

In a moment, she was gone.

In the blink of an eye, she went from staring in wonder at the large, crystal-filled cavern, to looking around in confusion at the entrance to a massive structure. Luke and Felia had just started to look around when she suddenly lost herself, somehow getting transported to...

She whirled, looking back at the large open doorway, spotting the distant setting sun, which cast long shadows across the hall and filled it with an orange glow. Beyond the [entrance](#), she could just make out the bases of four large statues, with steps down and out of sight between them. As she turned back, she had to steady herself.

She was in the [Jedi Temple](#). Not as whatever mockery Palpatine had made it into, but as she remembered it. As she remembered it from the last time she had been there.

"I must admit, while much has changed in decoration, the feel of the Coruscant Temple did not shift in the slightest."

Ashoka, already thrown off by her location, spun around to face the new voice, her lightsabers in her hands. Standing there, hands held behind her back, was a brown-haired woman. She wore maroon clothing, some sort of light armor, with hanging cloth reminiscent of a robe, but only barely. Her hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail, with separate locks of hair that framed her face.

"Greetings, Ashoka. I believe a welcome back is in order?" She said, her tone solemn and empathetic.

"What is going on?" Ashoka asked, finally getting her bearings, looking around with a critical eye.

"Well, you were standing among Kyber crystals in a wellspring of the Force," The woman pointed out. "Is it that surprising that you might receive a vision of sorts?"

"But... I wasn't looking for crystals." The Togruta pointed out. "I already have my lightsaber."

"True, but they were made for you by another," The nameless woman pointed out. "They had connected to you marginally, but you and I both know it can be so much deeper than what you have."

"I... I was content with what I had."

"It seems that the Force disagrees with you," The woman pointed out. "Why else would it bring you here?"

The woman gestured to the front hall, empty and silent, the atmosphere muted even with the vibrant sunset happening behind her.

"... Who are you?" Ahsoka asked, standing up straight and, after a moment, taking a step forward, heading deeper into the Temple.

"My name is not what I would consider important at the moment, but... Well, I suppose there is no reason not to tell you either," she debated before holding out her hand and following beside Ahsoka. "My name is [Bastila Shan](#)."

Ahsoka stopped in her tracks, her eyes wide. It took her a moment to find her voice, and when she did it was shaky with disbelief.

"...Bastila... Shan? The Battle Meditation prodigy? A hero of the Mandalorian War? The-"

"There were no real heroes in that war," Bastila said, cutting Ahsoka off with a sad shake of her head. "Only victims, casualties, and those whose scars were deeper than skin. I was lucky to make it out alive."

"I... it's an honor, I-"

"Ahsoka, you've done quite a few impressive feats in your time. There is no reason to treat me as anything other than a peer," She assured her, giving her a supportive smile. "In fact, in some ways, I believe you have managed to surpass me."

"I, but... I have so many questions!"

"And while I may have many of the answers, I am not here to discuss the conflicts I lived through," She said, shaking her head. "I am here for you, to help you."

"I- I don't-"

"Ahsoka Tano, are you truly about to insist, to a vision of the Force, that you do not need help?" The woman asked, a single eyebrow raised. "Surely you jest?"

Again, Ahsoka was silent, this time in self-reflection, as opposed to shock. Rather than respond, she took a step forward, walking through the empty halls she once called home. Eventually, she spoke again, her voice softer, as if afraid those who once lived in the halls around her might hear.

"I... I am conflicted," She admitted.

Bastila was silent, walking beside the orange-skinned humanoid as she traveled down the long hall. The Togruta did not seem to have a particular destination in mind. Just the need to walk.

"I was raised by the Jedi Code. I was raised to respect the Masters, to follow their word," Ahsoka eventually continued. "I mean, I was never a hardliner, but I thought, for so long, that the will of the Force was the will of the Order."

"And now?" Bastila asked softly. "After what you have seen and learned?"

"... I've accepted that the Order was misguided in some ways," Ahsoka admitted. "Between their... choices involving my own exile, and what I have learned since then, it is clear to me that the Masters did not have the control over the situation they... pretended to have."

"Control is often an illusion," Bastila pointed out. "The galaxy is filled with chaos, and it is often contagious. Many don't realize their own lack of control until the system flips them on their head. "

Ahsoka nodded in agreement, turning her head to watch as she walked past a mural she remembered sitting under when she was younger.

