

Chapter 12

Darth Cloran watched as the Jedi before her struggled to his feet. He was still clearly disoriented but he was showing an impressive will to overcome his inevitable end. She approached to within a meter of her opponent, just as he was able to once again stand erect. She could see the old eyes struggle to focus on her and it impressed her that while most sentient beings would be overcome with fear when facing death, this once proud Jedi showed no such emotion. This pleased Darth Cloran greatly, proving that he indeed was a worthy opponent.

Darth Cloran slowly raised her lightsaber in a high exaggerated backswing in preparation to bring it crashing down onto the neck of the Jedi.

Suddenly, and without any prior indication, the Jedi fell quickly to one knee as if he were ducking below her inevitable strike.

...

It is widely known throughout the Galaxy that over the many years that a Master and a Padawan work together, they develop a unique bond in the Force. This bond cannot be easily explained or defined in written language, yet it is precious and has been known to span long periods of time when a Master and an Apprentice are apart. This bond is sensed by both parties and provides a means of unspoken communication that those outside of the Master and Padawan relationship cannot comprehend. This bond has also been known to span long distances through the galaxy,

allowing current and former masters and learners to sense when the other may be in peril or have been harmed in any way.

Because of this close Force bond, Master Jarek was able to sense the stealthy approach of his padawan through the thick forest behind him. He was also able to perfectly time his sudden drop to one knee just as his padawan leapt over him to spring a surprise attack upon the unaware Sith Lord.

Later that evening when Mosok had time to think back on his actions, he would recall and recognize the lack of fear that was within him. But as he was preparing to execute the attack, he was not thinking whether he could defeat this Sith Lord. It had not even crossed his mind that he was completely outmatched by his opponent. Rather, Mosok was only concerned with saving his Master. The same Master who was the only one who had ever stood up for him and defended him when others thought he would fail and not be able to make it as a Jedi. His Master was not perfect and had no blood relation to him, but he was as close to a father to Mosok as he would ever know. This feeling was not uncommon for Jedi Knights and their Masters and it was this same devotion to his master that Mosok was fighting for now.

The Jedi Order taught Mosok to not allow passion and emotions to cloud his Judgement, but this was not the same as having no feeling at all. Compassion and devotion were emotions that helped bind the good in the galaxy together. In this case, it was devotion that was able to help Mosok remove the fear from his mind that he would have normally felt. Instead it allowed him to focus on the training

he had been taught. Mosok was aware that if he did not focus, his Master would die, and he would do everything he possibly could to not allow that to happen.

Darth Cloran was focused so intently on her success and on the thrill of victory that the surprise attack had caught her completely unaware and off balance. It was only the countless number of hours training and fine tuning her fighting skills and physical dexterity that allowed her to survive the initial attack by Mosok. With her lightsaber raised in preparation to deliver the killing blow to the Master Jedi, she had to quickly alter the positioning of the blade in an effort to save herself. She brought the tip of her lightsaber to the left to block the descending overhead slash from the blue colored lightsaber of this new opponent.

The force of the attack was powerful and when combined with the added momentum of the leap and her out of balance stance, it was enough to knock her down and away from Master Jarek. It was her sharp reflexes that took over from there and she effortlessly performed a back roll and ended up back onto her feet. This time she was in the correct surefooted posture that was taught to all lightsaber combatants.

It was Mosok's turn to be surprised as he fully had expected the force of his surprise attack to penetrate the defenses of the Sith Lord and strike home and kill her. He failed to plan for any follow up sequences to press the advantage that he once had. Realizing the error of his judgement, he quickly attempted a poorly executed series of strikes that were easily batted away by the Sith master. Mosok realized the increased likelihood of performing a fatal mistake if he continued to press the ill conceived attack. So

instead, he assumed a defensive Seresu stance in preparation for the counter assault he knew would soon come.

The clumsy follow up lightsaber strikes had an unintentional effect on Lord Cloran, as she was bewildered at the unskilled and half hearted follow up attack. This should have been the opportune time for her new opponent to aggressively press the attack. But this young Jedi appeared to either be a complete neophyte at lightsaber combat, or he was aware of the skill of her own blade and was just probing her defenses. Darth Cloran's own Force senses did not detect any fear in what she assumed was the fallen Jedi's apprentice. She was unclear on how to best proceed with this fight, which in turn bought Mosok some time.

