

With the wind at my back, I continued my descent into the sprawling valley. Once again, I felt my stomach churning as I considered the task before me. The discovery of Skywalker's had been surprising enough if one knew the old stories. I am still not sure exactly what my Proconsul expects we can gather from the Jedi. Maybe it was some kind of a kinship between Jedi-types. Better than that, I would have loved to know where he got the information on the infamous Jedi's whereabouts. As far as I had known the man had disappeared sometime shortly after the death of Palpatine and Vader.

I would be lying if I were to say I didn't care. It would be kind of like meeting the developer of the Death Star. Stories held him up like some kind of mythological hero of old. There had to be some secrets he could share with a newer generation of Force Users, right? The Holocron Library recorded a bit of the accolades Emperor and Lord Vader. If this Jedi had survived an encounter with the Sith, there surely had to be something more than just luck to the man.

The gray-robed form of a man contrasted with the top of the hill as I cast my glance up toward the crest of the hill. My heart seemed to skip two or three beats. This was really the moment. I took several deep breaths to try to calm my nerves. This was like meeting Tarkin or a Sith Lord of old. I quickened my pace, feeling a shiver in the Force as I drew closer to the living legend. This hero of the Rebellion, this long-lost Jedi, this former farm boy seemed to ooze a quiet power. It was unlike anything I had experienced in the midst of my fellow Clan-folk. It was similar to a few of the Lotus, but more focused and yet more serene. As though in response to my thoughts, the Jedi turned back to look coolly at me.

"Master Skywalker," I breathed, yet several feet away. I could feel the sting of the salt-air on the back of my throat as I tried to calm my breathing again. Skywalker was a picture of calm and serenity.

"You have come a long way." The statement was simple, without doubt or suspicion.

"Well, yes I have. I wanted to come, to learn from the likes of a true Jedi Master. I have long striven to-" I became silent as the old Jedi raised a hand. There was something about his very presence that seemed to command respect. It was not like Muz Ashen, where it was at times for fear of your destruction. This was something I could not fully fathom. He was so quiet, and yet the simplest action seemed to scream command to me.

"You do not carry truth in you." His words were firm, but less unkind than pensive. "You reek of the Dark Side."

I felt as though I were seated in a ship in free fall. My stomach further twisted in knots. I would have to play this more carefully than I had expected. "There has to be a better path. Many of the ways of your order remain lost to the galaxy. My kin know only of the Dark Side." It was a lie, of course. However, given the likes of Macron, Muz and even myself, it was not entirely untrue. It was perfectly honest, from a certain point of view.

"You must cast off the dark mantle you bear if you wish to experience true freedom. You must be willing to walk away from its temptations if you truly wish to learn. As an old Master of mine once said, the Dark Side is quicker, easier and more seductive. It is not stronger. Embrace true strength by forsaking this weakness."

I had a choice in that moment. I was not prepared to throw away my research, or to turn myself from the path that I had already committed to. I wanted to see, however, how far I could get. Could I fool the likes of a Jedi Master? Was he as gullible as his humble roots would indicate, if the old stories were true? Would I find myself joining the likes of Clan Odan-Urr in earnest under the benefit of his instruction. I didn't know. But I could lie.

"I am willing, master Jedi. If you will teach me. I would be honored if I could learn from you. I want to ensure that the Jedi Order does not become extinct. I want to continue the wisdom of the old ways. I want to establish new schools of study for those Force Sensitive sentients out there." I found the longer I spoke, the more lofty my lies became. "I want to learn all that is necessary to deliver the galaxy from its own pain." I dropped to one knee, bowing over it in a show of mock reverence.

Silence stretched on, broken on by the lapping of waves on beaches unseen just over the horizon.

Had I gone too far? Had I managed to oversell my bit? How would Sang take the news of my failure? Would I see the rage of the Consul kindled in earnest against me? The hair on the back of my neck rose to stand upon end as the questions rolled around in my head.

After what felt like ages, the Jedi spoke. "Very well." The phrase was clipped, but lacked no kindness. It was business-like, yet amiable in a way I could not have accomplished myself. "Follow me, and we will begin your training." Skywalker turned his back toward me as he began to make his way toward the unseen beach.

Just like that. I was going to complete my mission, gathering from Luke everything that he had to offer in the way of wisdom. I would return to the Clan as ordered, and somehow I would turn what I gained here into an edge we can use against the Iron Throne. Hopefully, I could keep up the facade long enough to avoid any serious slip ups.