

Chapter 4: An Uncertain Past

As Traya was finishing telling the group about their journeys on Taivas, Cade noticed him and Cha'ku were walking slightly behind Em and Traya. Cha'ku nudged Cade with one of his four arms.

"Cade, a word?"

Cade turned to the Myneyrsh, expectantly.

Cha'ku nodded towards Traya.

Cade allowed Em and Traya further outpace himself and his fellow Jedi.

Cha'ku's first words were unsettling, but not unexpected. "Her power has grown immensely..."

"It has..." Cade responded, feeling that there was more to this comment.

Cha'ku added, "so has her presence in the dark side."

"It has..." Cade responded again. He let his words hang in the air, feeling it would be best to let the Jedi voice all his concerns before more fully responding.

"Are you sure you should continue training her?"

"I am." Cade stated without any hesitation.

"But considering what she is?"

Cade could feel the anger rising in him, but almost unconsciously began implementing breathing techniques to level out his emotions.

"Don't stumble around it, if you have something to say, say it plain." Cade did not speak with anger, but made sure he was firm and forceful.

"Cade, she's a Sith Trooper!" Cha'ku took a breath realizing he was yelling. He said, quieter now, "She was bred for one purpose, to serve, not just the One Sith, but Krayt specifically. With blind obedience."

Cha'ku seemed to be waiting for Cade to speak, but Cade could sense that there was more on the Myneyrsh's mind.

Sensing Cade was content to sit waiting, Cha'ku pressed on. "Her connection to Krayt is a danger to all of us. My people have suffered enough at the hands of the Sith. You can feel her presence in the dark side and her power in the force. It is unlike anything I have felt since the time of Krayt. Do you honestly think you can control her?"

Cade could feel his anger rising, but calmed himself again. He had spent many years preparing himself, making sure not to make the mistakes of his youth.

He reminded himself how much the Myneyrshi had lost. From the Yuuzhan Vong decades ago, and how Krayt had taken from them in much more recent history. If anyone had an excuse to be suspicious of anything Krayt had a hand in, for sure, it was them. He continued his thought exercise of developing an understanding of Cha'ku's position. The more he thought about Cha'ku, the more he realized that he was not happy with the Myneyrsh's suspicions, but he could not fault him for them.

Cade looked ahead and saw Em and Traya now turning around, aware how far Cade and Cha'ku were behind them. "Go on, we'll catch up shortly," Cade yelled ahead waving Em and Traya to continue without them.

Em wrapped one of his arms around Traya's shoulders, playfully leading her along. He was trying to maintain a state of levity, while he could clearly sense that the conversation between the adults was growing more heated.

"Cade will be caught up with us soon enough." The old Myneyrsh said reassuringly to Traya. Traya looked over her shoulder as Em beckoned her to continue on with him.

Cade watched them leave, deeply thankful for Em'Achee. He knew that even with all the baggage Em'Achee carried as a Myneyrsh, he unabashedly, always treated Traya as one

might treat a grandchild. He hoped that one day he could live a life with that level of deep forgiveness, unwavering compassion, and unrelenting hope in the future.

When Cade was certain Traya was significantly out of earshot, he walked a ways ahead of Cha'ku, sat himself upon dead stump, and began toying with the dead root he also carried with him. He looked up and asked, "do you know the rumors about me?"

The Myneyrshi had very human-like eyes and bodies, besides the blue skin color and four arms. However, their long snouts and extended ears gave them an almost horse-like facial structure. Cade often found their expressions very hard to read for this reason. Here though, even Cade would read Cha'ku's scrunched brow and curled lips, to clearly indicate a deep confusion at the sudden turn in the conversation.

Cade gave out his usual disarming chuckle as he continued. "I know there are rumors throughout the Galaxy about my past. Although I am a Jedi of significant power, I am not a Master. The Jedi love to tout my more recent achievements, but the story of my youth is much more colored. I find it strange how fearful the Jedi are of stories of moral ambiguity, even when those stories end in redemption."

Cha'ku seemed to be better understanding the point the Jedi was trying to make, but he still seemed too suspicious to answer Cade's question.

"Cha'ku please. you give me politeness, but this is not what I require right now." Cade let out a chuckle. "All I want is for you to give me the truth. Please."

The Myneyrsh seemed to grow more comfortable to Cade gave him a push. "He is a junkie..." he began. "He was trained by Krayt himself. He slept with a Sith temptress." He looked up with a grin. "Please Cha'ku, don't make me fall on my own saber alone here." Cade released a hearty laugh.

"He sold Jedi to the Empire for Death Sticks...?"

"Right on the money!" Cade yelled. "What else do they say?"

"He taught Krayt the secrets of life and death."

"So you do know them! Very good. Very good." Cade paused, and his face turned as cold as a ferrometal hull in deep space. "Do you believe them?"

Cha'ku was taken aback. The lack of a denial had him confused. Surely these rumors were false. Why was Cade pursuing this line of thought? More importantly, how should he answer?