Mosok's respite was only for a brief moment, because when all else failed, Darth Cloran preferred aggression and power in her fighting style. As it was, her rage fueled fury returned quickly and she launched a devastating series of attacks that were mixed with confusing spins and leaps of an Ataru Master. The attacks were meant to quickly confuse and defeat any defender who was less than an adept master of melee combat.

If asked, Padawan Mosok would be the first to admit that he was not an adept master of melee combat. In fact, he would likely answer that he was not even a proficient user of the lightsaber, let alone adept at using it to defend himself.

Darth Cloran's first attack was easy enough to defend, it consisted of a simple leap over his head with a half spin followed with a slash from left to right. Mosok was

able to spin in place and block the slash, but this attack served only as a ruse to get the defenders lightsabre up high to expose the rib area where Darth Cloran lashed out with a powerful side kick.

By luck, Mosok had misplaced his steps and had the opposite foot forward than was normal for a traditional parried position. This mistake allowed him to simply step inside of the kick bringing him closer to the Sith Lord. The move was awkward, though it was effective at deflecting the attack. Darth Cloran was far too experienced at melee combat to be caught off guard, she simply continued her spin around, momentarily bringing the two combatants back to back, and then she continued the spin and progressed right into the next attack.

Without consciously thinking about it, Mosok ducked as he rotated on his heel to face his attacker which allowed the strike to pass harmlessly over his head. Darth Cloran did not seem to miss a beat as she leapt up and over Mosok again, spinning herself while in the air, preparing for another elusive attack that was a part of her chosen form of lightsaber combat. Mosok did not see the attack that was coming to his exposed backside and just as the Sith Lord landed on her feet, the killing strike was already on its way.

Mosok may not have noticed or seen the coming attack, but he did notice something he had never felt before. Mosok recognized the origins of the feeling as being from the Force, but he had never felt it quite like this before. The promptings were clear and concise and there was no mistaking what it was asking him to do. Mosok had never before experienced the Force prompting him so dramatically and clearly. It was still faint and in the background of his

thoughts, almost elusive, but he distinctly felt the prompting and there was no question as to what was required of him... and he obeyed.

Mosok instantly reacted to the clear command of the Force and dropped, performing a shoulder roll across the ground, moving him out of the way of the coming saber strike that should have ended his life in that instance.

Mosok had always felt the promptings of the Force, but they always seemed to be a bit foreign to him and very faint. It was like trying to listen to a muffled foreign language that he could sometimes just pick up bits and pieces of. But in this instance, the prompting came clear and it was like he instantly understood more of that same foreign language he had always struggled to understand before.

Mosok knew he did not have time to dwell on the new sensation. For now he knew he had to recover from his roll and regroup to prepare to defend himself. He came quickly to his feet and retreated away from the attacker, trying to put distance between himself and the Sith. At the same time he was concentrating on trying to understand what these new promptings were telling him. Unfortunately, the more Mosok concentrated on what he was feeling, the more clouded and unclear the Force promptings became. As Mosok was trying to create separation from the Sith Lord so he could concentrate, he quickly realized he did not have any spare time as she charged again and relentlessly pushed her attack.

Darth Cloran was surprised that the young Jedi had eluded some of her most complex sequences of attacks, but after having faced the surprisingly competent older Jedi Master, she had learned to adapt and not be caught off

guard if her traditionally successful attacks failed to strike home. She did notice that this younger Jedi was clumsy and not nearly as refined in his combat as the Master had been. It was also evident that he was clearly outmatched, but she was determined not to let the same underestimations cloud her focus on her fighting style, as she had done with the older Master Jedi.

She noticed that this younger Jedi's fighting technique was very similar to his Master's. It was a clear sign that he was still a student, or Padawan as the Jedi liked to call them. But she was not going to let this welp, nor his already wounded Master, escape. With those thoughts in her mind she executed a perfect sequence of slashes and thrusts that any blademaster in the galaxy would be envious of.

Mosok, in turn, was still concentrating on trying to hear more of what the Force was telling him when Darth Cloran launched her new set of attacks. Mosok was able to evade and deflect the first two strikes, a sideways slash and elusive upward thrust, using the common Seresu defenses. But as the third, fourth and fifth blazingly fast strikes came at him, he was unable to keep up and was losing his focus on trying to hear and understand the more clear promptings of the Force. Mosok again had to relegate to falling back on his old methods of listening to the feelings of the Force and combining them with his training in the Seresu fighting style in order to survive. This method again served him well as he was just able to deflect each of the incoming strikes, one after the other. Then suddenly, it was as if the filter had again been lifted from his mind and the commands of the Force were again direct and clear.

