

"On his way?" I asked, eyes wide behind my helmet. "You think he is on his way, not here currently?"

"He is coming," She repeated, leaning on the wall. "I can feel it."

I cursed and activated my built-in comms unit, activating it on its most powerful setting. I was technically out of the standard loop for passing orders around to the whole fleet, but luckily, we had a way to fix that.

"Comms override, full broadcast... Confirm," I stated, keeping my voice calm as I watched the comms panel inside my helmet.

I watched as my comms latched onto my crew, then the other ground teams, spreading out to any friendly system it could, spiderwebbing out from the closest to contact those further away. With the nearby starfighter and starships, it even jumped up to include the fleet far above the planet.

"Skyforged Vanguard, this is Admiral Deacon. We have a confirmed BAD OMEN in play, repeat, a confirmed BAD OMEN," I explained, knowing my message would reach anyone listening. "The orbiting fleet is to pull away from the planet, far away from the gravity well, and prepare for mass incoming Imperial forces. Repeat, prepare for full retreat."

A cavalcade of confirmations came through, with responses limited to captains and squadron leaders, they still came through overlapped. I could hear garbled reports that the BAD OMEN command was being confirmed by the Jedi stationed both on the *Fury* and the *Hope*, which was not an encouraging sign. Still, they were all pulling back far from the planet, preparing to jump to lightspeed at the drop of a hat.

"Ground fleet, prepare for retreat across the planet's surface," I continued, now addressing people on the ground. "Begin hyperspace calculations from several distant points far from above the military base, destination the gathering point. Share coordinates amongst the group. All ground teams retreat to the nearest vessel. My team will focus on rescue."

Our ground forces acknowledged the orders, and I could see the starfighters and starships changing their directions, conducting sweeps across the base for our other ground teams. Corvak was the last to chime in and confirm their retreat, the man clearly not liking the idea that he was running while Mandalorians were still in Imperial hands. Still, he confirmed the orders, and moments later, the *Loyal Hound* confirmed they were on route to pick them up.

As I was barking orders, my team and I moved, jogging through the facility, following behind me as I followed my spell. Surprisingly, and unfortunately, the lines split up after we ran through some hallways.

"Some of them are downstairs," I said after a string of curses. "And Vi is upstairs."

"We don't have time to do one after the other," Tatnia said. "Julus, Nal, and I will go down with Racer, Ahsoka Vaz, and you can go up."

"...Fine, but Vaz should go with you too. And don't slow down, we need to get off this planet," I reminded, before using the arrow version of Clairvoyance. "It looks like they are two floors down to the east. Now hurry!"

Tatnia nodded and all four of them ran off, practically leaping down the stairs, while Ahsoka and I did the opposite, climbing the stairs, jumping up two steps at a time.

"Ahsoka?"

"It's getting closer," she responded immediately, as if anticipating my question. "We need to hurry."

I cursed again and cast a buff on myself, pushing even faster and following my Clairvoyance, trusting her to catch up. I reached the top floor at a run, barely pausing to behold a pair of dark troopers, then, at a run, I shoulder check through a door, smashing through it. In hindsight, it was a poor idea to attempt, given the seeming obsession this galaxy has with thick blast doors, even on planetside facilities. I was strong, buffed, and armored like this, but not strong enough to slam my way through eight inches of reinforced security door.

Luckily, the top floor seemed to be a combination of a higher-end home, an observation point, and a throne room of sorts, meaning the door was not nearly as thick as it could have been. So, instead of slamming my way into a concussion, I busted through the door completely, sliding to a stop in the middle of the oddly opulent room. It kind of reminded me of a more Imperial-minded version of the [Chancellor's room on Coruscant](#), though larger and more open, with greys being the primary color.

Standing in the middle of the room was a man with dark skin and short, slick hair. He looked like the kind of person who, the moment you see him, the words "used car salesman" pop into your head. He looked at me with a confident smile, the smile of a man who thought he held all the cards.

This was [Moff Gideon](#), in the flesh.

He was dressed in black, a cape over his shoulder and down his back. He was also actually wearing armor, beskar most likely, which was a surprise since most Moffs, or any higher-ranking Imperial officer, would never consider doing so. Kneeling in front of him, face bloody and cut, was Vi. She looked at me with a surprised, but grateful expression on her face.

