**A Practical Guide to Benevolence**

Disclaimer: I don’t own Star Wars, obviously. If I did, several movies would have had entirely different plots...more realistic and original, I hope. I don’t own A Practical Guide to Evil. Maybe one day I will be able to write entire stories in a first person’s POV, but that day isn’t today.

Note: After the interlude of the previous chapter, I return to a move scene this time, one which always amused me the more I studied Star Wars lore. It is part of Episode III, and I think readers will have no difficulties recognising it.

“*Please, do keep digging your own grave. I look forward to your splendidly inevitable demise*.” Dread Emperor Benevolent the First.

**Twenty-six days before the Republic’s Fall**

**Core Worlds**

**Coruscant System**

**Coruscant**

**Galactic Senate**

As usual, there was a spectacle of what looked like bubbles of light accompanied by soft music in the middle of the Galactic Senate. One might almost think they were at peace given how peaceful and calm everything was.

Anakin tried not to be angry, he really did. But as he had walked through half of the Senate to be introduced here, he had seen dozens of Senators and the multitude of aides, wives, flatterers, and other support members that anyone not named Padme seemed to coalesce around them.

And the orders of the Council had not been of a nature to give him a pleasant mood to begin with. Seriously, it was like no matter how many victories and successes he brought back from the frontlines, there was no way to make the old Masters happy and content. In fact, battle after battle, the young Jedi knight had the unpleasant sensation of being used like an attack predator upon the Order’s enemies, a predator who wasn’t allowed the privilege to question the commands of Windu and other ‘conservative’ Masters.

“Chancellor, you asked to see me?” Anakin made it a question, though he should have made it a statement. Supreme Chancellor Sheev Palpatine’s office had never summoned him by mistake.

“Yes, yes, Anakin, I did,” the Tatooine-born Jedi suddenly felt ashamed of his thoughts when he saw the exhausted face of the man he deeply esteemed. If the Supreme Chancellor was enjoying the succession of light-bubbles and enthralling music, there was no trace of it on his face. “Leave us.”

The other Senators and helpers present in the Chancellor’s lodge bowed and left, and the two men found themselves alone...if one discounted the presence of the black-armoured guards guarding their backs.

“You do not like the musical interlude?” Never it let to be said the Chancellor wasn’t good at finding out what he tried to hide.

“I...not really,” the last Skywalker admitted. “It is pretty if you look at it for a few seconds, but it hasn’t a lot of...substance...I don’t know how to explain it, but-“

“No, that’s completely fine!” The most powerful man of the Galactic Republic promptly reassured him. “I just thought Alsakani music and holographic compositions would be more pleasant to your eyes and ears than mine. Apparently, it does not...we will have to endure the last half-hour together.”

If anything, the words puzzled him more, not less.

“If you don’t like the spectacles of Alsakan, why didn’t you cancel it and replace it by something more...I don’t know, productive?”

The former Senator of Naboo chuckled, though it was an inch away from gloating.

“The Supreme Chancellor had a lot of power, Anakin, but the Sub-Committee for Musical Affairs is not one I was ever member of. And if letting the Alsakani play their music helps me get their world and all their colonies on my side for the next painful financial reforms, I’m afraid tolerating the music and their artistic caprices is a price I am going to have to pay.”

“I see the political fighting has not improved since my last visit,” granted it had been months ago, but using the Force, it felt like it had been years given how powerful the emotions felt by Senators and spectators were tonight. “Why isn’t it getting better? The Separatist fleets have been repelled from the Core entirely, and their most dangerous fleets have been defeated and the survivors are fleeing back to the Rim. We’re bringing more and more warships in service, to the point that for the next campaigns, we’re going to have bigger fleets than the enemy for the first time of the war!”

“Oh, that’s simple, Anakin.” The Supreme Chancellor gave him a sad smile. “The Republic is bankrupt.”

For a second, the Jedi felt like the Supreme Chancellor had slapped him.

“What?”

“To be fair, we already were in dire financial straits during my predecessor’s term.” The ageing grey-haired man said quietly. “We just didn’t know it, because how can you properly estimate the economic situation when you don’t even know what you own and what you are owed? Then this war happened...and wars are terribly expensive.”

The Supreme Chancellor sighed heavily.

“At least this won’t be my problem for much longer.”

“But...the Republic needs you! If this is about the Council demanding you abandon the emergency powers-“

“Oh, they are asking for this...for the three hundred and seventy-second time?” Sheev Palpatine laughed at Anakin’s wide-opened mouth. “No, I am not doing this for the Jedi Order, Anakin. I am doing this because I am old and tired, and if I continue like this for a couple of years, the stress alone is going to kill me. People forget it, but the civilian duties of the Supreme Chancellor are anything but relaxing...and I had to add to it the responsibilities of commander-in-chief of the Galactic Republic’s military several years ago.”

Amusement and tiredness fought each other in the old man’s eyes. At the end, tiredness won out.

