

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

A/N: Finessing a Sith Lord.

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For the longest moment, both sides of Vader want to say 'no'. The part of him that led to the original Padme's death in the previous timeline and the part of him from this timeline are in full agreement on that front... they cannot lose Padme. Never again.

And yet, at the same time... Vader is not the foolish, emotional boy anymore. He cannot be, not if he wants to not only keep Padme safe but also take this galaxy and save it from the spiral of decay and destruction it is currently on. Whether Palpatine gets to institute his Galactic Empire or the Republic manages to stay alive a little while longer... neither option is at all acceptable.

Unfortunately, the truth is the truth. Facts don't care about his feelings. There is no version of the future where Vader tries to institute himself as Emperor... and manages to do so without a fight. As of right now, the galaxy knows him only as Anakin Skywalker, Jedi Knight... the Hero With No Fear.

An exemplary pedigree to be sure, but at the same time, there's no political background, no connection to the highest offices of the Republic. If Palpatine died tomorrow and Vader tried to take over, everyone would fight him... everyone. However, if Palpatine were to be incapacitated in a month, after declaring that Senator Padme Amidalla was to be his successor in the event of catastrophic events... that would be far more palatable to just about everyone.

In this case, they had to take a page out of the Banite Sith's playbook. They didn't just announce themselves as Sith and declare themselves Masters of the Universe. No, they'd gone ahead and slow boiled the entire galaxy for a thousand years, taking their time and working their way all the way to the top. And then they'd settled in at the top, entrenching themselves in the structures of power before ever finally making their big move.

Of course, it said something about Sidious' general competence that the Sith Lord had managed to turn a thousand years of his Order's work into a mere paltry twenty year Galactic Empire. Before it all fell apart. In the end, Sidious was a schemer... but long term ruling was most definitely not his strong suit.

Padme is still looking at him in the eye expectantly, so Vader finally forces himself to nod his head.

"Yes. But you won't be doing it alone."

That causes his wife to blink at him curiously, even as his hands continue to touch her naked flesh affectionately. Smiling a crooked smile, Vader makes his intentions clear.

"I will go to Sidious myself. I will reveal my presence on Coruscant to him... and tell him of my 'woes'."

Padme's brow furrows at that.

"Ah... your... woes?"

Nodding, Vader hums.

"I will tell him I've had visions. Visions of darkness. Visions of despair. Visions that make me afraid for the future of the galaxy. I will tell him I'm worried about him in particular... how vulnerable he is and how key he is to everything. And we shall see how I can make him placate me."

Tilting her head to the side, Padme considers that for a long moment even as Vader's fingers continue to touch her in certain intimate places. Her self-control is made evident in how she's able to contain her reactions, even as her body responds to him quite excitedly.

“... That could work, but it will need to be handled with care, husband. If you’re too heavy handed, you might just tip him off to there being something more between us than just love and marriage.”

That was a fair point. And Vader had to admit; he wasn’t at all experienced with handling anything ‘with care’. But luckily, he had this amazing woman currently in his lap to help him with it.

“Very well. Let’s discuss exactly what I should say and how I should say it. I’ll follow your lead, beloved.”

Padme smiles at that, looking quite pleased by his willingness to rely on her. Vader, meanwhile, listens intently as they begin to plot the hoodwinking of a Sith Lord.

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Reaching Palpatine’s Office without being detected is not too difficult. Once he’s close enough, however, he does reveal himself to the Red Guards outside of said office, who of course immediately move to bar his way. Stopping, Vader simply inclines his head.

“Please let the Supreme Chancellor know that Knight Skywalker wishes to meet with him. If it’s not possible, I will depart.”

He’s not worried about the Red Guards tattling on him to the Jedi Order or even anyone else to be fair. Indeed, The Red Guard were Palpatine’s personal bodyguards, and while the Sith Master technically didn’t need such things given his own power, he still chose for not just exceptional skill, but also exceptional loyalty.

Put bluntly, the Red Guard were loyal and ONLY loyal to Supreme Chancellor Palpatine... as they would continue to be once he became the Emperor of the Galaxy.

