

Observations and Alterations of a Life

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Observations and Alterations of a Life

by [ClasseySpanks](#)

Summary

Cassian's jaw wants to grind out his frustration, his lip to curl in annoyance, but he has not survived this long without mastery over his facial expressions. He is careful to keep his shoulders relaxed as he puts his attention back on the woman across the table from him and lets out a slow, steadying breath.

But none of it means he likes the way Luke Skywalker is watching Jyn.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

Okay, this is a fun little story that floated into my head. It is intentionally written in the present tense and with abrupt rhythm changes and time jumps to give it a dream-like/whimsical quality. I'm trying something a little new so thank you for giving it a chance.

Cassian's jaw wants to grind out his frustration, his lip to curl in annoyance, but he has not survived this long without mastery over his facial expressions. He is careful to keep his shoulders relaxed as he puts his attention back on the woman across the table from him and lets out a slow, steady breath.

But none of it means he likes the way Luke Skywalker is watching Jyn.

His flat affect is broken when a sharp pain blooms across his shin.

"What's your problem?"

He frowns and sends a halfhearted kick against Jyn's foot in retribution. "The Jedi," he mutters as he lifts his drink, using the motion to hide his lips. "He's watching you."

"Skywalker?" she asks, voice rising in surprise, but doesn't turn around, her face pinched in confusion. "Why?"

On Cassian's right, Bodhi rests his cheek on his chin, and nods his confirmation of Cassian's assessment with a quick glance over. "For an op, maybe?" he offers quietly. "Rumor is they're putting together a rescue for General Solo."

Jyn shrugs one shoulder, her head tilting in consideration. "Hutt cartels are nasty pieces of work. Does sound like something they'd send us on."

Cassian sets down his drink with a bit more force than necessary. "He's not looking at us, he's looking at you," he says before taking care to smooth his voice into the most neutral in his repertoire. "Perhaps his interest is of a more personal nature."

Jyn snorts her ale into her nose, sputtering and coughing before setting her stein down. "You must be joking," she wheezes, and scoffs when he just looks back at her with furrowed brows.

"Luke Skywalker, Jedi Knight and hero of the Rebellion, could pull any number of young pretty things he wants from his throng of admirers." She leans back and gestures from her tousled hair to her muddy boots before lifting the arm that is a topography of scar tissue.

Cassian knows there is more under her shirt on that side, just as rough and twisted. He had been the one to pull her behind cover after she caught the edge of an incendiary mine, had been the one to pull aside the burned fabric, and realizing the extent of her injuries, had called for their extraction. "But alas," she continues with a wry grin, "it must be my charming personality that has captivated him so."

It is there, hidden in the way her eyes flick away at that last statement and the way she snaps out her sleeve to cover her forearm, the barest hint of bitterness that has Cassian leaning back in his chair and considering.

There had not been near enough bacta on the ship to prevent her scars completely and he applied the majority to her face and neck, reasoning the depth of her internal jugular vein was unacceptably shallow. The burns hurt but would not kill her immediately. Bleeding out would. Now only the faintest lines peaked over the collar of her shirt to stretch up to her jaw. He follows them over the curve of her clavicle, up the exposed plane of her neck and looks away when she catches him.

It's not the first time she's caught him looking at her with far too much interest. Eight months since Scarif and he is no closer to defining this connection between them; it's a strange thing, all at once too intense and tenuous to be friendship while yet deeper, and threaded with affection, respect, and attraction.

Kriff, *he* knew why Skywalker would be interested.

Bodhi gives a small grunt of alarm, interrupting the awkward moment, and quickly lifts his drink. "He's walking this way," he mutters behind the rim and Jyn turns to watch the Jedi in black approach before he greets them each with their rank.

"May I sit for a moment?" he asks, waiting politely for them to accept before taking the seat next to Jyn.

"Your necklace," he says, pointing to the crystal that is barely visible at the edge of her collar and Cassian feels his back stiffen, the cybernetics implanted there causing the slightest vibration against his spinal cord, "is quite interesting. Do you know what it is?"