"Did you know that I fell to the darkness?" Bastila asked, Ahsoka whipping her head to stare at the Ancient Jedi with wide eyes.

"You what?" She asked, shocked by the declaration.

"I was captured by Darth Malak during the fight against the Sith," She explained, and for the first time, her cool exterior cracked just a bit. "For a week, he tortured me, forcing me to succumb to my anger and hate."

"Did... how...?"

"Revan," She explained, a fond smile on her face. "He declared his love for me, and that's enough to shock me to my senses."

"You... were together?" Ahsoka asked.

"We were more than together, Ahsoka. We were married," She explained, her smile growing. "We even had a child. As you can imagine, the Jedi Council did *not* like any of that."

"But, to love like that, to form connections... It goes against everything I- We ever learned!" Ahsoka insisted, having stopped her random wondering again. "The Jedi must refrain from forming attachments, as they can lead to the Dark side. Look at what it did to Anakin!"

"Many things can lead to the dark side, Ahsoka," Bastila pointed out gently. "Or do you think that it was my attachments that made my torture so effective? No, my love for Revan and his love for me was what allowed me to shake off the darkness and return to the light. Without that... who knows what could have happened."

For a long while, the two were silent again, pacing around the interior of the Temple. Eventually, after passing through a meditation chamber, Ahsoka spoke once more.

"... I am struggling to reconcile my teachings with what I am learning now," She admitted. "Love, attachments, the dangers of the Light... It all flies directly in the face of my upbringing. How do I know what is right and what is wrong if I cannot trust what I was taught? How do I know if I am doing the right thing? How do I *know*?"

"You don't," Bastila responded with a sad, understanding smile. "The Jedi Order... it was built as a solution to the problems of its age. As it grew, and as the ages changed, the Order, both yours and mine, stagnated. The people, the individuals were mostly good, kind people..."

"But..."

"But the institution was... well, not broken, but certainly dysfunctional. It needed to evolve, shift, and change... But it failed to do so," She explained, a pained look on her face as they both passed a window overlooking Coruscant. "Ahsoka, you were taught were absolutes because at the forming of the Order, even before the reforms, absolutes were needed. The ancient Jedi, the ones who were ancient to me, they needed to draw a line in the sand. To stand steadfast and guide the galaxy. That hardline stance only got worse with time."

For a long moment, the pair was silent, continuing to travel through the Temple. When Bastila continued, it was with a more upbeat, hopeful tone.

"But now you and your friends, they have the opportunity to shift, to adapt," She explained. "The answer to your question, Ahsoka, you don't know how, or why, or when. You simply know you must. The rest is up to you and those who walk beside you."

Ahsoka stared back at the confident woman, her mind racing through what she had said. She wanted to say she was wrong, wanted to pull up her teachings and tell her that they were what they needed, to hide behind the rules, the code, the calm but clean precision that told her what was good and what was bad, what she should do and what she shouldn't...

Then it all came crashing down. Her knees were weak, and her heart sank. For a moment, she felt like she would collapse, her body feeling weak as the realization finally dawned on her.

"I'm hiding behind it, aren't I?" She asked, Bastila smiling at her realization.

Ahsoka, her mind slowing down, her epiphany clearing her thoughts, finally realized where she was. Somehow, as they walked, they had arrived at the [High Council Spire](#). It was impossible, since they had not stepped foot inside of a turbo lift, but Ahsoka did not care. She stepped forward to the center of the room, as if she was addressing the Council themselves.

"The Jedi were misled, used, manipulated, and betrayed," She said, her face a determined visage. "But that does not mean we were innocent. Our neglect, our... stagnation, it led to a Sith taking over the galaxy. But now... We have an opportunity to change. To learn from our past mistakes."

As she spoke, the once Jedi Padawan turned to look at each of the seats, almost as if she could see each Master who would have claimed them. She took a moment to gather herself, releasing a long breath before finally speaking back up.

"For too long, I refused to adapt. I was scared of what might happen if we failed, scared by the fact that we would be setting the rules, making the decisions... meaning the burden of failure would be on our shoulders," The Togruta woman admitted, subconsciously shifting her

position to stand firm under the burden she was attempting to claim. "But I will not hide behind it any longer. I will no longer cling to the teaching of the Jedi. Learn from them, yes, but never again will I use them as a shield to cower behind. I will stand by Luke, Ezra, Felia, Amescoll, and his Padawans, and together, we will forge the next step of the Jedi Order, whatever form it may take."

