

Ahsoka listened through the external microphone as Luke and Deacon said goodbye. She knew she shouldn't be, of course, but ever since Deacon had pointed out that corrupting Luke in the state he was in, a condition she was partially responsible for, would be child's play, she had been nervous, on edge. Suddenly, her choice not to train Luke was put in a very different perspective.

Deep down in her heart, she knew her reasoning behind refusing to train Luke was weak at best. But somehow, she had managed to pretend that delaying his training, denying his requests wasn't that big of a deal, that it just meant he would have to find someone else, that he *would* find someone else. Never had she considered that someone else would take advantage of him. Or what the resentment Luke felt could do to him.

She had been lying to herself. And poorly at that. Meanwhile, a man who had one of the weakest connections to the Force she had ever felt, less than most normal, non-Force sensitive people, gave Luke what he wanted and needed in the form of real, genuine help. And what a shock it had been when Deacon actually guided Luke into meditation and helped him connect so profoundly to the Force. Some of his success could be attributed to pure talent, but even that only went so far.

And now he was giving him more advice, showing him how he could improve on his own, step past his need for a mentor, at least temporarily, and giving him advice about the dark side of the Force that wouldn't have sounded strange coming from a Jedi Master. Even if it leaned a bit on the gray side.

Ahsoka tapped off the microphone, letting the two finish their conversation in peace. She was still watching, though, as they said their final goodbyes and Luke climbed the ship's entry ramp. Ahsoka waited for him to join her in the cockpit, but she could feel him as he walked deeper into the ship, claiming one of the quarters, no doubt thinking about what Deacon had said.

Just as she was now.

For a moment, Ahsoka did nothing, eventually shaking her head and putting off her thoughts, focusing instead on getting the journey back to Thila Command underway. A quick peek at the pre-flight checklist she had already started, and she pulled the ship out of its resting state, taking the controls and lifting off.

From that point until they jumped to lightspeed, she focused entirely on flying. The planet was a mess of activity, with shipments of materials coming in and going out, setting up Alpha Base as a permanent location for the Rebellion. When she did finally jump to lightspeed, she released the ship controls and leaned back in her chair, the pervasive thoughts returning in a wave.

Eventually, she stood and left the cockpit, the autopilot fully capable of managing most adjustments, knowing she would undoubtedly feel something was wrong before it happened. She walked back and sat down at the small space that served as the ship's galley. She considered making herself some food, but ultimately, she wasn't hungry enough to bother. So, instead, she sat in the silence of the ship, trying to sort out her thoughts, trying to figure out just what she would do.

Ultimately, when she finally looked at it honestly, the choice was easy.

She stood and headed to where she could feel Luke, knocking on his door. For a long moment, long enough that she wondered if he had fallen asleep, he said nothing. Suddenly, the door opened, revealing Luke on the other side.

"Yes?" He asked, looking at her curiously.

"We need to talk," Ahsoka said. "... know I haven't exactly earned any goodwill, but..."

"...Sure."

They both returned to the galley, Luke awkwardly following behind the older Togruta woman. They settled into opposite spots on the galley couch, looking at each other. After another long moment of silence, Ahsoka took a long breath, centering herself in the Force, drawing strength from it. When her wild thoughts settled, she finally spoke.

"Luke... I need to apologize. I knew your father. I knew him quite well, actually," She admitted, finally breaking through the wall of silence. "I was your father's Padawan."

"... I don't know what that is," Luke admitted, looking disappointed in himself despite there being no real way for him to have known that.

A wave of shame washed over Ahsoka. Such a small, basic piece of information, and Luke was in the dark. He was carrying the weight of the Rebellion on his shoulders, the higher-ups making him out to be the poster boy for the future, and she had left him ignorant. She had the power to help, and she had refused because of her own problems.

"A Jedi Padawan is an apprentice of sorts. The Jedi Order would teach younglings to a certain age, not too different from the schooling you probably had, but with additional training in the Force," She explained, making sure not to come off as condescending. "The younglings would then take part in a series of trials. If they succeeded, an older Jedi would take them on as a Padawan. Your father was mine. I learned under him, and we fought together in the Clone Wars. I looked up to him and... In a lot of ways, we were like family."

