

Can One Displaced Hero Save a Galaxy?

(Chapters 148-150)

Novus Peregrine

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Chapter 148: The Kashyyyk Maneuver

- Kashyyyk – 55 Days into the Clone Wars-

Kashyyyk was not a world most would think of as soothing.

Indeed, for any but a Wookiee to claim such a thing would likely get looks of concern for your sanity, should the audience hearing the claim actually know anything about the world in question. If the Shadowlands were taken into account, there very well legitimately might not be any other world ever explored that was quite as dangerous. At least when talking about flora and fauna, rather than volcanoes or other catastrophes. Sure, Dathomir might be the home of rancors, Felucia might have dozens of dangerous denizens, Yavin IV might have insect swarms that could strip flesh from bone in seconds, Korriban might be the home to countless Sith horrors that had bred out of control.

Kashyyyk's most likely had *all* of them beat, combined, if you were foolish enough to descend below the upper few layers of the forest.

To those knowledgeable of the Force, a description of the Wookiee homeworld might have sounded like the sort of place you'd expect to be dripping in Dark Side energies. Yet, when such a soul stepped onto the planet for themselves, they would realize the truth. Kashyyyk was *natural*, in a way that worlds like Korriban were not. While the planet had, in the ancient past, been subjected to what amount to a runaway influx of the Force, the resulting world was *balanced* within the Living Force. It was as if someone took nature and the proper cycle of life and simply *amplified* it here on Kashyyyk.

Which was, in fact, incredibly soothing for someone who had recently been bombarded by billions of *unnatural* deaths in the Force.

What had happened on Geonosis wasn't an act of the Dark Side, as the Jedi understood it. Not exactly. The Dark Side was a mindset, rather than a thing of nature. Those who walked *with* the Force, following its will in so much as it had one, allowing it to guide them. They were those who walked in what was sometimes called the Light Side of the Force, but which, in truth, simply represented the Force in its *natural state*. A practitioner of the Dark Side of the Force instead sought to *dominate* the Force, to twist it and use it for unnatural ends. This, at least, was the perspective of the Jedi Order that had raised Aayla'Secura from a small child.

It wasn't even wrong, really. It was just...overly reductive and simplistic. Incomplete, even.

Something she understood now, and which she strongly suspected older versions of the Jedi Order had also properly understood.

The Modern Jedi Order, who had taught her those things, thought almost purely and totally of only the Cosmic Force. Within bounds of that mental construct, they were correct. Yet, the Force was *more* than just the Cosmic energy field that was created by life in general. The Cosmic Force was the *end* result, the *big picture*. Yet, the overall ecosystem was made up of smaller parts. It was here that most Jedi lost the plot, having not been properly taught about the concepts of The Living Force.

Admittedly, the distinction between the two was artificial. It was all one thing, not two separate tiers of power or layers of reality. Yet, for the purpose of a mortal mind being able to conceptualize The Force as a whole, the Living Force distinction served a purpose. The Living Force was all the *little pictures* that made up the *big picture* of the Cosmic Force. A world that became 'Dark' not by the twisting of the Dark Side, but by more natural events like a mass die off or extinction event caused by natural disasters, was not the same thing as one that had been artificially twisted by the machinations of a Dark Side cult.

In truth, Aayla thought someone really should have come up with different names for the two different phenomena. She suspected conflating the two by accident had caused innumerable acts of stupidity throughout history. It was what it was, unfortunately, and she doubted anyone would listen to her if she insisted on calling natural Dark aligned locations 'Dark' and places twisted by cults the 'Stupid Side of the Force,' or something like that. Possibly the 'Cartoonishly Villainous Side of the Force?'

Snorting, lips quirking into a grin at that thought, Aayla came out of her meditation.

She knew, now, that Izuku had been right to send her here ahead of him, for more than just political reasons. Even just a few hours a day spent meditating, in the handful of days since arriving on the planet, had rid Aayla of a stain on her Force presence that she hadn't even been fully aware was there. Like being scrubbed clean after having been dunked in foul waters, or gently washed off after running through smoke in a burning building. The impact of the miasma created by billions of dead on Geonosis had left that stain, but Kashyyyk's incredibly active, yet very neutral presence in the Force was easily washing it away.

Stretching as she stood, she was just in time to pad barefoot to the door of the guest treehome she had Zavra were sharing, opening it before the Wookiee outside could knock. Chewbacca blinked in surprise for only a moment, before chuffing in what Aayla had learned was the Wookiee equivalent of an amused laugh. He growled out the exact question he had for each of the last three days with a toothy smirk.

"You are ready for the war meeting, blue one?"

Nodding serenely, a look spoiled by a grin of her own, Aayla responded.

"I'd say let me just get my shoes, but I'm rather enjoying not needing them! Let's get going, shall we, Mr. Furry?"

Chewie barked with laughter again, even as he gave way, moving toward one of the planet's rare speeders that was waiting for them. Wookiees didn't use them much, preferring animal transport when they needed transport at all, but they *did* have a decent fleet of such speeders around specifically for rapid military movements. Until recent years, that had mostly been chasing down Trandosha raiders, though that had been stomped on hard now that they Wookiees had a decent sized System Defense Force of their own. One that had, in fact, been *blockading* Trandosha since before the war began, due to the asshole lizards using Trade Federation ships to attack Wookiee shuttles in their shared system.

Following her 'local guide' out onto the massive wroshyr tree limb that made up the 'road' here, Aayla reveled in the bark beneath her feet. She hadn't been lying in saying that it was nice to be somewhere where the natives didn't give a single, solitary fuck about what you wore. Understandably, really, what with the Wookiees themselves rarely using more than a belt to hold pouches and weapons. As for Aayla, Twi'lek attire didn't run skimpy *just* for cultural reasons. Their actual species anatomy had adapted to the dual extremes of Ryloth by being very temperature tolerant, and most Twi'leks found too much clothing to be stifling, rather than protective. The armor Mei had designed for her was *less bad* in that respect than pretty much any other armor Aayla had never encountered, but she still hadn't particularly enjoyed being stuck in it constantly for the entire Geonosis campaign.

Which is why she was wearing little more than a vest that could barely contain her boobs and 'pants' that didn't reach her ankles. On a world with a lot of metal or duracrete, she'd have wanted boots too, but on Kashyyyk where every floor tended to be wood, it wasn't necessary. As neat little side effect of having gone through Matukai training that toughened the body, which had incidentally increased her temperature tolerances even more. She could probably literally walk around naked on Hoth if she wanted, at least during the day, though the ice planet was cold enough she'd probably feel it at least a little. The skin weave treatment Zavra had adjusted for all of them had only enhanced her physical toughness even farther, to the point that she was honestly probably tougher than the Wookiees themselves were.

Shaking her head as she climbed into the speeder and it lifted off, with Chewie deftly maneuvering it toward the command center for the System Defense Forces, she engaged him in conversation again.

"So, I assume the Veto-class you *leased* from the League arrived on time last night? I trust there were no problems between our 'training experts' and the Kashyyyk SDF?"

