

trust is a flame slow to rekindle

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trust is a flame slow to rekindle

by [platinum_firebird](#)

Summary

A year after Order 66, Cody finds Obi-Wan in the desert.

Notes

Hope you enjoy, recip!

When Obi-Wan Kenobi steps out of his hut into the cool air of the morning, he discovers he has a visitor.

His hand grasps instinctively for his lightsaber, forgetting that it's no longer hanging from his belt, but wrapped up in cloth and hidden in a trunk in the house behind him. It's so hard to tamp down on years of instinct, to remember that he's in hiding now.

The man is sitting in the sand three paces from his front door, dressed in rough civilian clothes, and apparently unarmed. He raises his hands in surrender and says, "I'm not here to hurt you, General."

That title knocks him off balance, bringing with it a wave of memory. It's only been a year.

It takes him a moment to find his voice. "What are you doing here, then?"

"Looking for you," Cody says.

Obi-Wan scowls down at him; that's the last thing he wants to hear. "Shouldn't you be hunting down dissidents, Imperial Section Commander?" he asks.

"Gets old after a while, General."

Despite himself, something inside his chest warms at the sound of his old title in Cody's rough, familiar voice. It's only been a year, after all; the memory of everything he left behind is still fresh, still painful. And now here is Cody, a literal representation of everything he's lost, bringing it all back to life.

Obi-Wan stands frozen in the doorway, unsure what to do. The last time he saw Cody, the commander was ordering his men to make sure they'd succeeded in killing him. He's still a fugitive from the Empire, which means Cody should *still* be trying to kill him. He should have taken up a sniper's position in the rocks overlooking Obi-Wan's home and killed him as he opened his front door, as he did at the same time every morning. He should have snuck in and cut his throat as he slept, or stormed the hut with a company of troopers.

He should have done anything *other* than sit in plain sight and let Obi-Wan know he's here.

Cody is very well trained in combat psychology. He must know what kind of signal he sends, appearing openly, unarmed, close enough that Obi-Wan could have cut his head off with one swing, if he'd had his lightsaber with him. Cody has constructed every action to say 'I'm not a threat'. To say, 'my life is in your hands'.

Unless someone else is lying in wait, and Cody is the distraction. Obi-Wan reaches out with the Force, sweeping the land around the hut, but feels only the eopies, a few wild animals, and the man sitting before him. Unless Cody has led a skilled Force user to his door, they appear to be alone.

"You're looking for me," Obi-Wan says.

Cody just nods.

“Why?”

Cody’s mouth twists. “It’s...complicated. But let’s just say I’m no longer a friend of the Empire.”

Obi-Wan is quiet for a moment before he says, “That doesn’t necessarily make you a friend of mine.”

“I know.”

The silence falls again, heavy and cloying. Obi-Wan doesn’t know what to do with this man, this man who tried to kill him, this man who sits here now with no pretence or guile, who has spoken no word of a lie, who isn’t even *armed*.

He’s not supposed to take chances, but he does anyway, leaving the safe cover of the hut and walking straight past Cody. “I need to feed my animals,” he says as he goes past, “Come on.”

He can’t tell if it’s the Force or just his own wishful thinking, but there’s something in his gut telling him to trust this. To give Cody a chance, at least.

Cody follows him to the eopie shed and helps replenish their food and water, giving the creatures a bemused look when they snuffle their long snouts through his hair. Obi-Wan tries to ignore how it feels like old times, the two of them working together in tandem.

When the eopies are fed, when he’s checked the vaporator, when all the farm work he could use as an excuse is done, Obi-Wan is once again faced with the same problem. What is Cody doing here? Is he telling the truth? It doesn’t feel like he’s lying, but Obi-Wan remembers explaining to him how he senses untruths; how he reads people’s feelings, senses the tension that enters their Force signatures as they tell a lie. Cody remembers *everything* that might be of tactical value. He might have trained to subvert Obi-Wan’s senses, to be able to lie without feeling anything that would register in the Force. It would have been easier to kill him from a distance, to not interact with him beyond a blaster blot to the head, but the Empire isn’t above mind games. Maybe *that’s* the reason Cody’s here; he’s bait to lure Obi-Wan into one of Palpatine’s cleverly constructed traps.

