

The following morning, I stepped out of my room to find Tatnia and Ahsoka waiting for me, both of them chatting amicably about potential bounties that the team might chase while Ahsoka and I were gone. When I stepped out, carrying a bag of clothes for myself, I nodded to them.

"Morning. You guys ready?" I asked.

"Hardly going to be much different," Tatnia said with a shrug. "Might even be easier not having to watch out for you."

"Hardy har har, I'm sure you guys will miss me," I said haughtily before chuckling and patting her on the shoulder. "Everything will be fine. You guys are smart, and you can absolutely handle this."

She nodded, and I looked at Ahsoka, who smiled. Before I could ask if she was ready, she guessed what I was going to say and answered.

"We are waiting on you, Boss," She said with a smirk. "Luke is already at the *Starcaller*. We will be picking up Falia from Alpha Base. Sheora is still there, and she has agreed to let her go with us alone."

"And split from her brother?" I asked as we walked, heading to the smaller hangar where the *Starcaller* was docked.

"Falia is mature for her age, a symptom of having to take care of her brother and survive on the streets," Ahsoka explained, and I nodded in understanding. "She recognizes that, now that they are safe, they are a bit too reliant on each other. She hates doing it, but she is worried that her brother won't be able to be independent if they don't learn how to separate."

"So she thinks the best way to fix that is to separate entirely for a week, maybe weeks?" I asked. "I assumed we would be bringing him with us and that we could help ease them apart as we went."

"I said she was mature, not that she wasn't still a child," She pointed out. "I explained that to her, and Claron will be joining us."

"Sounds good. How about Ezra?"

"He will also be joining us," She said, now smiling. "We will have to pick him up from Lothal."

As we finally entered the hangar, we were joined by an already waiting Miru, who collided with me and gave me a large hug. Behind her was the [*Starcaller*](#), already going through its startup checks.

"I'll be back eventually," I assured her. "And in the meantime, you're going to be busy with all the new repair droids, parts, and staff to work on our ships."

"Yeah, I know," She said, pulling away. "You just said you weren't sure when you'd be back, so I thought...."

"As in, we were not sure if it would be in one week or two," I explained to her, patting her shoulder. "We should be back before two weeks are up, don't worry. In all honesty, if we are gone for two weeks and still not done, we will probably make our way back anyway. Two weeks is a while, so I would want to take a break, regroup, and figure out our next step."

"Good plan," Luke agreed, climbing down from the entry ramp of the *Starcaller*. "General Syndulla said to take all the time I needed, but she probably didn't mean that literally."

Miru smiled at the Force-sensitive, walking to him to greet him with a hug, which he returned. I raised an eyebrow and looked at Tatnia, who shrugged.

We chatted for a few minutes before saying our final goodbyes, boarding the freighter, and closing the entry ramp. I dropped my stuff off in the same bedroom with my armor before making my way to the bridge to find Luke and Ahsoka already sitting in their seats. The [cockpit](#) was just as well maintained and modified as the rest of the ship, with Ahsoka sitting in the central pilot's seat. It was pulled back and raised compared to the two others, letting it see out of the entire viewport.

There was also a familiar-looking blue detailed astromech sitting by a scomp interface system. It R2-D2, the true main character of Star Wars, in the metal shell.

"Hello, R2-D2," I said as I walked past. "It's nice to finally meet you. I'm Deacon Roy."

The droid warbled, his dome spinning to focus on me, letting out a series of chirps and whistles before focusing back on his task, which I had to assume was getting the jump data ready.

Leaving the droid to his work, I looked around the cockpit, seeing that Luke was in the copilot's seat, which left the gunner's seat for me, which was good because it was the only station that I could realistically use.

"Alright, we got greens all across," Luke confirmed, looking back and up at Ahsoka. "Ready when you are."

She nodded and slowly eased the ship up off the hangar bay floor and out the magfield, into open space. R2-D2 warbled and confirmed hyperspace coordinates were set in and ready to go, confirmation blinking through all of the screens, including the ones in front of me.