Chewie chuckled again, shaking his head and happily catching her up on the Wookiee side of events. She had, of course, already gotten a report from the 'Advisory Captain' that was present to 'train the Kashyyyk SDF on how to use the gravity well systems.' It was better to make sure she had the viewpoint from both sides, though. The whole thing was a very delicate fiction, after all. Kashyyyk couldn't *openly* invite a League Fleet in without an active emergency. The Republic didn't have anywhere near the political consensus needed to handle a formal alliance with the League just yet, and might not ever given how pissed some planets were about entire sectors defecting to the League.

Meaning they needed to come up with ways to delay an assault fleet long enough for the ‘nearby’ League Fleet to intervene when the time came. The Veto-class cruiser that the Wookiees were ‘leasing’ from the League of Free Stars, was a major component in the plan that they’d worked out. It would be *theoretically* commanded by Kashyyyk SDF officers, but with plenty of ‘trainers’ on hand to really handle the heavy lifting, the careful fiction legally covering for its presence. If what they’d been working on that required the ship worked out even halfway, the CIS fleet was going to be in for a very nasty shock on arrival. One that should provide plenty of delay for the cavalry to arrive.

Hopefully, it worked out as well as planned...

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Zavra cheered as she downed the spicy ale that the Wookiees loved so much, draining it from a proper Wookiee-sized mug of wroshyr wood and thumping it down between her and her opponent. Several Wookiees, who’d gotten over their disbelief after her third such challenger, were cheering on their friend as one of the largest Wookiees she’d ever seen tried to match her mug-for-mug. The informal drinking contest, held after the entire group had finished a hunt for the highly dangerous Katarns in the Shadowlands, had gathered quite a crowd by this point. Most of them were munching on raw or roasted Katarn meat as they watched, the latter seasoned even spicier than the ale. The hunt had gone quite well, bagging not just one, but a trio of the dangerous beasts.

The hunt itself had been super fun! Not to mention a great way for her new buddies, young hunters/warriors all, to blow off some of the tension that was building among the Wookiee forces. Wookiees could be *super* patient in some ways, they *were* long-lived *hunters*, after all. But when it came to a fight, they preferred to get in and get it over with. So the slowly ratcheting tension as the relatively new Kashyyyk SDF faced a certainty that their home would be attacked, without an enemy they could punch in the face immediately, had been causing some problems.

Zavra had known exactly how to deal with that, though! She’d barely had to nudge the officers to rotate the most itchy-fingered recruits off on shore leave, where she’d gotten a hunting party together! Followed by an actual party, of course! It was a bit of a pity that she couldn’t take part in the orgy she could totally feel was going to follow this many young Wookiees with their blood up getting drunk trying to keep up with her, but she was Izuku’s!

Well, she was also Mistress Aayla’s...and there was the fun wine the Wookiees had that acted like an aphrodisiac to most races that were near-human. She was sure Mistress Aayla wouldn’t mind her slipping a little into their dinner tonight! Master had told her to make sure Aayla relaxed some, after all, and there was nothing more relaxing than a couple of dozen orgasms! Yes, that was a good plan. She’d just make off with a bit of that wine a little later. She doubted the Wookiees would mind.

Oh dear, her opponent was looking woozy. Better encourage him to go find someone to have fun with, so he didn’t keep it up and wake up with a three-day hangover that would leave him out of the fighting! She grinned, leaned in to point him towards the female hunter she’d seen him eyeing all night, and purged the alcohol from her system with a combination of her implants and

the Force as she did. She most certainly hadn't told them she wasn't going to cheat, after all, and this was entirely for their own good!

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Severance Tann was a strange mix of irritated and pleased. Irritated because she'd been performing perfectly for her Master, taking world after pathetic world from the Republic fools. While the other crude Generals and Admirals of the Confederacy used brute force and superior numbers to smash their way into the Republic, her Master had used her as a far more intelligent and capable scalpel. There were a great many worlds among those now within CIS controlled space that needed to be captured *without* smashing them flat like a barbarian. They had useful industry or other assets that meant they needed to be cowed without being crushed. Severance had been his tool to do so, her Force abilities as his Dark Acolyte making her far superior to the brutes that got by on mere numbers and crude swarm tactics.

Still, while it was irritating to be pulled away from the highly satisfying task of *breaking* worlds to add to her Master's assets, another part of her was pleased to be given charge of a much larger task. True, the initial major target was seemingly an easy one, with Kashyyyk not having enough of a defense fleet to have any prayer of stopping what she was bringing along. Yet, her Master believed the League would come to Kashyyyk's aid, making the task far thornier. Even if it didn't, there was Umbara beyond Kashyyyk, which was another one of those worlds Master would want *broken to heel* instead of merely battered and gutted. Their technology would be a boon to the CIS war efforts, after all.

Overall, she supposed she was more pleased than irritated. There was a chance she would get a *proper* opponent, after all. Probably not the Sovereign of the League, but perhaps one of his Jedi pets at least. They would provide at least *some* resistance, she was sure, even if they obviously wouldn't be able to match up to her. Yes, this campaign should prove at least somewhat satisfying, even if it had interrupted her breaking another world properly to obedience.

As Severance watched the lines of hyperspace, thinking such thoughts and running scenarios about what she might face, there was an abrupt, brutal warning through the Force. Eyes widening, she opened her mouth to order the fleet to drop out of hyperspace immediately! She was too late, as something *else* ripped them out of hyperspace before she could give the order. Then, for a few minutes, seemingly *everything* was on fire...

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Zavra watched with glee as the trap worked *flawlessly*. Aayla was too high-profile of a figure to have come aboard the *Executive Order*, the Veto-class interdicator 'leased' out to the Wookiees for this ambush. Zavra, on the other hand, wasn't that well known outside the League, and only a bit better known inside it. She was mostly known to the military, not to random citizens, as she'd had nothing at all to do with the political side of the League. Those who did know of her outside the military mostly did so because *everyone* around Master was obviously of interest, and people kept track of who those people were. Without any sort of official position or serious political prominence with the League, Zavra had been able to 'tour' the Veto-class at an opportune moment.

Which was rather important, as the trap wouldn't have worked properly without the sort of timing only a Force user could offer.

Scouts had been keeping track of the CIS Fleet, which was uncomfortably large, since it cruised right through an unresisting Uytter and surprised everyone by splitting. A sizable portion of the massive fleet had shifted down the Lesser Lantillies...but the *majority* had shot down the Randon Run, which had been what they'd been expecting. There weren't any worlds between Uytter and Kashyyyk that had any chance of resistance, so they'd known Kashyyyk was on the proverbial chopping block, and Zavra had rushed to have her 'tour.' A tour in which she had, incidentally and with everyone oh-so-casually looking away, been left standing right near the controls for the primed Gravity Well generators, eyes half closed as she waited for a signal from the Force to power them to full.

Which she'd done just minutes ago, and had gotten the timing perfect, getting a lovely view of the destruction their trap was wrecking on the enemy.

Normally, minefields were a dumb fuck idea in space. Enough so that pretty much no one used them in a serious way. Even the League's use of Sky Mines to interdict worlds was the sort of tactic that cost such a fantastical amount of money that they'd rarely been used throughout history. Even a relatively small planet required *tens of thousands* of mines to get realistically useful coverage, after all, and even the League had only been able to produce them in practical quantities due to the Infinite Engine Seeds. Even then, they only had enough of a stockpile to use them on a few worlds at a time. Some of which they'd quickly repurposed and sold to the Wookiees for a song.

