

## Chapter 4

Nestled deep in the north-east corner of the Jedi Temple on Coruscant, up on the second floor, there are several large circular chamber rooms. These chamber rooms are used by the various Jedi Councils for their regular meetings as well as emergency council sessions and other meetings as needed.

In the traditional Jedi fashion, the furnishings in these chamber rooms are somewhat sparse. There is very limited artwork on the walls and only some chairs of various sizes and shapes arranged around the outside walls of the rooms. In the center of each of these rooms, there is a smaller set of uniquely selected chairs facing toward the center. These chairs are of different sizes and shapes to fit the varied sizes and shapes of the different species in the galaxy. The chairs end up being selected by whichever council had reserved the chamber based on whom would be participating in the council meeting itself.

On this particular day, in chamber room three, the Outer Rim Combat Council (ORCC) was meeting to discuss the war efforts in the outer rim territories. The ORCC comprised of five distinguished Jedi Masters with a variety of different backgrounds and levels of experience.

Emi-gon Vaus was one of the younger members of the council and had only been appointed six standard months earlier. The appointment was necessary after Master Fanlar had been killed at the hands of a Sith Lord. Emi-gon was a smaller sized human with dark skin and short dark hair that was kept cropped close to her face and never was allowed to grow longer than shoulder length. She also

looked unnaturally young for her age of 48 years. This was no doubt an inherited trait from her parents whom she had not seen since childhood.

Because of her youthful look, small size and quiet voice, Emi-gon was often times mistaken as being a weak Jedi amongst her peers. When an opponent made this same mistake, it usually ended up bad for them. Emi-gon was far from a weak or incapable Jedi. Emi-gon's family was a prominent political family on the planet Alderaan and her force powers were discovered when she was young. Once discovered and tested, she was quickly brought into the Jedi academy and her training had begun.

Emi-gon's easy going demeanor had earned her friends very quickly and she also had a sharp and inquisitive mind. This intellect allowed her to quickly learn and develop her force talents as well as let her perform well with her secular studies. She continued to excel through the early years of her training and she particularly thrived at understanding the living force and how all the living beings in the galaxy interacted and relied on each other. The symbiotic relationship seemed to make perfect sense to Emi-gon and her appreciation and caring for all living beings continued to grow alongside her force powers.

Emi-gon was quickly selected as a padawan by a very well known Jedi master who noticed her love of the living Force and took that strength and further developed it. This period of tutelage also rounded out her training in combat tactics, lightsaber technique, and especially the power of negotiation.

Emi-gon continued to impress her Master and word began to spread through the ranks of the upper echelon of

Jedi leadership about her talents. After passing her Jedi Trials on the first attempt, she quickly advanced through the ranks in the Jedi Order. Her reputation grew at an even more rapid pace after she successfully negotiated a series of very complex peace and trade treaties among some of the outer-rim planets that some thought was impossible.

Her first, and only, Padawan learner was a very capable female Jedi that showed great promise. This Padawan also attained Jedi Knighthood quickly, but in a regrettable accident, was killed by friendly fire during a skirmish in the jungles of an inhospitable moon. This surprise death deeply affected Emi-gon and while she would not admit it, many believed it was why she had never taken on another Padawan to train.

Emi-gon was fiercely loyal to the Republic and had proven to be both an accomplished combatant and a wise leader. Her reputation of profound understanding of the living Force and compassion for all living beings was an additional bright spot for her career. Now Emi-gon was also the council member responsible for sector two of the outer-rim territories, which included the remote planet K-31. In room three she was sitting in one of those unique shaped chairs and was making her report to the rest of the council during this normal weekly meeting.

To this point, the meeting had proceeded in an orderly fashion and Emi-gon was now reporting on her sector of responsibility. She was addressing the other four members of the ORCC that were present, speaking to them directly. There were also two other Jedi Masters attending the meeting via holo-projection from the more widely known 'High Council' of the Jedi Order.

Emi-gon was seated comfortably in her chair and was speaking easily about her various concerns.

“We received a burst transmission from Master Jarek indicating that SCU-11 executed a successful raid on the one known solar amplifier on K-31. The amplifier was completely destroyed as well as a sizeable amount of Sith troopers that were defending the amplifier. Unfortunately the Sith Lord was not present and her whereabouts remain unknown at this time.”

The head of the ORCC was master Yanif Dir and a front runner for appointment to the Jedi High Council at some point. He casually commented rather dryly.

“For Master Jarek’s sake, perhaps the absence of the Sith Lord was a fortunate event.”

Emi-gon was not surprised by the comment and was quick to reply.

“Do not underestimate Master Jarek. I sense he and his Padawan may yet prove more resourceful than you might imagine. Though I am concerned that this attack may have been launched prematurely by Commander Holt, especially without their CIV on hand to provide both support and extraction from the planet when needed.”

Taking in a breath, Emi-gon plowed ahead with her real intent for the report “.. and if it is at all possible, I would like to request that the council approve deploying a conventional landing force to a holding area just outside of the system in case a quick reaction force is needed to pull them out.”

This statement caused several of the members of the ORCC to exchange looks among themselves and some whispered conversations began between them as well. It

was again Yanif Dir who spoke up.

“Master Vaus, where do you propose that we gather this landing force from? You know we are stretched about as thin as possible across the outer rim and the Galaxy as a whole.”

Emi-gon learned a long time ago to never make a proposal without a plan to back it up. She responded to the question with her own answer.

“I spoke with Master Ewin earlier today and she said her operations in the Mustafar sector were winding down and that she could spare a battalion of light infantry for a short time. She could also provide a cruiser to aid Master Jarek if needed.”