We flew out away from the station, doing a wide loop around it to orient ourselves. Then we left it behind, flying out past the *Huntress*, which gave us what basically equated to a

thumbs-up message to let us know they knew we were close. As we passed by them, Ahsoka engaged the hyperdrive, and we made the jump to lightspeed. Once we were set, Luke turned around, his seat spinning with him.

"This is one heck of a ship, Deacon," He said, looking up and around the cockpit. "Miru was giving me a tour before you guys showed up. Lots of good work. Where did you get it from?"

"We bought it off a guy who used most of his money to invest back into his ship," I explained. "A wandering trader of sorts. It was expensive but worth it."

"Wait, you actually bought it?" He asked, feigning surprise. "I thought you guys only stole your ships."

"We would if we could," I said with a smirk. "But this ship, along with the freighter we have running supplies, are supposed to be clean so they don't draw attention. This one is clean so it can smuggle stuff, and the *Staggered Bantha* is clean so it can buy stuff without drawing attention."

"The Rebellion does something similar with a rotation of freighters," Ahsoka added. "They provide a significant portion of our supplies."

The three of us chatted for a while, discussing the supply issues that the Rebellion was nearly constantly dealing with, as well as what I would soon be dealing with should the Skyforged Vanguard continue to grow. Eventually, the topic shifted back to our trip.

"So, where are we going, exactly?" Luke. "Alpha base is our first stop, but Ahsoka, you said you had a lightsaber specialist?"

"I think I do," She said, tapping a few controls on the console before leaning back in her chair. "The Jedi Order had a tradition involving the construction of a youngling's first lightsaber, called the Gathering. It involved going to Illum, opening your senses, and locating a crystal that spoke to you. It even occasionally involved visions from the Force."

"Is Falia ready for that?" I asked, leaning back comfortably in the gunner's seat.

"For finding her crystal?" Ahasoka asked. "I will spend some time teaching her to open her senses when we leave. The method is basic, and she is older than me when I found my first crystal."

"Alright, that's good."

"Either way, after they found their crystal, they were taken back to Coruscant on a ship called the *Crucible*, where a droid called Professor Huyang assisted them in constructing their first lightsaber."

"A droid?" Luke asked, raising an eyebrow. "I know how impressive droids can be, more than most since I have R2, but teaching young Jedi how to make their lightsabers? That seems... almost counterintuitive?"

"By the time of the Clone Wars, Professor Huyang had been teaching Jedi how to build their lightsabers for a thousand generations," Ahsoka explained, a nostalgic smile dancing on her lips. "He had a way of helping younglings past their issues, teaching them important lessons along the way. He was so old that our history logs were filled with anecdotes that he dictated. He was even famous for telling a story called "History of the Galaxy Parts One, Two, and Three. We loved them, though I always loved the first one the most. We... also have a bit of a history."

I couldn't help but smile with her, getting a peak at the woman underneath as Ahsoka recalled her history. After a moment, she seemed to realize she was reminiscing, and she coughed, looking away from us.

"He was reliable, and... Anyway, he was a cornerstone of Jedi tradition. If we could recover him, it would be a huge benefit for future generations."

"Do you have any leads?" I asked. "And any pictures of him? I'll need both."

"Yes, I have both," She assured me with a nod. "Though, I'll admit, the lead is... a bit strange. One of the most popular stories he would tell was of a Jedi saving a princess with an enormous bounty placed on her head by a criminal syndicate. It's a long story, but at the midpoint, they were looking for an empty planet to take refuge on. They first attempt to hide on a random planet, only for people to recognize the princess's identity and immediately try to capture her. They manage to find a ship, but they are chased as they escape the planet. The Jedi submerges themselves into the Force and makes an emergency blind jump, dropping out of hyperspace around an unknown planet that neither of them recognized. They landed, only to find an ancient Jedi temple, one with enough resources to fix their ship and heal their wounds. It was supposed to be a lesson in trusting the Force, but..."

"You think it was a real planet?"

"I do. Something about the way he describes it... it was different from his other stories. It felt more real," She explained. "At the time, I just thought it was something different in the story, but now I think he was describing a real planet."