Trying to use such mines *in space itself* was typically an even dumber idea, under almost any normal circumstance.

Space was *vast*, and unless you were trying to do something highly specific and small scale, like protect approaches to a space station, it should be utterly impractical to deploy enough mines for a minefield to make sense. Even if you knew *generally* where someone was entering a system from, that wouldn't be enough. Hell, even if you had an Interdictor like the *Executive Order* to *force* a fleet out of hyperspace, the amount of area you'd have to cover was still impractically obscene. Gravity Well projectors were not *precision* instruments, they were *area of effect* weapons, and the very purpose of their existence meant that said area of effect was *not* small. Using an interdictor with mines *was* practical, barely, but it was the sort of thing that you'd need months of work to prepare in advance. At least if you wanted the mine density thick enough to matter.

Unless, that was, you just so happen to have someone on hand who could use what might as well be magic to bring up the projectors at *exactly* the right moment so that a fleet in transit is pulled *directly* into a much thicker minefield than should be plausible in space. Which, of course, is exactly what Zavra had done just...five minutes and eleven seconds ago. With the aid of the Force, she'd timed the projectors warming up just *perfectly* so that the massive CIS fleet was dropped smack in the middle of the trap they'd been preparing for the last week.

Mines were only one piece of what that fleet had dropped into, albeit a brutally effective piece.

In addition to proximity-based mines, which the Wookiees had ‘purchased as discount’ from the League, dozens of small asteroids and makeshift platforms had been towed into place all around the perimeter of the trap. On or in those asteroids and platforms were *thousands* of sprint-launch concussion missile and proton torpedo tubes. Sourced not from the League this time, but from *Corellia*. The Core world was largely tapped out for large fleet assets it could send to anyone, with too many commitments already. Yet, while even the massively productive Corellian shipyards were unable to produce enough *ships* to help everywhere, minor ship *components* were another matter entirely. The production of missiles, torpedoes, and the tubes to fire both had far outstripped the ability to build the ships that they’d go on.

As such, when the Wookiees had asked not for ships, but for shipments of launch tubes and the weapons to put in them? Corellia had been confused, but happy enough to provide. Meanwhile, as it just so happened, one of the few technology *exports* from Kashyyyk were *targeting systems*, manufactured by a fabrication plant in Thikkiiana City. They were high-quality and somewhat in demand...and there were enough of them in production at any one time that diverting enough to create the trap hadn’t been overly difficult. Quick welding jobs to build slapdash frameworks to anchor the jury rig of targeting systems and missile/torpedo tubes were well within the Wookiees ability to handle.

The result was, frankly, one of the most glorious orgies of destruction that Zavra had ever had the delight to see.

Over 15,000 torpedoes and missiles joined similar numbers of mines in smashing directly into the CIS fleet moments after it emerged from hyperspace, well shy of the Kashyyyk system proper. The fleet’s shields weren’t even up, and dozens of ships just *vanished*, consumed by the massed explosions they were hit with on exiting hyperspace. Of course, this was a *big* fleet, and many of the ships in it were *tough*. While perhaps ten percent of the fleet died instantly, the corpses of those gutted vessels acted as shields for still more ships, which took hits of their own but staggered through. Still other ships, by luck or fate, escaped damage entirely by simply not being targeted, or having arrived outside the target zone. The fleet had been spread out, after all, so not every ship was pulled out of hyperspace directly into the trap.

Still, at least another fifteen percent of the CIS fleet was crippled. The *Executive Order*, Kashyyyk’s SDF, and what Republic allies *had* been able and willing to muster ships to the world did their best to pour salt on the wound with turbolaser fire. They wouldn’t do so for long, the fleet assets available here less than five percent the tonnage of the enemy fleet. Yet, so disoriented and panicked were the enemy that they still got several broadsides in utterly unopposed, before the *Executive Order* lowered its projectors and the defenders hopped into hyperspace, fleeing with pre-calculated hyperspace jumps back into the Kashyyyk system proper.

In total, by the time Severance Tann managed to get her fleet back in order, it would prove that a full twenty seven percent of her massive fleet had been either destroyed or rendered too damaged to even think about fighting. All before even reaching the Kashyyyk system itself. Worse for her, it required almost two full days to make repairs to everything else. By the time she arrived at

her target, an 'emergency request for aid' would see a large fleet of League warships waiting to slug it out with her.

Who knows, this had worked well enough that maybe, someday, they'd called it the Kashyyk Maneuver...

Chapter 149: Smashing a Fork

- Onderon – 57 Days into the Clone Wars-

Mace Windu had been pleasantly surprised by what their scouts had been reporting. It wasn't all good news, of course. Avenelle, Nazzri, and Vena were all three now under Confederate control. In truth, however, that meant very little. Avenelle was a luxurious retirement world more than anything, and the CIS had accepted their surrender easily, the higher ups of the Confederacy no doubt more interested in having it intact than damaged. Nazzari and Vena on the other hand were isolationist in the extreme, to the point neither were actually Republic worlds at all, and thus there had been no question about throwing away assets trying to defend them. No one had any idea what was happening to them now but, even if the logic was cold, they had chosen that fate for themselves.

A modest-sized siege force had also broken off to Porus Vida, but that honestly wasn't particularly concerning. If not for the fact it wasn't directly on the hyperlane, and for the opportunity the ambush they were setting at Onderon represented, Porus Vida would likely have been their choice of where to stand their ground. The world was ancient, having been part of the Republic since before even the Idecta Era, and had suffered enough conflicts in its day that it had very potent planetary shields and significant ground-based defenses. It didn't have much of a fleet due to the Reformations, but it was one world that would require an actual proper siege for the Confederacy to take. As such Porus Vida had been instructed to bring up those defenses and simply wait and was more than capable of looking after itself for now. Honestly, the fact that the enemy had broken off a dozen Lucrehulks and support elements to siege it was icing on the cake, as it weakened the fleet walking into their trap.

A fleet that was *much* less worrying than they'd feared. Early reports of the sheer scale of the force assembled had been *concerning*, to say the least. Yet odds that would have been overwhelming enough to force a fallback option, one that involved running off with the King and having Bonteri pretend to *really* go over to the CIS, had been pared away when the initial fleet split. Mind you, the fact that the *larger* portion of that massive fleet had jumped down the Randon Run toward Kashyyk wasn't exactly *great* news, but it wasn't the worst. Quiet, unofficial talks with the Wookiees had reassured that the Council's own hopes the League would intervene in that particular fight were accurate.

Who would win over that world, Mace didn't know. Frankly, though, the forces he was expecting the League of Free Stars to be able to commit there were stronger than anything the Republic could have scrounged up. Again, applying cold logic that he wasn't a fan of, even a failed outcome there would likely batter the CIS fleet badly enough that a smaller Republic relief fleet might be able to stop their advance at either Umbara or Zeltron.

All of which meant that their own situation was looking far less dire than they'd feared.

On his side of the field, he had a mix of Jedi, Republic, and local forces. Forty of the Army of Light's Katanna IIs, twenty of their Hammerheads, thirty Consular-class refits, and enough extra carrier capacity to support an extra eighty squadrons of Blades, in addition to the one hundred and sixty aboard the capital ships. On the Republic side, he had a single Mandator II, six Maelstrom-class battlecruisers and three dozen Venators as a core, all practically fresh from Kuat's yards. In lighter ships, they hadn't been as lucky, but had managed to scrounge up a mismatch of three dozen frigates of various kinds and quite a few hastily upgraded CR-90s. Not from Corellian Yards, but from various defense forces that were scrambling to upgrade anything that could be turned into a warship.

