed along to the Emperor. The droids might become lost and fall into the wrong people’s hands. The bad people could extract the information from their memories. I trust you, Leia. I trust you to stay quiet about this.”

I shrunk further back into my pillows in confusion. My father said, “Anytime you think of speaking ill about the Emperor or mentioning what Mon Mothma and I are doing, just remember your nightmares. We must put up a false front that we support him. Only by doing that can we hope to one day take him out of power.” His dark eyes bore down upon my face. He grabbed my hand and squeezed it hard. “If the Emperor were to learn of what I was doing, he will kill me Leia.”

That harsh truth of his statement caused me to gasp aloud. “No!”

“What Mon Mothma and I are doing would be considered treason which is a crime punishable by death. Do you understand that?”

“Why would you do something that could get you killed?” I shouted.

“I do it for you, Leia and for all who live in the Galaxy. The Emperor will stop at nothing. He will kill anyone who gets in his way,” he explained. His voice cracked as he added, “He has to be stopped Leia. Someone has to do it. I’m willing to accept the risks because I just can’t sit back and do nothing. I can remember a time when our Galaxy was at peace and bright and full of hope. I want that for you. I do it all so that one day this Galaxy will be safe for you and your children.”

My young mind couldn’t quite understand everything that my father told me that night. But I would never forget a single word spoken. Over the years I would reflect upon what he told me that night pull strength from his words. I learned of his methods of deception and followed them nearly to the letter.

Even in his later years just prior to my taking over his seat in the Senate he would still argue the dream of restoration of Democracy to the Galaxy. It was always his belief that if he suddenly stopped fighting for what he knew would never be granted, the Emperor would have suspected him of being up to something. He allowed himself to be labeled as a crazy man so he could work behind the scenes to help

bring the Rebellion to life.

Fear of my father's life being in jeopardy caused me to keep my word for my entire life. I never spoke of the Rebellion to anyone, not a soul. I'm certain that the Emperor found utter delightful irony in the fact that my training and devotion to my adopted parents resulted in their deaths.

However, sometimes the death of one person is necessary. Bail Organa's words spoken to me so long ago rang through my head on that fateful day. My nightmares long ago buried resurfaced and blazed to terrifying life. I was utterly helpless and trapped. Had I given away Yavin's location, the men and women of the Rebellion would've been helpless. The Death Star would have still destroyed Alderaan and then destroyed them as well. The death of my father and my world nearly shattered me, but I had no choice. How could I have allowed all of those deaths, all because of an ideal and a dream?

And then Luke entered my cell. Suddenly there was hope again. Their deaths possibly weren't for nothing. The technical readouts still existed. We could triumph. For one glorious moment we were invincible. The destruction of the first Death Star signified that the Emperor could be defeated and that my father's dream was NOT some fallacy or folly. If Tarkin thought that I would cower without my father at my side, he was strongly mistaken. For my father has never truly died. He's still alive...in me. He taught me all about what is good and pure in the Galaxy. He taught me right from wrong. And I will NEVER dishonor his memory by ever walking away from the path of righteousness.

As much as it hurts to think about Alderaan, in my heart, I know that my father is proud of me. He's proud of the choices I made. I hadn't dishonored him on that day, and I haven't yet. This rebel's heart can and never will be silenced.

Entry 5

Each winter the Galaxy celebrated Emperor's Day during the glory days of the Empire. For me this holiday had always been a time for joy because my father would return home from the Imperial Senate and the Palace would be bustling with activity in preparation for the holiday.

Emperor's Day of my sixth year marked the first time that I did not look forward to the occasion. In fact I loathed it. Knowing that the Emperor was far from gentile or kindly, I resented that we were forced to celebrate his rule. Even the staff noticed the sudden change in my demeanor. I was sullen and scowled as I watched them air out the guest rooms and spend hours polishing our fine silver. My mother overheard the staff whispering about me and she called me to her side.

Sitting in our private living room, the warm Alderaanian sun brightened the entire area. Outside the windows a landscape covered in snow sparkled in slumber waiting for the first kiss of spring. I glared at the snow accusingly as if it were the cause of my misery.

"Leia, I need to talk to you," Dorme said. I can recall how she looked that day, she wore a long, brown velvet dress trimmed with antique lace. The brown masked the gray in her hair that was piled into intricate twists that precariously sat atop her head. I thought she looked very youthful that day, a fact that thinking about it now, often seems impossible since all children see adults as ancient and decrepit.

"What is it, Mommy?" I asked.

“You have to start behaving yourself,” she began.

“I haven’t been bad!” I protested.

She meekly smiled. “I know you haven’t [i]done anything wrong. Maybe that was the wrong thing for me to say. What I meant is that the staff has noticed that you aren’t happy about Emperor’s Day coming up.”

I crossed my arms over my chest and frowned. “Why should I be? He’s mean! And he could kill Daddy!”

“Yes, that is true. [i]We know that but the staff does not. They are very concerned about your sudden disinterest in a holiday that you used to love so much. Do you remember what your father had told you about putting on appearances? We need to do that in order to protect him,” she explained.

Staring deeply into her dark brown eyes, I groaned, “I have to pretend.”

“Yes. Better yet, why don’t you focus on the things that you usually love about Emperor’s Day; the wonderful meal, the company, the songs, the dancing...”

“And the presents?” I piped in.

She grinned, reached over and tickled my sides. “Oh yes, the presents!” Cradling me in her lap she sobered up and said, “Not too very long ago, Emperor’s Day used to be called Life Day and was a day set aside for families all over the Galaxy to celebrate during the dull time of winter. Without the pressures of work because of the cold months, it gave all of the residents of the Old Republic a time to enjoy their families and share stories. It was a way to bring families together before they would be thrust apart at spring when they would need to work and tend to their fields and crops. For us, it is a time when your father is able to slip away from Senate and we can be reunited with him. And it gives him a time to unwind and not think about politics. He in turn gives the people of our village, who work so hard throughout the year, a moment of joy by providing for them the most spectacular fireworks show.”