"But it was a blind jump," Luke said with a frown. "Could Jedi could really do that?"

"The Exploration Corps would use the Force to navigate all the time," I explained. "And nothing is impossible when you're one with the Force. Few can do it on purpose, but plenty of

Jedi experience moments of complete connection when the whole of the Force flows through them."

"That's basically how Huyang described it," Ahsoka agreed. "I know it is an insane stretch, but something about it feels right. I believe the Force is drawing my attention to it."

"I assume you have more than just the story, though," I said, looking at her with a raised eyebrow. "I don't feel like betting our lives on a random jump. No offense."

"None taken, I don't think I could even try to guess a safe jump path with the Force," She admitted, shaking her head. "Luckily, I know the location that they jumped from, as well the general amount of time that they were in hyperspace. With that information, I figure we could shrink the searching area enough for you to do the rest."

"I can work with that," I agreed. "Should be able to narrow it down pretty quickly."

After a few minutes of watching hyperspace and chatting, Luke eventually decided to head into the back and do some meditating, mostly to prepare for finding his crystal. R2 wheeled after him, leaving Ahsoka and I alone in the cockpit. It didn't take long for the Togruta to speak up.

"So... Do you have some experience with Thrawn?" She asked, turning her chair to look at me, a curious expression on her face. "Your reaction to him was pretty strong when I mentioned him yesterday."

"...Yeah, you could say that," I said. "You didn't, by any chance, kill him when you were out there, did you?"

"No, we tried to be as stealthy as possible," She admitted. "I was focused on getting Ezra out."

"Dang..." I said, trailing off. I was silent for a long while before shaking my head. "He is dangerous. Very dangerous. There are very few people in the Empire as dangerous as him. Isard and her backroom schemes, Pelleon and his ability to inspire and lead, Vader's iron fist and might..."

"You put Thrawn in the same category as Vader?" She asked, her eyes wide in surprise.

"They wield different weapons, but they are all just as dangerous," I explained with a shrug. "Thrawn is a once-in-a-millium genius. He outclasses anyone I could really think of. Certainly, anyone the Rebellion has on tap. What was he doing in the Unknown Regions?"

"He built a power block on a planet and essentially became its ruler, or governor," Ahsoka explained, shaking her head. "I don't know how he managed to take control that quickly, but his Star Destroyer was fully repaired. We rescued Ezra from a prison facility on the ground and left with a TIE squadron chasing us."

I frowned, chewing the inside of my cheek. Knowing that Thrawn was out there in the outer rim, doing whatever shady crap he wanted? That was scary, and it felt different from the story I knew, where he was deployed to the unknown regions under the Emperor's command.

"His ship was repaired, like good enough to return repaired?" I asked, Ahsoka nodding in confirmation. "That's concerning. I wonder if the Emperor knows where he is, or if he's gone AWOL."

"Not very likely, not with that many stormtroopers," Ahsoka responded. "Their allegiance to the Emperor is fanatical. They would never let him leave."

"He could be lying to them," I pointed out, only to shrug. "I don't know. It's something we are going to have to worry about later. Something tells me he is going to sit the current conflict out. Maybe he plans on trying to pick up the pieces once we win against the Empire."

She looked surprised by the idea, potentially because she hadn't really considered what would happen *after* we "won." I knew that killing the Emperor would be a big step to beating the Empire, shattering the government and military into smaller, more easily beaten chunks, but there was still a long road after we reached the end of this one. For a moment, she collapsed a bit, the weight of our goal, the Rebellion's goal, sitting heavily on her.

"Hey," I said, pulling her out of her thoughts. "One step at a time. Don't get bogged down by how long the road is, and just focus on getting to the next point on the map. For now, we are helping the next generation of Jedi, or equivalent Force wielders, take steps into their destiny. We can figure out what happens next tomorrow."

She let out a long breath and nodded, before tapping a few buttons on the ship's controls, standing from her seat and stretching.

"I'm going to get something to eat, maybe review some of the information I managed to find about Huyang," She explained, making her way to the cockpit door before looking behind at me. "I could use a hand?"

I smiled and nodded, standing up and following her out of the cockpit.