**Arc 2 Chapter 31**

The next few days went by in a blur, Anaïs barely paying attention as she got used to a sense she’d never had before, came to terms with an understanding that was so simple she wondered how she’d missed it, and explored a complexity that she’d never realized existed.

“It iz not going to go away if you *eat*, Anaïs,” Senara commented dryly.

“Sorry,” the Padawan apologized, not for the first time, putting down the shard of ice she’d been slowly growing, the crystals spreading in unique patterns. “It’s just. . .” she struggled, unable to put it into words.

“Oh, I know,” the Adept smirked, tapping the thin length of white wood on her waist that was her staff in its ‘travel’ form. “Ze first time I vas able to understand ze snowbark of my people, it made my trip to zis place *completely* vurthwhile.”

“There’s, there’s no *ice* on Coruscant, not really,” The Jedi tried to explain. “I saw it on-” she cut herself off, as Ilum, the frozen world where Jedi found their Kyber crystals and built their weapon, had been treated by the Temple Masters like it was a secret. Then again, she hadn’t been told *not* to tell anyone, so. . . *why not?* “Not on the planet I visited as an Initiate, to build my saber,” she stated, splitting the difference. “It’s a frozen world, but we were only there for a single day.”

“Perhaps, zhen, your *veapon* carries zhe memories of that place?” the Adept suggested, which sounded silly, but her Master *had* mentioned Psychometry, the art of reading impressions in the Force that dwelt within items, during her training. It was supposedly an *innate* trait, but perhaps she had a touch of it?

Trying to *feel* her saber in the Force. . . it just felt like her. Like it always had, since she’d been able to truly sense things in that way. “I suppose?” she more asked than said, taking a bite of the bits of meat in a spicy green sauce over a bed of grains in front of her, not having remembered actually *getting* her lunch. *Maybe I should pay more attention to my surroundings?*

“If you are looking for something to do, zhen perhaps, vith your newfound insight, you can give me zhat training you promised,” Senara mused teasingly.

Blushing, the Jedi hung her head. “Right, *sorry!* It’s just-”

The white-skinned woman laughed, waving away her friend’s apology. “*Relax*, Anaïs! I am just, how you say, pulling of ze legs. To be honest, I am surprised zhat you have not wanted to find some time to get *away* from zhe others.”

Senara gave the rest of the dining hall a significant glance, and the Mages sitting at the other tables quickly cast their gazes back to their food.

And that was the *other* reason why Anaïs had submerged herself in her studies of **Ice**.

For reasons beyond her, suddenly, she’d become. . . *popular.*

And she had *no idea* what to do with that.

At the Temple, she was well known, and liked, by many of the Padawans and the Temple Masters, but this *level* of. . . attention? With eyes on her at *all times*, at least when she was in public? It wasn’t a nod or a smile, with the other Jedi going on about their day, it was just. . . *staring.*

“I don’t get *why,*” the Padawan admitted, and, *yes*, her friend was giving her the *exact* look she was expecting the Adept would. “Okay, why?”

“Anaïs, *you are dangerous,*” Senara stated simply.

Frowning, the Jedi pointed out, “I was dangerous *before*.”

“Yes, but *zhey* did not know that,” The Adept argued.

“I fought that woman!” she objected. “The lightning one! Who’d already graduated!”

“And you *lost,*” Senara pointed out, though kindly. “Zhe fact that you lost against one of zhe *graduated* Mages does not matter to these people. Only zhat you *lost*, and zhat the Headmaster stepped in. Zhat he *did* showed your connection to him, which deterred future attempts, but zhat overshadowed *everything* else. *Now,* however, after parading zhat Dreadwing head around? Zhey have realized, *finally,* zhat perhaps the group that rules the galaxy might be *dangerous.*”

“We don’t *rule the galaxy,”* the Jedi objected, a little offended.

Lifting one white brow, the Adept questioned, “Can you not go anywhere and enact your will? Do you not have zhe backing of zhe galaxy’s government?”

“Yeah, *to protect it,*” Anaïs argued, but this wasn’t the first time they’d had this argument, and it certainly wouldn’t be the last. “So, what, they *like* me now? Because I *killed* something?”

“*Vhatever* made you think zhat they *liked* you?” Senara asked dryly. “Zhey see you as *valuable,* zhe two are *not* the same. Ah, look, and here zhey come now.”