There's a brief pause as the blank visors both stare back at him, but Vader knows they're communicating his request onward. Indeed, after a moment the doors to the Chancellor's Office open up and the two Red Guards step aside, moving back to their posts and granting him access.

Vader strides forward through the doors, which subsequently close behind him. He walks past brazen collection of Sith Artifacts that Palpatine has decorated with, from the Sith Spirit Urns to the Bronzium Statues of the Four Sages of Dwartii, to the Bas-Relief of the Great Hyper Space War.

Palpatine meets him at the entrance of his office proper of course, a grandfatherly smile etched across his features and a feigned bit of concern visible in his eyes.

"Anakin, my boy. I can't say I was expecting you to show up like this... I received no word that you'd been recalled from Malastare!"

In turn, Vader makes sure to come across as antsy, anxious, and worried. He grimaces at Palpatine's words and shakes his head, pacing a bit deeper into the hidden Sith Lord's Office.

"I wasn't. Rex is covering for me at the moment."

Palpatine makes a concerned noise at that in the back of his throat, causing Vader to whip around and explain himself further, as though he's worried about the older man's opinion of him.

"There's nothing to worry about, Chancellor, I promise you that. We destroyed Admiral Trench and his fleet above Malastare. The Separatists' designs on the system have been stymied for now. And... I wouldn't have come here if it wasn't important."

Humming, Palpatine nods, letting more feigned worry and concern bleed through.

“Of course my boy, of course. I have full faith in you, you know that. Do not fret, the Jedi Order will not learn of your absence from me or mine, I assure you of that much.”

Vader lets his shoulders slump in ‘relief’ at that promise, hanging his head for a moment.

“Thank you sir.”

Back to smiling in a grandfatherly fashion, Palpatine gestures over to a nearby couch for them to sit.

“Think nothing of it, Anakin. Now please... tell me what ails you. What has brought you all the way back to Coruscant in secret like this, just to speak to me?”

Vader moves to take a seat, his legs spread wide and his elbows braced on his knees as he laces his fingers together in front of him.

“... I have been experiencing visions, Chancellor.”

For the first time since this conversation started, Vader feels the smallest flicker of honest alarm from Palpatine through the Force. Until now, the Sith Lord’s true feelings could be likened more to satisfaction at not only seeing his preferred apprentice in such a state but also seeing Anakin Skywalker coming to him instead of anyone in the Jedi Order.

Now though... well, the only visions that Anakin is supposed to experience are supposed to come from Palpatine himself. Visions that would turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy even as the hidden Sith Lord fanned their flames.

When Vader had finally figured out in the previous timeline that his visions of Padme’s death had likely been implanted or at the very least influenced by Palpatine himself... he had raged. Oh how he’d raged. Unfortunately, he was already too weak at that point to do anything about it. Too weak to kill his Sith Master, whether for revenge or for purposes of usurping him.

Now though... well, Vader is talking about having had visions that Palpatine himself has had no hand in.

“Visions, you say. I can only assume these are not visions of our august Republic’s eventual triumph over the enemies that plague us...”

Vader makes sure to grimace again, even as he shakes his head.

“No... no, the visions are dark, Chancellor. And... they are personal. I fear... I fear that someone has designs on Senator Amidalla’s life.”

Palpatine’s true feelings turn calculating at that.

“Senator Amidalla... I know you both are close, Anakin, but-!”

“We’re married.”

Honest shock is paired with feigned shock as Palpatine sits up straight at that confession. Obviously the man had already known, but he wasn’t expecting Vader to just come out and say it like he did.

“Married... my word.”

Nodding, Vader huffs.

“It was shortly after the Battle of Geonosis. When I went to Naboo to recover from losing my arm. We married there, a small ceremony with just us and the droids.”

Finally looking up and meeting Palpatine’s eyes, Vader adopts an imploring gaze.

“I wish I could have told you sooner Chancellor, but I-!”

But of course, Palpatine is quick to wave him off.

“Oh, do not apologize my boy. Think nothing of it. I understand in full why such a thing had to be kept secret. Your Order would not approve... nor would many others. You do not want Senator Amidalla’s reputation tarnished... no more than I do. She is, after all, my successor to the Nabooian Senatorship as well as a long time friend, no matter any current differences brought upon by this war.”