“In a sense, the political opposition to the Centrists, some of which includes a certain Senator we are intimately familiar with,” the words had a tenderness there was only one woman his mentor could speak about, “is completely right. These last five years of wars and uncontrollable crises have made sure I am a **Dictator**, not the Chancellor I was elected to be.”

“But without you, the Republic would have collapsed!”

“Anakin, many Senators don’t care about the Republic.” The Supreme Chancellor whispered. “They never did.”

“I...I don’t understand.”

“The Senators of this not-humble institution are rarely elected to serve the interests of the people, Anakin. Assuredly hundreds have been elected democratically...or as democratically as one can be in the middle of the greatest war since the Ruusan Era a thousand years ago. But far more are chosen by their Kings or the ruling class of their planet. This can be a good thing, in stable times. Few sane people want to experience what the rule of the mob truly means in real life. I saw it a lifetime ago, and I assure you, no one who wasn’t brainwashed advocated for its grisly cortege of killings and crazy laws. But the Galactic Republic, while more reasonable, is not the rule of the people by the people for the people. It never was supposed to be so, and it never did.”

If anything, the man who had been a constant presence to hear his opinions since his arrival here looked more exhausted than when he had entered, and Anakin had to find guilty emotions inside his heart.

“Surely...surely they must be something you can do!”

“Of course,” the answer came with a smile. “First we must win the war, then we are starting forcefully twenty years of reforms to make this loose confederation of ultra-wealthy and impoverished worlds a true nation.”

The Supreme Chancellor coughed for a second before shrugging.

“I find that I have neither the motivation nor the years of youth in me to begin such an audacious political enterprise. Assuming I would survive politically the next months and we manage to transition the war economy back to something looking like the pre-crisis one, which is far from guaranteed.”

“The effectives of the army and the navy aren’t that massive compared to the size of the Republic.” It didn’t interest him very much, but Anakin had seen the figures. “Coruscant’s population alone outnumbers our troopers and the commissioned space crews.”

“It isn’t a problem of raw numbers. It is a lack of qualified personnel. For centuries we have been content to let the Trade Federation and the other megacorporations sell us their very affordable droids while our system of education and post-basic technological formation was falling apart. We were so content to have quadrillions of credits worth in metals and cheap fuel and resources that we disregarded the deleterious effects it had upon our economy. When I say the Galactic Republic was most likely bankrupt before the Separatists had the first thought of building themselves an army of battle-droids, I was not trying to be humorous, Anakin. It is the truth. The unemployment rates began to climb up two hundred years ago, and every decade from this point made the economic perils worse. The Republic’s deficit by the time of the Battle of Naboo was abyssal. Coruscant has no vigorous middle-class to create an era of Republican trade resurgence, and most of the Core is in worse straits. Worse, the very droids we found so affordable are no longer available, since the factories producing them are by now either converted into war droid factories or bombed to oblivion.”

Anakin swallowed heavily. By the Force, it was...properly awful. And two hundred years? The Jedi Council loved to repeat the Sith were responsible for the current state of the Republic, but...economically it looked like they had merely intervened at a time where the decline of the Senate and the rest of the Republic was entering the ‘unrecoverable’ moments.

“Now that you know this, ask yourself the question, Anakin: why should I want to spend the rest of my life shouting at disobedient Senators when a lot of them deliberately tried to oppose my ideas at every opportunity?”

Err...that was a good question. An old speech he had once watched on holo-recorder came back to his mind.

“Because you love democracy?”

For once, the Supreme Chancellor seemed genuinely taking aback...before a genuine laughter escaped his lips.

“My own words used against me...very good, Anakin. As a reward...did the Jedi ever recounted where you were present the tragedy of Darth Benevolent the Wise?”

“No,” the young Jedi Knight admitted. “The Council and the Masters don’t advertise the crimes of the Sith.”

“Ah, but this one committed no crimes as the Jedi would understand it. You see Anakin, Benevolent was born a Sith, the species, not the Force user, in what was the Sith Empire of Droomund Kaas some three thousand and eight hundred years ago. In body, he was red-skinned and muscular, knowledgeable in forbidden lore, gifted in the ways of the Force...the perfect Sith, like thousands of others existed at the time. In mind however, he was a disappointment.”

“How so?”

“Benevolent used exclusively the Light Side of the Force.”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard correctly. From the moment he became a Sith Apprentice, Benevolent refused to use the Dark Side of the Force. Passion was something he didn’t indulge into. Calm, serenity, and cold logic were his strengths, and anything which threatened them was something he abhorred. His opinion, that he wasn’t afraid to share, was that the influence of the Dark Side made the Sith Empire dangerously unstable and that as long as murder and power-lust would govern the higher echelons of the Empire, the Sith Masters would lose over and over against the Jedi.”

“I...” Anakin swallowed, his throat suddenly dry. “I suppose he wasn’t popular among his people.”

“At first he wasn’t,” the Chancellor agreed with a smirk. “But battle after battle, the Sith warriors betrayed each other and bled for the smallest of gains, while the small cadre of Light-users trained and supported by Benevolent grew stronger. And as one more Emperor fell, Benevolent knew the time had come; he overthrew the next emperor-claimant, and crowned himself Emperor in front of the surviving Sith Lords.”

