

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

A/N: Obi-Wan is going through it.

-x-X-x-

His anger lasts for a grand total of three clashes before fizzling out as Obi-Wan Kenobi realizes what he's doing. He's taken up his lightsaber against Anakin of all people, attempting to strike him down solely for the mere mention of Siri and Satine.

If he still had any doubts about having fallen to the Dark Side, this dispels it. And as the anger disappears as swiftly as it came about, Obi-Wan pulls back, letting his saber turn off just as Anakin is swinging for his head. He closes his eyes and lets go, allowing it to happen.

... Of course, it doesn't actually happen. Obi-Wan feels the barest hint of heat against his skin as Anakin brings his own lightsaber within inches of his neck. Then, he hears Anakin scoff as he shuts the blade down.

"Not falling for that again, old man."

Obi-Wan doesn't really know what Anakin means by that. It's also the second time he's called him an old man in as many minutes. He's only thirty-five! But... Obi-Wan doesn't really have it in him to argue at this point. He opens his eyes and stares at his former Padawan, feeling more hopeless than ever.

"Anakin..."

"You would die and leave this galaxy to the likes of Sidious? Tell me you're not that pathetic, Obi-Wan."

Obi-Wan flinches at Anakin's knowledge of the name Dooku had spouted to him all those months ago at the advent of the Clone Wars. Darth Sidious... the hidden Sith Master said to have the Galactic Senate under his control.

Obviously, Obi-Wan had told the Council everything Dooku had told him, just in case some part of it wasn't a lie. But at the same time...

"Anakin, we can't be sure Sidious is even real. It could be a fabrication by Dooku..."

Anakin scoffs.

"Do you really believe that? For even a second?"

... No, he didn't. As much as Dooku had been corrupted by the Dark Side and clearly turned to the Sith for what the Jedi couldn't or wouldn't give him, Obi-Wan had heard the truth in Dooku's words that day. As much as he'd tried to ignore it, he fully believed Dooku when the other man spoke of Sidious... Sidious was real. He was out there.

Anakin nods after a beat of silence.

"I didn't think so. Sidious is very real, Obi-Wan. After all, we both know him personally... seeing as he's the Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic."

That sends a jolt through Obi-Wan's body, his eyes widening in disbelief at Anakin's words. Chancellor Palpatine was Darth Sidious?! No, that wasn't possible... that couldn't be true. He...

"Don't feel too bad for not catching on. Sidious represents one thousand years of work done by the hidden Banites, a Sith Order created by a Sith Lord called Darth Bane to follow the Rule of Two. A Master to embody the power of the Sith and an Apprentice to crave it."

How... how did Anakin know all of this?

"He is the pinnacle of their philosophy... and has shrouded the galaxy in his Darkness, starting this war so that he can do away with all of his enemies in one fell swoop and give rise to his vision of a Galactic Empire... with him as Emperor."

Obi-Wan's heart drops as his mind goes to the only reasonable conclusion for why Anakin would be... this aware.

"Anakin... don't tell me... he's been grooming you all this time."

Anakin looks at him curiously for a moment before something seems to dawn on him and he laughs.

"Ah. No, Obi-Wan. Not quite that bad. I mean, he has been preparing me, don't get me wrong... but he didn't turn me into his apprentice right under your nose when you weren't looking. In truth, I should not know the things I know. The Force has seen fit to... give me forewarning."

Obi-Wan blinks, still not fully understanding. He's relieved that Anakin hasn't been secretly training with a Sith Lord for the past decade, because while he already feels like he's failed the younger man, that would be beyond even his worst nightmares. However, at the same time... Anakin's knowledge is incomprehensible without some sort of inside look at things. So... how?

"... It would be easier to show you, I think."

Anakin suddenly steps forward. Obi-Wan would have probably stepped back, but his quarters are too small... there's no space to back away. Before he can react, Anakin is in front of him and grabbing him by the arm with his flesh and blood hand... and Obi-Wan freezes, his eyes glazing over as Anakin *shows* him what he's talking about.

"Rise, Lord Vader. Do what must be done. Do not hesitate. Show no mercy."