Mosok parried left and then ducked the follow up slash, brought his lightsaber to the right to deflect the jab, and then he effortlessly stepped away from the attempted hilt strike from the Dark Lord. These Force commands were once again very clear and easily understood. During this pause in the Sith's attack, Mosok again tried to clear his mind and focus on trying to hear those promptings. He was prematurely thrilled to finally have figured it all out, but once again, the promptings seemed to fade and go unclear. His mind was overcome with fuzziness, right back again to the way it always had been for him and his relationship with the Force. Mosok was struggling with trying to figure this new revelation out when he heard a faint voice at his side.

"Mos...ugh... Mosok, it is... time to.. to go."

Mosok turned his head to see that his Master had come up alongside of him with his lightsaber in hand and ignited.

Mosok began to speak. "Master, together we will—"

"No Mosok. The Sith army approaches. I will hold them off... it is... it is time for us to part."

It was obvious to Mosok that his Master was not fit for any combat and probably would not be able to flee far on his own. More so, it was obvious that he needed medical attention immediately.

"Come with me Master."

Jarek immediately replied with conviction

"No Mosok, as your Master, I command you to head out to the Rally Point. It is imperative that you leave... now!"

Darth Cloran had earlier seen enough of the condition of the Master Jedi to not be fooled by the old Master's apparent recovery. It was obvious to her that he

was in no condition to fight and she took advantage of the distraction caused by the conversation between Master and Padawan. She charged in for yet another attack, drawing power and encouragement from the frail condition of the Master Jedi.

Master Jarek sensed the attack and yelled to his Padawan.

“Leave NOW Mosok!” and then quickly raised his blade to defend himself from the incoming lightsaber blows.

Just then the first yells of alarm from the approaching Sith army penetrated the forest and entered the small clearing where they were located. Not knowing any different than to obey, Mosok sprinted toward the edge of the clearing, heading away from the approaching Sith soldiers and toward the general direction of the rally point. As he entered the forest and the protection of the trees he turned toward his Master and watched as the man that had been the closest thing to a father to him struggled to ward off the attacks from the Sith Lord. The enemy soldiers were approaching the two combatants with their blasters raised, but they were unable to fire at the Jedi as their commander was too close and moving too rapidly to insure that they would not hit her.

Mosok watched in terror and tried to help guide his Masters movements through his own mind. He was trying to use the Force in a way that he did know how to, he was desperate for some way to help his Master escape death yet again, just like the hundreds of times his Master had done it before.

As much as he tried, Mosok could not see a way for his Master to escape on his own. He was telling himself that

this was his Master, his teacher, his 'Father' in the Force. He resolved while standing there watching him struggle to survive, that he would not leave his Master here to die.

With a renewed determination, Mosok raised his lightsaber up and prepared to rush back to his master's aid just as he saw him lock sabers with the Sith Lord. As Mosok was preparing to rush back into the clearing, Master Jarek sensed his Padawan's intentions and turned his head to look at him. He looked directly into Mosok's eyes from across the field, and then ever so slightly, shook his head 'No'. The message was clear. Mosok immediately stopped his forward movement and looked at his Master, pleading for him to allow him to come to his aid. When no such permission was given, Mosok switched off his lightsaber, turned and began to retreat deeper into the woods. For the first several meters Mosok continued to hear the sounds of the continued melee between his Master and the Sith Lord, but he had his orders, and he continued forward.

Mosok had traveled another hundred meters into the forest and was now unable to visibly see the melee. Suddenly Mosok stopped, his eyes opened wide in shock and horror as the Force screamed out to him. The feeling was stronger than any feeling he had ever experienced before. He knew his Master had been struck down. Mosok slowly lowered his head and offered his final farewell to his Master and with tears rolling down his cheeks... he pressed on. He separated himself from the final resting place of the only person who ever truly believed in him.

. . .

Emi-gon was sitting in one of the passenger seats of Ocal's space cruiser, or freighter, or barge, or whatever he called it, when she heard the same cry of pain through the Force that Mosok had.

Emi-gon realized she was too late.

The Jedi Order had lost one of its true heroes this day. The last of the remaining members of the group known as the "Nobel Five". She felt an overwhelming sense of gloom come over her and she too allowed the tears to flow down her cheeks. She just watched the clouds of hyperspace pass by the plastisteel windows of the starship, and she slowly accepted the fate of her former Master.