"Yes, I'm sure she's worn it around her neck for eighteen years without knowing what it was," Cassian murmurs dryly though Skywalker does not seem perturbed. Out of the corner of his eye he sees Jyn's lip quirk upward.

The Jedi unclips the saber on his belt, holding it out. "A kyber crystal is the heart of the blade. The blade is the heart of the Jedi," he says and Cassian has to fight the urge to roll his eyes. Of all the swarmy pick-up lines...

"Is that so?" replies Jyn, her voice carefully neutral, still waiting to see what the man is getting at.

Skywalker nods and pretends to study the weapon. "But one needs to be Force Sensitive to wield it successfully." He looks back up to Jyn and Cassian thinks he might need a few more drinks if this continues much longer... but then the Jedi's face loses the pompous aura and

becomes much more intent and Cassian suddenly might be ill for an entirely different reason. "Force-sensitive, like yourself, Sergeant."

Though the cantina buzzes with activity around them, soldiers of all file and rank burning off either restless energy or looking for a moment of respite, it all dims at their little table. Jyn blinks as she examines Skywalker for duplicity, but Cassian knows he speaks the truth, the observation seeming obvious to him now... the way Jyn fights, a flowing ballet of violence that he has more than once stopped to appreciate despite the surrounding danger, the way she sometimes looked blank with wide eyes before grabbing him by the collar to yank him to the side of an incoming blaster bolt... She had brought them through Scarif dragging him to where Bodhi waited with a commandeered shuttle though she could never explain exactly how she knew which had been safe to approach once they were on the beach.

Skywalker just nods slowly, confirming her questioning look. "The Order will need to be rebuilt and I will need students." He rose. "Though I don't see that happening until after the war, please consider my offer in the meantime."

Cassian's eyes flick from his retreating back to Jyn, her hand having slid up to press against her crystal. "Well," she says clearing her throat and shaking her head, "that was something. If you'll excuse me, I think I've had enough for one night."

Giving them both a tight-lipped smile, she flattens her palms on the table to lift herself up. They both watch her go, silent until Bodhi sighs, a noisy, gusty thing that puffs out his cheeks.

"Draven is going to have a shit-fit if Jyn gets a lightsaber," he mutters.

"Forget Draven," Cassian replies, his mind suddenly awash with a vision of a Force enhanced Jyn, two sabers in place of her truncheons as she attacks their enemies. "Maker help the Empire if Skywalker starts her training before the end of the war."

Chapter 2

Skywalker, as it turns out, waits only four months before asking Jyn to train.

"I thought it wouldn't be until after all this," says Bodhi, gesturing vaguely in the air around them.

Jyn nods slowly, her arms folding over her chest. "They've found evidence that the Imperials are building a second death star."

Bodhi's face goes slack with horror but Cassian stays rigid where he leans against the wall. Draven had told him as much this morning.

"After everything, after Scarif, Chirrut, Kay, and Baze...", whispers the pilot, looking between them.

Cassian knows the sickening feeling his friend is trying to process, the dread that their sacrifices, their comrades' deaths have meant nothing... it was a blow that left him silent for hours afterward. And when he heard Jyn had been summoned by Skywalker, he knew a second one was not far behind.

"I don't want to go," says Jyn, her normally sure and steady voice wavering. "We do good work, we've made a difference, and I'm not ready to give that up... But Skywalker says this is important, that it could turn the tide of war."

This time Cassian makes no attempt to conceal his tells as he clenches his jaw and digs his fingers into the fabric of his shirt over his folded arms. Ever observant, Jyn's eyes flick over the movements before settling on his grim features.

"Vader," he bites out, pushing off the wall. "He needs your help to face Vader."

He knows they are all playing the same memory, when they huddled over a monitor to watch the grainy security footage from Admiral Raddus's command ship as his crew desperately moved the stolen plans through to the Tantive IV. And throughout it all, the specter that stalked just behind, cutting them down and breaking their bodies with terrifying efficiency, a scene not even his nightmares could touch.

And Jyn, his brave, fierce Jyn, just lifts her chin and shrugs. "Perhaps."