Thankfully, *lighter* warships that were a bit more worthy of being called such was actually something Onderon itself was able to field, to help thicken the uncomfortably light screen for the heavier ships. Much to pretty much everyone's surprise, Onderon had somehow purchased a full two dozen Munifex IIs from the League of Free Stars. Alongside them were three times that number of the *military* model of the Defender II. Which made it clear that, for whatever odd reason, the League had chosen to invest in Onderon by letting them buy something normally only provided for a shortlist of their closest allies.

However that had happened, Mace was glad to have the ships, just as he was glad to have a ragtag bunch of privateers and modified freighters that were the first fruits of one of Bail Organa's initiatives. Specifically, one that gave pardons for certain types of past crimes, for smugglers and pirates that fought for the Republic in its hour of need. He wasn't exactly going to count on them for great courage, but the plan they'd come up with didn't require such from them. There were over *four hundred* such ships, all of which had *at least* one capital missile platform now welded on, and which were hiding in the shadow of Dxun. They were there to create a nasty surprise when they were sprung and then were *fully expected* to hightail it out system. The Vulture swarms might well catch *some* of them, but his own forces had enough fighters that it was unlikely their enemy would focus on the running freighters.

The only *visible* ships were those of the locals, of course. Which was part of the plan.

As for what was coming for them...it was still an uncomfortable 'weight of metal' as one of the more experienced Jedi who'd fought in the Hutt Crusade had called it. A useful term, honestly, as the wildly disparate types of ships used by everyone on every side made measuring by tonnage or total expected firepower both more honest measurements than ship counts in many ways. Something evidenced by what they were facing.

The heaviest units the Separatists were bringing here were six Providence-class battleships. Which, despite technically being *smaller* than the Lucrehulks, were proper warships rather than refits. Said Lucrehulks were, of course, the worrying core of the CIS fleet, with a full sixty of them remaining despite diversions elsewhere. Alongside them were eighty Munificent-class cruisers, and a hundred and twenty of the poorly-armed Diamond-class corvettes that Mace was frankly not concerned with.

It was a sizable force. One that, frankly and bluntly put, outmatched them in both tonnage and throw weight. If not for the fact this was a *trap*, it would be an unwise engagement. Since it was a trap, with the CIS Fleet hopefully expecting to waltz right into a *friendly* system after a 'local coup' 'replaced the King,' they expected the fight to be fairly even. Not easy, and it was very possible they would still lose, but the CIS was going to be mauled badly, assuming secrecy had held. Given that, even now, that very coup was *actually taking place*, with the members of it besides Bonteri unaware that the whole thing was now as charade...hopefully it *had* held.

It should have, since there had been a comms blackout on his fleet as well. But the truth remained to be seen in...twelve minutes now, by their best estimate. Embracing the Force, Mace readied himself for action. This would be his first true fleet engagement, and he was determined to prove equal to the task.

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- Kashyyyk – 59 Days into the Clone Wars-

Izuku's expression was a little bit grim as he floated, watching the CIS fleet drop into the outer system. Only Zavra was present in the *Miruko's* Battle Meditation chamber with him, with Aayla still acting in the role of an informal ambassador and command link with the Kashyyyk SDF. Which meant that only Zavra was there to see his grimace, though she also understood the cause of it. Frankly, her own expression was a bit unhappy as well, as she took in the total picture. Even if she wasn't really a Fleet commander, she'd experienced more of war than virtually anyone alive at this point, including being present for quite a lot of Fleet engagements both in her far and recent pasts. It was she that broke the silence, with the fleet comm currently turned off.

"Damn. We were hoping to get more of their fleet than that...or that the fleet would be smaller. This is going to be ugly."

Izuku nodded, not responding verbally to the entirely-to-obvious statement, even as he assessed what the computers were putting together about the opposing fleet. A full dozen Providence-class battleships were only the tip of the problem, with 117 Lucrehulks and 185 Munificent-class cruisers backing them up. There was almost nothing lighter than that, whatever corvette or frigate screen that'd had likely brutalized by the ambush, given there were barely 30 of the former and less than 20 of the latter. A chink in any major fleet's armor that, unfortunately, was less important with a Confederate fleet due to their massive Vulture Swarms being an exceptionally good stand in as a screening element.

If he had the same Fleet he'd taken to Geonosis, this wouldn't be *too* bad. There, he'd had six *Miruko*-class ships and thirty Paladins, plus another sixty Volitions and hundreds of smaller support frigates and corvettes. The *Miruko's* massively outgunned anything the CIS had, short of their small number of Subjugators, and even just three of them could likely take all twelve of those Providences without much risk. Meanwhile, they already knew from experience that a Paladin could utterly wreck the day of a Lucrehulk refit before it could even get in range to fire back. Realistically, with two to one odds in favor of a Lucrehulk pair, the Paladin would still almost certainly come out on top. Even a Volition had a serious chance of 1 v 1ing a Lucrehulk, assuming it

had enough support to keep the Vulture swarm off of it, simply because the *Lucrehulks* were as much carriers as they were battleships.

The problem, of course, is that Randon hadn't had six *Mirukos* to bring to the fight. The League just flat out didn't have enough of their Star Dreadnaughts to go around, even if it was the one class of ship they had more of than anyone else. Even if you scoured the Republic and lied through your teeth to call Mandator Is a real Star Dreadnaught, it was improbable you could find enough such modern and hyperspace capable vessels to match the 147 *Mirukos* currently in service. The last two of those being the first two from brand new construction after the war started, and just off their shakedown cruise at the moment. Yet, even with having more Star Dreadnaughts than anyone else, the League was now stretched to cover nearly 9,000 star systems as well.

That might only be a fraction of even the CIS in total, which was currently estimated to have bulked up to around 80,000 systems since the start of the war. Yet more worlds inside the space it controlled fell or bent the proverbial knee every day, so that number was still growing. The Republic, meanwhile, still had ten times *that* number. Though the raw numbers were not a great indication of economic power, with groups like the Trade Federation, Techno Union, and Commerce Guild making sure that circumstances were a bit more dire than raw numbers indicated. With the League being the smallest faction that arguably had a piece in this war, the brutal truth was that the CIS had almost as many *Lucrehulks* as the League had *frigates*. Let alone heavier capital ships.

The League was no longer expanding at all, as they were holding all the territory they realistically *could*, at least while maintaining a strategic reserve and retaining a percentage of the fleet for offensive action. Major fleets were anchored down to Tythe, Naboo, Dac, Jabiim, Charros IV, and Mon Gazza. Smaller but still critical fleets were holding Daalang, Charra, Nexus Ortai, Rishi, and several other nodal systems besides. Add in commitments in ships needed to protect 'core' League worlds from any chance of raiding, cover the various shipyards, and even chase down the Hives that had gotten off Geonosis into worlds within League space...

They hadn't been able to gather up a fleet of the same size as had been present at Geonosis to Randon. They were just too thinly stretched with other commitments.