As Obi-Wan watches Cody step out of the shed and into the light of the rising morning sun, he wonders when he got so paranoid. The old Obi-Wan wouldn’t have given his trust at the drop of a hat, but he wouldn’t have let these thoughts run riot inside his head like this, eating him up from the inside. What happened to him?

He lost everyone he could trust. He’s on his own now. And he was betrayed.

He wants so desperately to trust Cody. To have one person who came back, who wasn’t lost.

To make him believe anyone could.

He weighs his options as he walks back to the house. If Palpatine knows he’s here, he needs to get out now. But there will be few places more hidden or more safe for Luke to grow up.

They chose this place for a reason; Vader will never look here, and given his arrogance and dismissal of the Outer Rim, Palpatine might not either. If Obi-Wan can, he should make sure Luke stays here.

He needs to listen to Cody's reasons, his explanation for his presence here. He needs to ask some hard questions, and see if Cody's still not lying when he answers them. If he has found a way to lie without letting a Jedi sense it, Obi-Wan needs to keep making him do it over and over, until he slips up.

But if he's telling the truth...

Cody hesitates when they reach the hut, but Obi-Wan strides past him and pulls the door open. "I suppose I had better feed you breakfast," he says on his way in.

They eat a sparse meal in awkward silence. Obi-Wan has never been good at cooking, and the bareei grain is coarse and nearly tasteless, but Cody eats it without complaint.

After he clears the plates away, Obi-Wan sits back down and says, "So, why were you looking for me?"

"It's a long answer," Cody says, "And I don't know if you'll be happy with it."

"Tell me anyway."

Cody takes a deep breath. "The Grand Army of the Republic was never a cakewalk," he starts, "But the Imperial Army... Tiring isn't the half of it. It's crushing. Soul-destroying. There's no camaraderie, no friendship. Just constant looking over your shoulder, wondering who might be about to report you for 'misconduct' or 'dissident thoughts'. So I...deserted." Despite his sharp words about the quality of the Imperial Army, he still looks ashamed as he pronounces the final word.

"And you came here?"

Cody seems to chew over his words for a while before he speaks. "Most of the others like to pretend they always thought something was up with the Jedi. They like to pretend they all saw something bad in you from the start, that they always thought you were hiding something. Makes them feel better, maybe, salves their conscience. But I know what we did was wrong. A betrayal of trust."

The words shock Obi-Wan to silence; he didn't think he would ever hear them. Cody still feels like he's telling the truth, and clearly so. Obi-Wan can feel the anger, and more powerfully, the self-hatred, pouring off him in waves. It feels like he's wanted to say these words for months; like they've been building up inside him, itching and clawing to be released.

Cody straightens in his seat and says, "I came here to apologise to you, and to make amends, if amends can ever be made."

Obi-Wan has to ask the question, the one that's been burning on his tongue ever since he laid eyes on Cody sitting there outside his door. "If you knew it was wrong, then why did you do it?"

Cody meets his eyes and then quickly looks away. "It was an executive order from the Chancellor himself. Highest level there was."

Obi-Wan understands what he's implying; he'd had to make an awful choice. Give the order to kill Obi-Wan, or risk insubordination court-martials and 'reconditioning' for the whole battalion.

"The logic actually made sense at first," Cody says. "We were about to win, but the Republic was in shambles. Why wouldn't the Jedi want to take over, to guide the restoration themselves? Part of me even thought it made sense. But it would have been a betrayal, nonetheless." He sighs heavily. "I'm guessing there wasn't really a secret plan for the Council to take over the Senate."

"No. It was Palpatine's excuse to get rid of the Jedi."