He holds back on any further argument and his fists clench at his sides. Skywalker has been invaluable to the Rebellion, indubitably due to his affinity with the Force. A second asset with such power... for the Rebellion, it was the right course, the only course, though Cassian himself wanted to scream.

"Chirrut would want you to go," murmurs Bodhi and Cassian closes his eyes against the defeat that washes over him, knowing that any hope she will stay is now lost.

Jyn's posture softens as she smiles at their friend and her eyes fill with unshed tears. "You're right, Bodhi. Thank you."

Cassian swallows down the constriction in his throat and manages a gruff, "When do you leave?"

"Tomorrow morning."

He knows better than to ask where; even if she knew, she could not tell him. The heavy silence in the room is broken by a notification from his com requesting his presence in Draven's office. A new assignment.

Shoving his emotions behind the shell that formed as a child and hardened into the armor of a spy, he moves toward the door, stopping only when Jyn's hand catches him about the wrist.

She doesn't want to leave it, them, him, like this and neither does he. "I'll find you later, " he says and lets the placid look in his eyes fade away so she can see he means it. Her grip tightens briefly before she releases him with a slow nod, her meaning clear as if she had spoken it aloud.

Good. There will be Hell to pay if you don't.

His fist hovers just over the durasteel of Jyn's door. He doesn't know what to say, can't think of any words that won't choke him on the way out but there is no more time and no guarantee they will ever see each other again.

That thought brings his knuckles down twice in rapid succession and the door hisses open a second later. Jyn says nothing as she steps away from the panel, clearing a path for him to more fully enter the room. A pack sits on the desk, seams taunt from the contents within. Her weapons are laid out neatly beside it, along with what he presumes are her travel clothes for the morning. The sight of it all sits like a rock just under his sternum. He turns and, seeing her face scrubbed clean and hair down, he is reminded of how young she is, how young they both are.

"I dream sometimes," she says when he just continues to watch her, "that we never made it off Scarif. That we die in the blast of the Death Star. Sometimes it's so real-" her right-hand reaches to subconsciously rub over the scars on her forearm "-I can feel it. "

His dreams of Scarif never make it that far, usually waking him with either Kay's last words reverberating in his head or a version where he fails to make it up the tower in time. But still, he thinks he understands and nods to encourage her to continue.

"I thought we would die together that day. And after, when we were on a mission and it would go sideways, I would think, 'Whatever happens, we'll face it together.'" She starts to fidget, her gaze moving anywhere but to his face. "I don't want to leave you. I don't want to have to trust someone else to watch your back."

Cassian steps forward, ducking slightly to make her look at him. "I know. There is no one else I'd rather be by my side. I don't want you to go either."

She nods jerkily before finally meeting his eyes. "But I have to."

They don't touch in general as part of their strange relationship, at least not in the way it is conventionally done between friends. It is more of a persistent invading of each other's space, and small recurrent points of contact when walking down a hall together or sliding around each other in the tight confines of a ship. Sometimes the closeness he feels to her arises just from the synchrony in which they move, not having to communicate beyond a look when on an op in dangerous territory.

But now he reaches for her, tugging at where her arms have folded tightly against her middle. Her arms lift at the last second and wrap around his neck as he hauls her against him, his hands spanning over her back to press them together. In this moment she is alive, her crystal warm against his neck and her breath ghosting over his ear. He tries to memorize everything.

"Your mother would be proud of you, Jyn."

Her fingers flex against his shoulder blades at the words and they cling together for several long moments before she rocks back down on her heels, one hand folding into his.

They spend the few hours they have left sitting up in her bunk, talking until they both fall asleep, her head against his shoulder and their hands still clasped between them.

She doesn't wake him when she leaves.

Chapter 3

Draven absolutely has a shit-fit when he finds out *why* Skywalker has absconded with Jyn, or so Bodhi tells him.

"He keeps shooting me dirty looks, like it's my fault she turned out Force-sensitive. I've been on nothing but freight hauls since she left."

Cassian's own punishment takes the form of a breakneck series of missions across the galaxy, bargaining, trading, and killing for slivers of information about the new incarnation of the Death Star.