There were only two *Mirukos* here in Kashyyyk, one of them the *Miruko* herself. His flagship had only barely managed to reach Randon before the call to defend their ally had come, having needed some TLC after Geonosis. Izuku himself had only been able to catch up only due to the completion of the Randon Gate. He also only had twenty Paladins, not the thirty he'd had at Geonosis, since those couldn't pass through the Jump Gates. Though, thanks to the last-minute completion of the Jump Gate, they *had* managed to shuffle in extra Volitions and smaller ships to stiffen the fleet up after they'd gotten word just how massive the CIS attack force was. Which meant he did have 71 of the Volition-class, and over 200 Siege-class frigates.

Even so, and despite the losses the enemy had taken and the damage visible on some of their ships, the overall weight of fire was definitively on the CIS side this time. Though, of course, the League's usual tech edge would help to some degree. As would the fact that they were *not* the only ones to come to the Wookiee's defense. Izuku had been pleasantly surprised to discover Umbara had decided not to be stupid, the usually isolationist world getting the firm idea that

‘fighting over *someone else’s* planet is preferable to fighting over *ours*.’ They knew they were the next in line after Kashyyyk, and had sent forty squadrons of their Zenuas-33 starfighters. Which were, frankly, quite possibly one of the only starfighters in the galaxy that could match Heroes, Sidekicks, and the new Jedi Blades.

They weren’t the only ones to send help, either. The Wookiees were well-liked by quite a few species, and a fair few had sent what they could to bolster the Kashyyyk SDF. Mostly, it was corvettes, frigates, and gunships, along with quite a few armed freighters and starfighters. All of which Izuku was grateful for, since the League flat out couldn’t have brought enough fighter capacity to equal the *quarter of a million* Vultures the enemy was likely to put out. Despite having brought as much as they could, and despite the help from Umbara and others, they were absolutely going to be outnumbered badly on the starfighter front. Though, of course, pretty much every fighter on their side was better than a Vulture. Likewise, the League’s point defense systems against fighters were much better than most, with only the Lucrehulks possibly being of near-similar quality and coverage.

The Wookiees themselves were hardly unarmed either. The League had been selling them additional military model Defender IIs cheap for years, beyond those originally given as rewards after the Crusade ended. Better yet, in the run up the Clone Wars, they had also started selling them some of their surplus Munifex IIs. They’d also even, very quietly, let the Wookiees buy up some of the capital ship hulls recovered from the Hutt mothball fleets. The Wookiees, industrious as they were, had actually managed to overhaul and upgrade a quartet of old Centurion-class ships, the venerable battlecruisers *absolutely* nothing to sneeze at. The Kashyyyk SDF was, at this point, absolutely nothing to sneeze at...against numbers that were a bit more sane than the CIS was throwing around, at least.

Despite it all, it was bluntly obvious to *everyone* that the League had brought more to the fight than everyone else on the Wookiees’ side combined, including the SDF. Unfortunately, Izuku was very much afraid that it might not be enough. Doubly so since Zavra had warned him there was apparently a Dark Side user leading this fleet, who might very well try to disrupt his Battle Meditation. Something that he’d never had to deal with before.

Still. Not every fight could be one you were certain of winning, and this one needed to be fought either way. He was just afraid it was going t-

“Uh, Master? The *Knight Errant* is here, and her captain is asking for a private comm channel. Apparently, they have a prototype refit aboard that Rana had added to the ship in a hurry? That they think you need to know about *now*?”

Izuku blinked, swearing her felt the Force exude *smug* for a moment, and waved a command to accept the call, curious what the heck this was about...

... ..

- Onderon – The Same Day the Attack on Kashyyyk -

Mace had a grim smile on his face as he held a half-meditation, using the rest of his attention to listen in on the exchanges happening between the local system defense force and an

acerbic asshole calling himself 'General Grievous.' Something about the voice was giving him *bad* feelings in the Force, which is part of why he was half-meditating. Yet whoever he was, he apparently wasn't immune to a truism Jedi Knight Tinni had shared with him. Something he'd picked up during the Crusade from a young but talented commander named Raoul Courvosier.

Surprise is what happens when an enemy has seen something all along, but thought it was something else entirely.

The bit of tactical wisdom had stuck with Knight Tinni, and it had resonated with Mace too, given how he could apply the same line of thought to more personal forms of combat. When fighting with a lightsaber, it was very rare for your opponent *not to see the lightsaber*. They are *glowing swords*, after all. Making them believe it won't be where they think it will, or hit where they think it will hit, was a big part of every combat form. Applied then, to the tactical and strategic level in a fleet battle...show the enemy exactly what they are *expecting* to see, and that's what they will see.

This General Grievous was *expecting to see* a system that had already flipped loyalties in a successful coup. So that's precisely what they'd shown him. The man was competent, without question. He'd still brought his fleet into the inner system in good order and with shields up. Yet, it was obvious from the feel of the Force and the irritation in his voice that he was already looking *forward*, toward the next conquest. Better yet, he hadn't seen the need to launch his Vultures or send any sort of scout forward. Scouts that might well have noticed the ragtag fleet hiding behind Dxun, or the larger Republic fleet hugging the other side of Onderon itself as a shield from sensors.

Of course, even if he'd spotted those two, he still wouldn't have seen Mace and the Jedi units, as they were in the outer system, preparing for a Force assisted micro-jump that would put them right *behind* the CIS fleet. A fleet that was *just about* in range for the first strike. Right about...*NOW*.

"Executing Sucker Punch!"

The voice was that of Knight Mano, another Crusade veteran handling the auxiliary forces. Mace, with a tactical view from her fight, watched tensely as the ragtag fleet swung around Dxun at the *exact same time* Knight Tinni brought the Republic fleet swinging around Onderon...and in a bit of cerography that was only possible with a lot of preplanning and leaning on the Force, both forces pincer the CIS fleet between them as they opened fire with *thousands* of total missile and proton torpedo tubes, many of them modified or custom built to fire in 'sprint' mode. A mode of fire that allowed them to empty their entire magazine in under twenty seconds, using sustained targeting data rather than re-acquiring loc-on for each bird.

One instant, General Grievous was faced with a boring handover of a world that had switched sides.

The next he had over 36,000 missiles and torpedoes, aimed with passive targeting data provided by the defense forces and refined over the hour it had taken the fleet to move in, unloading on his ships.

To give the man credit, he responded with inhuman reflexes almost equal to that of a Jedi, barking out defensive commands before the comms to the local SDF could even be cut. They were the *right* commands, too, as far as Mace could tell. Yet, as fast as the *General* was, the largely *droid* fleet using none-too-bright B1 naval droids wasn't *nearly* as fast to respond. Thus, for the first wave of that incredible salvo, only the automated point defense systems of the Lucrehulks specifically responded at all, and they only knocked down a fraction of that wave, since it wasn't even targeted on them. The remaining missiles and torpedoes, over 3,000 just in that first wave alone, hammered into the six Providence-class battleships, and their shield folded like wet tissue paper under a lightsaber.

Not a single one of those battleships was still intact enough to fight by the time the second wave finished, and every wave from the third on focused on the Lucrehulks instead. Individual ships were targeted by as many as 200 missiles and torpedoes per wave, and there were a total of *sixteen* waves. Though only the first eight were of a size with the first, with the smaller racks on the freighters running dry even as the true capital ship tubes among the Republic force had twice the magazine capacity. The freighters all started bugging out the instant their tubes were empty, which was both fine and what they'd been ordered to do.

