**A Practical Guide to Treason**

Disclaimer: I don’t own Star Wars. Several movies would have followed very different scenarios in the contrary case. I don’t own A Practical Guide to Evil. It belongs to our Lord and Saviour erraticerrata.

“*Gentlemen, there is no need to worry: our plan is flawless. The Emperor will never see it coming*.” Grandmaster Ourobouros of the Order of Unholy Obsidian, later revealed to have been Dread Emperor Traitorous all along.

**Four years after the Battle of Yavin**

**Endor System**

**Endor’s orbit**

**Death Star II**

**Imperial quarters**

The moment Darth Vader and himself came out the elevator, Luke felt a sense of disorientation. The architecture of Imperial ships and stations, as sinister as it was on every species’ minds, had at least the merit of being predictable. The walls were grey or black, and so was the floor, the ceiling, or most of the decoration. And in the rare occasions when the Imperial architects and military engineers didn’t respect this, they were using a shade of red the very colour of blood.

As such the Imperial quarters were a shock for his eyes. To begin with, the Imperial Guards standing vigil were...yellow. It was so unexpected for the young Jedi he had to blink twice and check if he wasn’t hallucinating.

After a few seconds, Luke Skywalker realised he wasn’t. The men guarding the Emperor were truly wearing yellow helmets and yellow garbs, and the design was strangely reminiscent of clothes for the clothes a Tatooine smuggler would use than the armour delivered by the Imperial armouries.

Not that it was the sole surprise. On the left wall, a multitude of ‘wanted dead or alive’ posters had been stuck, and Luke didn’t know if he was to feel proud or fearful his own was at the very top.

Otherwise, this miniature throne room could have stood as a museum of strange and dangerous things. There were dozens of small pyramid-shaped objects burning in red light, certainly the infamous holocrons of the Sith Emperor. There were ritualistic statues of people being sacrificed on dark altars.

There was also a large tapestry of a man in black-clad robes rising on a golden throne, and according to the legend at the bottom, ‘providing peace and order to the galaxy’.

His formation of Jedi had given him an excellent control over his emotions, but Luke almost vomited at the hypocrisy of the scene, the artist having weaved this scene represented the citizens of countless species looking at the Emperor in adoration.

Unfortunately, as their progression came ever closer to the ugly throne, Luke had not the leisure to comment on the utter lack of truth the Empire sponsored.

The throne pivoted as they stopped just before the red carpet adorning the stairs.

“Ah, young Skywalker. I’ve been expecting this meeting for several years.”

Luke would be lying if he didn’t share this feeling. It was an event which had filled his dreams and nightmares for several years.

Reality was already stranger than his most wildly guesses.

Everybody knew the Emperor was an old man who had been disfigured by the ‘Jedi coup’, though in reality Master Yoda had told him it was an overreliance on the most dangerous hatred-fuelled skills of the Dark Side which were responsible for his predicament.

But the man in front of him didn’t look disfigured.

The Emperor was not exactly young, to be sure, his grey hair was evidence enough of that, but this was a man in his fifties which was looking at him with attention, not an old crone mere days away from the grave.

Luke wanted to believe this was a body double – the Emperor had become sadly infamous for their wide-spread use in the last two decades – but the Dark Side was so strong around the man that the chances of him being an impersonator were virtually null and void.

Moreover, the smile which appeared on the lips of the Emperor was not giving vibes of happiness in the Force.

“You have served me well, young Skywalker.”

“I do not serve you...your Excellency.” If the Emperor thought he had ‘served’ him before, truly the man had several big problems with his mind.

“Oh, but you did,” the Sith Master was cheerful. Too cheerful. “In a single battle, you destroyed Tarkin’s preparations to overthrow me.”

The Emperor slightly inclined his head on the side, and lowered his voice like he was delivering a great secret.

“Tarkin was planning to rally the military to him when he returned in triumph from crushing your rebellion. With the Death Star as his flagship and a large victory improving his reputation, he figured he had a chance to usurp my throne. It would have been the ultimate validation of his doctrine.” The Emperor should have looked saddened or angry, but the man who had destroyed the Jedi Order was, if anything, looking incredibly satisfied.

Luke breathed out calmly, and opened himself more deeply to the Force.

“You wanted him to betray you?”

“Of course!” The Emperor genially answered. “Have you any idea, young Skywalker, how many millions credits I have invested in making sure Tarkin’s head was swollen until he believed he was the best man to lead the Empire? First, I brainwashed his wife until she jumped willingly in my bed and became one of my official concubines. Then I threw on his path a hot-tempered red-haired bombshell at the Naval Academy...what was her name, Lord Vader? Baala? Saala?”