I must’ve had a look of confusion on my face, because she continued, “Your father will need to make a couple of speeches to the crowds about how wonderful the Emperor is, but other than that, the Emperor has very little influence in the holiday. There is so much more to the holiday than him. He has imposed his influence over the day, but the Emperor will never be the central reason that people celebrate Emperor’s Day. It is a day for family, fun, and relaxation. So what do you say, can you get excited about Emperor’s Day again?”

“You mean Life Day?” I asked.

She grinned. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that she was right. As much as I disliked the Emperor, I did love our yearly celebration. My mother must’ve seen the wheels churning in my head for she suggested, “Just between us, maybe we can call it Family Day.”

“Okay!” I agreed, and threw my arms around her shoulders.

From that point forward, I felt lighter and happily offered my help in the preparations for my father's homecoming and the festivities. Wandering around the palace I followed See-Threepio around, assisting him in putting out the decorations. We exchanged all of the pale white candles in the palace with bright magenta ones. And thick, fresh pine boughs were tied into long strands and we wove them up and down all of the many stairwell banisters in the Palace. Their rich fragrance brought a bit of the outdoors inside.

I always remember that Threepio was a bit of a puzzle to me, he was so smart and full of information, but he was a bit of an airhead. I knew that he was an old droid and was very wise and I decided to pick his brain a bit about the old customs of Life Day.

As we were decorating the main stairwell with pine boughs and ribbons, I looked around for any staff. Seeing that we were alone, I asked, "Did they used to decorate their houses with pine on Life Day?"

Threepio jolted and said, "I'm afraid I have no idea what you are talking about, Princess Leia."

"Life Day, you know, what Emperor's Day used to be?" I explained.

The golden droid stared in my direction and said, "I have no recollection of a day called Life Day. You must be mistaken, your Highness. On the planet of Ryloth they had an ancient celebratory day called Death Day where all of the Twi'lek's dance around naked under a full moon to pray to their gods that their year would be filled with successful hunts...is that what you meant?"

Lifting a brow and shaking my head, I emphatically answered, "No."

"Oh, well then I'm afraid I have never heard of this Life Day. It must not have existed," Threepio commented, finishing the curved ends of his bow.

I tapped my foot impatiently on the floor. "It DID exist, my Mommy told me about it."

"Well there are no such celebrations here on Alderaan so I don't know what she was referring to," Threepio commented, grabbing for a fresh roll of ribbon.

"It would've been during the days of the Old Republic?" I offered, hoping that would trigger something in his memory cortex.

The bolt of ribbon slipped out of his hands and Threepio yelped as he accidentally tossed it into the air. The ribbon quickly unraveled and fell all over his shoulders and head, bathing him in streams of magenta silk. I giggled as he made an exasperated noise.

"Oh dear, I've made quite a mess," Threepio complained.

"So how about it?" I doggedly repeated.

"How about what, Mistress Leia?"

Sighing and rolling my eyes, I whined, "The Old Republic? You know, the days before the Emperor?"

Threepio stared back at me blankly and fidgeted in a somewhat flustered manner. He didn't need to say

anything, I suddenly realized that he had no idea what I was talking about...at all. It was as if his memory had been selectively wiped out at some point.

I smiled at him and waved off my question. "Don't worry about it Threepio, maybe I didn't hear her correctly."

"I'm sure she was just referring to Emperor's Day, Princess Leia. Pine boughs are an essential component of the celebration they represent the spirit of the outdoors. Although the rest of the trees may be slumbering during winter, pine still remains green as a reminder that the spirit of rebirth with spring is just around the corner. From what I understand on arid planets such as Tatooine, they use plastic boughs since there are no trees there," Threepio prattled as he detangled the ribbon from his body. He moaned, "I couldn't imagine living somewhere as horrible as that. My joints hurt just thinking about all of that sand."

Seeing that he would never get the ribbon off by himself I came to his rescue. As he continued to ramble on about how Emperor's Day was celebrated on other planets in the Galaxy I began to wonder why it was that Threepio had no memory of events that weren't so long ago. Why would his memory have been erased?

The more I thought about it, the more I desired to know the answer. It would be something that would remain in the back of my mind, and I knew that one day, I would end up confronting my parents with the question. Then again, remembering what I learned when spying on my father, I feared what the answer to that question could be...

Leia stared at the page and chewed on the end of her pen. Her eyes drifted towards her house. Inside she had dozens of books filled with holoimages of her family celebrating Life Day. Placing aside her journal she stretched and then wandered inside and picked one off of a shelf. Flipping through the pages three dimensional photos of the twins when they were small children sprang to life. One image had Jaina laughing hysterically at her confused brother as he was holding a gift from his father of a new hydrospanner. Smiling, Leia recalled how Han had tried to mold his oldest son into becoming a mechanic like himself, but failed miserably. Although there were plenty of times when they were apart and her family in peril, Leia was proud of the fact that with the birth of the New Republic that her children never had to question the reason behind Life Day and that with oppression gone from the Galaxy that they were able to grow up in a time where they did not have to watch everything that they said. A tickle of pride ran down her spine, knowing that she had been a part in making that happen. And even though things were at times rocky for her family in the past, she foresaw that the future for her grandchildren was only brighter.

Recalling her youth, Leia realized that no child should ever have to learn to deceive at too young of an age. It was only because of her own parents love and devotion to her upbringing that such a lesson did not darken her soul for life. Left without the proper guidance such lessons could mar a child's psyche for a lifetime. Thankfully, she thought, there was no reason that her grandkids should ever have to learn such a thing as such things were well in the past.

She realized then how utterly important it was for her to continue writing her journal. Such memories from her past, and her wisdom needed to be shared with those now living in a time of peace. They needed to understand that resting on their laurels invited chaos and that freedom should never be taken for granted.

Entry 6

Leia brewed up a pot of tea and absently stared out the kitchen window as the sun climbed towards its noontime zenith. Outside several small children frolicked in the cobbled street outside playing with groups of brightly colored rings. As she opened the widow to allow a cool breeze to enter into the house, the children's bubbly cries carried on the air. She sighed and poured herself a mug of tea. Blowing on the hot liquid she padded outdoors and back to her patio. Resting her mug on the table she picked up her journal again and allowed the words to flow.

