

We both sat on the curved seat in the Lounge without speaking and just staring at our drinks.

“So,” Dave began tentatively, breaking the uncomfortable silence. “You have a nice ship here...”

“Yes...” I replied. “Err, thanks...”

Why was I being so wooden?

“Had her long?”

“Yes...”

“A girl of many words!”

I laughed.

“Sorry, first time with a boy...”

I felt myself blushing as I said it.

“I never spent time with a girl either...”

“This conversation is crap!” I commented dryly after another uncomfortable silence.

“Shall we start again? I’m Dave.”

“Mindy, and this is my ship, the *Sentinel*... Him through there – that is B1-K8, but I call him ‘Kate’.”

“He’s a Battle Droid!”

“Yeah, my parents repaired him and gave him the brain from an R3 unit – he has a rather dry sense of humour and he can be *really* obnoxious, but I rely on him with the *Sentinel*.”

“The *Sentinel* is a YT-2400?”

“Modified from stock, but yeah...”

“How old are you, if you don’t mind me asking?”

I hesitated for a moment before replying.

“Thirteen...”

“Thirteen?”

“Yeah – you got a problem with that?”

“No, no – I’m fifteen, but you look good for thirteen...”

I felt myself blushing again – for some reason I felt uncomfortable around boys and Dave in particular; why?

“Well, we may as well get comfortable – we have three days in hyperspace.”

“Where are we going?”

“Tatooine.”

I felt a lot more comfortable once I had removed the armour that I was wearing over most of my body.

The armour that I wore, was a leftover from the Clone Wars. It was what the Clones called, Phase II armour. It was dirty, somewhat dented and had not been white for quite some time, but it was functional. Around my waist, attached to my utility-belt, I wore a maroon leather Kama which came down to just below the backs of my knees. The armour was heavily customised to my body size – which was ‘compact’... I did not wear the helmet – favouring the mask and scarf instead. The helmet remained on the *Sentinel* and combined with the full suit, it could be pressurised and therefore allow me access to the outside of the ship when in space for a limited period of time.

The armour was a pain to put on and remove, having upwards of a dozen components, but it had protected me so far, keeping me alive, and I had a good selection of spare parts and panels.

After pulling off the two-part body glove and my shorts, I took a brief shower and pulled on some loose fitting clothes.

I was impressed – the ship was old, but was tidy and seemed sound.

Mindy had gone to remove her armour and take a shower – or so she had said as she vanished out of the Lounge; I was left to sit on the seat and wait. Kate clunked past once or twice to check on the cockpit, but otherwise the droid seemed to have other things to do. Mindy reappeared a while later and she looked very different.

She was short – about an inch over five feet and slim. Without all the armour she had been wearing – and the scarf, she looked good and I could see the contours of her body which indicated that she was growing into a young woman. The armour had given her a few extra inches in height and had bulked her out a bit. For the first time, I noticed the long blonde hair that would have fallen to just below her shoulders had she not had it up in a ponytail. There was no excess fat on her body; it all seemed to be toned muscle. She was wearing some soft shoes, light cream trousers and a grey halter top. Her skin was pale, but a pleasant and healthy tone and her eyes were a sparkling green.

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“You enjoying the view?”

I suddenly became aware that I had been staring.

“No – I mean yes... Yes!” I stammered and Mindy chuckled at my discomfort, but I did see a slight pinkness come to her cheeks.

“Look by all means, just don’t think of touching...!”

Mindy walked past the Lounge towards the corridor that led to the Cockpit, still talking.

“My cabin is in there,” she continued, pointing to a door on the left then vanishing. She reappeared and waved for me to follow her. “That was the Lounge, with the Galley over to the side. There is the ramp to the left of the Doughnut.”

The ‘doughnut’ was the centre of the ship apparently.

“Up and down are two CEC AG-2G quad laser cannons,” Mindy said as she waved at a ladder that led up and down, in the centre of the Doughnut. “The main area of the left front quadrant is the Main

Hold. Next to it are a pair of cabins. You can have that one, by the Airlock and Docking Ring – it's the most comfortable after mine – locking code is: six-four-six-nine-four. Fresher suite is in there and there are two more cabins off the Doughnut – not in the best condition and best avoided... To the left of the ramp is Number 2 Hold. Right aft is Main Engineering and Escape Pod 2. Escape Pod 1 is directly aft of the Cockpit.”

We found ourselves back in the Lounge where Kate was visible in the Galley and I could smell food.

I was usually very hungry after a 'mission' and Kate knew that – so he was cooking my favourite; Corellian nerf sausage with Corellian potato sticks. I hoped Dave liked Corellian cuisine! The boy indicated that he wanted to take a shower.

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By the time Dave returned, the food was almost ready. He was wearing the same clothes – he obviously did not have anything else to change into. He was tall, with dark brown curly hair. His eyes were an alluring blue and he was tall – he had at least five inches on me. He was fairly well built and I could see some muscle on his upper arms.

He wore a pair of loose, dark blue trousers that had a large cargo pocket on each thigh. On his top half, he wore a black t-shirt and a dark brown, leather jacket which for now he had dumped on a seat. On his feet he wore knee length black boots. I had to admit, he looked... Handsome!