“I think it was Daala, my Master,” his father dutifully replied.

“Yes, Admiral Natasi Daala,” the Emperor cackled, “Gods Below, this girl is truly an ambitious snake in a sexy package. With her to whisper her poison in Tarkin’s ears, our dear Gran Moff was going to turn on me sooner or later. The next measures were somewhat less original, I will admit. I killed one of his sons and blamed the rebellion. I mounted sabotages and terrorist attacks against his homeworld. I passed him over several titles. And finally, I made him my **Chancellor**.”

Luke felt the pulse of damnation echo loudly into the Force, and he couldn’t avoid a wince.

“This is awful,” the young Jedi commented upon this near-unimaginable series of treacheries and betrayals.

“Thank you!” the Lord of the Dark Side clapped in his hands twice before his grin disappeared. “I must admit everything was not perfect before you blew him up into tiny fragments of dust. I wanted him to make an example of Chandrila, but unfortunately between my **Black Knight**’s capture of Princess Lei and Tarkin’s distaste for House Organa, it was Alderaan which was on the receiving end of the *Death Star*.”

The Emperor did not look at all sorry for the ‘mistake’.

“Truly regrettable, but one can’t do an omelette without breaking a few eggs and executing the hens on trumped-up charges.”

Despite the warnings of Master Yoda and Obi-Wan, the cynicism of such a sentence cut Luke’s breath for a few seconds.

“Tarkin killed billions in this act of mass-murder!”

“More or less twenty billion,” his interlocutor corrected in a bored tone. “Alderaan, due to severe childbirth laws, has never been a population giant of the Core Worlds. Frankly, the economic crisis Tarkin unleashed was far more bothersome for the Empire as a whole. There were many competitive firms which had their headquarters on the Organa-ruled world, and blowing them up into orbital debris cost plenty of financial chaos in the last four years. There were over four thousand cabals formed in the sole goal to overthrow me, and over a fourth of them had Alderaanians in them!”

Luke shook his head. Was that how a man utterly corrupted by the Dark Side sounded?

“Why so saddened, young Skywalker?” The Emperor innocently asked, though it didn’t fool him. “You are after all the greatest mass-murderer of the Rebellion, no?”

“I am not like you.”

“No,” the Sith Master immediately agreed. “I certainly didn’t use a starfighter to kill two million seven hundred ninety-nine thousand and six hundred thirty-eight men, women, and droids with two proton torpedoes. I have to admit that in ratios of ammunition used compared to the number of people killed by your deeds, you have no equal in this galaxy.”

Luke stayed calm and serene. He had to not give in to the Dark Side, this was what the Emperor wanted.

“Your Empire killed billions, and you manipulated the deaths of entire worlds, beginning with the Clone Wars. You made the Republic collapse-“

“Really sorry, but my poor ears must be a bit rusty,” the Emperor interrupted it like he was straining hard not to laugh. “Young Skywalker, I certainly gave the final death blow to the Republic, but I certainly didn’t provoke its collapse in the first place. When the Senate was stupid enough to give voting rights to these cretins of Neimodians in control of the Trade Federation, I wasn’t even born!”

“And can you say the Sith before you haven’t an hand in this?”

“Yes, I can,” the black-clothed ruler cackled. “Young Skywalker, for a thousand years, the Sith Masters kept their numbers at the extremely low number of two, ignoring the benefits a Band of Five provide. The rule was obviously stupid, but we were two for an entire galaxy, as Darth Bane intended. The Galactic Republic at the very height of its prosperity had over eight million planets, and the number of its citizens was certainly in the high quadrillions. How could I, or any other Sith, collapse an entity that large with a few Masters of the Force, especially when the Jedi had hundreds of thousands of ‘Guardians of the Republic’?”

The smile of the Emperor was filled with dark amusement and malice now.

“The Republic was a rotten shell by the time I was born, young Skywalker. The Trade Federation, the Banking Clans, the various shipbuilding megacorporations...they were all busy exploiting the Outer Rim and paying the Senators billions of credits to close their eyes. Most of them didn’t care – and still don’t – about what is happening outside the Core.”

“Even assuming you are right,” and Luke didn’t bother disguising the fact he didn’t believe none of it, “the Republic could have been healed. There were good men ready to act, the damage left by centuries of Sith manipulation and tyrants’ exploitation could have been healed!”

The Emperor burst into laughter, and to Luke’s consternation, his father imitated him on his left, the black helmet producing sounds which were both strange and mocking.