I didn't have very many friends growing up. In fact, Emperor's Day was one of the few occasions where I would actually get to interact with children my own age. Bail and Dorme were very protective of me and didn't allow me to attend regular schools. I suppose I understand their reasoning, it related back to what my father had told me the possibility of strangers overhearing something that they should not. So I didn't attend public schools, I didn't belong to play groups...I didn't have friends.

A few of the servants who worked in the Palace had children. But oftentimes they were too frightened to play with me. I guess they supposed that a Princess would want nothing to do with commoners. They couldn't have been more wrong. Emperor's Day was one of those rare occasions where they would come out of hiding and we would all play together. We would be given the simple...well, not so simple...tasks of laying out all of the silver on the tables. I suppose with place settings of nine utensils per each seat, that wouldn't be seen as simple chore. We'd have races to see who could put out the most pacesettings, whose would be the neatest, and whose utensils shined the brightest.

The cutlery was always so shiny and pretty. Each spoon, fork, and knife were stamped with the Royal Crown of Alderaan. Seven large tables that held upwards of fifty to seventy guests a piece were arranged in a large rectangle in the great dining hall. My father's table was situated right in front of the giant fireplace. In the weeks before Emperor's Day, the cleaning droids had polished the marble floor to a brilliant shine, and had soared through the sky, dusting soot off of every crystal on each of the twelve massive chandeliers that hung in the hall. When the fire was a lit, the sparkling lamps above cast brilliant, refracted rainbows all over the room.

In addition to the intricate pine bough arrangements, my mother would order in exotic flowers to be created into massive arrangements. Each flower came from different corners of the Galaxy. Three days before the guests began to arrive, she, I, Threepio, and several servants would gather in one room and spend the entire day arranging the bouquets.

When we'd first enter the room we'd nearly be blown over by the staggeringly overwhelming fragrance that only ten thousand flowers gathered in a single confined space could produce. We'd have to allow the room to air a bit before we could stay inside, otherwise we'd immediately all develop headaches. Once the fragrance had spilled out into the hallway we'd begin our arrangements.

I'd usually get paired with a very shy servant girl named Suulsa. At first she'd stare at me with saucer sized frightened eyes. I'd have to break the ice and joke with her to help ease her fear of me. I'd have to do this EVERY year. It got rather frustrating, but since I was starved for conversation with kids my own age I happily began our yearly ritual of trying to get her to open up to me. As we'd clip out the messy pollen blobs on lilies I'd tell her that we needed to make sure that we didn't drop any of the yellow pollen. If we did and made a mess, then the wood sprites would come into our rooms in the middle of the night and turn our skin green. She'd always recoil in horror and then start to giggle at the thought.

Maybe it was the fact that I didn't have many friends and didn't know how to properly interact with them, but I always tried to frighten Suulsa by creating one outlandish story after another. Looking back on it, I suppose that I was probably subconsciously trying to find someone else who felt the way that I did after I'd learned the truth about the Emperor. Suulsa was a simple girl, however. And she always just laughed off my ridiculous stories.

Two days before Emperor's day my father returned home from the Senate. Usually he arrived carrying vast numbers of bags filled with presents and hidden wonders. That year was of no exception. Perhaps his guilt of robbing me of my innocence had inspired him to purchase dozens more gifts than one little girl could ever possibly have a use for. Whatever the case, I remember nearly passing out when I saw the mountains of glittering gifts just waiting for me to open.

Before that could happen I got swept up in the madness of days of meeting and greeting guests, waiting impatiently for our delicious smelling feasts, spending hours listening to wonderful music and folktales, and then experiencing the joy of dance.

Emperor's Day Eve had finally arrived in all of its glory. I awoke early and bounded happily into my parents room. Crawling onto their bed I began to jump up and down, shouting, "It's Family Day Eve! It's Family Day Eve!"

My poor father groggily woke up and arched in inquiring brow in Dorme's direction. She gave him one of her usual "I'll tell you later" looks, stared at the ungoldly pre-dawn hour on the chronometer and promptly rolled on her side to go back to sleep.

I certainly wasn't going to stand for THAT! Worming my way up the center of the bed I yanked back the covers in attempts of getting my parents up. My father yawned, stretched, and snatched me in his arms. In one swift movement he dove me under the covers and proceeded to tickle me until I was crying from laughing so hard. My kicking and protesting to my father's relentless fingers finally forced my groaning mother out of bed.

I recall her grumbling something about only a welp of a Sith would ever want to get up this early. As my mother went into the refresher to prepare herself for the day I snuggled against my father and excitedly asked, "So what did you bring me this year?"

Stroking my hair, he barked out a laugh. "You will just have to wait and see, young one."

Jutting out my lower lip, I pouted and complained, "No FAIR!"

Bail's rich and hearty laughter filled the room and he asked, "Well what do you want, Princess?"

Innocently, I shouted, "A brother!"

My answer caused his smile to fade from his face. From my spot I swear I felt his heart stop beating in his chest. Cautiously, he asked, "Why would you want that?"

"Then I could have someone to boss around and do my chores for me," I matter-of-factly replied.

He burst out laughing, again. "Something tells me that he would object to that."

"I would be older than him. He wouldn't be able to argue with me," I stated.

Looking back, I wonder if Bail suddenly thought about Luke and tried to determine if he would obey every command I issued to him or not. Shaking his head, he replied, "He would be his own person, Leia. You wouldn't have the right to tell him what to do."

"But you tell Threepio what to do, how is that different?"

"Threepio? Threepio's a DROID. He was created to serve the commands of humans. Humans aren't born that way," my father explained, looking somewhat bewildered.

"But our servants do whatever we ask of them and they're human," I pointed out.

"Yes they do. And they do that because they are well paid for their services. They do their jobs because they receive compensation, not because they feel obligated to do whatever we command of them," he stressed.

"Even though we're royalty?" I asked.

