

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Vader accepts his new position 'gracefully'.

-x-X-x-

“... If the Council believes I am worthy of such honors, then I accept.”

This was, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the most shocking discovery Vader had made, not just since finding himself in this timeline, but perhaps since discovering his children had survived and one of them had been hiding under his nose for decades as the Princess of House Organa.

... And yet, he is still Darth Vader. He would not be worthy of the title Sith Lord if this sort of thing could off-balance him to the point of making any type of mistake in this moment. Let alone one as monumental as... blurting out his discovery for instance.

“Excellent. Please, take your seat Master Skywalker. Master Secura, you are dismissed. Thank you for your report.”

Aayla shoots him a look but has the presence of mind not to try to overstay her welcome. As she departs, Vader makes his way over to one of the empty seats. With the war on, the Jedi High Council is truthfully going through a bit of a churn anyways... the Battle for Geonosis left multiple empty seats which still haven't all been filled since.

Still... all of them?! It's so hard to believe that he almost doesn't, initially. He doubts his own findings, his own initial impression so much that he has to take a second look. And yet, the answer doesn't change just because he's having a hard time believing it. Each and every member of the Jedi High Council present in the chamber today... reeks of the Dark Side.

Not just Depa Billaba, sat a distance behind him near the council doors. Not just Aayla Secura standing at his side. No, literally every Jedi physically in the room was Fallen. This included the likes of Mace Windu... and even Master Yoda.

That last one would send a shiver down Vader's spine if he weren't in total control of himself right now. The Grandmaster of the Jedi Order was over nine hundred years old. And even *he* had Fallen to the Dark Side? *Master Yoda?* How? When? Why the fuck did Sidious not seem to know about this?

Of course, the answer to that is actually rather obvious when Vader thinks about it for longer than a second. The reason Sidious hasn't detected the darkness concentrated in this room is because it pales in the face of his own presence in the Dark Side. As well as Vader's.

Even if someone like Grandmaster Yoda has been around for nine hundred years, the vast majority of that time he was still steeped in the Light Side of the Force. And its clear that while he's Fallen now, he has not fully embraced the Dark Side. If he had, if he did... well, that was terrifying to consider to say the least.

As well, Master Windu, in spite of practicing Vaapad and toeing the line of the Dark Side, was essentially in the same situation that Vader had found Depa in. He was wallowing rather than learning to use the Dark Side, clearly trying to hide it over relishing in it.

They all were trying to hide it. Now that he was actually looking, it was so obvious it hurt. Each and every member of the Jedi Council was doing a terrible job of hiding their Fallen nature from the others. And the only reason they were all succeeding was because they were each too busy focusing on themselves to see what was going on around them.

Meanwhile, he and Sidious had been blinding themselves to the truth simply by existing. Even the destruction of the Dark Side Nexus hadn't been enough to reveal the corruption at the highest echelons of the Jedi Order. It had merely sent Sidious on a hunt to find the *one* Jedi Master among the Council that he had thought had Fallen.

Vader wished he could derive more amusement by that fact, but alas, such humor was tempered by the fact that he himself had made the exact same mistake. He'd uncovered Depa Billaba so easily and then patted himself on the back like he'd done a good job. When in truth, he'd stopped just short of uncovering so much more.

It was infuriating, but the only one he had to blame was himself. More than that, there was no point dwelling on it. Instead, Vader needed to focus on the here and now and figuring out how this affected his plans going forward.

... Were the Council Members off world also Fallen? Was *Obi-Wan Kenobi* Fallen?! That seemed impossible, but then this new timeline he found himself in had already surprised Vader half a dozen times anyways. His own wife was as close to 'Fallen' as a non-Force User could get for instance, and the Padme from the original timeline would have never succumbed to Darkness.

So nothing was off the table. Sith Hells, the entire Jedi Order might be Fallen for all Vader knew at this point!

...

Slowly, keeping half an ear on the meeting happening around him, Vader begins to unfurl his Force Presence a bit further. He's subtle about it, as subtle as he can be of course, even as he spreads himself outwards until he's encompassing the entire Jedi Temple with his attention.

At first he's looking for more Fallen Jedi. But rather quickly Vader switches that and starts looking for even a single Jedi that *hasn't* Fallen yet. And... he can't find one. He cannot find a single Jedi that still walks in the Light Side of the Force.

Padawans, Knights, Masters... every single one of them is steeped in the Dark Side. From the Archives to the Halls of Healing, nobody stands out to him. Fuck... even the Creches... even the Crechemasters feel Dark to his senses.

And the younglings, the Force Sensitive Children under their care... their Force Presences have a touch of darkness to them already.

Force Sensitive Children, even raised in the Jedi Temple from infancy, were usually neutral in the Force for much of their first few years of life. It's not until they could actually understand the world around them, not until they became closer to sapient beings, that their Force Presences began to be colored by their surroundings.

Obviously, them being raised in the Jedi Temple, this usually meant they quickly found themselves converting to the Light Side. That was by design, of course. The lack of outside attachments because they'd been taken from their families as babies meant they were empty vessels ready to be filled with the Light.

Except that wasn't happening anymore. Not here, not in the Jedi Temple. Instead, the creches were filled with younglings who were already starting to feel the Dark Side of the Force. They would never be proper Jedi... they would be 'Fallen' before they even got the chance to be taken as Padawans.

But at this point, what did 'Fallen' even mean? If the entire fucking Jedi Order had turned to the Dark Side... what did that mean for the galaxy at large? How had this happened? It definitely hadn't happened in the previous timeline, so what was different now?