For a moment, her voice echoed through the empty space, her words hanging in the air. Finally, she felt a hand on her shoulder, turning to find Bastila standing next to her. The ancient Jedi gave her a nod and a smile before fading away to nothing. In the blink of an eye, Ahsoka was back in the cave. Her feet hadn't moved, but her hands had, pulling out the pink Kyber crystal Deacon had given her so long ago. It was glowing, floating above her palm as she held it out.

The crystal was a darker, deeper pink, almost magenta. Before she could say or do anything, though, a faint line appeared along the crystal, glowing slightly before cracking in two, each half the perfect size for their own saber.

In a moment, he was lost.

One second, he was standing in the damp, cold cave, surrounded by wonderful glowing Kyber crystals, and the next, he was standing at the top of a [rocky, dry hill](#). The air was dry, almost painfully so, while the mild cold had somehow changed into a dangerous biting chill. A stiff breeze flowed over the mountain, pulling and tugging at his loose clothes, the kind you usually wore when you were in danger of overheating, not freezing to death.

"Hello!? Anyone there?" He called out, slowly turning in a circle. "Hello? I mean, you no harm... I'm not sure how I got here..."

Nothing but silence greeted him. Not even the echoes responded.

Cursing under his breath, he reached down to touch his father's saber, which had become something of a lucky charm, only for his hand to come up with nothing. Not only was his lightsaber gone, but all of the other gear he kept in his pouches were empty, too. Suddenly, he was feeling a lot more vulnerable. Luke cast another look around, trying to pick up any clue as to where he was, before picking a random direction and setting out to walk that way.

He had barely reached the crest of the surprisingly level, large hill when someone called out to him from behind.

"If you're looking for shelter, I suggest you descend. The wind is less biting down low," A woman's voice said from behind him.

Luke spun around, turning to see an older woman with white hair, pulled into a loose bun standing there with a small smile. She was dressed in white robes as well, with one hand on her belt and the other on her lightsaber hilt.

"Hello... my name is Luke," He said, trying to give the woman what he hoped was a friendly smile. "Do you have any idea where we are?"

The woman gave a short look around before shaking her head and shrugging.

"I apologize, I don't recognize this place," She admitted. "But then again, I'm not here for the scenery. I am here for you."

"For me?" Luke asked, suddenly on the back foot as the woman slowly approached him. "What do you need me for? I'm just some guy, nobody important."

"Oh, really? Luke Skywalker, Son of Anakin Skywalker, Last of the Jedi, Commander of Rogue Squadron, Hero of the Rebellion," She listed. "Do those perhaps sound familiar?"

"I sort of wish they didn't," Luke mumbled before focusing back on the women. "What do you want? Did you bring me here?"

"No, I had nothing to do with that," She responded honestly. "I am just as stranded as you."

"Dammit..." Luke said, chewing his lip before shaking his head, once again looking around. "If you're stranded too, let's try and get our bearings."

Luke looked around again, taking a moment before he pointed out to an adjacent hill, one separated by a long, stone-filled valley.

"C'mon, that hill seems to be a bit taller," He correctly pointed out. "If we can climb it, it might give us a better vantage point."

The hilly, steep mountain did appear to be higher, and if there was anything to see nearby, it was as good as any place to spot it.

"C'mon, we should stick together until we find a way off this place."

Luke explained before slowly starting to descend the hill they were currently on. He hopped from boulder to boulder, sliding down in some spots and jumping down in others. He frequently turned around to check on his company, and they were always nearby, despite never seeming to move all that much.

"So what's your name?" he called back to the woman as he carefully crawled down a near-vertical face.

"My name is [Meetra](#)," She responded simply.

"It's nice to meet you, Meetra," Luke responded, stopping on the edge of a large boulder for a break. "Any idea how we got here?"

"I might have a theory or two," She stated, her voice suddenly closer as she sat down beside the young Jedi in training. "Tell me, what was the last thing you remember?"

"I... I was with Deacon and Ahsoka..." He said with a frown, looking out over the valley, then back up to where they had descended from. "We... We were..."

"In the crystal cave, a natural wellspring of the Force," She prodded, smiling as Luke finally started to connect the dots.