On the rare occasion he is able to return to base, he sends a single message to Jyn's account, not willing to risk anything more to discovery.

I'm alive, it says.

And there is always one waiting.

Me too.

For now, it is enough.

It is months more until he finally gets what the Rebellion truly needs in the form of a slightly battered data stick from his Bothan contact.

"Were your people compromised during retrieval?" he asks, wondering if the Rebel cell will still be able to operate but the Bothan is already shaking his head.

"Not compromised. Neutralized."

Cassian freezes, parsing through the humanoid's growled language to make sure he understands correctly.

"Losses?" he asks.

"Total."

Securing the stick in a hidden pocket, he clasps his hand on the Bothan's shoulder. "Thank you, friend. We will do our best to make their sacrifice worth it."

"The Emperor has made a critical error and the time for our attack has come."

Cassian's eyes flick about the room, gauging the leadership responses when the holographic model of the half-finished Death Star flickers to life before Mon Mothma. He wonders who among them was tasked getting his team safely through to the generators to dismantle them.

"The data brought to us by the Bothan spies pinpoints the exact location of the Emperor's new battle station. We also know that the weapon systems of this Death Star are not yet operational. With the Imperial Fleet spread throughout the galaxy in a vain effort to engage us, it is relatively unprotected. But most important of all, we've learned that the Emperor himself is personally overseeing the final stages of the construction of this Death Star."

The energy in the room spikes as murmurs hum from every corner. They all feel it, the end of a twenty-year war is within their grasp if they can take down the Emperor along with his planet killer. But both are protected by a powerful shield generator on a moon of the planet it orbits.

General Madine presses a button and the holo changes, a non-descript freighter appearing before them. "We have stolen a small Imperial shuttle. Disguised as a cargo ship, and using a secret Imperial code, two separate strike teams will land on the moon and attempt to deactivate the shield generator. The first team will approach from the East. General Solo, is your strike team assembled?"

Cassian did not hear his reply, his attention drawn to a figure in the far back of the room.

"The second team will work from the West. Lieutenant Erso?"

Cassian's chest clenches and his breath stilt as the figure moves to the front, her hands sliding back her hood. "Yes, ma'am. I just need to speak with intelligence to coordinate our approach."

And Force, she is looking right at him and he knows she feels it too.

Draven pulls him away before the dismissal, his team of infiltrators needing their own debrief. Afterward, he finds Jyn is sitting on his bunk with her satchel of belongings resting by her feet, and he blinks to assure himself she is real. Her attire is not what he had envisioned when he thought of seeing her again. Cloak now removed, she looks very much as she did when she left, same boots and utilitarian clothing, all in muted colors, and a blaster strapped to her thigh. He can still see the faint outlines of the knives she always kept stowed away. She looks the same, really, save for the two silver cylinders hanging from either hip.

She meets his gaze with her own, her lips quirking up in a small smile.

"Hello, Cassian."

It's enough to stir him to movement, and he more fully enters the room to allow the door to hiss closed behind him.

"It thought you would be with Skywalker."

Jyn shakes her head. "He'll be with Solo. Most of the fights with the empire have been aerial so Rebellion leadership is lacking when it comes to ground Forces. They figured I was the best suited. Two teams, two chances to get our intelligence cadres to take down the shield." One brow lifts. "I believe that would be you."

Cassian smiles and steps closer. "Commander Dussac's cadre will be with Solo. You get me."

"We get you there, you get us in, we drop the shield, and hold it from the Imps until they blow that monstrosity out of the sky." Her voice is firm, resolute, and she looks different in a way he can't quite define... the absence of the tension she would hold in her brow, the jaw that was no longer perpetually clenched...

Before, it always looked like she was holding herself together by sheer force of will, but the woman with him now seems so much more at peace.

"Command suits you," he says as he moves to sit beside her. "And it will bolster troops to have a Jedi with them."

Her countenance turns faintly stormy as she angles her body more fully towards him. "I'm not a Jedi, Cassian."

"Well not yet, maybe, but..."