"Yes, Leia. If they weren't paid, they wouldn't lift a finger to help us out and I wouldn't blame them either," he answered. Holding me tightly at his side, he continued, "Just because we belong to the Royal House of Organa, doesn't mean that we are better than anyone else. Do you understand that? We have to know that with our bearing and birthright holds responsibility to the people of Alderaan. We are ambassadors for our people. Long ago our family founders were chosen to lead because our ancestors were intelligent, compassionate, and humble. These are the qualities that our family works to preserve with each generation. We have a legacy to follow. And that is not always easy, Leia dear. Pride is an ugly thing. If you believe that you are better than other people, they will resent you. Resentment inspires hatred and anger. And you can't lead people who are angry with you."

Mulling over his words, I finally asked, "So I'm no better than anyone else."

"That's right," my father replied. "And neither am I. Remember money comes and goes. Even Palaces, and whole civilizations eventually will crumble and fall. What endures over time is what resides in your heart. If you believe in yourself, and in always following the path of righteousness, others will follow you. You must always believe that the choices you make in life will be what is best for the people for whom you serve. I work as a Senator in a corrupt system. Although I am often drowned out in a sea of political discourse, I still fight the good fight. Someone has to be willing to stand up for goodness."

"Even if it could get you killed?" I whispered.

"Yes, Leia. Because sometimes there are things worse than death," he replied.

Completely confused, I asked, "What would that be?"

"Sitting back and doing nothing. To accept complacency and to allow evil and misery spread over the lives of innocent people is worse than death. For if you are willing to sit by and enjoy your own comfortable life you have made yourself blind to the suffering of others. While you rest on your rich chairs and couches, others are freezing on the streets. While you are devouring a ten course meal there are people out there starving, hungering for a crumble of food. Every Emperor's Day the Royal House of Alderaan gives away millions of credits to her people in order to help ease their suffering during the cold winter months. While in the Senate, I fight to remind my fellow Senators that there are still people in the Galaxy who rely upon governmental aide in order to survive. We may be royals, but it is the common people who are the backbone of our society. They grow the food that we put in our mouths. They string the threads that make our clothes. They assemble our vehicles that allow us to fly in space. If they all lost hope that their lives would never improve, they would find no reason to go to work. Society would fall apart and we would cease to exist. It is our responsibility to maintain hope and to give the illusion of safety to others in order to keep the dream of a better tomorrow, alive."

I suddenly felt very guilty for trying to frighten Suulsa having done everything that an Organa wasn't supposed to do. I worried that I had failed my father. I secretly vowed to never behave like that again.

"Then why did you get me so many gifts instead of giving them to a poor person?" I asked.

My father smiled and then groaned. "Because, I'm doing a miserable job as your parent. You shouldn't be learning any of this stuff until you are much older. You're too young to take on these burdens."

"I think you're a great, Daddy. I wouldn't want anyone else but you," I replied and snuggled against his chest.

Bail wrapped his arms tightly around me and with a voice thick with emotion responded, "You have no idea how much that means to me my child. No idea."

Entry 7

I was too restless to wait for my mother to put me through the torture of putting my hair up into intricate hairbraids. Dorme rolled her eyes as I continued to squirm, twist my head around and kept pestering her with questions. Finally, she simply combed my hair down the middle, grabbed a couple of large bone, circular clips, and twisted my hair around them into two large buns on either side of my head.

She arched a brow at the interesting style and muttered, "Somehow I doubt your hair will stay in place all day like this but it was fast to put up."

"Can I please go now?" I begged.

Dorme shook her head and agreed, but not before she tugged out the wrinkles in my long white dress. Shrieking in delight I tore out of my bedroom and raced down the grand stairwell towards the first floor. My ears immediately detected the rumble of feet and masculine voices ahead. Guests had started to arrive.

Panting, I rounded the corner towards the main entrance and skidded to a stop. It seemed as if there were miles and miles of adults wandering around. Where were the children?

My lips were curled into a pout as I trudged around and endured the constant bombardment of pinching fingers to my cheeks and listening to grown women blather about how big I'd grown. Soon, I was deflated and bored.

I headed towards the open living room and plopped down on a couch. Curling my legs under my body, I tried not to cry from disappointment. I never got to hang out with children my age, and Emperor's Day was the only time I usually go to. I was depressed, dejected, and angry. Why did my father get my hopes all up for this day? Dropping my head into my hands I sniffled and began to cry.

Then I heard a low whine. Peering under my arm I saw Artoo rolling around on the floor by my couch.

"Go away," I ordered.

The little droid whined in protest and moved closer to me. Beeping wildly, he attempted to get my attention.

Angrily, I slammed my fist into his domed head and whined, "I don't want to play with you, Artoo!"

Artoo emitted a low, sad whine, rolled backwards and then opened one of his side compartments and grabbed my foot with one of his extending arms. He held on tight and shook me.

Quite mad now, I turned around and wanted to scream at the droid. Looking up I saw many dignitaries wandering around and suddenly realized that screaming at my droid in front of them probably wouldn't be the kind of lasting impression my father wanted me to imprint on them.

I growled, "Fine, I'll go with you!" Artoo chirped happily, let go of my leg and buzzed down the hall. Wiping tears from my face I ran after him in hot pursuit. The little droid then stopped in front of the closed doors of the auxiliary dancing hall. I stared at him with confusion and asked, "What? We never go in there."

He rolled out of the way and shined a light towards the handle, indicating for me to open the door. Still angry, I ripped the door open and was greeted by the most amazing site. The smaller dancing room that we never used had been turned into a children's paradise for fun! Large funhouse castles, bouncing trampolines, miles of toys and foot powered swoopbikes filled the room. Mouth gaping with amazement the cries of dozens of children's happy voices filled my ears.

In the center of the room, just on the other side of the large bouncing trampoline, I saw flashes of gold and a high pitched outraged cry pierce the air. Motioning Artoo to follow me, we headed towards the curious sight. As we rounded the corner, to my great dismay, I saw Threepio lying on the ground, thrashing his arms and legs around as three older boys sat on top of him and at his sides plucking at his golden coverings with multi-tools.

"Artoo! Please help MEEEEEE!" Threepio cried.

"Hey! Get off of him and leave him alone!" I shouted running over to my mechanical friend's aid.