"Perhaps a bit dramatic, but I suppose I couldn't have expected anything else," he said. "Before we begin, you should be aware that if you attack me, I will kill your ally before you can even hurt me."

"I'll just heal her," I point out, taking a half step forward.

"I suppose you must be more impressive than we thought, if you could heal death."

I raised an eyebrow, pulling back before I could finish my step forward, using the motion to ward off Ahsoka, who was just about to rush through the smashed door. Instead, she skidded to a stop and took cover.

"Ah, so you can be reasoned with," he said, in the same way you might talk to a particularly stupid animal. "Good. Now, do you know what this is?"

He shifted, showing off what he was threatening Vi with. A lightsaber, the [Darksaber](#) of all things, was in his hands, thumb on the activator. He brought it out from behind her head, far enough that, as it was, it would not hit her if it went off. Unfortunately, I had nothing that I could cast that fast or that was accurate enough to stop him from flicking it on and slicing into her head. My Telekinesis was just as likely to startle him into activating it, either, as it wasn't a subtle spell. I had nothing.

But thankfully, Ashoka did.

The second he raised the saber's lethal end away from Vi's head, Ahsoka came around the corner, snagged the saber with the Force, and tore it out of his hands. She smoothly caught it from the entrance, stepping through the shattered door and hooking the weapon to her belt, right next to her own saber.

"Talking isn't a free action," She said, giving me a wink.

"God damn, I love you," I said before firing an Icy Spear over Vi, the ice slamming into Gideon's chest and blasting him away from Vi.

I made a beeline past Vi, dropping a Grand Healing on her as I walked by, my focus on the Moff. His beskar armor had saved him from the large ice spear, but the impact had him on his back. As I approached, I put my foot on his chest to keep him down, before I hit him with my truth spell, frowning when it failed to latch on to his mind.

"How long until Vader arrives?" I asked, pulling my blaster out. "Tell me."

"Why? We both know you can't let me live," He responded, somehow maintaining his confident smile, though it certainly seemed more brittle. "You know, we have so much in common, you and I. We-"

I cursed and shot him in the face with another Icy Spear, the massive icicle punching through his skull and into the floor beneath him, killing the man instantly. The impact was so harsh that his feet lifted off the ground from the force.

"We need to move now," I said, turning around to see Ahsoka helping Vi out of her restraints. "He was buying time, which means he thought he could make it."

We moved quickly, running back the way we had come, though this time we were forced to stop and fight a squad of regular stormtroopers. Ahsoka was forced to shield the unarmored Vi as I cut through the two dozen men, their armor and weapons no match for my magic and

enchanted beskar blade. When we finally reached the ground floor, we barely had to wait a few seconds before Tatnia, Julius, Vaz, and Nal returned, followed by the warriors of clan Galti.

"Oh, thank god," I said as they appeared. "Calima is incoming, she is gonna catch us outside. Everyone grab a buddy, we are going to have to-"

"We can't leave," Vi explained, shaking her head. "They took our armor away, we have to retrieve it."

I paused, my entire line of action halted by the pure idiocy that just came out of her mouth. Rather than immediately exploding, I at least try to give her the benefit of the doubt.

"We don't have time to find anything, the least of which is some hidden lock room of armor," I said, looking at her like she was crazy. "*Darth Vader is on his way*, and he is on a ship that puts my entire fleet, from top to bottom to shame!"

"It's our ancestral armor, I don't expect you to understand," She commented. "It's more important th-"

"No, you don't understand. I put the lives of my *people* on the line to get your ass out of here, and you want to put them at risk for some metal!?" I asked, stepping closer. "I am not putting them in any more danger than I already have! If you do not follow me out of this building, I am *leaving you here*, so what you need to figure out in the next thirty to forty-five seconds is if your ancestral bantha shit is worth you and all of your men dying!"

Without another word, I turned to leave, my people following behind me, walking out the front hall, stepping over the cooling dark trooper corpses. We were just a dozen feet past the entrance when I could hear the Mandalorian warriors running after us to catch up.