Lifting an arm, the Adept pointed, and the Padawan followed the path of her finger, seeing Jabari making his way towards them, trailed by the rest of his friends.

“Jedi Anaïs,” he greeted her formally, tilting his head forward in a miniature bow. “On behalf of Clan Mwindaji, I offer a formal pact of friendship, but, given my clan’s actions, I understand why you would be reticent to accept.”

The boy’s Presence in the Force was in *direct* contrast to his words, the feeling like that of a surly cat forced into a corner, unhappy and looking for any excuse to escape, and *no* part of him seemed happy to see her, which hurt a little. As such, she started to say, “Thank you, but-”

“Don’t be *stupid*,” Chiku interrupted her, the girl’s bird-like Presence oddly amused, but with a domineering air that *oozed* **Dark**. Not enough to taint the air around her with it, but enough that, were her Presence *physical*, Anaïs wouldn’t touch her unless she was wearing gloves. *Disposable* gloves. “You’re being given a *chance*. One an outworlder like *you* normally wouldn’t get. With our clan’s backing you’ll be running with a *better* class of Mage,” she added, flicking a disdainful look Senara’s way

The white-skinned girl snorted.

“Have something to say, *outsider?”* the wind specialist demanded.

“Oh, *no*. I’m sure I ‘ave *nothing* to say that vould be worthy of your ears,” Senara snarked.

“That’s *right*,” Chiku sneered, missing the sarcasm, and Anaïs looked at the others in the group, expecting them to say. . . *something,* like they had before when the unpleasant girl got particularly nasty, but they remained silent, Jabari clearly holding his tongue. Kamaria was to his side, giving the unpleasant girl a glare that said she *wanted* to shut down the **Dark** tinged Mage, but she, too, said nothing.

*They don’t want to do this,* the Jedi realized. Them being forced to distance themselves from her because their families *commanded* them to *had* upset them, so she thought it would’ve made sense for them to be *happy* to go back to being friends like they were before. That they *weren’t* suggested that there was something. . . *else* at play here.

Knowing she couldn’t close her eyes to *truly* focus on the Force, the Padawan still felt out within it, and tried to put forward the thought that she was *going* to take them up on their offer. That she’d try and be friends with them once again.

*There.*

It was subtle, *barely* a whisper, and it was only now that she was *looking* for it that could she sense it, one ripple lost amongst hundreds, and she *knew* that without Master Lucian’s training, she wouldn’t have been able to see it.

*And if I say no?*

The ripple was gone, though new ones replaced it, lesser ones, a sense of ‘could be’ instead of ‘*will’*.

“Thank you, but no,” Anaïs informed Jabari. Remembering the lessons on de-escalation from the Temple, she continued, “I hold you in no ill will, nor your compatriots, however, your Clans have made it clear what their position on foreign Force users are, and I will respect that.” Which she thought was better than Master *Lucian’s* way of dealing things, which would be to ignore them outright, and kill them if they became an issue.

Scowling, Chiku started to yell, “Listen *here*, you stupid-“

*“Chiku!”* Jabari snapped, his voice harsh, his Presence snarling, claws unsheathed, and the bird-girl shot him a hateful glare, but stopped talking. Nodding to the Jedi, the young man stated formally, “Thank you for your consideration. Given my Clan’s *previous* directives, nothing else could be reasonably expected. We shall see you in class.”

As one the group turned and left, though Ganizani *did* send her one sad glance as they did so, leaving a confused Jedi, who, looking to Senara, found her friend smirking slightly. “What was that?” Anaïs asked, as the Adept seemed to have understood the last few minutes far better than she did.

“*Zhat,* vas clan politics,” the white-haired girl noted, amused. Seeing the blonde girl’s confusion, she explained, “If you had said yes to zhem, you would *not* ‘ave been friends with *them,* Anaïs, you vould have been beholden to zheir *elders*.”

“The same elders who told them they couldn’t talk to me,” the Jedi nodded, having guessed it *might* have been something along those lines, but there was more to it. “And I take it they’re not that nice?”

Senara snorted, but at her friend’s bewildered stare, as the Padawan *didn’t* see the joke, she sighed. “Do you Jedi not have elders?” the Adept questioned, lifting a brow.

Anaïs nodded, but argued, “Yes? But if they wished to speak to me, I would not try and avoid it.”