One of the boys turned his shaggy head and said, "Buzz off!"

Fuming, I planted my fists on my hips and murderously glared at the boys.

"I think he's got a ZX-14 power converter hot wired into him here...I could really use that for my swoopbike," the fat, brown haired boy straddling Threepio's hips said.

I couldn't, wouldn't take any more of that kind of disrespect! I marched towards where the boy sat and violently shoved him off of Threepio. The two other boys looked up in alarm that switched over to blinding anger as they wheeled upon me. The shaggy haired boy grabbed my arm and twisted it behind painfully behind my back. The second jumped over Threepio and stood in front of my face. Squeezing my cheeks between his thumb and index finger he seethed, "Leave us alone, pipsqueak."

"Squeak this you, nerfherder!" I shouted, wrenching my face out of his grasp I bit down on the soft skin between his thumb and index finger, then swung and the heel of my palm connected with his nose. The boy yowled. As he did so, I powered my left knee in front of me, shoved my foot backwards, and kicked the boy restraining me in his gut. Artoo rolled to Threepio's side and sprayed a stream of water at the third boy who I'd shoved onto the floor as he was making to

leap on top of me.

Artoo's piercing cry echoed throughout the room. The boy I had just kicked tackled me from behind, and we crashed to the floor. Pain rocketed through my chin as it connected with the floor. I screamed in agony and anger, spun and slammed my fist into the boy's jaw. He flew off of me, as I surged to my feet. My left bun spiraled out of its hold as I backed up and stood next to Threepio with my fists upwards ready to pound on the next person ready to challenge me.

The three boys clumped together and stared at me hard, trying to decide what to do. From all around them, the other children in the room suddenly burst out laughing and began shouting insults at the boys. Now thoroughly humiliated, the boys began to crowd around me. A girl, who couldn't have been any older than four years old, who'd been jumping off of the trampoline, sprung up in the air, back flipped and landed protectively in front of me. Her red hair was covered in braids and she wore a strange reptilian looking outfit. She snarled at the boys. "You'll have to get through me if you want her boys!"

The boys laughed at the tiny girl coming to my rescue.

From the floor, Threepio sat up and glanced at my bedraggled appearance and said, "Oh my, Princess Leia you are filthy! It is quite unbecoming for a member of the Royal Family of Alderaan to appear before guests in such a disheveled state. I do suggest that you clean up before dinner."

My heart filled with pride as the look of anger on the boys faces suddenly shifted towards blinding terror. Collectively they took a step back...right into the legs of my father.

All three boys gulped and stared up into the Prince of Alderaan's stern face. Calmly, he asked, "Who started this?"

As I stared at the faces of the fearful boys, I realized that for all that they were doing something very wicked and wrong when I approached them, but I was as much to blame as they were for the fight. I cleared my throat and said, "I did."

The children murmured around me and the girl in front of me spun and flashed me a quizzical look.

I stepped around her and explained, "They were trying to take Threepio apart. When I asked them to stop, they didn't. So I attacked."

A flash of merriment lit up my father's eye as that mental image must've crossed through his mind. He quickly smothered a smirk with the heel of his hand and then regained his composure. He studied the boys and noted that one had a bleeding hand and nose, the other was soaking wet, and the third was grabbing his stomach. Clearing his throat he said, "But they obviously fought back."

"Yes, father," I agreed.

"How is everyone? No broken bones?" The boys all shook their heads. "Alright, go get cleaned up, the lot of you. And remember, next time a lady asks you to stop doing something...listen to her."

The wet boy's mouth opened wide with wonder, "You're not going to punish us?"

"No, Young Motti, I think you can wait until your parents find out how you and your friends got into an all out brawl with a girl. I'll let them decide how best to punish you," Bail replied.

The brown haired young man looked on in horror and then ran off.

When the boys were gone and the other children had returned to their playing, Bail leaned down in front of me and pushed my hair behind my ear. He sighed, "That wasn't very diplomatic of you, now was it?"

I shifted on my feet and answered, "No, father."

"Did you reveal your identity to them when you asked them to stop what they were doing?"

I shook my head.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because, you told me that I shouldn't feel overly important for who I am," I answered.

My father seemed rather confused on how to address that unexpected answer. I then added, "And because I forgot."

He sighed and said, "Violence is never the answer, darling. Just remember that, ok?"

"Yes, Daddy," I said.

The girl at my side piped in, "You should be proud of her, she fought well. Leia will make a great warrior some day."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"My name is Teneneil Djo."

Bail smiled and replied, "She's a Princess from the planet of Dathomir."

The girl frowned and said, "I am a warrior."

"Yes, I'm sure you are," Bail answered. "Come on, Leia. Let's see about getting you cleaned up before your mother sees what happened to you."

I remember smiling back at my new friend as my father led me away to be cleaned up. Teneneil and her family had to leave the celebration early for an emergency back home. The rest of the activities from that year blur in my mind. The funny thing is that neither Teneneil, nor I even remembered that we had met once as kids. It wasn't until she and I were pacing and waiting for Tenel Ka to give birth to her triplets that we started walking down memory lane and Alderaan was brought up. In passing, she mentioned that she had once been there, that in fact, it was one of the few times in her early life that she had actually left her homeplanet of Dathomir.

When we realized who each other was we both had a good laugh.

On a less amusing note, Motti, it turns out later became an Admiral in the Imperial fleet. According to records that we uncovered after the fall of the Empire, it appears that he had served and died on the First Death Star. The records also show that he and my father...my real father... clashed heads. My father was reprimanded for attempting a force choke on Motti.

How sad is it that when I read that, I smiled?

It's funny how fate allows people to cross over each other's lives many times over. Sometimes,

people are just destined to come in contact with each other....

Leia laid down her pen and realized that evening was rapidly approaching. As she stood up from her bench on the porch she heard the approach of a landspeeder coming up the driveway. Padding towards the sound, she greeted Han as he came to a stop in front of their home.

Han jumped out of the speeder and left his cooler in the backseat. He swept Leia up in his strong, long arms and said, "How are you doing today, honey?"

"Good. How was fishing?" Leia asked.