“Young Skywalker...who are these ‘good men’?” The Emperor asked. “The Jedi? Their vaunted position of ‘above the laws’ made sure that even as the Senate was dancing to my tune, they never left their ivory towers inside their Temple to wonder what was truly happening a few kilometres away from their residence. Or maybe you refer as to these paragons of democracy and virtue named Mon Mothma and Bail Organa?”

“They are champions of democracy, unlike you.”

“I was elected Senator of Naboo, did you know?” The Emperor grinned. “Granted it required me to blackmail the King, five secret cabals and thirty assassinations, and I probably rigged a few ballot to have an exact sixty-six percent of the electoral vote, but I was elected. Bail Organa wasn’t. For all its haughty ‘principles’, and ‘love of democracy’, Alderaan was always dominated by the ten Great Noble Houses. For more than ten thousand years, they have dominated the executive, legislative, and judicial systems of their planet. If your sister had not been adopted by the ruling masters of Alderaan, her chances to become a Senator would have been literally inexistent.”

The argument made Luke freeze. The Emperor knew about Leia. How? How was it possible?

“Master?” Apparently, the Jedi wasn’t the only one to be caught cold by this revelation. “Master, what is this about I having a daughter?”

“Leia was adopted by House Organa after your...tragic accident in the lava fields of Mustafar and Senator Padme Amidala died giving birth to her and young Luke,” the Emperor spoke slowly like he was addressing a small child. “Consequently, yes, she is the twin sister of young Skywalker.”

“YOU KNEW AND YOU DIDN’T TELL ME?” The explosion of the Dark Side was monstrous. Holocrons flew everywhere. Statues were shredded. For a few seconds, chaos reigned in this section of the *Death Star II*.

The Emperor didn’t even twitch at the wrath of Darth Vader.

“Honestly, my **Black Knight**, I was almost certain you would recognise her as your daughter,” the master of the Death Star cackled. “The girl is the perfect copy of Amidala when she was her age, except she replaced the ridiculous Nabooian hairstyle by the even more disturbing Alderaanian buns.”

“You knew and you didn’t tell me.”

The Emperor raised his eyes to the ceiling and sighed theatrically.

“Next he’s going to tell me he didn’t even bother bribing a few people to see if his wife was still pregnant when they buried her.”

“YOU KNEW AND YOU DIDN’T TELL ME!”

“I suppose the next illogical step will be to affirm you didn’t even check if there were another Skywalker scions hiding on Tatooine for two entire decades.”

“**Destroy**.” Terrible tendrils of darkness were summoned by the power of the Dark Side, and at this very moment, Luke understood how much his genitor had been toying with him during their last duel.

The very reality was engulfed in darkness. Objects were pulverised. And Darth Vader charged the Emperor, his red lightsaber flashing like blood in the middle of the night.

“It is treason, then.” Eldritch sparkles pulsated around the hands of the Emperor and slammed into Vader. Then suddenly the holocrons left intact burned in an even more powerful red light, and struck him from behind with things looking like whip-lightsabers.

“I’m not saying I saw your betrayal coming a thousand light-years away,” the Emperor smiled, “but I’m implying it very strongly. **Punish**.”

One of the most feared men in the galaxy screamed in agony, before a hand wave sent him shattering most of the room’s decoration and slamming against the elevator.

Darth Vader fell on a mountain of debris and didn’t try to stand once more, unconscious from this single powerful overwhelming attack.

The whole scene had not lasted ten seconds.

“I suppose it’s time for me to find another **Black Knight**,” the Sith Lord seemed genuinely sorry, though after what had happened, Luke wasn’t going to trust the expression or the words. “Do you want the **Name**, young Skywalker?”

“I will not serve you.”

“Yes, yes, the Jedi I managed to capture before the coup were all saying that,” the fifty-years-old man sarcastically declared. “Most of the young whose indoctrination could be broken rapidly changed their opinions.”

“Because you corrupted them.”

“Yes...however personally I call it having fun. Being a Sith allows you to gather riches, power, beautiful concubines, priceless tomes of sorcery, the power to strike down any idiot who annoys you, and of course my favourite: engineering secret cabals to overthrow myself.”

Several red lights were lighted near the Emperor’s seat, and in the distance, a few alarms shrieked.

“Ah, your friends have come, young Skywalker. Right on time,” The manacles which had tied his hands ceded.

“The fleet of the Alliance is going to destroy this battle-station like I destroyed the old one.”

“I find this...unlikely, young Jedi.” Suddenly and without warning, the eyes of the man began to burn in evil yellow fire. “**Everything is proceeding as I have foreseen**.”

Somehow, Luke knew the man was taunting the Force, the galaxy, and everything living in a radius of thousands of light-years.