"Well, I mean, I don't know."

"Do you believe them?" Cade said, without a hint of humor in his voice.

"I suppose... I mean some must be true, but I don't understand."

"You're wrong." Cade knew the Myneyrshi couldn't sweat, but he swore he could see droplets forming on his brow.

"Excuse me?" Cha'ku asked.

"It's not that some are true... they all are."

Cha'ku paused. He didn't always understand humans' sense of humor, but he believed that this was an odd game they often played. An exaggerated lie was followed with a denial followed by laughter. However, Cade was waiting for much longer than he understood was customary for when a human would begin the denial portion of the joke.

"Just kidding?"

Hearing the Myneyrsh state so awkwardly, the extremely common human phrase, Cade laughed so hard he nearly fell off the stump he was sitting on.

Cha'ku wasn't sure whether to be embarrassed or pleased with himself. A small smile began to creep onto his face.

Cade wiped tears of laughter from his eyes, but once again repeated became deadpan serious. "All. True."

Cha'ku stopped smiling.

"In many cases I did things even worse than they say." Cade let this last sentence hang in the air.

"Luke and Kol had chased me down in my dreams for years. The only way to silence them was to numb myself to the Force with Death Sticks. In those years I didn't die, but I don't think I could really call what I was doing living..."

"I sold a Jedi to the Empire to make a quick buck. I was not just trained by the Sith, on recommendation from Krayt I might add, I slept with one."

Cha'ku watched Cade fiddling with the root in his hand. He could feel Cade's sorrow emanate through the Force. Then he felt an immense blast of hate, and an intense sense of danger coming from the sitting Jedi. Out of instinct, one of Cha'ku's hands went to the lightsaber on his right hip.

"That's the correct reaction," Cade whispered just loud enough for Cha'ku to hear. He then stood up, lit his lightsaber, lunged at Cha'ku, extending his blade directly towards the Myneyrsh's throat. Cade was only a few inches from delivering a fatal blow.

Out of instinct, Cha'ku's hands launched to both lightsabers at his waist, igniting them with an upward swing. Both blades crossed Cade's, knocking his extension upward toward the sky, out of line with Cha'ku's neck. He then launched backward creating space between himself and his potential foe, holding a fighting stance,

One blade was extended forward, the other held back in case another defense movement was needed.

Cade didn't flinch. His footing stayed solid, his blade now pointing to the sky. Cade closed his eyes, unignited his blade, and threw it to Cha'ku's feet.

"You have nothing to fear," Cade stated plainly.

The Myneyrsh, still unsure of Cade's intentions, held his battle stance. "When I was a young, I left a path of destruction in my wake." Cade walked back to his stump and sat down.

"My worst crime though, well, even the rumors don't mention that..." The sorrow returned... The hate had vanished...

Still holding his sabers ablaze, Cha'ku asked, "Cade, why are you telling me this?"

Cade stood up. At first Cha'ku kept his fighting stance, but as Cade continued walking over, he slowly lowered his arms. The Force gave no sense of danger or indication of threat coming from Cade.

Cade was only about a foot away when he gently wrapped both his hands around Cha'ku's lower right hand, the one that had previously been defensive. He kept the blade on and brought the glowing weapon to a horizontal position across his own throat.

"If you want to judge a person by their past sins, decisions, histories- I should be the first one you kill."

Cha'ku could only stare into Cade's eyes. There was no joy in those eyes, only regret. Cade brought the blade even closer to his throat. Cha'ku could smell the flesh burning where the weapon made contact.

"Cade, I don't want to hurt you."

"Krayt trained me as well, Cha'ku. Am I also your enemy?"

"No, but..."

Cade released Cha'ku's hand holding the lightsaber at his throat. Cha'ku launched backwards and disengaged his lightsaber.

"I know the damage Krayt has wrought on your planet, and I would never ask you to forget that pain, but I implore you. Try to separate your feelings of hate toward Krayt from that small child over there."

Cade looked outward to the ridge where Em and Traya had gone.

"I truly believe that from this maelstrom of hate and destruction, we have been given an opportunity to grow something beautiful, something truly wonderful. I know it is hard to accept her, but I ask you, on my behalf, let her know the goodness of this world, not its hate.

"I believe that that child is just like your planet, something beautiful, a sign of hope, to be grown from a place of so much pain."

Cade turned back to find Cha'ku smiling. "Well, Cade, this is definitely a different man than I knew when you returned to our planet a few years ago. I cannot promise you that I will not keep an eye on her, Krayt has proved way too powerful for me to responsibly leave all my suspicions at the door, but, for you my friend, I will trust her as I do you."

Cade rubbed the back of his head. "Well, ferric, I sure hope you're more trusting of me than I am!"

The two laughed. The tension that had been building between the two Jedi, fully released now.

"Well let's go then. That pair will be wondering what we've been up to" Cade stated as he extended his hand, force-grabbing his lightsaber on the ground. Side by side, they then began heading back over the ridge to join their friends further down the way.