His lips curled into his famous lop-sided smile and he replied, "Not well. Rowlon and I didn't catch anything. There was a whole pack of teenagers who were out in their speederboats churning up the lake so much that the fish all went deep underwater. Damned kids, they even sprayed us with water a couple of times during the afternoon, I think just to spite us."

A soft giggle erupted from Leia's throat.

"What?" Han demanded.

She poked him in the stomach and said, "You! You're getting old, Han."

Hazel eyes showing a sliver of despair, Han groaned, "Oh man, that is something my old man would've said. I AM getting old."

"That's not a bad thing you know," Leia replied, lightly caressing his back.

"Nope, I guess it's not. I mean, it ain't the years that count but the parsecs, right?" Han quipped.

"You betcha!" Leia agreed. Standing on her tiptoes she lightly brushed her lips against his. Han grinned and captured his wife in his arms and deepened their kiss.

When she pulled away, Leia felt slightly flushed. Even after all of this time, Han could still take her breath away. A mischievous grin spread over her face and she kidded him, "Well I for one am glad you didn't catch any fish today."

"Why not?"

"Because you don't reek!"

A belly rumbling laugh exploded from Han's gut as he led Leia towards their home. "Well, I guess that is a bonus."

"Come on, we'll cook up some of your catches from yesterday," Leia answered. As they passed by the porch, Leia grabbed her journal and brought it indoors and set it aside. As she watched her wonderful husband walk towards the kitchen and start sifting through spices trying to decide how to prepare their fish, she decided that more entries in her book could wait until tomorrow. Tonight she would devote entirely to her wonderful husband, the man who fate had thrown in her path all those years ago.

Entry 8

Han blinked his eyes open and squinted them quickly shut as the bright Nubian sun shone directly onto his face. Groaning, he rolled over to wrap his arm around Leia and bury his eyes in her sweet

smelling hair. Instead, his arm found an empty, cold bed. Disappointed, he frowned and sat up into the sun. Han flipped back his covers, stood up, stepped into his slippers, and headed into the refresher. As he scratched his bare chest he let loose a cavernous yawn. Groggy, he stared at his reflection in the mirror and grunted at the thick layer of gray stubble that stood to attention around his face.

"Hell, I'm looking old," he muttered sadly as he ran his fingers through his more gray than brown hair. He shaved and showered and headed towards the heart of the bungalow searching for Leia. He found her sitting at the holoemitter talking to Jaina.

"Hey, kiddo," he said.

Leia jumped in alarm and spun in her seat. A small, nervous grin spread across her face as she said, "You startled me Han. I didn't hear you."

"Boy you two must've been in deep conversation if your Jedi instincts were even turned off. What's up?" Han asked, worried that maybe some new Galactic sized calamity had again struck his family.

"Nothing, Dad. You know, just girl talk," Jaina quickly covered.

Han's eyebrows shot up like rockets, as he quipped, "Girl talk? You? Now I *know* you're up to something...come on out with it."

Jaina's blue holo-image folded her arms across her chest and she arched an eyebrow straight back at her father. "Well alright Dad if you really want to know...you see I've missed my last perio..."

Throwing his hands up in defeat, Han retorted, "Sorry I asked! Sorry I asked!" He hurried into the kitchen and missed seeing his wife wink at her daughter's image, suppressing a giggle.

Casually leaning towards the kitchen, Leia asked, "What are your plans today, Han?"

The rich aroma of caff filled the air as Han filled a mug and took a long draught of the warm, bitter substance. He answered, "I've got work to do on the *Falcon*. I think I might go into Theed though. I need to pick up a few spare parts that they just don't carry out here in the sticks. You wanna go?"

"I don't think so. I really want to keep working on my project," Leia guardedly replied.

Alarms sounded in the back of Han's mind; his wife never missed an opportunity to go shopping. Something was *definitely* up he determined. He slammed his mug of caff onto the kitchen counter and glared in her direction.

As if sensing his train of thought, Leia sung out, "Really, Han. The sooner I can get the project done, the sooner I can start doing other things." She then turned back to her daughter and talked to her in a low voice.

Jaina's voice called out into the room, "Bye, Dad!"

"Bye, Jaina," Han answered and watched Leia sign off and saunter in his direction. She wore a sea foam colored pants suit and had her hair twisted up into several elaborate buns that sat around her head in various places. As he often did, Han marveled at her ability to expertly put up her hair in such intricate settings in such short periods of time. Then again, he thought, he had no idea how long she'd already been up this morning – it could've been hours for all he knew.

He sighed. Leia rounded the kitchen cabinets and wrapped her arms around his chest. Any signs of annoyance on Han's behalf disappeared as he wrapped his arms tightly around his wife. He asked, "You sure you don't want to go into Theed? We can lunch at that little café that you love so much."

Leia inhaled Han's reassuring, masculine clean scent and answered, "As lovely as that sounds, I just don't feel like spending my entire day wandering in and out of junk shops with you."

"Well you could go shopping on your own. You know there's no way in hell I can stop you from doing that," Han said.

"I'm just not in the mood. Besides, I've got a dinner to put together tonight," Leia revealed.

A lopsided smirk spread over Han's lips, as he crowed, "See, I knew you were up to something!"

She fluttered a grin at him and replied, "Well it's nothing big, Chariss and Rowlon want to come by and partake in some of that lovely fish the two of you have caught recently."

Han's lips dropped into a frown, he asked, "That's it?"

Leia laughed. "What were you expecting that the entire New Republic fleet was coming for a feast?"

He shrugged his shoulders and planted a kiss on her forehead. "I guess not. What time do you want me back by?"

"The usual," Leia answered and let him go.

Han's shoulder popped loudly as he reached into the cupboard and removed a travel mug to transfer his caff into. He groaned as his body again mercilessly reminded him that he was falling apart. He then glanced at Leia and saw the love in her eyes and realized that it probably didn't matter that he was aging. "Well, I'd better get going. You need me to get you anything?"

"You can pick up a couple of bottles of wine if you'd like," Leia said after a few moments of reflection.

"A couple? Has someone developed a drinking problem?" Han asked.