Meanwhile, just as the Republic ships came into turbolaser range...

"Execute Ramrod."

...Mace Windu gave the order that had his own fleet jumping in *directly* behind the ravaged CIS force. When they blinked out of hyper from the jump, they found less than 20 of the Lurcehulks still capable of fighting back, and adrenaline surged through Mace's veins as he began to call out targets. He wanted those ships *dead* before they had a chance to launch their Vultures in full, something they were already trying to do as the droid fighters streamed out of launch bays. They had a chance to actually drown the *CIS* in superior numbers of fighters right now as both their own and the Republic's launched, and he wasn't going to waste that.

Curiously, he noted that a flight of non-Vulture fighters had launched from somewhere and was already breaking away, fleeing the battle. A whisper of the force had him send a squadron to chase them, but something told him they wouldn't succeed. Why, exactly, it was important to try and catch just four Belbullab-22 starfighters he wasn't sure. He also didn't have time to contemplate it as his mind was fully drawn into the battle. The ambush had taken them from the underdogs in numbers to having the dominate hand, but he wouldn't allow any more lives to be spent here than absolutely required.

Not just because they would be needed for other battles, but because it was the right thing to do...

... ..

- Kashyyyk -

Izuku watched with calculation as the CIS fleet charged through the particle beams of the Mirukos and Paladins. He'd taken his fleet out to meet the enemy specifically so that he could reverse course and draw out the amount of time where their ships couldn't properly bring him to

battle due to the range difference with those weapons. Not with the capital ships, anyway. There was an orgy of destruction going on in the space between the fleets, as his own fighters and lighter screening elements dueling to keep the Vulture swarms back. It wasn't *entirely* working, but League ships had better point defense than essentially anything else in space. Meaning that the Vultures that did get through weren't doing a lot of damage.

He could *feel* the rage and frustration of the enemy commander at that fact, that the only way she could currently engage him was failing. Of course, that wouldn't last much longer. Kashyyyk didn't have a planetary shield, so they didn't dare let the CIS fleet into ranges where it could start either bombardment or landing operations. There was only another minute or two before he'd have to turn and charge, but the engagement so far had already cost the enemy commander four of her Providence-class and eleven Lucrehulks. Not all of them destroyed, only one of the Providence and three of the Lucrehulks had died outright, the others simply peeling off and retreating after taking too much damage from concentrated particle beam volleys.

More importantly, he was fairly certain the enemy commander was convinced this was a conventional, if frustrating, engagement. She *had* tried to disrupt his Battle Meditation, and had partially succeeded, managing to at least *limit* the amount of it he could use. At least, she *thought* she had. In reality, Zavra had shielded him from most of her efforts and he'd simply pulled back on the amount used as another way to fool her into doing what he wanted.

Which, as it happened, was for her to stumble face-first into Rana's little surprise.

Seriously, if he wasn't already half-drowning in beautiful girls, he could have kissed the woman.

"All Captains, prepare to execute Phase Shift. Repeat, prepare for execution of Phase Shift."

The order, spoken into the command channel, got verbal acknowledgments from the most senior captains, the ones in charge of entire divisions of ships. Other captains simply flipped the switch that colored their ships as ready on the Battle Board being displayed before him, and they were all satisfyingly smooth. Even the non-League forces, though admittedly such was partially because he was leaning harder on *those* with what Battle Mediation he *was* using, than he was on his own people. Another minute passed, then two, and then the range to the planet fell too far to keep retreating safely.

"Execute Phase Shift. Repeat, Execute Phase Shift."

With so many non-League elements, he'd needed to keep his plans simple, but Phase Shift was just that, simple. It marked the point where they shifted from a defensive, withdrawing formation, into an offensive spearpoint aimed at the center of the CIS fleet. Given they were still outgunned, it should have been a *slightly* questionable decision, but not enough of one to worry their enemy, as it looked like another relatively conventional maneuver.

In truth, it would have been exactly that if the *Knight Errant* wasn't hanging in the shadow of a Paladin, the *Valiant Promise*, ready to set off its little surprise.

Once Phase Shift was fully completed, their own fleet began *accelerating* toward the CIS, several Paladins acting as spear tips to form up around. The most critical of those, however, was the *Vaillant*, being 'guarded' by the *Knight Errant*. In truth, it was the other way around, the Paladin prepared to dedicate a lot of its own defensive fire to making sure the *Knight Errant* wasn't hammered despite being near the front. The fleets were closing quickly, with both accelerating towards each other, and any moment now they'd be in range for more traditional weapons. Yet, before that...Rana's little surprise had just a *little bit* more range than most turbolaser fire.

"Knight Errant. Fire."

The command was calm, but the results were not.

The Knight Errant had been slowly and subtly charging the Omni-cannon it had been fitted with. Its power requirements were enormous...but as it fired, the reason for that was made perfectly clear. The shot lanced out, targeting the Providence-class Zavra had identified as carrying the Dark Sider, and as it struck, said ship *came apart*.

The most important thing, however, was that the *beam hadn't stopped*. Instead of a single shot, the Omni-cannon was firing a *stream*, with rippling waves of energy building all around the *Knight Errant*. A beat passed, then two, three, four, the waves *contracted*, the beam flared...and the damage *propagated*. Impossibly, the next half dozen nearest ships to the Providence-class that had just been obliterated experienced their *own* spontaneous, unplanned, deconstruction. Something that sent a stutter of disbelief and panic through the enemy in Izuku's mind.

Disbelief and panic that he *pounced* on.

The Dark Side commander had *died* with her ship and crippled the command structure of the CIS fleet in doing so. With panic on their mind from the display, Izuku ruthlessly pressed in with the 'discourage the enemy' side of Battle Meditation, which wasn't usually his focus. Now, as he bore down on the enemy's collective will...captains began to break. Orders were snapped and individual ships pulled away from the CIS battle line, breaking ranks and protective fields of fire.

It happened at the worst possible time, just as both sides found the range and began pounding each other. One side was abruptly completely unfocused and poorly led, the other bolstered with Battle Mediation to make every combined fire plan work flawlessly. More CIS ships started exploding, and *more started panicking and fleeing*, farther breaking down the enemy formation. Izuku's captains barely needed him at this point to know what to do, targeting isolated ships and pounding them to scrap, spreading the panic even farther.

What had been a battle rapidly became a rout.

Not that they were going to be allowed to escape, of course. After all, even if the prototype Omni-cannon could only fire once before slagging itself, it had done its job breaking them, and Izuku had a pair of Veto-class ships to keep the enemy ships from getting away. A few smaller vessels might escape, but the rest...their options were surrender or death. As more and more began to strike their engines and choose surrender, his lips curved into a bloodless smile. Not for the deaths or the destruction of his enemies, but at the thought of the reactions to his plans for afterwards.

He wondered what the Wookiees were going to think when he offered most of those ships to them as prizes to bolster the Kashyyyk SDF with? The League would take what the Wookiees couldn't, having converted a number of surviving Lucrehulks from the Crusades fully into carriers which were quite useful. But the Wookiees SDF would have as many of them as they thought they could repair and crew. One way or another, he was quite sure the reactions of the rest of the Republic would be entertaining. Particularly those of Trandosha. Somehow, he thought Wookiee hunting was going to rapidly become a dying practice...