“And they didn’t kill him?” His past experience with Dooku and several other Dark-side users had given him enough experience to know how such a proclamation would be received.

“They tried. But Benevolent had prepared himself well. His allies were loyal to him, and they had made realistic plans, unlike the megalomaniac schemes of the warlords who opposed his cause. The Masters of the Dark side were each only slightly less powerful than Benevolent, but they hated each other, and never wasted an opportunity to kill a rival if it was granted to them. And thanks to his skills of Battle-Meditation and Precognition, one man bathed in the Light Side of the Force could easily deliver said opportunities on a golden throne.”

His mentor clicked his fingers with a smile of admiration on his face.

“Battle after battle, planet after planet accepted the rule of Darth Benevolent. Shipyards were rebuilt, plains and forests corrupted by centuries of abominable experiments were purified from the suffocating sorceries polluting them. At his height, benevolent grew to control something like ninety percent of the Sith Empire, tens of thousands of worlds, and for over a decade, the first true Academies of the Light Side of the Force were opened and flourished under his guidance. For the first time in their history, the Sith were on the eve of a Golden Age.”

The more the Chancellor spoke, the less Anakin understood why the Council didn’t mention Benevolent at all. The man may have been a Sith, but it sounded more like an accident of birth, and that the Sith had genuinely tried to make his own version of the Republic, though in a more...direct style than the Republic politicians would like.

“Why aren’t we taught about him, if he was so close to change the Sith Empire for the better?”

“Because Benevolent took a Jedi woman as a lover,” Palpatine sighed and the sound was somehow light and deafening at the same time. “And acting under the orders of the Coruscant Jedi Council, she killed him during his sleep.”

“No...”

“The Sith were the bogeymen of the Rim, Anakin. And the Republic made sure a great deal of some of their less than shiny actions was tied to the existence of the Dark side of the Force being an existential threat on the Galactic Republic’s frontier. If there was no insane tyrant to convince the Sith to go on a grand campaign of slaughter, then obviously there was no justification for the Core Worlds draining the Rim worlds of their gross systemic product to satisfy the economy of immensely rich systems like Kuat and Corellia.”

“But the Jedi should have been above that!”

“Yes,” the piercing eyes of Sheev Palpatine stared at him. “They should have been. So why didn’t they cheer when Benevolent’s efforts arrived to their ears?”

“I don’t know.”

“This is only a hypothesis, but over the years...I decided the answer was control.”

“Control?”

“Control, Anakin. If Benevolent had succeeded in his goals, the result would have been a new Order of users of the Light side of the Force, but one which didn’t refuse secular titles, to involve themselves deeply in politics, to marry, to have families, or to correct the wrongs wherever they travelled. Benevolent’s followers were strong opponents of slavery under all its forms, and didn’t hesitate to punish the Lords who refused to comply with their edicts. And they were far more tolerant of Dark side users, since after all most of their ranks were recruited from them. As such, the Dark side, while on the wane, was not forbidden; it was just the Light side had to be the dominating source of power the new Sith would use.”

“There would have been...defections, perhaps even mutinies in the Jedi ranks.” The Tatooine-born ex-slave said slowly, trying very hard to not show how much the speech was touching him.

“It would have been more than that. The appropriate word is schism, I believe.”

Before them, the Alsakani spectacle entered a new phase of bigger bubbles and more improbable lights. Where it had been merely annoying before, at the light of the Chancellor’s words such an exhibition of power was far more worrying than it had been mere minutes ago.

“It isn’t going to be possible to save the Republic as it is, isn’t it?” Days ago he wouldn’t have dared the question.

“The current status quo of the Senate isn’t conductive for a miracle of this importance,” his mentor approved. “In times of discord like those we are living in, we need a strong, decisive voice to speak alone. The oligarchy we are ruled by won’t give us this voice. But a strong, **benevolent**, enlightened leader may be the rallying figure we need. Someone who has a reputation of winning against the Separatists despite the odds...”

Wait a minute, was the Supreme Chancellor really suggesting?

“Of course before a general, **benevolent**, popular election can be organised, we need to solve a minor problem.”

“A minor problem?”

“You have to satisfy carnally your wife to perfection, Anakin, so that she doesn’t run to the Jedi the moment the war ends.”

The young Jedi Knight felt his face burn in embarrassment.

“Err...that is...”

“Her sexual needs **must** incite her to forget her principles until you and I can convince her that the approach of the Peace Party is utter nonsense. I would really, really hate for you to end like Benevolent because you weren’t good enough satisfying her urges in the marital bed.”

**Author’s note**: The moment I heard of the background story of Dread Emperor benevolent in a Practical Guide to Evil, I knew I had to make a crossover about his legacy...and this scene wrote itself quite well, I think.

The other links to the sites where An Impractical Guide to the Force can be found:

www. alternatehistory forum /threads /an-impractical-guide-to-the-force .499018/

www. p a treon Antony444

archiveofourown works /27421807 /chapters /67028977