Folding her arms over her chest, Leia cleared her throat and retorted, "Possibly...I was just recalling how at last night's dinner you downed practically an entire bottle by yourself."

Han's face turned bright red. "Oh. In that case, maybe I'll pick up three."

Leia giggled and shoved him towards the door. Pecking him on the lips she sent him on his merry way. When the sound of his speeder had vanished, a sly grin had formed over her lips, contented with knowing that Han still had no idea what to expect when he came home. She snuck a glance at her wrist chronometer. She still had a couple of hours before the girls showed up to start preparing for the feast. She turned around and picked up her journal, deciding to pen in a little more before they arrived. Grinning, she thought that at least that way her cover story would still be true – from a certain point of view.

A warm morning breeze kissed her skin as she walked out onto her patio. Leia brushed off a couple of errant leaves that had fallen onto her chaise lounge. She tucked her feet under her body, dropped onto the chaise, and opened up the journal. Skimming the pages to see where she'd left off she raised her pen and began to write....

Off and on for the rest of the winter my father had occasionally come home. I had gotten used to him showing up with his rebellion friends and disappearing for hours on end. I rarely go to see him at those times, unless I forced myself into the parlor to quietly sit and listen to them plotting the demise of the Empire.

Mercifully, that long winter FINALLY ended. By the time the last clumps of snow had melted, none of us wanted to see the white substance again for a very long time. Spring arrived in all of her glory, bathing the world in golden, warm sunshine and painted the fields with wildflowers and bright green grass. Animals who had slumbered all winter were seen frolicking about, racing through the fields, and devouring sweet, fresh roots. The skies filled with the cheerful songs of dozens of songbirds, circling and looking for new mates.

I tore out of the palace and spent every waking minute that I could outdoors. The Palace possessed many acres of gardens which provided wonderful places for a child to get lost in her own imagination and fanciful dreams. Oftentimes, I'd head outside and only hours later, when Threepio was sent to locate me, would I realize that the day was already nearly over. My skin turned from a dull pale white to a golden brown in a matter of weeks.

My mother let me run wild without much interference. She'd tell me that it was healthy for me to want to be outdoors, and that when I became a grownup I would look back on those days fondly. She couldn't have been more right. Dorme was wise beyond her years, for now, all I have left are the memories of my youth and those days of sunshine burn brightly.

One day it was very warm outside and I had stripped down to my shorts and undershirt. When the gardeners weren't looking, I bolted down the long rows of perfectly pruned Alderaanian night roses as they were being watered by high placed sprinklers. My feet slipped in the slick mud and I got utterly drenched from misting water. I shrieked merrily and forgot about the darkness that loomed outside of the security of the Palace. I forgot to hate the Emperor, and I enjoyed being young and carefree.

My father picked that day to unexpectedly take a break from his Senatorial duties to come home for a long weekend. He found me racing up and down the muddy paths, oh I must've been a frightful mess! Mud had splattered all over me from end to end. When I heard him clear his throat I slipped and fell face first into the thick gunk. Dejected and embarrassed, I stood up and was quite distressed when the sprinklers chose that moment to go off.

I was a disaster. My cheeks burned hot with shame for how frightful I must look. Bail laughed at what obviously must have been a deep pout that covered my comically mud covered face.

Meekly, I asked, "Are you mad at me, Daddy?"

Scratching his chin, Bail chuckled and asked, "Why would you think that? I was once a young man too and used to enjoy getting muddy."

"But I don't enjoy it...it just happened!" I whined as I exited the garden, and walked towards him. The bristly grass felt strange between my toes after having run in the beds. It was warm, and with every step I took mud dripped off of me. I wondered if I would get in trouble for getting the grass dirty.

Bail did refuse to touch me, as he was still wearing his Senatorial finery, but he gladly walked beside me as we headed into the mud room. There he made me climb into a deep wash basin. I sat down and pouted again. He took off his coat and stripped down to his undershirt and turned the water on me.

I yowled, "Cold, Daddy!"

"Sorry," he said, grinned and then readjusted the water temperature. He scrubbed me down from head to toe, tickling me the whole time. I didn't know whether to laugh, cry, scream, or shout – in fact, I probably did all of those things. When he was done and was reasonably sure that I was no longer a mud ball, he swaddled me in a thick white towel and then asked, "So, I believe that I deserve a proper welcome home greeting, what do you think?"

I grinned and threw my arms around his shoulders. Bail lifted me out of the sink and I squeezed my legs around his back, embracing him as tightly as my thin, little body could manage. I figured the tighter I squeezed, the more I'd show him how much I loved him.

When I pulled away, Bail's face was wet with tears. Being the wonderful man that he was, when I asked him what was wrong, he didn't burden me with the truth about how tense things were getting for him in the Senate, instead he answered, "I'm just happy because I love you so much, Leia."

My hug worked! "I love you too, Daddy!" I said. "I love you this much!" I then squeezed him again.

He laughed and twirled me in a circle. I giggled happily as he then finally put me down. Taking my hand he said, "Let's go find your Mom, okay?"

"I know where she is! Follow me!" I then bolted from him and tore off through the Palace with him following me lazily behind. We spent that weekend as a family, playing games, eating our meals outdoors and enjoying the fine weather. I think it was probably the best weekend of my life. At that time, I'd never felt more loved, nor had ever appreciated my parents more. They didn't give me gifts, toys, or trinkets, instead they gave me the most precious gifts of all, their love and time. So often families work so hard that they often forget to just enjoy spending time together and to me that was the most precious of treasure of all. For a child, even though he or she may not know it at the time, those free hours spent with your parents create the longest lasting memories.

The toys of my youth are gone, the pictures are gone, but my memories will always remain strong. Bail and Dorme will always remain alive as long as I still breathe. They live in my heart, forever. I thank my natural mother from the very depths of my soul for sending me to live with them – for although I would've loved to have known my real mother, I know they both raised me the best that they could. I never was in want of anything growing up, and the only thing I wanted to do was to please them. I loved them dearly...I still do. And I am grateful that they raised and helped me to become the woman that I am today.