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As we sat at the bar in the Galley, we ate and we talked. It seemed that neither of us had parents, but Dave would not go into any further detail. I was the same, so I did not argue. I also took a moment as I ate to consider the container that I had hidden in my cabin; I really wanted to retrieve my parents' lightsabers and study them, but I wanted to do it in private.

Dave said he was tired, once he had finished his meal and he went to his cabin and soon fell asleep. I left Kate on watch in the Cockpit and headed for my own cabin and my mixed thoughts. I closed the cabin door behind me and pulled out the container from its hiding place.

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I slowly pulled out the two laser swords and lay them on my bunk.

I treated each weapon with the reverence that they justly deserved. It was not just that they belonged to my parents, it was also that they were the weapons of the Jedi. The Jedi were all wiped out – at least they were if you listened to the crap that was spread about by the Empire. There had been rumours about surviving Jedi, but they were just that; rumours.

Even the weapons of the Jedi were banned. Anybody caught with a lightsaber usually met a summary death at the hands of Darth Vader's evil minions. Nobody dared even touch a lightsaber – even if they ever saw one. I had no memory of ever having seen one before. I knew about them, of course, who didn't! For some, even those of *my* age – the Jedi and what they represented were becoming stories, myths and legends.

The Force – what was it? Was it real? If I were a Jedi, could I use the Force? There was no way that I could be a Jedi! I had no powers – but then I remembered something; that stormtrooper who had fallen...

Had that been me?

I awoke several hours later and found myself still hugging the lightsabers.

That was rather stupid, I thought – what if they had activated; a scary thought! I replaced them in their cloth-lined container before I ran some cold water over my face. I had slept as well as I normally did, but I still felt drained as I changed my top. I picked a figure-hugging white top with no sleeves and which crossed over my breasts – what there was of them...

I liked the view as I checked myself out in the mirror. The top exposed my slim waist and my navel – I had no problem with showing some skin, at least when I was not ‘working’! Now, I thought as I grinned at myself, what reaction could I get from Dave...

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I found Dave in the Lounge eating some biscuits for breakfast along with some milk. I did the same, grabbing some biscuits from a plate on the Galley bar.

“Good morning, Mistress Mindy!”

“Morning, Kate – sleep well?”

“Funny!” Kate replied as he walked out of the Lounge.

“You enjoy teasing him, don’t you?” Dave inquired. “Morning!”

“Good morning, Dave – yes I do like to tease him; he teases me!”

I noticed Dave checking out my top, not to mention the gentle bulges in my chest area. Again, I felt myself blushing – why did I react that way around boys? I decided that I needed to teach Dave some respect – maybe some sparring.

How good could he be?

After breakfast, I found myself in the Main Hold, facing Mindy.

She was smirking and something about the smirk worried me. She had said that she wanted to spar – I was not worried; I had a few inches on her and a lot more muscle!

“Okay, boy, let’s see what you can do now...”

I shrugged and without warning I sent a strong kick into Mindy’s stomach; she went down like a sack of Corellian potatoes! She lay on the metal gratings, groaning with her arms wrapped around her stomach. I went over and got down on one knee beside her.

“You okay?”

Mindy coughed a couple of times and she had tears in her eyes.

“Yeah... That was good – very good!”

Asshole!

I had *not* expected that! The boy had some moves; I had to give him that, but I *hated* being beaten – I was *not* going to let him off...

I span around and wrapped my left leg around his neck, pulling him down and flipping on top of him. I smiled as Dave struggled against my hold, but then my own smile vanished as his strength began to overpower my own. I flipped backwards and away from him before he threw me.

Dave jumped nimbly to his feet.

“Where’d you learn to fight?” I asked casually.

“My parents taught me from when I was about five.”

We circled each other, keeping our distance and gauging each other.

“Is this some weird Human mating ritual?”

“Huh?” I queried, looking over at Kate.

Too late, I saw the shadow advancing for my head and realised that Kate had distracted me. All too soon, I was back on the gratings again; damn droid!

“Very sorry, mistress... Ha!” Kate said as he continued past the Hold.

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“There must be more...” I continued as I got back to my feet ignoring the grinning Dave.

“I’ve been living on the streets for two months now and well, Coruscant is *not* the safest place in the galaxy!” Dave replied offhandedly.

“No, and neither is Jakku...!”

I leapt at Dave, kicking out with my left leg and catching him in the shoulder. I span and kicked him in the chest as he went down before I rammed my fist into his stomach. Dave hit the deck hard and groaned at my assault on his torso.

“Interesting...” Kate commented from the hatchway as I stood astride Dave.

“Kate – I swear I will deactivate your voice processors if you say one more word...!”

“Roger, roger!”

Kate vanished.

“I thought you said he had the brain of an astrodroid,” Dave commented from the deck.

“He thinks he’s funny, imitating what he used to be. He still has the Battle Droid brain, but only as a secondary processor – and I’m sure that’s where he gets his wit from!” I growled, helping Dave up to a sitting position.

“You can look after yourself, Mindy!”

“You too...”

“Obviously, we have both been living where we need our wits and we needed to learn fast – to survive. You mentioned, Jakku...”

“I did – a barren wasteland in the Western Reaches; famed for... Well for being a long way away from just about anything!”

“Maybe...”

Dave was cut off as an alarm sounded throughout the ship...