Chapter 150: The Party

Izuku was incredibly relieved that Wookiee parties just flat out didn't lean *fancy*. Well, not what the *rest of the galaxy* seemed to think of as fancy at least. Admittedly, there was a certain degree of primordial *ostentation* to the ceremony he was currently taking part in. The stage, such as it was, was set in a large outdoor plaza made by encouraging massive branches of the great trees to grow together in one spot. There was a huge, carefully contained, bonfire to the back of King Grakchawwaa and several thousand Wookiees in attendance, along with representatives of every group that had come to Kashyyyk's aid. The King was as 'dressed up' as any Wookiee Izuku had ever seen...which meant a fancy headdress, sash, necklace, and staff.

That was it.

Even those, from what he'd been able to pick up, were partially signs of personal accomplishments. The headdress and staff were part of his position, but the sash and necklace of polished bones were both the results of specific feats. The sort that required a hunter to descend deep into the Shadowlands and hunt things that normally *hunted you*. As demonstrated by the fact that Zavra now wore a similar necklace of her own...which only held *one* fang from a Katarn that she'd personally slain solo. The fact that the King's necklace had easily thirty such prizes, *and* others Izuku didn't recognize, said a lot about just how skilled a hunter the Wookiee had been in his younger days.

There was also the beating, almost thrumming, of wood-and-skin drums, along with the drink that was being ceremonially passed out by Wookiees too young to participate in battle. Yet, it was still far less *stuffy* than the formal celebrations of most species, and the King had barely spoken before letting a storyteller stand to tell the tale of the 'Great Hunt.'

The old and greying Wookiee storyteller was impressively skilled as a narrator, and didn't shy away from giving credit to the League, the Umbara, or their other allies. Yet, the telling wasn't at all sycophantic either. The storyteller did a fantastic job of weaving the contributions of everyone from the Wookiee engineers to the starfighter pilots into one overarching tale. He even mentioned a few standout individuals (such as one starfighter pilot who'd racked up a truly impressive 29 kills in the battle) by name, regardless of which group they'd been with.

It was also, with great expertise, kept *concise* enough that the narration ended when the last Wookiee hunters and guests received the potent brew Izuku now had in his hands. The humans and others present had all been warned ahead of the ceremony to be *careful* with the stuff, as it was considered a strong drink by *Wookiee* standards. Still, as the King stood and declared a 'drink

of victory and remembrance,' he didn't hesitate. Though he *did* lean on the Force the moment the brew passed his lips, to keep his head from swimming or his body from instinctively hacking at the *burn* in his throat.

A few humans present couldn't manage, but only got chuffs of laughter and 'gentle' claps on the back from the Wookiees nearest them. A couple of other species hadn't even tried, having scanned the stuff and determined it to be potentially *lethal* to them. But that too had been accounted for, with the Wookiees having provided a more mild and non-alcoholic juice normally given to their young. Which might have been an insult from some species, but from the Wookiees was just an acknowledgement that not everyone was quite as naturally...robust...as they were.

The drums picked up a new beat after the toast was done, ending the brief ceremony. The Wookiees cheered and quickly broke up to prove that they *really* knew how to throw a party. Pleased that he and Zavra weren't immediately swarmed, treated with respect but hardly fawned over, Izuku led the way to meet up with Aayla. She'd been seated in a different part of the huge circle, with the command staff from Kashyyyk SDF, since she'd worked with them from the start, including being one of those who helped come up with the trap used initially against the CIS fleet.

Then, it was time to take his loves *dancing*. Given how *vigorous* the Wookiees were in that activity, it was probably a good thing that all three of them had gone through the Matukai training by this point...

... ..

- Lemon Starts Here -

Aayla moaned as she was pressed breast-to-breast with Zavra in the barely-hidden nook of the wroshyr tree, just a level below the main plaza of the city. Zavra, already completely and unabashedly nude, groped half-mindlessly at the loincloth that was somehow all Aayla had left of her own outfit, even the thong below it already ripped away and tossed into the depths of the forest. The loincloth lost the fight, following after the thong, even as Izuku's cock pressed into her ass, his lips kissing their way up Aayla's sensitive lekku, even as her nipple piercings taunted her with a low vibration.

Distantly, in the *very* small part of her brain that was still working, Aayla blamed the Wookiees for the fact that they hadn't even made it back to their guest treehome.

Not that she *really* minded, getting a bit of a charge out of the fact they were practically out in the open. Still, she *might* have been a little bit more prone to propriety...if it weren't for the fact that she was an empath and she could feel at least four or five Wookiee couples within her current range doing exactly what the three of them were up to. Such wasn't the *norm* for Wookiees, who usually kept such things private, but large-scale parties were an exception. The primal nature of Wookiee celebrations tended to draw at least the younger Wookiees into a fervor, causing them to pair off in the nearby forest. Given tonight was likely the largest party they'd had in *centuries*, it wasn't exactly surprising that it had happened tonight.

Which had been a *slight* issue, if not exactly an unpleasant one, since *both* Aayla and Izuku were true empaths. Zavra, of course, was just a cheerful nymphomaniac, so the fact she hadn't

been affected by the bleed over as more and more amorous Wookiees paired off hadn't mattered much. In fact, she'd actively egged both of them on, and only been encouraged to push still more when Izuku's resolve had broken and he'd started playing with Zavra's implants...and Aayla's piercings.

While they hadn't had nearly as many chances to play with them as she would have liked, her piercings had been created based on Zavra's own, meaning they had a micro vibrator and a temperature unit in them. She did only have them in her nipples, along with a single stud in her tongue, as they hadn't quite been able to figure out how to make the clit piercings work with her anatomy. Yet, the nipple piercings alone were certainly enough to have done the job of getting Aayla *very* worked up as they danced, ate, and danced some more. Things had gotten a bit *hazy* after a while, and Aayla was half certain she'd lost her top in a Wookiee mosh pit, mostly by accident.

Which hadn't really *stopped* her. The Wookiees didn't give a damn if she was topless, and she'd been too far too aroused by that point to care about the handful of other outsiders that might see.

Now, she was far enough gone that she shuddered through her first climax of the night when Zavra abruptly speared her pussy with two fingers and began to thrust. She barely kept a howl from her lips, which were thankfully captured by the other woman a moment later, a kiss helping silence her sounds of pleasure as those fingers continued to ruthlessly pump. She felt Zavra herself shudder a moment later, vaguely aware it must mean Izuku had finally let her cum after teasing her far more aggressively, with many more options, than he had with Aayla.

There was a very brief moment of confusion that ran through her brain a minute or so later when Zavra removed her fingers and they traveled *farther*. Then she was moaning again as they sunk into her ass, spreading her natural lube to her rear entrance. That was enough for her to realize just why Izuku hadn't pounded her into the tree yet, and a thrill shot up her spine. Anal might not be her first choice normally, but it was still something she'd come to enjoy, particularly with the number of times it had been her only penetration option while in chastity of some flavor. Even if that wasn't the case now, and she hoped she was going to get reamed properly sooner or later, she certainly didn't resist as the fingers prepared her.