Rolling her eyes, Senara stated, *“Yes,* because zhey are *your elders.*”

Shaking her head, the Padawan argued, “No, I mean, maybe?” Frowning, she thought out loud, “Or, I’ve never seen someone *other* than my Master deal with Force users other than Jedi, so. . .” Considering it, she shook her head. “No, some of the Masters are. . . *misguided*, but the majority are good, wise, caring men and women, and I would *welcome* their advice, even if they had no authority over me.”

Staring, the Adept finally shook her head. “Jedi,” was the only thing she had to say.

<SWPP>

Once more in Professor Fatsani’s Elementalism class, Anaïs concentrated on her ice.

As she’d been doing over and over, she reached out to the Force, and resonated with the core of the concept of **FREEZE**. In turn, the Force replied, forming a seed of conceptual ice that reached out to her in turn, asking where to go, what to *be*, a core of possible **FREEZE** that wished to be let out, but did not demand it.

Directing it to a point in front of her, she let the Force work, and a crystal bloomed into existence, one she caught with a single small barrier that created a misty silver platform upon which the bit of frozen water could sit. Shaping it was still something she was learning, as there *were* ways it naturally wanted to grow, the fractal patterns of the base crystal pushing ever outwards, but she could direct its growth as she wanted, to make a flat plate, a rod, a ball, though the last was no where *close* to smooth, and more.

She’d had Senara display how *she* used her own Wood element, but the girl’s style, just like her approach to the Force, was completely different from the Jedi’s own, the woman reaching in and *pulling* on her ‘Magick’, weaving the strands how she wished. It let her grow the wood in unnatural ways, but that *also* required her to manage *every* strand, while Anaïs could just direct it and let it. . . *go.*

The Mages, she was coming to realize, used an entirely *different* method from either of them.

They commanded the Force to do as they wished, using the Runes to. . . ‘phrase’ the order they put out, as it were. They were working with wood today, and, watching them in the Force, it was almost like they made a framework in that other realm that they then *forced* to be filled in the physical world through an exertion of directed will. As before, there was no anger, no *hate* to what they were doing, just a determination that it would happen, an expectation that it would form, and a belief that it *would* work.

And then it did.

It was certainly *interesting*, though it didn’t help *Anaïs* in the slightest.

“Professor!” Chiku, a couple tables over, called, pointing at the ice crystal in front of the Jedi. “She’s not doing what we’re *supposed* to!” Pausing for a moment, the girl smirked nastily, “But I guess she’s finally doing *something,* so maybe don’t punish her *too* much?”

Fatsani walked over to the Padawan, his ivy-like Presence twitching as it laid spread across the classroom, and he lifted an eyebrow, holding a hand over the ice she’d been working on, clearly waiting for her permission. She nodded, and he plucked it off the floating platform it sat on, examining it closely. “Continue what you were doing,” he instructed her.

“But *Professor,*” Chiku started to object.

“Worry about your *own* task, Ms. Chaltu,” the professor rebuked, and the bird-girl fell silent. “Anytime now, Ms. Vond-Ryssa,” he prompted.

Feeling out in the Force, Anaïs continued working with the feeling of **FREEZE** in the shard, growing the crystal up and around, trying to make a bowl, like the professor had made one of stone in her first lesson with him. Focusing, putting her *all* into it, the process was not quick, but the Force understand what she was trying to do, and worked in tandem *with* her, the ice crackling softly as it grew upwards over the course of several minutes. It wasn’t smooth, but the substance reacted to her requests, filling in the gaps to make it watertight, the outside shifting on its own to form a textured pattern reminiscent of snowflakes that she liked, though she didn’t know *why* it did that.

“Hmm,” the man remarked, turning the bowl back and forth. Holding up his other hand, the Force around him *flexed* as a bit of ice formed in his hands, spreading outward and upwards into a smooth hemisphere, the ice white instead of the light blue of hers, but otherwise featureless, coming into existence over the course of a dozen seconds or so. “Now you.”

It took the Jedi a moment to understand what the man was asking. Having *seen* what he’d done, though, it wasn’t *too* hard for her to copy it. She didn’t *command* the Force, merely envisioned the ‘Spirit of Ice’ as they’d say it, and she asked the Force to assist her in making it to the same ‘specifications’ that her teacher had given. It took several seconds to form the outline, trying to keep the shape in her mind, but, pressing forward once she felt the Force agree to assist her, a sudden *crack!* wrang out as the entire thing sprang into existence in only a second or two. While a lighter blue than before, though, it still was *still* not the white of the professor’s creation.