As Leia stared at the last words written on the page, she realized that, for now at least, her project was over. She smiled brightly believing that she had done her parents justice with her words. That lonesome part of her soul that had been aching for Alderaan a few days earlier was at peace. Just remembering her parents was enough to remind her of their love. In a way, she almost felt as if they had given her a tight embrace from across the ages.

The ghosts of the past spoke to the living and only through the power of story would their tales live on and they would never be forgotten.

The sound of voices drifted on the air from the driveway. Jaina had most likely arrived to help make preparations for Han's surprise birthday party that they'd all planned. Leia shut her journal and got to her feet. A broad smile crested her face as she wove her way through her home and readied herself to receive all of her children and their families. Her home would soon be filled with laughter, shouting, and joy.

Her front door burst open and her nearly three-year old granddaughter, Lynnia, burst through the doors. She shouted, "GRAMMA!" Leia smiled, the dark-haired imp had been given those same ridiculous looking buns on either side of her head that Dorme found so easy to set her hair in so long ago. Throwing out her arms, Leia embraced the child and lifted Jaina's little girl in her arms. Lynnia squeezed her tightly and said, "Know what?"

"What honey?"

"I love you THISSSS MUCH!!" Lynnie pecked Leia on the cheek and then squeezed her neck tightly.

Leia burst out laughing as she was overcome by tears of joy and sorrow both at once.

Jaina burst into the room carrying two large trays. Seeing her mother's expression, she stopped dead in her tracks and asked, "What's wrong, Mom?"

Lynnie pulled away and Leia gazed into the girl's face that looked so much like her own. She smiled brightly and said, "Nothing, Jaina. Absolutely nothing. In fact, I'd say that everything's about perfect."

Arching a none-too-convinced brow, Jaina shook her head and retreated into the kitchen and explained the timeline to her mother on when Raven, Jacen, Tenel Ka and Anakin and the triplets would be arriving. Leia put her granddaughter down and took her hand as she absorbed the schedule details.

Pushing aside her memories of her past, Leia stepped toward the kitchen to enjoy the simple pleasure of spending time with her loved ones and to create some new memories that, maybe one day, would be written down and shared for future generations to read.

The End

Bonus Untitled Vignette that relates to this story:

The howling wind caused the windows to shudder inside the Royal Palace of Alderaan. Leia approached one of the large paned windows and squeaked the heel of her hand over the condensation that had formed over the glass. Outside, heavy, relentless snow plunged towards the ground, creating another thick layer of the cold substance over the dormant Alderaan soil.

Sighing, Leia thought back to her sixth year and realized that was the last winter that she could remember seeing so much snow. Now, ten years later, it felt as though the seasons would never change. Absently, her right index finger began to draw out images onto the condensation. In her mind's eye she saw blades of fresh, pale green grass that tickled and prickled her bare feet. From the jagged line she drew a trunk of a tree and created long branches that she generously weighed with blooming shurra fruit blossoms. Closing her eyes, the blanketed gardens down below sang with life. Birds merrily chirped as they raced through the air, and flutterbugs decorated the trees with their vibrant purple wings. The fresh, floral scent of spring held the promise to nourish her cold soul.

She opened her eyes and scowled. Still winter.

The noise of servants rushing about caught her attention. Swiftly, she approached the back door and beamed. "Father!"

"Hello, Princess," Bail exclaimed as he removed his hat and gloves. Leia gladly took the cloak from his shoulders and handed it to a servant before she tightly embraced her father. When he pulled away from her, he said, "You look prettier each time I see you...I can't believe you're sixteen already!"

"And you don't look a single day older," she replied.

"Liar! I'm turning into an old man," Bail replied, pointing to his receding hairline.

Leia saw past his chipper attitude, and saw melancholy marring his brown eyes. She asked, "Father, why have you returned from the Senate so soon?"

He gazed at her and sighed. "I never could get anything past you, could I?" He walked along with his daughter clinging to his arm. Together they entered his study and sat upon a large nerf-hide couch. The musky scent of rich leather permeated the air. Absently, Bail picked up one of Leia's braids and ran his index finger over her soft hair. He explained, "The Emperor does nothing to ease the suffering of people all over the Galaxy, Leia. I don't know what to do. I think I've given up all hope on ever getting through to the man."

"He shot down your impoverished aid bill," Leia stated.

Bail nodded. Curling his fist under his palm he fought back a swell of frustrated tears. "It's hopeless. Now the poor will never receive the aid they need."

"No it's not. Father, you haven't been working with Mon Mothma and the others for so long to give up now! You know why you must remain in the Senate," Leia stressed.

Bail gazed at his daughter with pride and sadness. She certainly possessed her mother's dogged determination.

"I don't think I can do it any longer, Leia," he replied.

Setting her jaw, Leia stared at her father and said, "Then let me take your place."

"What?"

"Come on, father, you know I'm ready," Leia excitedly exclaimed.

Bail launched to his feet. "Absolutely not! You're only a girl. You'll get eaten alive by those vicious, power-hungry politicians."

Scowling, Leia stated, "I'm not a child any longer." She got up and raced in front of him, forcing her father to meet her pleading eyes. "I'm ready to take your place. I've been studying political theory for over ten years..."

"Studying is one thing, but actually being a member of the Imperial Senate is another! No one will respect you!" Bail shouted.

Grinning, she replied, "And what's wrong with that? Our plan has always been to keep ourselves visible while we secretly plan its demise. What better way to keep them unawares of our treachery than to send your inexperienced, young..."

"Headstrong..."

"...daughter in your place? You will do more good working for the Rebellion here than on Imperial City. Please, the time is right," Leia explained. "Too many people depend on us." Bail seemed uncertain. She continued, "You taught me to never give up. And I won't give up on the dream of restoring Democracy to this Galaxy. And neither can you."

Bail secretly beamed, this was exactly the outcome he had hoped for in his early return home. When one person's strength fails, another must rise to the occasion. In this instance, Padme's daughter would now carry the torch for freedom that her mother had always held so long ago.

Silently, he nodded his head.

Leia squealed with delight and squeezed him tightly, "I won't ever let you down, Father. I promise."

Bail lovingly replied, "I know you won't. I know you won't."