Nor, of course, did she do anything more than moan into Zavra's mouth as her fingers were replaced by Izuku's thick cock. He was harsher, rougher than usual, likely driven on by the primal nature of the Force on Kashyyyk and the Wookiees fucking nearby, but Aayla was absolutely here for it. As he speed up and Zavra squirmed, disengaging to slide down Aayla's body and put her extra-long tongue to use somewhere more fun, Aayla lost any remaining thought of restraint.

Thankfully, one Twi'lek's very loud and lewd moans wouldn't stand out all that much compared to the noise of several Wookiees that were building up their own heads of steam not too far away. After all, Wookiee mating practices were a very *vigorous* affair...

- Lemon Ends Here -

... ..

The morning after the celebrations for the successful defense of Kashyyyk, Izuku, Aayla, and Zavra were lounging around the guest treehome Aayla and Zavra had been granted. Breakfast was a hearty porridge-like food, made with local berries and wyyyschokk eggs, that all three quite enjoyed. Aayla the most of all, of course, as the mixture was somewhat spicy and appealed to Twi'lek tastebuds as a result. Still, it wasn't *overly* strong, and even the modest bowls of it they were eating were super-dense with calories to help them recover from their night of...*enthusiastic exertions*.

Of course, despite the relaxed atmosphere, they weren't being lazy, all three of them having tablets in front of them they were idly skimming for a daily briefing as they ate. Which, as all three of them began to finish up their breakfast, caused a contemplative hum from Izuku that caught the other two's attention. He, of course, had a somewhat more *exhaustive* briefing than either of the girls, though Asora and Lieutenant Baskil had it well organized for him, as always. Baskil being his latest aide from the military side, with Trotter having long ago been promoted for the good work he'd done during the Crusade.

"Well now, this *is* interesting. It seems the Republic has finally gotten its house in order well enough to want a proper Summit with the League, and Organa is cagey enough that he's suggested using Kashyyyk as a semi-neutral meeting place to hold it."

Even as the girls perked up at that idea, more Aayla than Zavra admittedly, Izuku considered the idea carefully. After running it through his best mental analysis, he had to admit that the timing and location were most likely the best they were ever likely to get. They'd already heard about the Republic victory at Onderon, smashing the other prong of the fleet that had been thrusting coreward. It had been just as lopsided in the Republic's favor as the Kashyyyk battle had been, giving an offsetting victory to help make it look like the Republic wasn't coming to the League from a position of weakness.

Meanwhile, Kashyyyk itself was still loyal to the Republic, and a number of Republic worlds *had* sent reinforcements or material aid to the Wookiees. Such as all those torpedo launchers and missile systems that the Corellians had provided. At the same time, the Wookiees were on extremely good terms with the League of Free Stars. Likely the one Republic world closest to them now, with Naboo and Abrion Major having switched loyalties to the League during the opening days of the war. Add in how honorable the Wookiees were known to be, and it was just about the closest thing to Neutral Ground that could be had, shy of a deserted world out somewhere in wildspace.

"You know they are going to want to talk about all those worlds that have been rushing to join the League, right? The only reason there hasn't been a major backlash from that so far is because of how badly they needed our help."

The question had come from Aayla and raised the primary issue. At the end of the day, by the time this conflict was over, assuming the Republic won, they would likely badly outnumber the League. Enough so that they might be able to take *issue* with the fact that several thousand worlds had 'illegally' left the Republic in favor of League protection, with more still signing on in a steady stream. The League *wasn't* expanding any farther at this point. It realistically couldn't.

Yet they only actually had the loyalty of perhaps a third of the worlds within the newer space they were currently holding. As the reality of the situation and the generous terms of the League settled in, more of the worlds currently enjoying *accidental* protection within that space were starting to convert too. If *every* world within their current area of control flipped, the 9,000 worlds the League currently, properly, controlled would easily triple. There was some...*question*...as to whether any version of the Republic would ever tolerate a near 30,000 world polity as a neighbor. Particularly when three quarters of those worlds had once been part of the Republic itself.

Still, Izuku shrugged. It was a bit of an *uncomfortable* shrug, as what he had to say on the subject wasn't exactly something he knew everyone would be comfortable hearing. Not even Aayla. Were Padmé and Sabé present, he might not even have voiced the thought aloud at all, but Aayla was a realist, at least. Sabé was too, to be fair, but Padmé was not and Sabé was more loyal to Padmé than Izuku.

"Frankly, love, the Republic isn't all that much better than the CIS. Honestly, if not for the whole *Sith* thing, I might even be inclined to wash my hands of this conflict entirely and say the Republic was getting what it deserved. While groups like the Techno Union are scum...other Megacorps like Kuat aren't honestly that much better and many of the Core Worlds are actively *worse*. Kuat Drive Yards, for example, was all in on this war, just like the CIS, planning from the start to make a fortune war profiteering. This isn't like the Crusade, with a clear evil and enemy. *Both* sides are pretty scummy, and the *majority* of the worlds in the CIS had genuine reasons to rebel for their treatment."

Aayla's expression was pained. Tellingly, however, she didn't actually try to protest. Instead, she took a slightly different track.

"I understand what you're getting at, Izu. That just *letting the Republic* force the new League worlds back would be genuinely wrong. But is that stance even something we can *get away with*? I mean, if the CIS loses, a lot of those worlds are going to be desperate to join the League instead of going back to the Republic. I kinda can't see the Republic allowing *that*, and right now we're kinda a threat to them, in that sense?"

Izuku scowled. Frankly, he'd prefer it if that was *exactly* what happened. The Republic had shit all over the Outer Rim, and a goodly chunk of the Mid Rim too. If they took back all the CIS worlds, it was entirely too probable that they'd punish those worlds harshly for 'treason,' possibly outright stripping them of any voice at all. At the same time, Aayla had a point. As much as part of him *screamed to force* justice and fairness on the galaxy...there were limits. Even the Hutt Crusade had been a near-unbelievable achievement. The results of which had yet to last the test of time.

"I...the *League* might be willing to make treaty concessions. Not for any world within the borders we've established, but a formalized treaty not to allow any additional worlds *outside* that zone to join us. In exchange for recognition that those we've already accepted or will accept within our current area of control had or have the right to leave the Republic to become part of the League. With the carrot for the Republic being not just tentative mutual defense, but serious military aid against the CIS. Possibly some free trade agreements and technology exchange too, if additional carrots are needed."

Aayla's expression was *complex* as she nodded. Understanding, agreement, and dismay all mixed. Not just on her face, but in the movements of her lekku and the emotions wafting off her through the Force. Zavra, being Zavra, simply grinned and put in her own two credits.

“Or, hear me out here! Master can declare another Crusade! I'm sure we can take enough of the CIS before they go down to declare you Emperor of at least *half* the galaxy! Which would stop them from being able to do anything about it, since they don't have the resources or *balls* to pick that big of a fight!”

Even Aayla snorted at the expression of *horror* on Izuku's face at the idea of being placed in charge of so much of the galaxy. He didn't even want the job he had now! Saying as much aloud broke the tension as both of his lovers giggled. Which, he thought forlornly to himself, didn't change the fact that the Summit he was near-certainly going to be agree to might just be an...unpleasant...affair.

Well, needs must when the galaxy was intent on burning itself down around your ears...

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