His voice trails off as she shakes her head. "To be a Jedi, one has to separate from all of their attachments. They say to do anything less risks falling to the Darkside." Her voice sounds brittle and her words sharp. "Bunch of idiots. Every Force user walks the line between the Light and the Dark, every day must be a conscious decision not to fall. A life of isolation won't prevent it. I have been alone, I've tried compartmentalizing my emotions, I've tried to keep people out for my own good. For six long, miserable years, I lived that way and I won't ever again. If that is what the Jedi demand of me-" she looks to him, her green eyes fierce "-they can go fark themselves."

"Good," he murmurs in agreement.

"Besides," she continues, her eyes dropping, "I think Skywalker will be glad to be rid of me."

"Why?"

"I don't think he cared much for sparring with me."

Cassian grimaces. He is well versed in Jyn Erso's fighting style and imagines several possibilities, each equally as painful as the last. He asks anyways.

"What did you do?"

"I refused to give up my knives and blaster, or as he called them, 'those inelegant weapons'." She scoffs lightly, raising her eyes to his once more. "I've been shooting since I was eight and I've had my sabers for maybe six months. The best weapon is the one you know best." She shrugs. "He got angry when I'd pull it or a knife on him after he would disarm me. But that's really the point, isn't it? No one would expect a Force user to pull out a shiv."

Cassian feels his lip twitch in amusement. "Seems reasonable to me. Was that all?"

Jyn's face scrunches as if she's debating on telling him more and he is surprised at her sheepish expression. "Well... that and I kept using the Force to deactivate his saber during

fight."

A beat.

Then another.

"You what?" he asks incredulously.

Jyn throws up her hands in exasperation. "It's not my fault he gave his an idiotic design that I could exploit."

Cassian's shoulders start to shake and he bites his lip to suppress the laugh that threatens to escape. He can't help but visualize Skywalker's increasing ire as Jyn repeatedly deactivates his saber at inopportune times.

"Made him so angry, he threw the hilt at me once. I shot it with my blaster."

Perhaps Skywalker and Draven can start a support group.

That thought has him giving up all pretense and he doubles over, tears leaking from the corners of his eyes as his laugh fills the room. His diaphragm pinches at his side and he figures it has been ages since he's had a moment like this. He straightens to see Jyn smiling at him, a fully bright one he has only seen on a few occasions.

"He didn't find it near as funny."

"No," replies Cassian wiping the back of his hand across his eyes. "I didn't think he would."

They sit in companionable silence, his gaze on where her knee is pressing into his thigh.

"After tomorrow," he asks, voice low, "what will you do?"

"Not sure," she says but her hand slides over to hold his where it lay in his lap, "Figured I'd stay here, continue to form those attachments the Jedi so hate."

He squeezes her fingers. "Rebel," he murmurs.

She returns his grip. "For you? Always."

Chapter 4

"You could stay," he says in a rush when she goes to stand, one of her arms freezing where it reaches for her satchel. "Here, tonight, I mean."

Joreth Sward could sweetly talk a woman into his bed with little effort. Willix could project just the perfect amount of aloofness to be enticing. And yet, when he is well and truly himself, just wanting a woman to stay in his space for a little longer, Cassian flounders.

Because you actually give a damn.

"You sure?"

He nods and she rises, moving to the fresher. "I'll just-" she says pointing and snatching up her bag. "in there, for bed. Just a minute."

He lets out a heavy breath when she disappears behind the door and the sonic activates. Moments later when she moves past him to set down her things, he notices something that her vest previously obscured.

"Your crystal?" he asks.

She smiles and withdraws her twin sabers from the bag, holding them out for him to see.

"I broke it when I tried to meld it to my first construct, severing it cleanly in half. It now sits at the heart of them both."

It's right, he surmises, that the momento from her mother to remind her to believe in the Force is now fueling her most fearsome line of protection.

She is in the bed when he exits from his turn in the fresher, a space for him left open beside her.

Later, if he were to recall what happened next, he would not be certain who reached for the other first in the dark of his room. He thinks maybe they both did.