"Master Skywalker?"

Blinking, Vader is pulled from his thoughts by the voice of Mace Windu. Thankfully, he's been keeping enough attention on the conversation going on around him so that he's able to straighten up and answer promptly. The question at hand was what he would do next... now that he was a Jedi Council Member and got to choose his own missions and what not.

"I believe I and the 501st are best served reinforcing Masters Kenobi and Unduli in their current duties. They've seen success working together so far, but if we wish to capitalize on our victories against the Separatists, we need to consolidate our forces and aim for a bigger push."

There's a pause as his words hang in the air. Vader waits for someone to disagree with him or tell him off or what have you... but that doesn't happen. Instead there are murmurs of agreement and nods all around the circle and Vader is forced to hide his incredulity.

It's not just that the entire Jedi High Council has Fallen, is it? No, it goes a step beyond that. They've all Fallen to the Dark Side... and much like Aayla had been, they've convinced themselves that he is their last hope. His greatest detractors no longer trust their own judgment, which has led them to do a one eighty on him.

He MUST be the Chosen One, destined to bring balance to the Force, because clearly they've personally failed. So they can only rely on him. And this is the belief they've all come to individually, completely separate of one another.

... By the Force, what a damn mess.

"Very well, then it's settled. Master Skywalker will prepare his forces and depart to join Master Kenobi and Master Unduli. I will inform the Supreme Chancellor of this meeting's developments when I talk to him later this evening."

That... Vader can't help himself. He clears his throat and leans forward.

"Actually... if you wouldn't mind Master Windu, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with Chancellor Palpatine while I'm on Coruscant. I could brief him on what has happened here today as well, perhaps?"

Admittedly, this might be overstepping a fair bit. But Vader can't help himself. He has to be there when Sidious finds out that the Order promoted him to the rank of Master entirely of their own volition without an ounce of prompting from outside forces.

More than that though, he also wants to limit direct personal contact between Sidious and the Jedi Council as much as possible, because the more time the

Sith Lord spends in any of their presence, the higher the likelihood that he will discover the truth.

So, you know... there's actually a very solid reason why it should be him to deliver the news, on top of the fact that he just really, really wants to see the bastard's reaction.

After pausing to consider his proposal, Master Windu... nods, much to Vader's hidden excitement.

"Very well. Thank you Master Skywalker, I'll leave the Chancellor's briefing in your capable hands then."

Sith Hells, this really was a bizarre version of his original universe, wasn't it? Still, with this he'd gotten everything he could possibly want out of this. He would go and tell Sidious what had happened here today and see his reaction. Then, he would rendezvous with Darth Varice and find out for sure whether or not Obi-Wan was Fallen.

After that... well, he'd figure out what he was going to do then. Still, if the entire Jedi Order had Fallen to the Dark Side... that changed things. It changed everything.

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Darth Sidious girds himself for his upcoming meeting with Jedi Master Mace Windu, just as he always does. The sanctimonious Jedi Master was a devout worshiper of the Republic and did not approve of many of the things he was doing as Supreme Chancellor. It was always... challenging, having to meet with the man.

Which is why he's so surprised and caught off guard when the doors to his office open and Anakin Skywalker steps through instead. Blinking owlishly, Sidious rises from his desk, caught off guard. Someone was going to be in serious trouble for that, given he should have been informed of the younger man's approach!

“My boy! I heard you were back on planet, officially this time, but I wasn’t expecting you! I have a meeting with Master Windu in the next five minutes, but we can push that back if needed... what can I do for you?”

When an opportunity is presented, always take advantage of it. And in this case, the opportunity to increase the dislike between Windu and Skywalker was something Sidious was more than happy to do.

“Actually, I’m here in Master Windu’s place, Chancellor. I offered to take this meeting on his behalf and he generously allowed it.”

... What?

Furrowing his brow, Sidious slowly sits back down in his chair behind his desk, even as Anakin approaches. The young Jedi looks surprisingly serene at the moment; his hands folded within his robes and a soft smile on his face. He looks... content. Untroubled. Unburdened, even. Hm...

“That’s... highly irregular. You know I always appreciate your company, Anakin... but these meetings are supposed to be between me and a member of the Jedi Council. It feels a bit like they’re throwing you to the wolves by sending you here like this when you weren’t even there for the meeting we’re supposed to be discussing...”

But even as Sidious takes the opportunity to sow further discord, Anakin shakes his head.

“Ah, apologies Chancellor, but that’s part of why I’m here. I actually was there for the meeting... as today was my first day as a member of the Jedi Council. They saw fit to appoint me to the Council upon mine and Master Secura’s return from the Malastare System.”

... Excuse him?! Sidious doesn’t even bother trying to hide his shock. After all, Sith Lord or not, anyone would be shocked by what Anakin has just said! He

does, of course, make sure to quickly translate said shock into happiness though.

“That... congratulations are in order then, my boy! Why, you must be the youngest Jedi Council Member in history! Though I must confess, I’ve never heard of a Jedi Knight being promoted to such a position before...”

Anakin just shakes his head, still smiling faintly.

“And you still haven’t. I’ve been promoted to the rank of Master, Chancellor. You are looking at the Order’s newest Jedi Master and member of the Jedi High Council.”

He says it proudly, clearly wanting to share the good news with his good friend Sheev Palpatine. That part was good, because Sidious had spent most of the boy’s life cultivating that friendship. The rest of it though... they promoted him to MASTER?!

What the fuck was going on?!

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!