

[Back To Index](#)

## Family Ties

by Cheree Cargill

This story was written just for fun and is not an attempt to make money or infringe on any copyrights or trademarks. Only the original ideas contained within the works on this nonprofit web site are the property of their authors, and please do not copy or link these stories to any other website or archive or print without permission of the author.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Luke?" The princess pushed her way through the undergrowth of ferns and ground cover into the clearing. Skywalker sat on a mossy log, his back to her, but turned slightly at the sound of his name. "I just wanted to tell you that we'll be leaving in a few minutes."

"Han, too?" he asked.

"Yes, and Chewie and Threepio. We're going back up to the flagship for the time being and then we'll be going out with the scouting party that's investigating the new base site. The others will be pulling out before too long. The Empire knows we're here and it won't be too long before somebody picks up the reins on Coruscant. Killing Vader and the Emperor has just thrown oil on the fire, I'm afraid."

Luke smiled slightly then became thoughtful once more. He was silent for a moment then said softly, "He asked me to tell you something."

"Who?" Leia looked at him, puzzled.

"Vader ... Anakin." Leia frowned reflexively but Luke didn't notice. "He said to tell you that I was right about him." For the first time, Luke turned his intense blue eyes on his sister. "There was good in him, Leia. Just before he died, he renounced the Dark Side and came back to the Light. \*Anakin\* killed Palpatine, not me. He saved my life ... and himself."

Leia had drawn away from him, a horrified expression slowly spreading over her face. She shook her head in disbelief. "Luke, you can't be serious! You sound ... proud of him!"

It was Luke's turn to look puzzled. "I don't understand."

"You know what Vader was what he did! How can you blindly forgive him like this?"

"Didn't you hear me? He turned back to the Light. He's the one who destroyed the Emperor."

"And you think that makes up for twenty years of evil? Just like that? I can't believe this!"

"He's our father. How can you condemn him like this?"

Leia stared at him in amazement, then frowned angrily and answered, "Luke, it is immaterial to me that Anakin Skywalker impregnated our mother. He is *\*not\** my father! Bail Organa is the only father I ever knew and I will not toss away the years he gave me just because Vader chose to remember Mother at this late date!"

She rose to her feet, trembling in fury. "How can you be so blind? Don't you know that Vader was responsible for destroying Alderaan? Don't you know how many people he killed? Sweet Maker, Luke, don't you know what he did to Han and Chewie and me on Bespin?" Tears were brimming in her eyes and she choked, whirling from him to dash them away.

Luke was on his feet, too, looking stricken. "Leia I'm sorry. I *\*do\** know ... it's just that ... well, you didn't see how he was in the end ... how he changed. He wasn't Vader in the end. He'd come back to the Light."

"That doesn't make up for his crimes, Luke! His victims are still dead! Alderaan is still gone!" She closed her eyes and gulped air, trying to steady herself. When she was calmer, she went on in a quieter tone. "Luke, I know you see him in a different light than I do. You saw him as Jedi to Jedi." Pain filled her voice and features as she continued. "But, Luke, you don't know what I went through at his hands, from him *\*personally\**. He interrogated me for hours on the Death Star. I nearly cracked. I nearly told him everything just to get him to stop. Then he made me stand and watch them blow up Alderaan, and then he took me back for more interrogation."

She closed her eyes and drew another shuddering breath. "And on Bespin, he used us as bait to bring you there. Dear gods, Luke, he tortured us until you heard our screams through the Force and came. I watched him put Han into carbon freeze just to see if it would work as casually as you or I would scribble with a pen to see if it would write." There were tears running down her face. "How can you ask me to believe that Darth Vader is my father?"

Luke put his hands over his face as the backwash of her anguish overwhelmed him. Two different textures leather and skin drew his attention and he pulled back to stare at the black glove covering his right hand. She was right; the misery and death that had followed in Vader's wake for twenty years could not be erased by Anakin's redemption. Vader had used him, too, or had tried to. His cybernetic hand would be a reminder of that fact for the rest of his life.

He looked back up at Leia and she saw in his face the acknowledgment of the truth. The two young people stood painfully for a moment, their eyes locked on each other, then Luke moved toward her and she fell into his arms.

"Leia, I'm sorry," he said, holding her tight and trying to keep his own tears from falling. "I'm so sorry. Forgive me. I love you and I don't want to hurt you like this. You're right ... I can't excuse him."

Leia had brought her tears under control. "I love you, too, Luke." She sighed deeply and tightened her hold for a moment. There was suddenly a sense of completion in her, as if a missing piece of the puzzle had finally fallen into place. When she drew away, she knew that it had nothing to do with the kind of love she felt for Han; this was her brother and she had found him at last.

"We'll talk about this later," she promised, her hands still resting on his arms. "I do want to hear about it ... about Anakin."

"We have a *lot* to talk about," Luke answered. "I want to hear about our mother and what your life was like. What we missed not growing up together." Leia smiled and nodded.

A soft cough brought their attention to an uncomfortable-looking Han Solo standing at the edge of the clearing. He had come upon the two embracing and was uncertain if or how he should proceed.

"Uh ... I just came to tell you we're ready to go," he said awkwardly.

Leia reached out to him, smiling, and he approached them, self-consciously taking her hand.

"I didn't mean to interrupt..." he began. Leia laughed and pulled him closer so she could slip her arm around his waist, hugging for a moment.

"I was just saying goodbye to Luke," she answered.

"Yeah," Luke laughed, embarrassed himself. "I guess we got a little emotional there for a minute."

"Hey, don't apologize to me, kid! Her Worship could drive anybody to distraction!"

Leia made a strangled sound and punched him in the ribs with her free hand, but the altercation was a good-natured one and it went no farther than that.

Luke laughed and said, "Well, guess we'd all better be getting back. There's still a lot to do."

Leia had sobered. "There's \*so\* much to do. Sometimes I wonder if we'll ever see the end of it."

Han tightened the arm he had around her shoulders. "Hey, don't go all mushy on us now! We need you more than ever. Right, buddy?" he appealed to Luke.

Leia looked up at her new husband and smiled. "Buddy ... Do you know what that means, Han? It's short for 'brother'."

Both Han and Luke looked startled for a moment and stared at each other in surprise. Then a lop-sided grin pulled at Han's lips and he stuck out his hand toward Luke. "Well, yeah, I guess we \*are\* brothers now, thanks to Her Worship. Right ... buddy?"

Luke laughed and grasped Solo's hand firmly. "Right ... buddy!"

They stood for a second then Han growled, "Aw, this is startin' to sound like one of those cheap holovid tearjerkers! Come on let's get back to camp before they send out a search party!"

He started back, his arm still around Leia's shoulders. Luke hesitated for a moment and looked back into the clearing, sensing a presence in the Force begin to materialize. Abruptly, he stopped it with a sharp motion of his black-gloved hand. "We'll talk about this later,"

he said darkly and turned resolutely to follow his sister and brother-in-law.

THE END

[Back To Index](#)