A quiet pause came over the council for a brief moment and then it was the Twilik Jedi Master Ickti Vin'Dar who replied calmly and with some feeling in his voice.

“We commend Master Ewin for her willingness to help, but with the upcoming operations against the Sith-held fring planets, and our precarious position in sector four, we simply cannot spare a single ship, let alone an entire infantry battalion, to stand as a QRF. Even if it is a unit as valuable as a SCU and its Jedi Master.”

Emi-gon was again ready for this response and her response was rapid, though it did show some signs of desperation as she looked into the faces of all the gathered ORCC members.

“Masters, we cannot just leave SCU-11 and Master Jarek to fend for themselves without any form of offworld bombardment and extraction capability. Surely we can spare a single battalion until the end of dash elevens operation? If we cannot do this for the SCU itself, then at least for one of

our own... not to mention his Padawan! This council has-

“Master Vaus, “ It was master Vin’Dar who cut her off  
“we do admire your loyalty and desire to preserve your fellow Jedi as well as your concern for the soldiers under your command. But we must not let those feelings cloud our judgment about what MUST be done for the good of the Republic.”

The heads on the other council members were nodding in agreement, though Emi-gon did notice a few that were not as animated as the others.

Vin’Dar continued, “The will of the Force has placed Master Jarek where he is at this time. The future is always changing and many times it is clouded, but the Force has not dictated a change from the current strategy. We have noted your concern but the decision has been made. May the Force be with Master Jarek and SCU-11.”

There was a stunned look on Emi-gon’s face. The tone and finality of Vin’Dars statement made it clear that the discussion was over and SCU-11 was left on their own.

. . .

“This is my space... I have always belonged here...”

The seasoned cyborg Captain, named Ocal, was muttering to himself again. This was not the first time that his young green skinned co-pilot smiled after hearing his captain ramble on about the Galaxy.

“I can see that smile Quinto! Just because I mutter and enjoy my ‘enterprising methods’, does not make the truth any less true... this really is ‘My Space’!”

Ocal’s comments only made Quinto’s smile grow all

the way to the sides of his mouth as well as show in his eyes as well.

“I’ll be sure to annotate it on the star maps captain, that we have just entered ‘Ocal Space’”

Ocal turned to look at his co-pilot with a scowl that would frighten a Rancor.

“Why don’t you go check the tie downs on the cargo and let me enjoy my peace and quiet!”

If anyone ever asked Ocal to describe himself, he would probably start with expert smuggler, ace pilot, elusive man of action, and occasionally even a legitimate enterprising businessman.

It was the last part of his description that was accurately depicting Ocal at this current moment in the Galaxy. The ongoing Jedi-Sith war was helping his legitimate business boom! The amount of supplies required to sustain an Army was vast and there are only so many transports to go around the Galaxy. Both the military and civilian transports and cargo ships were taking a beating during the war. Anyone with a reliable cargo ship was in high demand, and both the Sith and the Jedi were paying top credit for anything with empty space for cargo and that could deliver it on time.

Some cargo ship owners, the ones that were greedy and willing to take the risk, were playing both sides of the war. They would alternate transporting for both the Sith and the Republic. For the most part, Ocal steered clear of the Sith; their methods were notoriously brutal if one failed to deliver the goods or was even just a bit late. Though occasionally the opportunity and money was just too good to pass up and Ocal had hauled cargo for the Sith as well.

If asked which side of the war Ocal wanted to win, he typically answered 'Whichever side was willing to pay more!' Though his close friends, of which there were only a few, knew of the good morals that were found deep inside of this unassuming, tall, human cyborg with a mechanical eye enhancer. Ocal also loved to wear a brown, round brim hat that typically was never off his head for more than a minute.

As it was right now, Ocal, and his co-pilot Quinto, were just wrapping up a delivery run for the Republic back on Coruscant. They had made a run to the Mustafar system to deliver some critical parts needed for repairs to the ever fragile Hyper-drives in several of the Republic's battle cruisers after a hard fought victory. Once those parts were delivered they loaded some equally important raw materials from that system which were needed for many of the intricate chips used in the circuitry of hyper navigation computers.

These materials were needed back on Coruscant by the high tech manufacturing plants there. The price paid to deliver the parts to Mustafar was enough to pay for the trip both ways and still would have some left over. But the price paid for the items coming back was the Lymic Spread on top! Ocal was thinking that perhaps a retreat on a faraway planet was actually doable... provided the Sabacc Tables treated him right.

Ocal was still daydreaming about the cozy retreat abode on the water when the Hyper-Space countdown light alerted him to their proximity to Coruscant. The flashing light snapped him back to reality and to the task at hand. He Quickly grabbed the light speed thruster controls and keyed the shipwide intercom. Ocal notified Quinto they were

preparing to exit light speed and to prepare for arrival.

Ocal smoothly pulled the light speed thruster controls back, pulling their craft out of hyperspace. The deceleration caused the view out of the front windscreen to fade from the swirling color clouds of hyperspace travel, to the streaked lines of passing stars that were associated with the trans-hyper velocity. Finally the view settled to the normal view of standard space and the approaching planet of Coruscant.

Keying the intercom again Ocal's voice echoed through the entire ship

“Okay Quinto, lets look sharp back there and double check all of our paperwork. Lets try to get through customs smoothly this time and maybe we can get to the Sabacc tables before 2200.”

Ocal was hoping his blaster would not be needed this time around. He was trying hard not to think about having to spend time in a lower level cell again.

“Dang... that wasn't my fault!”, he muttered to himself.

Having just walked onto the bridge, and knowing exactly what Ocal was thinking about, Quinto smiled again. He was thinking to himself of just how funny that story really was.