It is altogether chaste and maddeningly seductive, the way they kiss, languid and slow, their limbs entangled and hands roaming. She gasps when his hand slides up her ribcage, the flat of his palm grazing her breast. He bites back a groan when her nails indent into his lower back and move to scrape along the V of his abdomen. They are mapping out the planes and scars of one another, committing the details to memory and down in his bones, he knows why. It is the same reason he's memorized the pattern of her eye color, and the lilt of her accent. The reason he can perfectly recall how she looks when annoyed with him or in the middle of slicing a wall of encryption. They hope to carry what they can of each other if the worst comes to pass.

Pulling back, he breathes in a large gulp of air and takes in her rumpled clothes, tousled hair, and swollen lips. He leans down to rest his forehead against hers, their breaths mingling in the shared space between their bodies and thinks he's never been more happy to drown.

He's never had much use for the Force. He figured any power that willed the murder of his family, the destruction of Jedha, and the obliteration of Alderaan deserved his indifference, if not his outright scorn. But if the Force protects Jyn, if it gives them more than this next mission, he just might reconsider.

He knew it had been going too smoothly.

Their unit had met little opposition on their way to camp, just a few pairs of Stormtrooper scouts that were easily dispatched. General Solo's unit made quite the entrance and attracted most of the ground forces in the area. After an uneventful night, they roused early, slowly making headway to the West entrance of the generator. Once there, Jyn and the others flanked the facility while Cassian's team searched for an alternative entrance, finding it in a vent camouflaged on the forest floor.

Vents. The downfall of the mighty Empire.

It is not without difficulty though, as only Cassian and one other on his team can fit through the narrow opening even after stripping off most of their gear. Their blasters and equipment had to be pulled behind them, attached by ropes to their ankles.

They had nearly accessed the blast door controls when they were discovered, the troopers announcing their presence with a disorienting flash grenade.

And now, Cassian is on his knees, deep in the basement of the facility while a soulless mask glares down at him.

His head is jerked back by his hair just as the other trooper slams the butt of his rifle into his face. The strike is hard enough to break his nose, and he can't hold back the grunt of pain no matter how much he wants to. His hair is violently released and he lists to the side, off-balance with his hands cuffed behind him before he is shoved roughly upright once again.

A mechanical voice breaks through his lingering haze. "Where are the rest of the Rebels?"

He shakes his head to clear his vision, ignoring how it makes him vaguely ill and looks up at his interrogator just as the barrel of the blaster aims between his eyes.

"Last chance, scum. Where are-"

The voice box crackles at the same time he hears the distinctive clunk of plaststeel being struck, and the trooper's head jerks forward. Something metal clinks to the floor and they all look, prisoners and troopers alike, to see a shiny cylinder roll to a stop at the edge of the shadows.

The trooper who had been struck in the back of the head steps closer to inspect the item, his head tilting in confusion.

But even with sweat and blood in his eyes, Cassian recognizes it, his chest swelling with hope.

The metal hilt is suddenly sucked back into the blackness of the hall, startling their captors, and there is a flurry of safeties being released as the whine of primed blasters fills the air. Cassian and his man are forgotten as the troopers take a formation against the unseen threat and he has to lean to see between the white plates of armor.

In the darkness, two yellow beams hum to life, both of them as brilliant and blinding as the sunset on Scarif.

Then Jyn is moving and the troopers are falling, one faceless fascist crumpling after the other as golden sparks shower the air around them.

Seeing her like this, unleashed to her full potential...

It is more glorious than he ever imagined.

Jyn is frowning at him, tilting his chin this way and that, trying to see the extent of the damage in the flickering light from the Ewok's bonfires.

"How many times do I have to tell you not to block with your face?"

He flicks his finger against her knee while not moving out of her grasp. "I literally had my hands tied behind my back and a trooper holding me in place."

"Doesn't make it untrue," she grumbles and lifts her hand. "Hold still."

He reaches up, blindly catching her wrist. "I don't need bacta. We have plenty hurt worse than a broken nose. Don't waste it on me."

"I'm not going to use bacta."

He opens one eye as best he can with the swelling and glances at her empty palm. "The Force can do that?" he asks just low enough to be heard over the nearby carousing.

