

While we spent a few hours brainstorming ideas on how to approach our newest mission, it became clear that three weeks, plus travel time, was far enough away for us to take our time figuring out the best way to approach it. Despite my many claims that I was fine, I was still clearly struggling to let go of our previous mission. Thankfully, Ahsoka immediately picked up on the fact that I was overcompensating, and quickly shifted the meeting from mission planning to a briefing on the mission concept. When the meeting was over and everyone was given the information so we could start developing ideas, Ahsoka took me home, telling Tatnia and several others that I was taking a few days off.

I didn't need much convincing, to be honest, and allowed her to take me home and drag me into a day or so of unwinding.

"You have the outline of a plan, now it's being spread among your people," she pointed out as we relaxed on our couch. "They know what they are doing, they've done dozens of these together at this point. Let them do their jobs, we can formulate one cohesive plan later."

"Yeah, I know," I said, letting out a long breath. "I just need a minute to get past the stress and anxiety. I know my people can handle themselves, I just can't..."

"Can't stop thinking that you're the reason they were in danger in the first place?" Ahsoka guessed, frowning when I nodded. "I know that feeling, it's not something that you can just place to the side, especially because it's true, you are the reason people are there."

I looked up at Ahsoka, and she reached out, running her hand along my cheek.

"You've brought together all of these people, gotten everyone working together to strive for something new and exciting," she explained, her eyes locked on mine. "I know sometimes you lack background understanding about stuff like this, but a settlement thriving like Vercopa has, growing so quickly, supported by the fleet, with everyone working together, happily cooperating... I've never seen anything like this, Deacon. Just the fact that you have Jedi and Mandalorians sharing space, happily working with each other, is beyond astounding."

"I didn't do it by myself-"

"But you get to shoulder the blame for putting people in danger?" She asked, raising an eyebrow as she caught me out. "Either you're the only one responsible, so it's your fault, or free will exists and this has been a collaborative effort, with people working together to achieve your dream, *voluntarily*."

I couldn't help but chuckle, shaking my head, leaning back on the comfortable couch. She, of course, was right, but logic hardly counted for much in things like these. Still, her words helped, and I smiled, putting my arm around her shoulders.

"Thank you, Cinnamon," I said, leaning over to kiss her cheek. "I will work through it, it's just gonna take time. "

She nodded, patting my chest as she leaned against me. After a few minutes, she shifted a bit, and when I looked over, she looked like she had chewed a lemon.

"So, not to put more on your plate, du d'bhem, but there is something we do need to talk about," She said, wincing as she caught my eyes. "So, you might remember that when we saved Vi, I disarmed Gideon?"

I tilted my head as I replayed the scene in my mind. After watching for a moment, my eyes went wide.

"Oh shit," I cursed.

"Yup."

"We have the [Darksaber](#)," I said, letting out a long breath. "Where is it?"

"One of the treasure vaults on the *Fury*," She responded, shaking her head. "It didn't feel right carrying it on my hip, especially with Mandalorians around who would definitely be able to identify it on sight."

"Fuck..." I cursed, rubbing my face and nodding. "That's a good call, though Vi must know you have it."

"You know, technically..."

"No, absolutely not," I said, shaking my head.

"I might have disarmed him, but that doesn't really count," She pointed out. "You're the one who killed him. So technically it's yours."

"Ahoksa, the only reason I would pick up that stupid sword is to throw it into the sun," I said, shaking my head. "There is no way I'm keeping that thing on me. Not only would it stir up pointless crap, but it runs counter to everything I've said to Vi and Corvak. Leadership through possession of an artifact is just about the dumbest way to rule that exists!"

She chuckled, nodding in agreement, putting her head back on my shoulder.

"I agree, I was only teasing you. Though we do need to figure out what to do with it," she continued. "It's too important to their people to lock in a vault."

"I think that's exactly what we should do," I countered. "It represents a bloody line of succession that favors violence instead of competency. Seriously, between this and their mask, it's better left gone."

"Do you think Vi would agree with that?"

"I think she would appreciate knowing that it's somewhere safe," I pointed out. "And she agreed to join and give up that kind of stuff. I doubt she is going to try to snag it to become Mandalore. I'll need to tell her to keep it to herself, otherwise, it will make a huge target on our

backs. I really don't want to have to kill [Bo-Katan Kryze](#) because she rushes in and tries to claim it and ends up hurting my people."

"She wouldn't attack us first, not when I'm publicly part of your group," Ahsoka assured me. "We worked together to push Maul off of Mandalore. We are friends, allies even."

"I didn't know that," I admitted with a frown. "Should we reach out to her?"

"Absolutely not," she said, shaking her head. "Bo-Katan might share some idea about Mandalorians having the potential to be more, but she would never accept giving up on Mandalore itself. She wouldn't submit to anyone else but a Mandalorian leader, either, preferably herself. I'm actually a bit surprised she hasn't reached out to confirm we are treating her people well."

I nodded in understanding, and both of us were quiet for a while. After a few minutes of just enjoying each other's presence, I leaned over and kissed Ahsoka's cheek before slowly standing up and stretching.

"I'm going to invite the crew, including Miru and Calima, for a casual dinner," I said. "It's been a while since we've gotten together without a mission hanging over us, and if we have weeks before we have to move for that mission, now seems like a good time."

"Cooking or take out?" She asked, trying to hide her preference for the former.

"If you go shopping, I'll make you whatever you want," I said with a smirk.

"Deal!"

Ahsoka gave me her own quick kiss, before we both started getting ready. She quickly asked for pizza, which I absolutely should have seen coming. After agreeing, she left to gather the ingredients, and I began calling people.

The night turned into a casual evening in, with the crew plus Miru, as well as Corvak and his wife, Noori. Their baby girl, Vina, was as cute as ever and stayed mostly happy throughout the get-together. I shared the pizza recipe with Noori, as they both seemed to love it.

