

Chapter 12

The Truth of the Dark Side

Darth Vader ran across the blackened plaza and raised his free hand. A huge column lying on the ground flew at Voldemort, who aimed his wand at it.

“Pulvis et Umbra Sumus!” Voldemort yelled, turning the giant pillar to a cloud of dust. He swept out his wand, throwing Vader backwards to the ground. Vader lifted another huge chunk of marble and threw it at the wizard. “Et Cetera!” Voldemort yelled, and the chunk disintegrated.

“Is that all you have, Vader?” Voldemort demanded.

Through the creeping twilight, Vader saw the Emperor’s shuttlecraft and a dozen TIE fighters approaching the palace’s devastated landing area. He swept the light saber high over his head and smashed it into the ground. A rift opened in the charred plaza and with a massive tremor, tore a wide crack in the ground. Voldemort levitated out of the way.

Vader jumped to the other side of the crack and reached out to choke the wizard. Voldemort blocked it with his wand.

“I’ve had enough of this,” Voldemort said. “Avada Kedavra!” he yelled, and cast the familiar green stream toward Vader. Vader blocked the curse with his light saber, and it bounced to the ground, widening the crack. The crevice was so deep the bottom was impossible to see in the darkness.

Voldemort cast a powerful shock wave at Vader, and Vader deflected it at the nearby wall, demolishing it.

“You fight like a crazed wookiee!” Vader said. “You cannot defeat a Sith Lord without discipline.”

“Quid pro quomus!” Voldemort yelled, and Vader suddenly realized he was holding only a thin wooden stick. He saw the white wizard holding his glowing red light saber. Voldemort had used the trading curse to take his weapon.

He jumped across the crevice at the Sith Lord and swung with the light saber, as Vader jumped out of the way.

“A mistake,” Vader said, holding the wand. “This thing may be useless to me, but that weapon has tricked you.” He held up a gloved hand and Voldemort felt the light saber pull away. He tightened his grip, and Vader raised his hand and threw Voldemort across the plaza. Voldemort swung the light saber again, but Vader swept his hands downward and the weapon crashed into the scorched marble plaza instead.

Voldemort struggled to break Vader’s control of the light saber. He had not foreseen this. Voldemort relaxed his mind and took another broad swing. Vader easily jumped out of the way, but this time, the dark wizard had a plan.

With his free hand, Voldemort cast a massive bolt of electricity. Vader landed directly in its path and screamed. He fell to his knees in pain. He reached out with the wooden wand, but it was useless to him. His chestplate began to sizzle. He would not survive long if it shorted out.

Voldemort intensified the bolts of energy, and felt the power of the dark side course through his veins. He realized he had gotten the trick from the Emperor at Mos Eisley. He knew

he could kill Vader with it. As Vader's breathing started to falter, Voldemort laughed loudly and walked toward the dying Sith Lord. Another great story was about to change forever.

"Apprentice! Stop!" a voice yelled.

Voldemort released the energy bolts and looked through the gloom. He saw Palpatine enter the plaza, accompanied by several storm troopers. Voldemort smiled.

"Master, you've arrived," Voldemort said. "May I destroy the traitor now?" Voldemort asked. He held the light saber above Vader's neck. One strike and it would be over.

Palpatine approached and looked at them. "You fight well. You have proven a match for a formidable enemy." He stopped and pulled something out of his cloak. In the faint starlight, Voldemort saw that it was a brightly-colored quill.

"Do you remember this?" Palpatine asked as Vader looked up with curiosity, his mechanical breathing still heavy.

"Yes, Master, I do," Voldemort said.

"It is how I released your horcrux. You told me everything about them, and that the best way to release one is to use a wand once held by the soul it carries." Palpatine said.

Voldemort realized something was wrong. He felt no control over Palpatine at all. The Emperor turned the brightly colored quill over and examined it.

"It was found near Mos Eisley," Palpatine continued. "It allowed me to release your soul from that crashed ship."

"Yes, Master," Voldemort said with creeping fear, "so that I could fight by your side and help you rule the Empire."

"No," said Palpatine. "So I could destroy you! Crucio!" Palpatine screamed as he held out the wand. Voldemort fell to the ground in severe pain. He writhed on the plaza floor, still holding the light saber. Darth Vader started to stand up.

"Did you think I learned nothing of your craft?" Palpatine yelled as he held the quill steady.

Voldemort stood, despite the Cruciatu curse being cast against him. He held out the light saber with every bit of his strength and finally blocked the spell.