Jyn scrapes her teeth along her lower lip. "I've only used it on myself but Luke said it is no different. I've healed minor wounds before but I think I can manage this, if you'll let me try."

Cassian knows her well enough to tell she is nervous, though he is not sure of why. "Alright," he says closing his eyes again and taps his boot to hers. "Get on with it then."

He tries not to smile at the glare he is certain she sends his way but it is wiped clear as soon as her fingers skim up the sides of his jaw to rest on his battered cheekbones. The air stirs across his neck as Jyn breathes out and the dull throb of blood pounding through his damaged

tissue quiets beneath her touch. Cassian can't quite describe it, the feeling that spreads throughout him from their points of contact, though it doesn't stop him from trying.

Like warm, dripping spark-bee honey...

Or that first buzz that travels up your spine when drinking top-shelf Corellian whiskey.

Or how he feels when Jyn smiles because of him.

Maybe it's not the Force at all. Maybe it's just her.

Her fingers slide to the bridge of his nose, tracing lightly and coaxing the bones painlessly back into place. After several long minutes, her palms move down to cup either side of his face.

"There," she says, her voice a whisper. "Still handsome."

His cheeks warm at her words and he feels absurd, a grown man and rebel spy blushing at such an innocuous compliment. But he forgets when he opens his eyes without difficulty and can breathe once again through his nose without a gurgling wheeze. He catches her hands before they fall away and turns his face to bring her palm to his lips.

"Mi corazón," he murmurs against her skin, "thank you."

Her eyes soften and shine as she swallows and he pulls her to him, turning her so that her back is to his chest. His arms encircle her waist and they watch the frivolity around the fires, wincing when a drunk Ewok has to be tackled to the ground with a blanket when he gets too close to one.

Perhaps the war is over, perhaps this is just the start of another, maybe this is an endless cycle without hope for escape-

But they will not think of it tonight, for once allowing themselves to enjoy a moment where their suffering and their losses have not been in vain.

And if they dare to finally hope for something beyond living to see the next day, no one on the Forest moon of Endor that night could blame them.

15 years later...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Jyn's heart thunders in her ears as she waits, one hand raised to block out the setting sun while she scans the skies. Of course, the one time she says yes to one of Luke's little trips, the one time in fifteen years Cassian goes on an op without her...

It was supposed to be a simple mission, gathering harddrives from derelict Empire ships and analyzing them for any offshoots of Operation Cinder lurking therein, but Cassian had gone dark twenty-two hours ago, his only communication with her being a short string of numbers sent over an encrypted channel.

8472, 6021

It was part of their code, a way they devised to send messages that could not be deciphered and relied on memorization.

Cassian just told her two things:

He has a passenger and dangerous cargo.

Her concern ratchets upward when she feels whatever he has on that ship before she even hears the roar of approaching engines. It's bleeding the Force out around it with such strength, it nearly takes her breath away.

"Cassian," she mutters to herself, her right hand resting on the hilt of her saber, "what have you found..."

He breaks cloud cover ten minutes later, landing in the open barren field by their domicile and Jyn lifts both her blades as the hatch falls open. In the seconds it takes for the door to touch the ground, she prepares for several scenarios, planting her feet and drawing the Force around her, ready to strike.

What she is not prepared for is her husband with a large blanketed bundle leaning over his shoulder, to shush her and wave his hand irritably at the weapons in her hands.

"Put those away!" he mouths silently but Jyn is too confused to move because what he holds against him is a little girl, her smudged face relaxed in slumber and one leg hanging in a splint from underneath the blanket.

Jyn realizes as her husband walks past her that the girl is what she felt in the Force, that this child is both the passenger and cargo.

She can't be more than five years old.

"Karking hells," she curses and follows him inside, watching as he carefully lays the child in their spare room before returning to Jyn's side.

He looks tired but unharmed, though Jyn runs her hands over him just to be sure. He smiles at her concern before grasping her hands and kissing her knuckles.

"Cassian," she says equally both fond and exasperated, "what happened?"

