

Darth Howlader the Pantsless

“So...let me tell you a story.

“How does a man do as Howlader did? To wear no pants at all, unless physically forced into them by unfortunate - may the Force be with them - staff of the Master At Arms? Why would a man do that? The thought is obscene. It is ridiculous. And, as we all know, it's the thought that counts, so let's get to it.

“They say he was an Admiral at some point. They *know* he was arrogant, puffed-up and histrionic even then. Certainly, he had a penchant for making things about himself that he never really lost. Maybe that, then, is how it happened. To an ordinary man, to be overlooked is no more than normal. To a man trapped within the rigidly stratified hierarchy of the Imperial Remnant, to be overlooked is perhaps the blessing, the better to escape when the scapegoating starts. But to a monster of vanity like that? It is a trauma. A slight. An insult that cries to the heavens. And what better cry than one that attracts all the more attention because the bearer is not wearing pants?

To a man like that, it is all about competition. Well, it is all about *competition*. And all about making things a competition to garner his attention, to please him.

“They say ol'Sheev - the Sith Lord we honor as Sidious - was much the same, back when they called him Emperor. He made people wait, on bended knees, for hours on the merest hint that he might call them. He proved his dominance over his courtiers in games that would be petty, were it not for the immense power he wielded over them. As it was, such dominance was a stark reminder that he was the central, supermassive black hole around which their universe revolved.

“Likewise, the Grand Master has a way of making it about him. About his visions, his actions, his activities. All things within the Brotherhood must revolve around him.

“So, then, maybe that's why he did it. A trauma of being overlooked and ignored. A desire to want things to be about him, rather than the equally limitless vanity of his master. It certainly fits the man's odd obsession with pandas.”

“*What's a 'panda'?*”

“I don't know, kid. What's a Falcon, and what does it have to do with Millenniums? Millennia? Millenio? Anyway.

“The man’s obsession with pandas and pants seem, from a linguistic perspective, too closely related to ignore. And the panda? Well, it is said not to wear pants either, don’t you see? Perhaps, then, someone denied that he was a panda. That he was pandaless. At his age, you see, it’s not impossible he might have misheard. Or perhaps the denial struck at some deep, twisted, delusional depth, hit a chord so deep and dark within him that he could not but retreat into denial. In a moment like that, you’d not be remiss to say that he had a choice. A spittle-flecked, psychotic breakdown...or that he ignore the slight by changing it. Instead of *Pandaless*, he became *Pantsless* in his own mind, you see? That? That is a tale I can understand. One I - no, one that *everyone* can sympathize with.”

“That’s still not a reason.”

“Well, if you wanted reason, you came to the wrong place.”

“Look, Lord Howlader. All I’m here for is because the Grand Master asked me to get you to put on some pants.”

“Well, son. Looks like you’re out of luck.”