"I am sorry," Vi said as she caught up. "You are correct, forgive me."

"Admitting it is half the battle," I responded simply, still not exactly happy with her. "Living with your new understanding afterward is the real challenge."

As we jogged forward, the *Chariot* flew low over the front end of the massive building before tilting completely on its side. Looking up, I could see into the still-empty hangar.

"Okay, grab a buddy, let's go!"

I reached out to Vi and wrapped my arms around her, making sure it was secure before activating my repulsorlift pack. We lifted off the ground slowly, the added wait making the pack struggle, but we quickly picked up speed, reaching the open hangar. Almost immediately after entering, gravity reoriented itself, and we slammed into the floor, thankfully with me on the bottom, as landing on her in my armor would have likely hurt quite a bit more.

A few Mandalorians weren't as lucky and required healing.

A few of my crew had to run repeat trips, as there were more of them than us, but within a minute, we had them all safely on board.

"Calima, we are good to go!" I sent out through my comms, already running up the stairs.
"Punch it!"

I could feel the ship accelerating, but I kept running to the lounge, where the battlescreen display was still active. I could see the rest of the ground fleet regrouping, just starting to angle upwards when it happened.

The previously blue projection flashed red as a massive ship dropped out of hyperspace, followed by a fleet of other warships, ranging from a trio of simple Star Destroyers, two pairs of Victory-classes, and over a dozen smaller starships.

Vader had arrived. And it seemed like he learned his lesson from last time.

"Fuck! Goddamit, jump to hyperspace," I ordered. "Orbiting fleet, full hyperspace retreat! We will skim the surface of the planet, come up and out once we are out of range, just jump!"

The responses took a moment, before several confirmations came through, and our fleet, which had backed off the planet significantly, jumped to lightspeed, disappearing from our sensors. I let out a long breath before shaking myself off and looking back at the projector, scaling it down slightly for more detail.

"Alright, you heard the plan, we are skimming the planet for distance, then pulling up and out of the atmo when we are out of range!" I ordered, feeling the Chariot already reorienting. "Spread out, keep moving erratically, and push to the red. We can worry about repairs when we are gone."

I could hear the thrusters and power cores in the ship whine as Calima pushed us faster, the engines running hot enough that I could hear the warning sounds from the bridge. It didn't matter, though. Getting out of the *Executor's* range was far more important.

The barrage of turbolasers began almost immediately, giant beams of energy slamming into the ground, causing explosions of dirt, stone, and debris. Thankfully, we were high enough to fly over it, but each one was as terrifying as the last. Still, we moved on, desperately speeding over the planet, pushing ourselves to the edge of the fleet's range. Most of the larger ships couldn't descend into the atmosphere, they couldn't even come too low into the planet's gravity, and the smaller ships didn't have the range. They were also slow, too, meaning there was a window we could hit, where if we pushed hard enough, we could squeeze past their range. Every mile we covered around the planet translated into significantly more in space, so once we pulled up and out of the atmosphere.

We just had to survive the bombardment first.

After nearly three minutes of constant flying, barely dodging, barely making it past the explosions, we were finally approaching the outer limits of their range. Already their fire was becoming more haphazard, falling behind or missing wildly, no longer the close near misses of before.

Then, as if it were timed, like a cruel joke, a punchline delivered moments before we were safe, one of the turbolasers slammed into the *Forward Charge*. A larger ship, hell, even the *Chariot* might have survived, especially with its enhanced shields, but the *Forward Charge* was too small. The turbolaser punched through the shields, shearing its port side blade wing off and sending it into a downward spin, before the ship slammed into a raised craig of stone.

The massive explosion that followed was a death sentence for any crew that survived the impact.

"*Forward Charge!*" I shouted through the comms. "*Forward Charge*, do you copy?! Anyone?! Dammit, respond!"

The silence through the comms was devastating.

Not thirty seconds later, we made it out of the fleet's range, and not long after that, we pulled up and out of the planet's atmosphere. Far in the distance, we could see the *Executor*, escorted by a dozen other ships, all of them trying to catch up to us, but it was too late. Not even their TIE fighters could catch up before we jumped to lightspeed.