"I had already pulled data from hard drives on several ships in the Nima area when I decided to venture a little further out. No sooner I climb into the next one, I find her, scared and alone at the bottom of a drop."

"Her leg... is it broken?"

He nods. "I tried to reassure her that I meant no harm, but she didn't believe me and pushed me with the Force when I approached. Surely you can sense it on her?"

Jyn snorts lightly. "You could say that."

"I don't think she knew what she was doing. I think it was instinct, her fight or flight response being limited by her broken leg. So, her mind chose for her." He pauses, his expression appearing pained as he watches the child from the doorway. "I got her to trust me by giving her water and food. She had to have been there for days, Jyn. Just left there to die. No one at the outpost would have sunk the credits to fix her leg or get her medicine."

She reaches out, slipping her hand into his. "You did the right thing."

"And besides, she has the Force. Not even Skywalker manifested that young. She's strong, yes?"

Jyn lets out a long breath. "It's practically pouring off of her. The only other person I've ever felt like that was Leia and Han's kid."

Cassian is quiet, his jaw working as he rolls something over in his head.

"What are you thinking?"

He looks almost grateful that she asks. "That she reminds me of myself, growing up alone in an indifferent universe without a guardian. That she reminds me of you, and how for the longest time you always looked hunted and wary. That I don't want to give her to Luke who will tell her that never loving or being loved is for the best."

Jyn studies him for a moment. "You want to keep her with us?"

"The fact that I found her is a miracle. We both understand what it is like to be abandoned and alone. You can teach her to use her abilities safely... at some point, it almost feels like fate."

Her lip twitches up in a smirk as her arms folded across her chest. "Careful, you're starting to sound like a believer."

He reaches out, taking her hands firmly in his. "I don't know what the Force wants and I don't care. I believe in you, I believe in us, and I believe she found her way here for a reason. We could be good for her."

Jyn can't refuse him and she is surprised she doesn't even want to. They had discussed children, even tried for several years, but nothing came of it. Her heart still breaks when she thinks of Cassian holding her after years of no luck.

"I would like to have more family," he had said, "But you, Jyn, are all the family I need."

The girl stirs before she can agree, bolting upright and twisting in preparation to run before she remembers her leg. Cassian is moving toward her, murmuring soothing words while the little girl's eyes are wild as they dart between them, calming only when she registers Cassian's identity.

"Shhh, mija, you are safe." He kneels near the head of her bed and gestures back at Jyn. "This is my wife, Jyn. She can do magic with the Force, like you."

The child's eyes sweep back to Jyn who is now leaning on the door frame. "You can?"

In response, Jyn levitates the chrono on the bedside table, letting it fall into her outstretched palm before she slowly approaches the bed.

"I can. And I can teach you how to control it."

The girl's brown eyes widen as she takes in Jyn, gaze flicking from her hair and face and then over to Cassian.

"You," she says, returning to Jyn, "you sound like me. No human at Nima sounds like me and you can do what I do. Are you my family? Have you come back for me?"

Jyn's heart breaks a little with how soft and hopeful the girl seems at the moment, her malnourished frame practically shaking.

Cassian reaches out and takes her hand. "We are not your family, but we would like to be if you want to stay with us."

Her lip trembles, disappointment coloring her features. "If I don't?"

"We have a friend who teaches children to use the Force and runs a school. You could go there if that's what you'd prefer."

"But my family, they'll not find me if I'm not on Jakku."

Jyn's gaze meets Cassian's briefly and she can read everything he wants to communicate.

She's alone. They aren't coming back, if they are even alive. But we can't tell her that right now, it's not the right time.

"We can stay in contact with the outpost, make sure they forward any reports of parents looking for their child. But in the meantime..."

The girl considers his offer for a moment, using the heel of her palm to wipe away her tears, the dirt on her face streaking across her cheek.

"I'll stay with you."

Cassian's face breaks into a smile that highlights his dimples and Jyn can't help the one that crosses her own.

"What's your name?" she asks the little girl, her voice cracking with unexpected emotion.

"Rey. I named myself Rey."

Chapter End Notes

Okay, this was a fun little bit of indulgent wish fulfillment.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!