

"Now, what do we have here? This is no place to be dallying about."

Soundless steps danced across an open ocean, all deep waters and distant, brilliant stars in explosions of color. Lights and shadows alike lifted up from the mirror-surface depths to swirl around bare feet and surround a willowy body, flowing and following every movement. Floating white hair blazed a trail like a comet tail.

A silver smile like a falling star graced a sightless face.

The figure approached another across the ever-shifting, unending landscape. This one was much taller and broader, a veritable wall, with rich brown fur and a small black nose and clawed hands and feet. There were flashes of scenery around him, a constant churning of the star-sea directly below him, as if he stirred the waters to storm. One moment, it was a canopy of leaves. Immense, towering trees to dwarf skyhook buildings and treehouses nestled amongst them. Then, the inside of some starship, stretches of black space. Many planets. Many battles. Many faces, but a few in particular.

The larger figure startled at the unfamiliar voice and approach, turning about and roaring mightily. The woman, however, merely tilted her head and kept her faint smile in place, her ears flicking.

"Hello to you too, hmm?"

The Wookiee growled. The Miraluka laughed, and it was bell chimes. Where she stepped closer to him, the waters calmed and stilled into peaceful starscapes.

"I apologize, my friend, I didn't mean to surprise you. I just came to investigate. I've been rather alone here, you see, and you're the first visitor I've had. Most don't linger, not here. You're not really supposed to."

"Grrroww."

"You have people waiting for you very eagerly, you know. I'm told it simply doesn't do to keep a princess waiting."

"Rrrrow, grrggghhow."

"'Not ready yet' and 'they still need me' don't tend to hold up, I'm afraid. Even when we make our peace with death, we leave things unfinished."

The growl she got back this time was sharper, more hostile.

"Because I know the feeling, believe me."

"Grrrwwwowwr."

"I don't have to. I see you very clearly. I know not your pain but I know mine, and that is universal in this beautiful Galaxy of ours."

Another growl, snapping teeth and a lifted, waved hand. The woman's tapered ears twitched back as she shook her head.

"Don't be rude. Your temper is little use to you here, anymore. You could toss me about and it would do nothing. The only thing for us here is to talk. So?"

He tried to shove her away, a mighty shove that once would have thrown Humans. Instead, he passed right through her. His expression transformed in engraved perplexion, and she laughed.

"Tsk. See? No good. You're going to have to try something other than fighting."

"Rrrrrnnngh, grrrooo ooowr rwwwe, nngwm."

"Fought a lot, did you?"

The Wookiee stared at her eyeless, freckled face for a long time before groaning and then slumping over, his arms crossed in evident grumpiness. However, as the woman just waited and smiled, he relented, answering. He talked awhile, roughly. He spoke of slavers and tyrants, smugglers and princesses and rebellions. He spoke of battles and victories. An award hung on his neck. Then...change that didn't really change much. Politics and struggle. Failing family. Or family failing him. Leaving it behind. Finding it again. A new war. A new order. Really the same old fight with a different face. Losing more loved ones. Losing and losing.

When he was done, a hand settled on his arm, warm and gentle. Her smile was very kind.

"I gave my life for a cause too," she said. "They didn't want my help or my love or my care but I gave them still. I never intended to lead them but I did and when I did, I did what I knew to be right. I loved them when they hated me. I loved them then most. They waited to plunge knives into my back but I'd given my word and I would honor it. I gave them everything I had and still gave more. I died for them." Her voice quieted on the last word.

"Grrwwwo?"

"No. Not for one second." She gestured. "They were my family."

"Rrrrr," replied the other. "Gggrrrrrwoow."

"I would have done it even if they weren't. Even had I hated them."

"Grrgrg." Black eyes looked around pointedly. He shoved her with his paw and she shrugged peaceably, a clear difference of opinion.

"They weren't really my enemies. No one ever was. Just other lights. Just other people. Brothers and sisters of mine that could have been."

He half-growled, half-laughed at her to convey the sheer insanity of her statement.

"Rrrrrrrllllloor. Wwrrrr, hhrhwwr."

"Haven't you ever believed in anything? You fight for all that and then, what, nothing? What about your Rey? What about the Rebels?"

**"Grrroww."**

They faced each other in challenge before her smile came again.

"Imagine feeling that way for them all."

"Rrrroww."

"It is insane, but better to be that than a lettuce, you know?"

He rolled his eyes and shook his head at the strange woman.

"Might I ask you two things, my friend?"

A questioning rumble.

"What is your name?"

"Rrrrogg."

"Nice to meet you, Chewbacca. I am Atyiru. Atyiru Caesura Entar Arconae."

"Rror."

"Yes, it's a mouthful." She giggled, then sombered. "So, Chewie...if you could go back, what would you do?"

"Grrrh."

"*Fight?*' Just that. Hah, I see. I see. Hmm." She seemed to stare at him for a long time, considering deeply. The waters went absolutely flat. Then, they erupted into life, a tempest. The lights and shadows whipped into a vortex around her, a cosmic cascade at her command.

"Perhaps you are right. Perhaps in another universe, in another life, it *is* your time, where a princess waits on the other side. But not in *this* one. In this one, you are not done. Your general, your Jedi, your fellows await, and the brothers you've lost on the other side count on you to carry on. You are not done. It will be so. I won't let it be otherwise."

She reached out and, in one smooth motion, slammed a flat-palmed strike into his chest that thrust him back as if he were a star falling too. He bellowed as he fell away, the world warping around him as she became a shining speck. The otherworld of inbetween faded, and the Wookiee knew only black as he returned to his body, words echoing as if from a dream.

*"Go, Chewbacca, and may the Force be with you."*