*“She can’t even make it right,*” Chiku commented quietly, though the girl pitched her voice to carry through the entire classroom, the bird-girl’s Presence *dripping* with anger.

Fatsani, meanwhile, flipped the bowls in his hands face down on the table, his on the left, the rougher one on the right, and he took the one she’d *just* created as well, placing it in the center. A spell, written in four circles twisting vines flashed, and a glove of dark-red bark formed around his left hand, the rest of the class going quiet.

With a single, sudden movement, the Force concentrating around the man, the *same* way it would for a Jedi using Force Control, the professor drove his gauntleted fist down onto his created Ice bowl with superhuman strength.

It shattered *completely*, the center broken to the point of being mere powder as the stone table shook, but held. Moving to the center bowl, the one that the Padawan had just created, he copied the motion exactly, only instead of fragmenting into dozens of pieces, it held, though it cracked apart as he lifted his hand, falling into several large shards. Moving another step over, Fatsani once more swung down, *this* time with even more force than he had the first two.

The *table* cracked.

Anaïs stared at the fracture lines that now ran across her workspace as, working his hand as if it were sore, he lifted the armored limb, the bottom of the professor’s glove dented, the bark falling off in pieces. It regrew in a moment, and he, with a little difficulty, reached down and *pulled* the now-embedded bowl out of the stone, her creation only having suffered superficial damage. “I’d say this would stand up to *quite* a few blaster-bolts before it was destroyed,” he remarked, putting the blue bowl right-side-up, and turning his attention towards the Jedi. “I have been told you have some skill with Wood?”

“I, uh,” the Padawan stuttered, trying to figure out *what just happened*, her training with her Master helping her rally before she got *another* dose of itching powder down her back, not that the Professor would do such a thing. “Yes, but I can’t make it from nothing,” she told the dark-skinned man, her ability with Plant Surge not the same as *whatever* it was he’d done to make his wooden glove.

“Interesting,” he remarked, a flex of Force loosening his gauntlet, which he removed and tossed into an empty corner of the room. “Do as much as you can, Ms. Vand-Ryssa. Do *not* hold back.”

“Are-” she started to ask, wanting to ask if he was *sure,* but by the way the professor was staring at her, he *was.* “O-Okay,” she replied, once more sure that *something* was going on here, but, *again*, she wasn’t sure what it *was*.

Closing her eyes, she felt out in the Force, but there was no direct feeling of *Danger* here, so she complied, reaching out for the wooden gauntlet instead, the thing *glowing* with Professor Fatsani’s Presence. It resisted her, a little, like the body of a Jedi would, but she wasn’t trying to *destroy* it, only use it as a base. Extending her hands outward to help her focus, a crutch that Lucian had repeatedly told her was something she would *have* to train herself out of before an ability was *truly* mastered, she grasped the object with Telekinesis and brought it up to work on it easier.

Taking a deep breath, she set her mental feet and reached out to the Force, asking for its assistance, as much as it was willing to offer her. As always, the Light was her ally, and it filled her, pouring through her as it reached *through* the Padawan towards the bit of wood that *wasn’t* truly wood, and started to take shape.

With no direction needed, only untamed *growth,* the Jedi had no need to control it, and let it ‘surge’ forth in truth, focusing on it to the exclusion of all else. As the Force moved with her, *life* blossomed outwards, forming with the distant sound of limbs waving in the breeze, of roots questing through the earth, of the faint hints of something ***more*** that she couldn’t understand.

And then it was over, and she staggered, *exhausted,* catching herself on the cracked table, as she blinked, trying to remember what she was doing, the feeling gone, like a half-forgotten dream, and fatigue pulled at her, though she resisted it even as her eyes drooped a little, Lucian having pushed her *far* harder in her training with the Jedi Master.

Silence reigned in the room, as she looked to the corner the glove had sat in, and blinked in surprise.

Where before was empty space now sat a large tree, though nothing on the enormous woods of the forest just outside of the Circle; roots had broken through the stone floor, looking for sustenance; branches had pierced the nearby window while others extended inwards, all of them heavy with leaves and a few bearing small berries; and, hanging in the center, supported by a network of branches, the glove she’d formed it all around sat.