“I sold the false-plans of the Death Star II myself to the Bothans, before taxing them several millions of credits and ordering plenty of executions to ensure they ‘guaranteed’ the authenticity of the data.” What followed could only be called a long session of gloating. “All your friends on the moon of Endor are going to attack the wrong bunker, the one which is filled with deadly neurotoxins and a powerful laser warhead. The real shield command centre is five hundred kilometres away from it, guarded by the ursine pests I have bribed with honey and sugar into playing ‘allies’ to your side. One hundred Star Destroyers led by several of my most ambitious Admirals are waiting to be summoned into this system, and I have already purged the Vader loyalists from their ranks. They were informed beforehand the one who will destroy the greatest number of rebel starships will become my new Grand Admiral.”

Unfortunately, it wasn’t just gloating for the sake of it. Mere seconds later, it became obvious that the *Death Star II* was still protected by an impenetrable shield that nothing in the Alliance arsenal was able to pierce.

And the massive fleets which came out of hyperspace had dozens of brand-new Star Destroyers leading the charge, surrounded by a swarm of TIE starfighters and hundreds of Light Cruisers. Behind them, uncountable Interdictors prevented any hasty retreat.

“We have survived worse,” this was a lie, and Luke knew the Emperor had noticed. Individually, many pilots and fighters of the Rebellion had met unfavourable odds and disastrous beginnings. But this time, the Empire had assembled a truly crushing numerical superiority. “And if you die today, your Empire’s structure will collapse and a new Republic will be established, one which will truly bring stability and peace to this galaxy.”

“I have my doubts,” the Emperor used the Force to summon one holocron to his hand. “You see, young Jedi, I have put in scene the deaths of a colossal number of body doubles over the last years. The moment I am killed, I will blame my death on a million people, and all the secret cabals I am secretly the Grand Master of will launch deadly attacks against all the worlds supporting the Rebellion.”

“You are...you are...a monster.”

The grey-haired man shrugged before slowly standing on his feet and placing back the black hood of his robes over his head.

“I am **Dread Emperor Traitorous**, Jedi,” the creature of darkness boasted, “and I have yet to find a situation that couldn’t be improved by a copious amount of lies and body doubles!”

“These were your last treasons,” behind them, Darth Vader – his father – activated against his red lightsaber.

“My betrayals will never end,” Traitorous cackled, “did you know I paid Han Solo to shoot your TIE Fighter during the destruction of the first Death Star?”

Luke knew it was a lie. It had to be a lie, right?

“Anyway you two aren’t suitable to be **Black Knights**. I have decided to make Leia Skywalker my new **Chancellor**, at least I know that when she will try to betray me, the judicial and political battle will be truly epic; she won’t begin her treachery by behaving like the lowest brute of the under-levels of Coruscant!”

“Your reign arrives at its end, your Excellency,” Luke activated his own lightsaber, and green light danced to fight for the Force. The monster was lying and lying, but he had not succeeded turning him to the Dark Side, he would not cripple him with doubts and suspicion.

Then the Emperor pressed a touch on the holocron, and the black armour of his father was powered down, and for the second time of the day, Darth Vader fell against the floor.

“My dear Vader,” the Emperor cackled, “I am truly horrified you never tried to analyse the software of the armour you were gifted after your little attempt at swimming in the Mustafar lava went wrong. You didn’t think I had left a few electronic traps for contingencies, did you?”

Then the yellow eyes turned towards him, and in them Luke saw only vicious amusement and eternal manipulation.

“I am **Traitorous**! I betrayed the **Betrayer**! I have cloned myself a million times, and ten million cabals are acting for and against my orders at any second! I have doomed angels, destroyed planets, and corrupted prophecies! I am the master of a million worlds by the power of the Dark Side and treason! I convinced the Senators of the Republic to proclaim me Emperor! I destroyed the Jedi Order, and by my will your pathetic band of rebels was allowed to become a credible threat! I reframe the truth as I please! I am your enemy and your friend!”

“I am a Jedi,” Luke parried in extremis the vivid Sith lightning the Emperor sent his way, “and your evil ends today!”

Traitorous cackled in evil laughter.

“**That’s the spirit, hero**!”

**Author’s note**: There are a few Dread Emperors who try to advance their pawns in subtle manoeuvres and invisible plots. Dread Emperor Traitorous absolutely doesn’t rely on this, as his name implies. For him, it’s more the ‘refuge in audacity’ trope which is involved...

It has to be said that in a potential future, the galaxy is going to spend centuries solving all the damage from his betrayals...everybody will remember Traitorous for a long, very long time.