

“All I Want”

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2004 JC Boards Love Letter Challenge entry, “The Saga”

Flight Officer Welker gave a huge yawn as he approached his quarters. Dogfights always wore him out. He was just glad that his Y-wing held together, though he honestly was rarely concerned that it wouldn't. Wishbones may be slow, and those X-wing pilots might enjoy flying circles around him, but Y-wings had a ruggedness and resilience that no other snubfighter had. More than anything else, that ability to take a beating is what kept him alive.

When he reached the door, he noticed a datapad propped against it on the floor. Puzzled, he picked it up, glanced at the name of the addressee, and walked into the room.

The Rebels generally did not have an excess of luxuries, and these quarters were no exception: only the bare minimum was supplied by the Alliance. Welker grabbed his roommate's chair, sat down, leaned back and propped his booted feet up on his friend's desk. Like the snubfighter they shared, there was little in the room that was not considered communal property by both of them. The war was hard enough without worrying about trivial things like whose holonovel that was or to whom the fresh fruit belonged. Well, fresh fruit probably wasn't the best example because it was so rare and so valued on the ship due to their distance from standard shipping lanes, and it was something worth being possessive about. But little else had a name attached to it, and that suited Welker and his gunner, Flight Officer Plath, just fine.

The pilot turned on the datapad and saw it was a text letter. He curiously began to read.

*Dear Emory,*

*I'm sure you're not expecting this. I guess, in some ways, I didn't expect to be writing this either, and I have to admit that I'm a little nervous. This is Tianna, by the way.*

That certainly caught Welker's attention. Tianna was the girl he had a crush on who worked in the quartermaster's office. How many times had he persuaded his gunner to go with him down there to get some trivial piece of equipment they hadn't really needed just so he'd have an excuse to see her and be near her? He kept reading.

*I see you and Mikka in here all the time, and I always enjoy talking to you. I'm sure that's obvious. Something you probably didn't know, though, is that lately, when I've seen you two coming, I've swapped duties with someone else so I could be the one to come over and help you. I didn't even realize I was doing it until a week or two ago, and not long after that, I realized why I was doing it: I've come to care for you.*

Welker's breath caught in his throat. Had he read that right? Those words couldn't be true,

could they?

*Hard to believe, isn't it? A lowly clerk like me falling for a heroic guy like you. I mean, you're part of a fighter squadron! You probably get letters like this all the time. You could have any girl you wanted, someone smarter, someone prettier. I should just admit to myself that it won't work. There's probably no way that you could see in me what I see in you. But I owe it to my heart to at least try and ask. It deserves an answer from your heart, not my brain's fearful defenses.*

The pilot felt his heart hammering. He saw in her all that was good in the galaxy. If only she could see that...

*I wrote this letter while the dogfight was going on outside. I've lived through dozens of dogfights since I was assigned to this ship, but this was the first one that truly frightened me. It was fear that I might lose you, fear that you might be hurt or killed or captured, and fear that if any of those things happened, you would be gone. My life would be empty again, and I might never know what could have been. That fear just made it all the more clear to me that I had to tell you now how I felt, how much I truly care, before another dogfight comes and denies me the chance forever.*

Welker was well aware of those possibilities too, but they all seemed to melt away when he gazed at Tianna. It amazed him that she could be so afraid during a dogfight and yet still be willing to endure it every time the squadron was sent on a mission. The closer she got, the worse it would be for her. She was brave.

*You're a bright, welcome light in an otherwise monotonous, lonely, hard existence. I can't tell you how much it's meant to me to get to know you over these past couple months, and I want to know more about you. I want to know what draws me to you. I want to know if there's a chance for something more between us. And I want to discover what kind of couple we could be.*

They would be a perfect couple, Welker knew. She was his refuge from the war, his life in the midst of death.

*When I joined the Rebellion, I told myself that I had endured enough hardships at the hands of the Imperials. There was going to be nothing distracting me from doing all I could to fight them. My soul went into that fight. I sacrificed all I had left.*

*Now my soul is tired of fighting. I've realized that I'm simply putting more hardships on myself by denying my heart anything except the fight. War is hard enough without needlessly making it harder. I want to change that. I want to love, and I love you.*

Those were the exact words Welker had been praying she would say to him.

*It's almost time for my shift to start. I'm sorry for not saying all this in person, but as I said, I'm nervous, and I don't have the courage to fly into a dogfight like you do. If I change my mind, I'm comforted by the thought that I can always take the datapad back before you return. If*

*I don't, then you'll have time to think everything over without feeling like you have to give me an answer right away. I'll be patient if it means you'll give my words careful consideration.*

*You know where to find me. I'll be there waiting for you.*

*Love,*

*Tianna*

Welker's feet fell heavily to the floor as he stared at the datapad in his hands. "Stunned" didn't even begin to describe how he felt. It was almost surreal. Everything he had hoped for, everything he had prayed for... All his dreams...He wanted to cry. The emotions were just overwhelming.

He jerked his head up when he heard someone outside in the corridor entering an access code at the door. Welker quickly shut the datapad off and stood up, attempting to look casual.

The door opened, and his roommate walked in. The Y-wing gunner offered Welker a tired grin and a greeting. "Hi, Mikka."

"Hi, Emory." Welker held the datapad out to Plath and tried to sound normal, though he doubted he succeeded. "There's a letter for you."

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*The End*

Revision A

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