Luke was stunned by her admission, his jaw hanging open as he stared, unable to put together the words to respond. Ahsoka took advantage of that and continued.

"Toward the end of the war, there was an attack. Someone was killed, and the Jedi Temple on Coruscant was targeted. I was framed for it."

Ahsoka, despite having years to handle and deal with the emotions connected to one of the worst events in her life, struggled to control herself. The hurt, the frustration, the pain... it lingered even now.

"The Jedi Council, a group of masters who were the leaders of the Order, made the decision to expel me," She continued, looking away as if looking past the walls of the ship around them. "I was disbarred from the temple, my status of Jedi Padawan was stripped, and... they threw me to the Republic Military Court, which seemed determined to cast me as the culprit."

"I... I can't imagine..." Luke said, his eyes filled with shock and empathy.

"The Order was all I knew. My entire life was spent working to become a Jedi Knight, my entire existence dedicated to the Force. My friends, my family, they cast me aside to avoid conflict with the Senate. Something... broke inside me, looking up at the council as they refused to listen to my plea, choosing politics over one of their own," She admitted, her voice getting quiet as she confessed a deep secret. "I could feel it, but I didn't realize until later that it was my trust in the council, in the Jedi way as they saw it. What had we become if they could just toss me aside like that? The people who raised me, trained me, the people who-

She stopped, once again feeling the emotions overwhelming her. Deacon's words echoed in her head, and she could feel the truth in them. For so long she had pushed her emotions away, forcing herself to remain calm. But she was unbalanced, and everything she repressed only became more potent as it festered.

"Your father never gave up on me. He fought for me, working to uncover what had actually happened. When the traitor was discovered, he dragged her to court, to show I was innocent," She explained, shaking her head. "I was freed, and the Jedi Council... insisted that it had all been trial, that I was stronger for it. A few of them apologized and welcomed me back. And I walked away."

She closed her eyes, looking down at her hands, sorrow leaking out of her into the Force.

"Good."

She looked up at Luke, with wide eyes, her jaw hanging open. He looked upset and conflicted, but his eyes were filled with understanding.

"What? I...but your father... He... I abandoned him!"

"Ahsoka... What they did to you sounds terrible," He said, shaking his head. "I... I can't imagine how it must have felt... How could you ever trust them after that? I don't blame you for leaving, and I'm sure that my dad didn't either, not if he really understood."

"He did, in the end. But... I left him alone, and he..."

"You couldn't have known what was going to happen," He assured her. "You couldn't have known what Darth Vader would do, that he would betray everyone. He is the one who killed my father, not you."

For a long moment, Ahsoka was silent, finally realizing the lie that Obi-Wan had told. Almost immediately, she resolved to tell Luke the truth. Maybe not today, but soon. He deserved to know the truth about Anakin's fall from someone who knew him well enough to understand.

"I... Thank you, Luke," She finally said, letting out a long breath that hitched slightly with emotion. "Your father would be proud of you. And he would have been very upset that I refused to train you."

Now it was Luke's turn to look surprised,

"Wait... does that mean?" He asked, hope slowly making its way into his voice. "You're going to train me?"

"Yes-"

"Thank you!" He said, looking like he was barely holding back from cheering.

"But!" Ahsoka said, cutting off any further cheers or gratefulness. "You need to understand something. I was just a Padawan. A Padawan that was arguably on the cusp of becoming a Knight, but still just a Padawan. I will show you the basics, teach you what I know, but... you do really need a Jedi Master to guide you."

"I'm not sure I want that," He admitted hesitantly. "What little I've learned about the old Jedi Order...No offense, but it hasn't been good."

"I'm the last person who would tell you that everything about the Order was perfect," Ahsoka admitted, chewing her lip. "But there is a lot of context around why the Order was struggling. We weren't prepared for the Clone Wars, and the council's relationship with the Senate had shifted into something that... I'm not sure the first members of the Order would have liked it. But the people... Most of the people were good."

