

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

A/N: Asajj Ventress meets her new Master, huehuehue~

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Asajj needed this mission to succeed. Even if the greater share of the glory would go to General Grievous, the role she was playing in the capture of Kamino and the decommissioning of their cloning facilities would go a long way to washing clean her previous failures. Her Master, Count Dooku, would be forced to acknowledge her value and worth after all was said and done, and further train her in the ways of the Sith.

... Which is why it was so infuriating that Grievous had gone comms silent on her for hours now! She had reported in as soon as she was ready, with the sabotage in place to keep Kamino's defenses from reacting when Grievous' fleet arrived in orbit over the planet.

However, the General had still been working on his own side of things when she'd called. Until he had Rishi Station under his control, his fleet could not move forward without alerting the greater Galactic Republic to their actions.

It should have been handled by now though. Either that, or she should have received some sort of message stating otherwise! Instead, she'd received nothing and she didn't dare try to establish a connection on her end. Not outside of the agreed upon times.

Instead, Asajj was forced to hide in the bowels of one of Kamino's stilt cities, doing her best to avoid detection from both security... and the Jedi Master overseeing the Cloning Operations on the planet.

Jedi Master Shaak Ti was someone Asajj would dearly have liked to fight under normal circumstances. If they were facing off against one another on a battlefield, the Sith Apprentice would drop everything in order to face the Togruta Master in glorious combat and hopefully bring her low just like she'd done to Jedi Master Tholme mere months ago.

These were not normal circumstances, however. Asajj didn't dare risk discovery, not when the mission was still on as far as she knew, not when Grievous might contact her at any moment to tell her that his fleet was jumping in.

And so she was forced to wait. Forced to wait and hide, using meditation techniques taught to her by Count Dooku to condense and contain her presence within the Force so that Shaak Ti could not detect her.

Laying in wait in the shadows of Kamino, the last thing Asajj is expecting is to be discovered. After all, she's done everything right... hasn't she?

"Hello Ventress."

And yet... one moment there's nothing and the next moment he's there. Eyes widening, Asajj comes up out of her meditation in an instant, drawing her sabers and igniting them. The red blades cast light upon the shadowy compartment she'd been hiding in, as well as the one who has discovered her.

He wears all black, with a cloak and hood that hide his true identity from her. However, something about his voice is... almost familiar.

It doesn't matter though. She's much too wound up at this point to bother with words. After hours of hiding, hours of knowing nothing about what's

going on, the only thing Asajj sees is an enemy that's discovered her location. With a snarl, she launches herself forward... only to be stopped in her tracks, her sabers frozen in front of her in the midst of an impaling attempt.

The light from her lightsabers gives Asajj a view of the hooded figure's jaw and mouth, his lips curling up into an amused smirk as he holds her there seemingly effortlessly. Narrowing her eyes, the Sith Apprentice focuses inward. This was not the first time that a Jedi had stopped one of her charges with the Force.

Last time it happened had been on Rugosa, when Yoda, Grand Master of the Jedi Order, had stopped her from killing King Katuunko of Toydaria with a single gesture of one of his small, clawed hands. After that, Dooku had been most displeased at her failure, but he'd also admitted that she didn't stand a chance in a fight against someone like Master Yoda.

He had, however, deigned to show Asajj a technique if she ever again found herself in the grasp of a particularly powerful Force User. It involved turning her own Mastery of the Force inward, suffusing her body with every ounce of her power, and then blasting it outward to break free.

With a harsh cry, Asajj does exactly that, expecting to catch this mysterious stranger by surprise as she busts out of his hold and lunges forth to bring an end to his life.

Only... that doesn't happen. She feels the technique do what its supposed to. She expends a great deal of energy in blasting her Force Presence out from every pore of her body. However... rather than break the hold on her trembling form, it has little effect. The other simply continues to hold her in place, her escape attempt causing barely a ripple in his concentration.

“Nice try.”

How? How was that possible? And how was he doing it without even lifting up a hand in her direction? Even Yoda had been forced into that physical representation of his power in order to prevent her from killing the Toydarian King.

“Who... who are you?”

The handso- no, the smug smile grows.

“I’m not sure if you’re ready to know that yet, Ventress. It might just break your mind.”

His voice really does sound familiar. Her eyes narrow as she struggles to place it. At the same time, she bristles at the insinuation that she’s weak willed or... or fragile!

“Enough games! What do you want?!”

After all, she’s beginning to suspect that this might not be a Jedi. If it were, they wouldn’t be so interested in hiding their identity, and they also wouldn’t be toying with her like this. No, even the likes of Kenobi or Skywalker would have already taken her into custody by now if they’d caught her dead to rights as this mysterious stranger had. Not that either of them was actually capable enough with the Force to pull off this bullshit anyways.

“What do I want? That’s simple enough. I want you, Asajj Ventress.”

What.

Asajj opens her mouth to speak, but before she can do so... the hooded figure stops hiding himself quite so much. His presence in the Force unfolds like a sheet and blankets the space around them... weighing down heavily on her shoulders as Darkness surrounds them both.

Never... never before has she felt such power. Never before has she encountered such mastery of the Dark Side of the Force. Even her Master, Count Dooku, didn't feel like this. And that wasn't a lack of trying either. He'd punished her plenty of times for her failures in the last several months, showing her the fullness of his own power in the Dark Side.

