

The meeting room closest to the intelligence hub on the *Fury* was about half full by the time we had all gathered together. Those attending ranged from leaders of the ground teams to ship captains, as well as Ahsoka, Tatnia, and myself and the rest of my crew. Mara was there as well, still standing back but paying close attention. Sheora showed up not long after we had, carrying a datapad she linked up to the central holoprojector. She immediately launched into her presentation, the ex-Rebel having long ago dispensed with flowery introductions.

"Right. So, unfortunately, our usual resource, that is to say the Rebellion's intelligence service, was not exactly a treasure trove of information," She said, tapping on her datapad and bringing up an image. "That said, we managed to scrape together a good profile. This is Thaan Bercha. Fifty-four, Corellian, and current crime lord of Trelia Seven, a terrestrial moon in orbit around Trelia, a gas giant."

The image was of Thaan, or so I assumed. He was just starting to show his age, unsurprising given the average human lifespan in Star Wars. He had a thinning hairline, a pot belly, and a thick scar that ran along from his ear all the way to his lips, where it knotted and gnarled.

"He cuts a distinct figure, and he walks with a limp, so he shouldn't be hard to identify," she continued. "He is also a bit on the paranoid side, so his security is a bit on the high side."

Thaan's image shrank, and five more appeared, each showing a Mandalorian. All of them were wearing a decent amount of beskar, though it was far from a full covering.

"These are his primary bodyguards, they stick to him like glue," She explained. "You find him, and they are almost guaranteed to be close by. Do not underestimate them."

"My father used to be part of that group," Vaz admitted, her claws ticking against the table. "When he adopted me, he started growing a conscience. Eventually, he got sick of working for Thaan as a bodyguard and as an executioner."

"That's not the type of job you can just quit," Tatnia pointed out with a frown, Vaz nodding in agreement. "You learn too many secrets."

"Is that when he was killed?" I asked, looking between the two.

"No, my father escaped, gave Thaan that scar and his limp in the process," Vaz responded. "He took me, and we got off planet. But his 'friends' came looking for him. He was the best of them, but he couldn't fight off five of them. I wanted revenge but... I didn't do any better. I was sent to that hellhole we escaped from."

"Well, now you can get a little payoff," I said, reaching out to pat Vaz on the shoulder. "Just don't go off the rails, we do this as a team."

She nodded, and after a moment, we focused back on Sheora, who had been waiting patiently.

"Well, that brush with death made Thaan even more paranoid than he was before," she said. "But I'm pretty sure that you can handle anything they have. He does a lot of trade with off-planet contacts, but his influence is planetary only. He doesn't even have his own fleet."

"Does the planet?" Ahsoka asked. "Any defensive fleets?"

"It does, but only a few corvettes and two squadrons of starfighters," Sheora responded. "Nothing that could stand up to any of our fleets."

"... Where is this planet?" I asked with a frown. "Is there no Imperial presence?"

"It's along the line of the outer and mid rim. The planet isn't poor, but it's not nearly important enough for the Empire to consider it worth protecting," Sheora responded. "They might stop by occasionally, but they never go down to the planet. We won't have to worry much about that."

"And we are sure he is worth the time?" Tatnia asked, giving Vaz an apologetic look. "I'm all for payback, but we do need money rather soon."

"On his own, Thaan wouldn't be worth going after at all," Sheora admitted. "But his main source of income makes him a good target. Most of his money is made by using his resources to harbor smugglers and as a stash and safe haven."

"So he is a glorified underling?" Julius asked. "Pretends to have real power, but it all really comes from the people he is working 'for'"

"In name, no. But in function, more or less. He does have a considerable amount of power on the planet, and he does more or less run the criminal underworld there. But most of his success is due to the payments and resources he has received."

"But he is worth robbing?" I asked, wanting confirmation

"Him specifically, probably not," She revealed. "He likely has some things worth taking and selling, and he likely has credits stored away. But the real prize comes from what the Hutts and other groups are having him hold. We should be able to find a considerable amount of equipment, materials, and more worth a sizeable amount."

"So what, we blast in, kill Thaan, and steal whatever of the contraband he has tucked away?" Julius asked. "How do we keep his underlings from raiding all of them?"

We were silent for a moment, each of us considering the idea. Blitzkrieg raids were something we were good at, but they did limit our options for looting, especially when our target is as spread out as a criminal underground.

"Why do we have to blast in?" Mara asked eventually, everyone turning to look at her. "Thaan is a criminal... why not talk to the authorities? Offer to kill him, tear down a bunch of his infrastructure in a controlled way, and in exchange, we get to take his money and the contraband."

"That's... a solid idea," Tatnia admitted, nodding as she considered the concept. "Considering who owns it, the government would be happy to advertise that someone else had taken everything, to keep Hutts and other criminals coming to them demanding they return it."

"Plus, they will likely have a significant amount of information stored about him," Sheora added. "Territories, manpower, properties, hideouts, all of which could be useful for us."

"We could even sweeten the deal a bit, offer some starfighter to add to their defense force," I pointed out. "We have a full squadron of headhunters at this point, they are decent starfighters."

"That's a heavy price," Ahsoka pointed out with a frown. "Why bribe them like that?"

"Because, if Thaan controls the underworld as much as he claims to, then he will have ears all over the place," I explained. "If we are going to work through the government, then keeping it quiet until we are ready is key. Otherwise, Thaan will go to ground and hide all the good stuff."

"Then we need to reach out to their government," Sheora said with a nod. "I will find out how, and hand it off to you, Admiral."

"I'll be waiting," I nodded, leaning back in my chair. "In the meantime, have your people put together some information on the Hutts and others that he deals with. It might give us clues to whose stash is worth going after."