"I'll try and keep an open mind," Luke said with a smile. "I suppose it's not fair to judge them just off of what you and Deacon said, especially since... I got the feeling that Deacon didn't like them very much."

"I felt the same thing. You were most likely picking up on his emotions," Ahsoka explained with an encouraging smile. "He definitely had strong feelings about them and of the Force in general."

"Really? He talked about it like he understood it pretty well," He said, brushing his hair to the side.

"Which is shocking," Ahsoka explained, shaking her head. "You have to understand that even at the height of the Jedi Order, the Force was regarded as mysterious and mystical, unknowable to most. The inner workings of the Order, the people on the council, how to feel the Force, how to wield it... he showed a surprising level of understanding and knowledge."

"Could he be from the Order?" He asked, leaning back in his seat. "Maybe someone who joined after you left?"

"I don't think so. His age suggests he would have been brought into the Order around the same time as me," Ahsoka responded, shaking her head. "I won't pretend to know every Jedi from that time, but I don't recognize him in the slightest. I also don't think his... magic is using the Force."

"I don't either. When he healed my sore back, and again when he healed my leg, it didn't feel like the Force," Luke agreed. "There wasn't anything behind it. No... shifting or pulling."

"Do you feel shifting or pulling when you connect to the Force?" Ahsoka asked curiously.

"Yeah... don't you?" He asked, looking confused. "The few times I've managed to do it, mostly by accident and briefly before Deacon showed me the kinetic meditation, it felt... like when you first sit down at a new speeder, and you can feel the controls responding. The right repulsorlift is flickering, the steering is pulling slightly left, and its power core runs better on full power. It's telling you something, telling you how to fly it or what it's capable of, how far you can push it. What?"

By the end of his analogy, Ahsoka was smiling, nearly on the verge of laughing. She shook her head when he asked what was going on.

"Sorry, it's just you reminded me of your father a lot just then," She said, reassuring him. "He was an incredible pilot, the best of the Jedi, and he loved flying. You have that in common."

"...Did you know my mother?" Luke asked suddenly, before backpedaling. "Sorry. It's nice to hear I have something in common with my dad, but... no one has ever mentioned my mom. I don't even know her name."

"I... I'm almost positive I knew your mother," She admitted with a frown.

"What do you mean?"

"Relationships were forbidden by the Jedi," She explained. "Any attachments, really. It's one of the reasons they only accepted new members so young, preferably before they can even bond with their family."

Luke recoiled at that state, especially at how casually Ahsoka said it.

"That's horrible!" He said, disgust evident in his voice. "That's... How could they do that?"

"I... There are many things about the Jedi Order that I saw as normal once upon a time," She explained, wrapping her arms around herself. "Some of it was because it was all I knew, but some of it... I don't know. I can tell you we were taught that it was because attachments were dangerous. They lead to emotions that can lead to the dark side. Jealousy, fear, grief, lust, anger..."

"So the Jedi Council didn't approve of my parents?" Luke asked.

"I don't know if they even *knew* about your parents. I'm pretty sure that Obi-Wan knew, but the rest of the council? I can't say."

"What was her name?"

"Padme Amidala," She responded, lost in one memory or another. "She was the Senator for Naboo. Before that, she was the queen."

"Wait... Queen?" Luke asked, his eyes wide. "I'm *royalty!*?"

"No, no, Naboo had a democratically elected regent," Ahsoka explained. "There was no royal bloodline or anything like that."

"Oh, thank god," Luke said, flopping back in his seat. "I don't think I could handle that."

"Though, plenty of them would treat you like royalty..." She added. "They loved your mother and wanted to change their rules so she could hold power longer."

After a few seconds, Ahsoka chuckled at his reaction, understanding it entirely. After a long stretch of amicable silence, Luke spoke up again.

"Could you... tell me about them?" Luke asked. "Deacon said he would but got distracted with his magic."

"I think... I would love to," She responded.