But if Dooku had always felt like an unassailable mountain that she couldn't see the peak of... this man felt more like an entire planet, nay a galaxy. Mysterious, unknowing... and so very, very powerful.

Suddenly, she's released from his Force Hold. But rather than try to capitalize on it, Asajj just thumbs off her sabers and drops to her knees. She still holds the unpowered hilts in each hand, but she makes no move to try and use them, instead focusing on controlling her breathing as her heart races in her chest.

Her first instinct is somewhat shameful, admittedly. She almost discards Dooku as her Master right then and there and begs this man to take her as his Apprentice instead. It's reckless and impulsive, but it also feels right... yet Asajj holds herself back. She doesn't know enough about this situation. The only thing she knows for sure... is that this man is no Jedi.

Slowly, the pressure of his Dark Side Presence alleviates slightly. It's still there, but Asajj is at least able to catch her breath and get herself back under control again.

"You're... you're one of us. A Sith. Did Dooku send you?"

Was he supposed to be her backup? A flash of indignation runs through her, but she holds her tongue all the same. It's difficult to continue to do so when her words make him laugh, however.

"Oh Ventress. You really think yourself a Sith?"

... What? Asajj bristles at that, her eyes narrowing, her teeth gritting, and her hands clutching at her lightsaber hilts.

"I am Count Dooku's Apprentice. That makes me Sith."

She hates how defensive she sounds in tone. Though at least she's able to keep the uncertainty out of her voice as she speaks. Not that it seems to mean much to her mystery assailant, unfortunately.

"Do you really believe that Ventress? Do you think that Dooku believes that? You're no Sith Apprentice. You're no more than an Acolyte... but in reality, all you really are is his weapon."

Anger, rage, and hatred well up in Asajj and she snarls as she activates her sabers and tries to lunge forward once more.

"That's not TRUE!"

This time around, the hooded figure doesn't bother freezing her with the Force. He just lifts a hand... and seemingly blocks her saber strikes with a single palm, one after the other. Ventress' eyes widen in disbelief before she launches a flurry of blows designed to overwhelm this insane defense... but nothing she tries works.

It's only near the end when he finally gets bored that she belatedly realizes he's not catching her sabers on his actual gloved palm but rather catching them with the Force a miniscule amount from his body and then turning them aside.

Just as she's figuring that out though, he flicks a single finger and Asajj goes flying backwards, slamming into the wall behind herself with enough force that she sees stars. By the time she's recovered, her sabers have been confiscated and she finds herself spread eagle on the wall, completely helpless.

"Isn't it? Hm, let's test your knowledge then, shall we? If you really are Count Dooku's Sith Apprentice... what is your Sith Name?"

... What? Asajj blinks absently, causing that insufferably smug yet handsome mouth to smirk again at her.

"I... I haven't earned one yet!"

But the hooded figure just shakes his head.

"That's not how the Banite Order works. They operate by the Rule of Two, you see. One to embody the power, one to crave it. A Sith Master and a Sith Apprentice... but BOTH are Sith Lords. Always. And when the Master takes on their new Apprentice, they give them a Sith Name."

She... she wants to call him a liar. But he's still blanketing the room in his Dark Side Presence and much to Asajj's chagrin, she can feel the inherent truth in his words. But also... Banite Order? They? Was he... insinuating that he was a different form of Sith altogether?

“Maybe you’re right. But then, surely you know Dooku’s Sith Name at least... right? He wouldn’t keep such a thing from his Sith Apprentice, now would he?”

Asajj’s mind goes blank. She... he... gritting his teeth, she snarls.

“What’s all this nonsense about Sith Names anyways?! How do I know you’re not just making it up and-?!”

“Darth Tyranus. That is Count Dooku’s Sith Name.”

His words hit harder as she feels the truth of them imparted through the Force. Darth Tyranus. Count Dooku’s Sith Name is Darth Tyranus. And he hadn’t told her. Why hadn’t he told her?

“Last but not least, there’s the final issue with you being Dooku’s Sith Apprentice, Ventress. Just one small thing... Darth Tyranus is not the Sith Master. HE is the Apprentice.”

... What. A shudder of confusion and incredulity runs through Asajj’s entire body. There was just no way. Dooku was powerful. He was strong. Most of all, he was old. How could he possibly be the Sith Apprentice? Who would be his Master?! And... and if he WAS the Sith Apprentice, what did that make her?

Nothing. It made her nothing more than a fool who had been completely and utterly taken in by Dooku’s promises of tutelage and power. It couldn’t be possible... and yet, as Asajj searches her feelings, some part of her knows it all to be true. This man, whoever the fuck he is, hasn’t told a single lie.

“Who... who are you? Why are you doing this?”

She hates how plaintive her voice sounds. How weak she sounds. And yet, that hatred doesn't fuel her as it should. Instead, it's sucked out of her as she's held against the wall, helpless and powerless to fight back. Only then does Asajj realize her mind is clearer than it's been in a long time... because this monster standing in front of her is draining her of her negative emotions, using them as fuel for himself.

"I already told you why I'm doing this, Ventress. I want you for myself. As for who I am... I am Darth Vader."

Darth Vader. A shiver runs down Asajj's spine at the name 'Vader'. There's power behind that name, more than she can even begin to comprehend. Perhaps her first instinct was right. Perhaps it was time to discard her old loyalties and swear herself to a new Master entirely...

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A/N: Remember to go back and VOTE!