Feigning confusion, Vader furrows his brow and lets a hint of worry leak into his voice.

“Differences, Chancellor?”

It would be strange if he didn’t latch onto that after all. Palpatine just chuckles ‘good-naturedly’.

“Ah, its mere politics Anakin, nothing for you to worry about. This war... it is making us all act rather crazy. Senator Amidalla, your wife... she merely wishes to ensure that the Republic doesn’t change too much in the course of defeating the Separatist Movement. This is something I agree with, mind you, however I also feel that the Separatist Movement must be defeated so that the Republic continues to exist at the end of all of this.”

Shrugging, Palpatine smiles blandly.

“We both want the same things though, in the end.”

Funny how much truer that is than Vader is supposed to know. He can feel that Palpatine is internally laughing a little bit at what he perceives to be a tormented, distraught Jedi Knight that he can twist and corrupt into his personal attack dog.

“But please Anakin... these visions of yours brought you all the way back to Coruscant via clandestine means. You said they were of a personal nature... and had to do with a threat to Senator Amidalla’s life?”

Swallowing hard and nodding vigorously, Vader sighs.

“Yes. She’s in danger, I just know it. Specifically, she’ll be in danger if she leaves Coruscant. Only, I know she won’t let that stop her even if I tell her. I need her to stay here, to stay safe so I can continue fighting this war until we win... but I can’t control her. I can’t keep her here.”

Shooting Palpatine an imploring look, Vader leans forward.

“I had thought... or rather, I hoped that there might be something you could do, Chancellor. Some way to keep Padme grounded here on Coruscant for the foreseeable future...”

Of course, the hidden Sith Lord doesn’t immediately leap to assure Vader he can do just that. Instead, he leans back for a moment, looking contemplative as he considers the request.

“Even with all the powers the Senate has granted me so far in order to try and win this war... I’m afraid the power to order a Senator to remain on planet is one they have not seen fit to allow me just yet. I cannot tell Senator Amidalla she must stay on Coruscant. I cannot demand that of her. But perhaps... perhaps there is another way.”

Vader leans forward some more, like the eager puppy he’s feigning to be.

“Yes, Chancellor?”

Palpatine feigns contemplation for a moment longer before smiling softly.

“Apologies, Anakin... I can’t make any promises at this moment. However, I can say I will do everything in my power to make sure nothing happens to your wife. Now that I know there is a threat, she will be as protected as she can be, you can be certain of that.”

Feigning a combination of disappointment and gratitude, Vader hangs his head and nods.

“I... I understand sir. Thank you for that much at least.”

“Of course, dear boy. Of course. You can always come to me with anything that plagues you. I will do what I can no matter what.”

The unspoken ‘even if the Jedi will not’ lingers in the air as Palpatine sees Vader out of his office. The next part will be up to Padme, who will be having a conversation with the Sith Master tomorrow about further insulating herself within the growing dissident movement against him.

Padme won’t outright ask to be made Palpatine’s second in case of his incapacitation or anything as heavy handed as that, but she will make it clear she needs some form of ‘victory’ over him to make her look better in the eyes of her growing band of allies within the Senator.

From there, hopefully the two conversations will stir Palpatine in the direction they want him to go. After all, if Padme is named as Palpatine’s preferred replacement in the event that he can no longer discharge his duties as Supreme Chancellor, then she will no longer be able to just leave Coruscant without his permission, since she will suddenly become far too important to risk on off-world missions.

And likewise, having a prominent member of the growing faction of dissidents named to such a position will in turn seem like a show of placating those in the Senate who are clamoring for peace and a repeal of the war time powers granted to the Chancellor’s Office.

It should be the perfect answer to Palpatine’s current ‘woes’. Hopefully it all worked out because if it did, he and Padme would be one step closer to securing this galaxy for themselves.

As for Vader... he departs from Coruscant shortly after his meeting with Palpatine. Ostensibly he departs in order to return to Malastare... but he would be a fool not to take advantage of the current proximity to a certain core world while he was so close by.

It was time to finally pay a visit to Byss...

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