“I believe it should be clear to all, why Ms. Vand-Ryssa is here in *my* class, and that her control of Wood far outstrips your *own*, Ms. Chaltu,” the Professor noted, as the bell-tower chimed outside, signaling the end of the lesson.

*But, we still had twenty-five minutes left!* the Jedi thought tiredly, taking a moment to realize that she must’ve been working for that *entire* time. *Oh, that’s the opposite of ‘combat ready’.*

“Stay a moment,” Fatsani commanded her, as the others all filed out, whispering to each other, even Jabari sending a look her way that was simultaneously impressed and *scared*, though she didn’t know *why*.

Once they were gone, the man turned to her, but she spoke before he could, blurting out, “I’m sorry about destroying your classroom, Professor! I didn’t mean to, and-”

“You did what I asked,” he stated, cutting her off. “Tell me, who is your Master?”

“I, what?” she questioned, confused.

“Your Master, Ms. Vand-Ryssa. Unlike others here, I am not ignorant of the workings of the wider galaxy. While you do not wear a Padawan’s braid, you do not have a Knight’s confidence. Or their arrogance. That means your Master is dead, you have fled the Temple, or they approve of you being here. And, as far as I am aware, only *one* Master knows of the Circle. So tell me, what is your Master’s name?”

The man’s stare was intense, but, despite it, she felt not a hint of *Danger* in the Force. “Master Lucian,” she stated, and felt the man’s Presence ripple with recognition. “My Master is Master Lucian.”

“So he’s taken an apprentice,” the Mage noted neutrally, glancing back at the tree she’d brought into being. “Creating roots, and leaves, is the mark of one who has ‘mastered’ Wood, and those who can create *fruit* are few indeed. But your ways are not ours. I look forward to hearing what you accomplish, Padawan Vand-Ryssa, though if you are *his* student, I likely will not.” The man’s gaze was distant for a moment, before he shook his head, slightly, as if to clear it. “You are dismissed, and do not worry about the *other* elements, Jedi. That you have learned ***Ice*** is impressive enough.”

“Thank you,” she nodded, a touch of Force Control helping to keep her standing as her exhaustion from over-using the Force slowly faded. The blonde woman grabbed her bag and headed for the door, but paused, turning back to Professor Fatsani, and asked, “If you don’t mind, Sir, how do you know my Master?”

The man had been regarding the tree she’d grown, but glanced back towards her, and the barest hint of a smile flitted across his features. “That is simple. *He’s* the one who brought me to Bhoyaria, thirty-eight years ago. Said I didn’t’ have a ‘military disposition’, so he sponsored my admission into the Circle. Now go get some rest, young Jedi. You look like you need it.”

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**Jorel**

Blastech – Baktoid piece of junk

Merr-Sonn Munitions – Industry Standard

Concordian Crescent – *Gold* Standard

Pengalan – planet

Kernast – Destroyed town

Alpha TL Captain Thul

Twilek Sergeant Eted’diwe

Beta TL Nikto Man – whiny asshole

Xatra - Gamma team lead - Zabrak woman – Lieutenant, blows shit up.

Delta TL – Chiss man – spy with changeable personality

Rebellion Cell Leader – Stelog Waleye – human male

Rebellion Leader – Dilvax Lonlen – Human Male

Rebellion Top Lieutenant – Blon Randuel – Human Male

Rebellion Top Officer – Kuna Halcorr – Human Male

Rebellion Top Officer – Alyla Syko

Trade Federation Financeer – Slevath Ceavin

Rebellion rookie – Urni Raziba - Twi’lek female (teen, orange)

Rebellion Lieutenant - Kiri – Devorian woman

Rebellion Lieutenant - Harmet – Human Male

Rebellion Lieutenant - Dash Baize – Human Male

B’skonako – Twi’lek mining town that is captured

**ANA**

Oricho Sector

Bhoyaria

Bamide – Circle of Magic city

Chiku – pansy Parkinson Wind

Jabari Mwindaji– Leader (Blood casting)

Siri – Jabari’s sister (Black claw casting)

Osei – Staff member (Bone-white Bark casting)

Kamaria (kama) – Wolf girl Ice

Zeeno – Wolf boy (Kama’s cousin) Ice

Itoro – Buffolo Boy Earth

Ganizani – Monkey Girl (quiet) Wood

Ice and fire. Water and lightning. Stone and wind. Steel and wood

Fatsani – Elementalism class

Senara - Nightsisters - Never conceded to evil