Vader stood up and held his hand out to call the light saber, and Voldemort lost his grip on it. As Vader caught the weapon, he threw Voldemort's wooden wand into the air and swung at it with the light saber, splitting it in two.

"No!" Voldemort yelled. He held out both hands and cast a bolt of electricity at Palpatine. The Emperor absorbed everything Voldemort threw at him, and then cast the bolts of energy back through the quill. Voldemort fell to the ground.

"You are no match without your stick," said the Emperor. "Do you know why the dark side is so powerful?"

Voldemort screamed loudly in excruciating pain.

"Most think it was always so," Palpatine said. "But they are wrong." Palpatine intensified the energy bolts.

"The dark side became incredibly powerful in one night. I remember it well," Palpatine told him. "I was only seven years old, and my father felt a shift in the Force."

Vader walked slowly toward the Emperor and shut off the light saber.

“He began to draft a bill to improve Naboo’s security.” Palpatine said as he stopped the bolts of energy.

“He used this,” he said, lifting the quill.

Voldemort looked at him with his eyes full of fear. He tried to disappear, but he was too terrified to clear his mind.

“Then you broke in and took it from my father, do you remember?” Palpatine asked. “Right before you killed him!”

Vader looked at the Emperor curiously. He powered up his light saber and looked at Voldemort cowering on the floor.

“With you around, the dark side increased. Slavery became rampant. The Trade Federation expanded. The Jedi began to lose their hold on peace,” Palpatine said, staring at Voldemort. “You are the foundation of the Empire itself.”

“I am the power behind the dark side?” Voldemort said.

“Yes. Even after I killed you, your horcrux kept the dark side strong,” Palpatine said.

Voldemort began to stand up. “Then you cannot kill me. The Empire could not survive!” he said weakly.

The Emperor laughed loudly for a horrifyingly long moment. “You fool, there is another horcrux,” he hissed.

“What? How?” Voldemort demanded as he stood.

Palpatine pointed at Darth Vader. “It is him,” he said. “When you failed to kill Vader on Tatooine, you created another horcrux. Your soul now lives within him.”

Voldemort’s face contorted as he considered this horror. How had he not seen this? It was exactly how he created Harry Potter’s horcrux. Every thirteen-year-old girl on

Earth had figured that out. In one terrifying instant, Voldemort realized it was true. “No!” he screamed.

“Destroy him, Vader.”

“With pleasure, Master,” Darth Vader said as he raised the light saber high. He brought it down on the cowering Voldemort and slashed off his head. With a few more strokes, he sent the pieces of the wizard skittering into the crevice. They disappeared into the blackness. Voldemort was dead.

The Emperor and Vader stood on the plaza, surrounded by storm troopers. Before them, the ruins of Naboo’s demolished palace city stretched into the distance. There were so many buildings destroyed and so many people dead.

“Leave us!” Palpatine ordered the storm troopers. Once they were alone, he said, “It did not have to be this way.”

“Master, he did this?” Vader asked, looking at the devastated city.

“He had me under mental control, and I barely remember it, but the whole time I struggled to break through.”

“I am glad you did, Master,” Darth Vader said.

“I confess, I might have done this myself,” Palpatine said, gesturing to the destroyed palace. “I am a Sith Lord, you know.” He looked at Darth Vader and smiled.

“What of him?” Vader asked, looking at the crevice in the palace ground.

“I’m sure that is the last we’ll see of him, Vader.”

“Master, I mean, what of his horcrux, his soul within me, the dark side’s power? Is that true?” Vader asked.

“It is,” Palpatine answered.

“Then when I die, the dark side dies with me.”

“Perhaps,” Palpatine said. “But there is one option; a living horcrux can transfer the soul to his offspring if he looks into the child’s eyes with his own, and wishes for salvation.”

“But I have no children,” Vader said.

“Then your death will truly be the end of the dark side’s reign,” said the Emperor with sadness.

Vader thought once more of his wife, Padme, and her tragic end. The future of the Empire depended on his children, and now he had doomed it by killing her over a year before. “I shall not think about Padme ever again,” he told Palpatine.

“Good.”

“As for Voldemort-”

“As for Voldemort, we can never reveal the source of the dark side’s power,” the Emperor interrupted. “From now on we shall call him, ‘He who must not be named.’”

The two Sith Lords looked at the sky, now completely dark except for the sparse stars of the outer rim. One of them was actually a pair of suns that spun around each other, causing gravitational wobbles that appeared as bright twinkles to Vader and Palpatine. Orbiting them was a small, dusty, barely inhabited world that held the future of the Empire, the dark side of the force, and the immortality of a certain dark wizard.

THE END