"You were my brother, Anakin! I loved you!"

"Last we met, I was but a learner. Now, I am the Master."

"Only a Master of evil, Darth."

“Go, my son. Leave... me.”

The visions hit Obi-Wan like a tidal wave, washing over him and threatening to drown him. They aren't even fully complete... they're more glimpses of the future than anything else. Still, he sees it. He sees Anakin kneeling to Palpatine and becoming his Apprentice. He sees them fighting on a lava planet and... and maiming Anakin severely but not killing him.

He sees everything... right up until the end, when Anakin dies saving his son from Palpatine. As the barrage of foresight comes to an end, Obi-Wan chokes and shudders, pulling out of Anakin's grasp. The other man lets him, watching as Obi-Wan collapses back onto the bed, sitting and cradling his head in his hands.

“That... that was...”

“A possible future, a path we might have gone down... if the Force didn't have other ideas. It showed me everything that might have happened, everything that could have been if Sidious' machinations were allowed to complete. It was... enough to change me, I will admit.”

Obi-Wan looks up to see Anakin shrug.

“I am... more Darth Vader than Anakin Skywalker now. I am not merely a Fallen Jedi... I am a fully realized Sith Lord. Twenty years of memories in a suit, apprenticed to the most vile man in the galaxy, will do that.”

Obi-Wan flinches at the mention of the suit, knowing full well that *he* was the one who made it necessary.

“Anakin, I'm sorry-!”

“No. It wasn't you. That was a different Obi-Wan. Another version of our timeline altogether. And yet... it was illuminating, wasn't it? Tell me, Obi-Wan Kenobi... are you truly going to give up and let Sidious win?”

Every fiber of his being rebels at that idea. Just what little he'd seen of Sidious in Anakin's shared visions is enough to make him balk at the thought. Sidious cannot be allowed to win. He cannot be allowed to live. He needs to... he needs to die.

"But what about after, Anakin? Say we kill Sidious? Say we stop him from instituting his Galactic Empire? What... what next?"

Here, his former Padawan's yellow-orange eyes seem to study Obi-Wan for a long moment. It takes a beat for Obi-Wan to realize Anakin is considering whether he's worthy of the truth... which of course makes it easy to realize where Anakin's head is at.

"No, Anakin, you can't..."

Snorting in derisive amusement, Anakin arches a brow.

"I can't what, Master?"

For a second, Obi-Wan is taken back in time by the deferential address said in an irreverent tone. Then, he rallies himself and gives Anakin a pointed look.

"You cannot simply exchange one Empire for another. If we stop Sidious... you making yourself Emperor of the Galaxy is no better, surely you must see that?"

His thoughts go to the glimpses of the future he saw. Darth Vader was... a monster. A monster of his and Sidious' combined making perhaps, but a monster nonetheless. As much as Obi-Wan DOES love Anakin like a brother... he shudders to think of what the galaxy would be like under Vader.

"What... what would Padme think?"

Anakin straightens up at that and Obi-Wan feels a little guilty for bringing her into this. That was the other thing that the glimpses of the future timeline had shown him... Anakin had a son. And there was only one woman in the entire universe who Obi-Wan would suspect of giving birth to Anakin's child.

“You’re much too clever for your own good, Obi-Wan. We’re married, you know.”

His eyes widen again, another shock to the system making him gawk in disbelief. Married?!

“When did that happen?!”

“After Geonosis, while I was recovering on Naboo and acclimating to my new prosthetic. It was a small ceremony... only C3PO and R2D2 were in attendance.”

That... that hurts more than Obi-Wan could have expected. Not because he feels betrayed by Anakin’s decisions, but rather because he wishes he could have been there.

“I... I see. Congratulations are in order then. Still, you must know how much Padme loves democracy. What would she think of you trying to do away with the Galactic Republic in order to name yourself Emperor?!”

For a long moment, Obi-Wan thinks he’s maybe getting through to Anakin, especially when the other man just stares at him for a long moment with an unreadable expression on his face. And then... Anakin cracks a lopsided grin and chuckles.

“You’re right. I would make a terrible Emperor.”

Obi-Wan feels relief for all of a second before Anakin continues on.