"Performing a Gathering ceremony, something that can include Force visions," He finished, sagging in relief. "Then this isn't real, is it?"

"Oh, it's real," She assured him. "It's also happening completely... up here."

She reached out and tapped his forehead, the young man looking up at her hand as she did.

"Right... Ahsoka and Deacon mentioned this might happen," He said, frowning slightly as Meetra pulled away. "Ahsoka said to follow the will of the Force, but Deacon just said to do my best and learn what I can. Apparently, it's not often that the Force reaches out and starts giving advice."

Meetra chuckled and nodded, Deacon's words seeming to tickle her fancy.

"Your friend certainly has a unique perspective on the Force," She admitted, still smiling. "We weren't sure... Well, I won't betray his secrets, but he has grown on us over time."

"He has helped a lot. Both the Rebellion, myself... Even Ahsoka seems to be happier around him," He admitted with a small smile, which dulled slightly as he continued. "I honestly don't know how he does it."

"Oh? His magic?" Meetra asked, fully aware of what Luke really meant, but playing along anyway.

"No. Well, yeah, I would like to know that too. But I meant how he so effortlessly takes command," He explained. "Miru claims that he didn't like it when they first started, but now he commands an entire mercenary faction, one that's already growing past forty people."

"You are a fair hand at leading as well, from what I've seen."

"But I hate it," He explained, shaking his head. "And I'm not getting better! I hate seeing people who I would have considered as friends look at me like I should know what to do like I should be respected for..."

"For things you don't feel you deserve?"

"Yeah. I mean, sithspit, I'm nineteen! I shouldn't be leading a whole squadron or have the power to command troops!"

"And yet, your Rogue Squadron has followed you into danger countless times," Meetra pointed out. "The people you lead respect you, and while some may wonder about your age, they see you as someone who can lead them to victory."

For a long pause, the two were silent. The white-haired woman seemed content to wait while Luke worked through whatever was on his mind.

"I know the Rebellion is looking to me to... be a hero, a leader or... A figurehead?" He eventually said, not exactly sure how to put his thoughts into words. "I miss being the kid Tantooine. It's not that I don't want to fight the Rebellion..."

"I think I understand. The burden of leadership and responsibility is not an easy one to bear," She agreed, Luke immediately nodding. "Some people, like Deacon, find they have a talent for it, even if it's not something they enjoy."

"And for the rest of us?" He asked.

"Necessity is a hard mistress but rewards those who persevere with wisdom through experience," Meetra explained before simplifying her advice. "Practice makes perfect, Luke. You're young, and you have been thrust into this position. There is no reason you should feel confident. In fact, I would be more concerned if you did."

"So that's it? Just grin and bear it until it doesn't bother me anymore?"

"Well, for one thing, you aren't nearly as bad as you believe yourself to be," She pointed out. "Just now, you were thrust into an unknown situation. Rather than panic or wait for someone to fix the situation for you, you took control and came up with a plan, even engaged someone to collaborate with."

"I... I suppose that's true, but-"

"Luke, you must learn to trust yourself," The older woman insisted, putting her hand on his shoulder. "With that, you would be surprised how quickly you can learn to fill a role you are unfamiliar with. Learn, gain experience, and your confidence in your leadership abilities will grow in time."

Luke let out a long sigh, seeming to shore up his confidence, before nodding in understanding.

"I will keep working at it," He assured the ancient Jedi. "I might not enjoy it, but I have a responsibility to the people who have chosen to follow me.... I think I will start by asking Deacon for some advice."

"A sound plan," Meetra suggested. "Perhaps you should consider talking to a few others as well."

"I will."

"Good," She said happily, standing up before helping Luke to his feet. "And remember. There are more ways to lead than by direction. Sometimes leading by example is just as effective."

"Thank you, Meetra," Luke responded, looking around the bleak, stony landscape again. "... So what happens-"

Before he could finish his sentence, Luke was suddenly back in the cave. For a moment, he panicked, struggling against his new position. Rather than standing at the base floor of the cavern, as he had been, he had squeezed himself into a crevasse, a space he hadn't remembered crawling into. After a few calming breaths, he looked forward and spotted what he had unknowingly been looking for. Just at the tips of his fingers was a brilliant, deep green Kyber crystal. With a gentle tug, the crystal came free, falling into his hand.