Sheora nodded, and not long after, the meeting broke up, with everyone going about their separate ways. Mara followed after Tatnia, Ahsoka, and me, and as we got into the hall, I gave her a thumbs up.

"Good job with that idea," I praised with a nod. "What made you think of that?"

"Well, I... guess I'm used to having the local governments work with me when I'm on a mission," She responded, looking a bit sheepish. "Not trying to bring them to the table didn't make sense to me."

"Well, either way, you likely made this easier and more profitable," I said with a smile. "Well done, I'm glad you spoke up."

The longer I worked closely with the Mara, the more I was glad that we got her out of the Empire's service when we did. She was clearly less jaded, and while she had slight confidence issues that her non-existent older version would have strongly disliked, this version had a lighter conscience that I'm sure she would have appreciated. Only time would tell what she would go on to do, but I was looking forward to being a part of it.

It took another day before Sheora was able to find a way for me to contact the planetary governor of Trelia Seven. He took my call from his office, while I was on the bridge of the *Fury*, as it had the most powerful communication gear from all of our ships.

Sitting on the throne like captain's chair was also a hell of a way to make a first impression.

The call connected, and after a moment, an older [Keshiri](#) male appeared, standing behind a large desk, his arms folded behind him. He had pale purple skin and a grey streak of hair that ran up from his temple in a curve around his head.

"Admiral Deacon, I was told that you had a business proposal?" He said, his tone leaving no room for nonsense. "I must admit, I am familiar with your work, and I am intrigued by what you might have to offer my planet."

"Governor Ludus, thank you for taking my call," I said, giving him a slight nod. "We do have a business proposal of sorts. If you are familiar with our group, then you might be familiar with our business model. Most of our profits are made by taking from pirates, raiders, slavers, and other groups."

"I am aware," He said, offering no elaboration or effort to continue the conversation.

"Good," I responded, rather quickly deciding to dispose of any fancy words in favor of getting to the point. "Our proposal is to work with your government to eliminate Thaan Bercha and dismantle a chunk of his criminal enterprise."

"Why?" he asked, an eyebrow raised slightly.

"Targeting large criminal kingpins, if you have the resources and ability, can be quite profitable," I explained. "Your planet is being used as a galactic storage facility for several large-scale smuggling corporations, and Thaan Bercha is making money hand over fist, while your population suffers from his success."

The purple-skinned humanoid was silent, peering back at me with an intense look. His gaze was unmoving, and I resisted the temptation to look away, as that was likely exactly what he wanted me to do.

"How would you do this?" he asked simply.

"Targeted raids by several combat teams that specialize in urban combat," I explained easily. "We would hit as many targets as we could at once, cutting off the head and burning as much of the body as possible."

"And what exactly would this cost us?"

"Absolutely nothing. In fact, I am prepared to offer an incentive, a squadron of modern [Z-95 headhunters](#)," I responded. "To add to your existing defense force."

"And how would you be deriving a profit from this venture?" He asked, not buying my statement for a second. "I am quite aware you do not run a charity."

"Ah, and there is the compromise," I said with a nod. "We would like to have unrestricted access to the smuggler stashes, equipment, or ships recovered during our mission. As well as the assets of Thaan, personal or tied to his business."

"And property?"

"Feel free to absorb that when we are done clearing it of anything valuable."

Again, the man went silent, studying my face carefully. I was beginning to get nervous internally when he finally nodded.

"I tentatively agree to this concept, but while I may govern this planet, I do not run every aspect," He explained. "There are several people who must be informed that you will have to meet with."

"As long as I can determine their loyalty before revealing the truth to them," I countered.

"As long as it does not permanently harm them, physically or emotionally."

"Of course," I agreed with a nod.

"How will you arrive at Trelia Seven?"

"Our fleet will station itself a short jump away from the planet for emergency support, but my people will arrive stealthily," I explained, leaving our method purposely vague. "I will arrive and make contact with you so that I can meet the necessary people."

The plan was to hire civilian transports and arrive piecemeal over the span of a week. I would go first, along with Ahsoka and Mara, while the rest of my teams would arrive later in pairs and small groups. For this mission, as the clones would attract attention, Vi Galti's team, made up of ten of her people and eight Jedi, would be swapping places with Commander Frost's. We would also be borrowing the second half of Clan Galti's warriors, though they would be deployed separately from Vi's team. That was a group of sixteen Mandalorians.

On top of all that, we were bringing three teams of beskar-armed BX units, but they would stay with the fleet, moving closer when the mission was ready. They would be ready for rapid deployment, but their targets would be less critical as there would likely be a few-minute delay. They would be the cleanup crew for our main focus points. We would focus on our target and any valuable resources, while they claim and clear less interesting locations.

It was going to be a significant project getting everyone on the planet and ready, but keeping them a secret, even from the governor, would allow us some leeway even if the plan was uncovered. Plus, I had no real reason to trust that the governor wasn't working with him, or being bribed. Hell, I at least partially considered the idea that they were the same person, but the fact that they were different species, that possibility was smashed.

"Very well, I look forward to meeting you in a week's time," he said with a nod. "Until then, I will not reveal your arrival."

"I am looking forward to it as well," I said with a nod, before Governor Ludus nodded back and cut the call, the holoprojector going dark.

"Hmm... I like him," I said, turning to look at Ahsoka and Tatnia, who were both standing down on the crew level, out of range of the holoprojector. "Gotta appreciate a politician who gets right to the chase."

"It's like finding a [corusca gem](#) in a junk yard," Tatnia added, getting a chuckle out of me. "Let's just hope that he isn't on the take."

"If he is, he will regret betraying us," I said with a frown, shrugging after a moment. "Our ships will be in position to pull us out with prejudice if they try anything funny. Now come on, we need to get moving. The quicker we start moving in, the less likely it is that our plan is discovered."