“But Padme would make an exceptional Empress, don’t you think?”

It says a lot that Obi-Wan’s first instinct is agreement. Yes, Padme Amidala WOULD make an excellent Empress for the Galaxy. There was just one problem with that...

“She would never agree to it, Anakin. Nor would the rest of the galaxy either.”

Far from being deterred however, Anakin just shrugs.

“You’d be surprised. Palpatine’s most recent decree might not have reached your ears just yet... but he’s named Padme as his Heir in all but name. Essentially, if anything happens to him, *she* will become Acting Supreme Chancellor. From there... well, it wouldn’t be that difficult to transition things. The Republic is corrupt and trillions of people know it. Ordinary, everyday individuals just going about their lives across over a million worlds. They yearn for something new... something better. Can you honestly say that Padme as Empress wouldn’t give it to them?”

No, he couldn’t... but maybe that was the Dark Side talking. Now that he knew he was Fallen, Obi-Wan could feel it lurking within him. It feels... strangely warm if he’s being completely honest with himself. He would have expected it to feel cold and distant, a predator moving around the edge of his camp, constantly lurking, constantly hungering for a piece of him.

But no... no, instead the Darkness is already nestled inside of him. *Deep* inside of him. It’s been there for quite some time, Obi-Wan understands now. Longer than he ever could have imagined... as long as Melida/Daan at a bare minimum, perhaps longer still...

Focusing back on the matter at hand, Obi-Wan nevertheless feels like he has to continue being the voice of reason.

“You still require Padme to agree to this, Anakin.”

But Anakin’s confidence remains ironclad. He just smirks, his next words making it clear where his certainty comes from.

“She already has. Padme and I are a team, Obi-Wan... do you not think she was the first that I told about these visions? She understands the same as I do that the galaxy is broken. Only we can fix it.”

The knowledge that Padme Amidala of all people, one of the most upstanding and stalwart non-Jedi that Obi-Wan has ever known, has apparently agreed to takeover the galaxy... well, it's certainly a blow to his already shaky understanding of the universe. Perhaps the final blow necessary to fully and utterly destroy said understanding once and for all.

Smirking slightly, Anakin steps forward and offers Obi-Wan his flesh and blood hand.

“Join me, Obi-Wan. Join us. Wallowing in your Fall isn't the way forward... thousands of Jedi are already doing that and look where it's got us. Embracing the Dark Side is the only option. It does not require you to give in to hatred or anger... it merely allows you to finally accept the emotions you've been taught to run from all your life.”

Staring at the hand, Obi-Wan fully internalizes it in that moment. Its not Anakin offering him his hand right now... its Vader. Anakin is gone, he'd said as much... Darth Vader is what remains.

And yet, Obi-Wan has seen Vader's life story from his creation to his sacrificial death. He knows Darth Vader to be both the monster he unwittingly helped Sidious create... AND the man who rose above what Obi-Wan and Sidious did to him, all for the sake of his son.

Its *that* Darth Vader, the one who destroyed Sidious in order to save Luke, that Obi-Wan thinks he might just be able to listen to. If the Dark Side can be turned towards helping people... then it stands to reason that Vader might be the only one who knows how to make it do so.

Slowly, hesitantly, Obi-Wan nevertheless reaches out and puts his hand in Vader's. It feels like a betrayal of everything he's ever known... but apparently everything he's ever known was a lie anyways.

Vader smiles and the earnest joy in that smile almost reminds Obi-Wan of Anakin as a boy. The yellow-orange of Vader's eyes is enough to bring him back down to earth, however.

“Long have you been an advocate of the weak and helpless, Obi-Wan. Rise as Darth Vocatus... and know that even as a Sith, you will not surrender your empathy or your compassion. If anything, the Dark will only amplify these things in you.”

He wants to believe that. He wants... he wants to believe Vader is right and that not everything is hopeless. Perhaps that's why it's so easy to shed his old self right then and there. By the time he's standing, he truly is Darth Vocatus, the new identity slotting right into place.

“... What are our next steps?”

Vader grins.

“Now? Now is when things start to get interesting.”

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