"Yeah. The Temple..." Cody shakes his head. "The Temple convinced a lot of brothers to jump ship. We weren't supposed to know, but people talk. Killing all the Jedi officers was extreme, but there was reasoning behind it. Killing the non-combatants, the elderly, the *children*..." Cody stops, shakes his head, and silence reigns throughout the small dwelling. Obi-Wan tries not to remember, but the images are vivid, clear as a holo; the Temple floors strewn with bodies, and the holorecording of the man who'd done it, who'd cut down his family without mercy.

"Of course, after that, the brass cracked down on anything that went against protocol," Cody says. It takes Obi-Wan a few seconds to remember what they were talking about. "I should have jumped ship then, but I was still lying to myself. Papering over the cracks, telling myself I hadn't done something awful." He shakes his head again. "I'm done lying now, though."

Despite himself, Obi-Wan can't help but admire Cody. Many lesser men would simply have run, unable to face their misdeeds, unable to even attempt making amends. But Cody has come here, armed with nothing but his words, and spoken with convincing candor. That shows admirable strength of character.

The silence stretches, with Cody looking down at his hands and Obi-Wan tongue-tied. He can't say, 'I forgive you', because it's not true. Not yet, and maybe not ever.

"Did you not worry I would just kill you before you had the chance to speak?" he asks.

Cody shrugs. "I would probably have deserved that. I gave you the option, if you wanted it."

Obi-Wan can't decide if he agrees or disagrees with that statement, so instead he asks, "What did you do with your blaster?", because he's never seen Cody without one.

“Traded it for a ride out here.” Cody rubs his thumb over the end of his nose. “Gotta be honest, I feel pretty naked without it.”

Unconsciously, Obi-Wan responds with humour. “If you’re going up against a lightsaber bare-handed, you may as well be naked.”

Cody looks up at him, and a small, hesitant smile breaks across his face. Like always, something in Obi-Wan’s chest lifts in response-

But no. He shouldn’t be smiling, laughing, feeling comfortable with this man. This man tried to kill him.

Or should he? Cody just apologised, and with the utmost sincerity. He wasn’t lying; Obi-Wan is convinced of that.

Obi-Wan has no idea what to do. Most people who’ve tried to kill him have never come back to apologise for it afterward.

But Cody has told the truth, and Obi-Wan wants so desperately to trust someone. Maybe he needs to take a leap of faith.

“Well,” he says, slow and careful, “I won’t make you sleep outside. But there’s only one bed, so it’ll have to be the floor.”

“‘Bout the same thickness as your average GAR mattress, then,” Cody says cheerfully.

Obi-Wan can’t help his smile.

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Cody doesn’t leave; but then again, Obi-Wan doesn’t ask him to. Cody has nowhere else to go, and after a year spent either alone or with only the locals’ suspicious glares for company, it’s nice to have someone friendly around again. Awkwardness and suspicion still hang between them, something they can never quite shift; but it gets easier, over the course of a week, to smile with Cody again, to talk to him, to relax around him.

It’s not the attempted murder he has so much of a problem with, Obi-Wan realises. In the past he’s ended up working somewhat amiably with people who previously tried to kill him; Asajj Ventress, Hondo Ohnaka, and Cad Bane all spring to mind.

The problem is that Cody was the knife in the back that he never expected. Around Ventress or Bane, he would have expected it, been watching for it. But Cody was the one who was supposed to be *protecting* him. The real problem wasn’t the attempted murder; it was the betrayal of trust.

Always, at the back of Obi-Wan’s mind, is the consideration that this might all be some elaborate trap. He can’t see how it is, if it is one, but he keeps his lightsaber hooked on his belt at all times, just in case.

Cody feeds the eopies, cleans the house, and complains about the incredible amount of sand that finds its way into every nook and cranny. Obi-Wan meditates, goes into town for supplies, makes one visit to watch the Lars' farm from afar, and meditates some more.

Despite repeated entreaties for his advice, Qui-Gon is resoundingly silent about the whole affair.

The weeks stretch into a month, and then two. Obi-Wan says nothing about forgiveness; trust is a flame slow to rekindle, though it's on its way there, now.

Maybe they'll have something stronger, some day.

For now, they're making it work.

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