The impromptu get-together continued pretty late, though Noori left early with Vina. It wasn't anything extraordinary, just some time to catch up with friends. I did take the opportunity to warn them that, since we had a critical mission scheduled that we couldn't afford to miss, I would likely be holding all missions until after, just to ensure we had every asset available. I intended to engage this mission with just about every piece we could, besides maybe the *Fury*, as being taken away again would cause some serious effects on the local economy and supplies.

The following morning, I left the central city and headed out to the prison island. Construction on the facility was completed, including several small homes that resembled cottages on the surface. These were intended for a variety of people, from Jedi who were concerned they were going dark to those who were living on the island as a means of hiding. At

some point, if she ever fully recanted her Imperial ties and passed my lie-detecting test, Mara Jade would be moved to one. It was something I hadn't brought up, one because I didn't want it to look like I was holding it over her head, but also because she was just as likely to find that a curse as she was a reward.

Someone like Mara was no good at not doing things. She was already starting to harbor some ill will toward what she had gone through under the Emperor's yoke, and while she hadn't completely recanted, I could tell that when she finally did, her first question would be how she could help. Unfortunately, letting her out of Ysalmiri range was not an option, not with her connection to the Force being a beacon to Palpy.

I spent a few hours visiting with the young woman, mostly talking about the latest happenings, both news from around the galaxy and what was happening closer to home. She had what appeared to be actual sympathy for the death of our people, something I took as a good sign. It was clear by now that while the Emperor's training had attempted to crush her into a heartless assassin and wetworks specialist, she still retained her empathy, strained and repressed as it was under Palpy's command.

After spending some time with the young woman, who seemed to be doing well and was making progress with her counselor, I headed back to the *Fury*, though we didn't stop there for long. Instead, we made a quick jump to a nearby system, where our fuel production facilities were located. There, orbiting a large sun was a gas giant, one with a convenient moon orbiting around it, which made the perfect base for our mostly automated systems.

Essentially, you had the facility, and next door was a sealed base where those assigned to monitor the facility stayed. This worked fine for the most part, since even things like repairs were mainly automated. Unfortunately, it did make the initial installation more difficult and expensive, something we were aware of as the new fuel production lanes, transports, and collectors were being installed.

So far, all of our newly acquired facilities were on the moon, but only two new lanes had been started.

"They have just about the same level of automation as the sets we purchased," The lead of the control facility reported, as we stood in the main observation room, overlooking the growing plant. "With just five more personnel, we will be able to monitor the entire addition. Of course, that means more droids, but we got most of what we need from the plant's storage, so we only need the list I provided."

"What sort of increase are we looking at?" I asked, glancing down at the datapad he had passed me, which I would hand off directly to Finder, the Skyforged head quartermaster.

"Around a hundred and twenty percent," he recited, his leku twitching in what I was certain was excitement. "Even better, we can start producing better quality gas for our blasters as well, running the refinement through the smaller production lines."

"That's going to require some conversion, but the power and shot count increase will be worth it," I accepted with a smirk. "Fantastic news, I look forward to starting shooting different colors."

"What color depends on how much time you would like to spend converting it," the lead explained. "We could easily do orange or purple, and either would be a noticeable increase in power. We could also push for green."

"I assume green would be the best?" I asked, looking over at the Twi'lek.

"Yes, and it's cleaner, meaning less wear on our weapons," He explained, before adding. "It would require our collectors to go deeper, as well as some specific equipment..."

"How much?"

"For one small production lane, which is more than enough to supply all our blasters, it will likely take thirty to forty thousand credits," he explained. "Further, as we have never filled our own blaster packs before, we will need infrastructure to do that as well."

"And that would cost?"

"I'm afraid I do not know, I've never been part of that process, only creating the gas itself," he explained. "I have some contacts who might be interested in assisting us, or the hiring division can find someone on their own. Either way, an expert would know more."

We talked a bit more about the idea, amending the list of requested assets on the datapad he had handed me. I wanted my people to have the best weapons they could, and that included firing the best ammunition. It would likely be a lengthy process to convert everyone to the new system, even after production was up and running, but we had the time.

The trip took a total of three days, leaving us with another two weeks before it was time to head out on our next mission. As I had told my own crew, all outgoing missions were now on hold, so that we could collate all our available assets and prepare for the attack.

Of course, we did not spend the two weeks idly. The combat teams spent a considerable amount of time training, running drills, and conducting maneuvers. Clan Galti was happy to join us, even though they were still wearing their classic Mandalorian gear. Getting them armored up would take a lot of beskar, but thankfully, they were happy to assist in that. When they joined us, they brought several massive pallets of beskar, all of which had been stolen during our raid on the deep space storage facility. Or, rather, stolen back from the Empire.

Now, I refused to take Mandalorian beskar and make our armor with it, as I wanted there to be no confusion on who it belonged to. So, rather than letting the beskar sit and collect dust, they began selling it, or offering to sell it at least, to any Mandalorian who could provide a quantity of precious metals. Even better, the more we liked who they took the metal from, the more they would get for what they brought. Steal it from some random bank? They might get one ingot of beskar for every three ingots of metal. Steal it from slavers, hutts, or the Imperials, even in a roundabout way, they would get considerably more bang for their buck.

By the time our two weeks were up, we had only had a few bites, but once word got out, I was sure that would change. It was... more than a bit of a run around just to get more metal to turn back into beskar, but both Corvak and Vi clearly appreciated that I wanted Mandalorian beskar to stay in Mandalorian hands.

I just didn't want to give any outsiders a way to complain.

By the second half of the last week, everything was more or less already set. We were holding off on our final briefing, which would be a significant event considering the number of people involved. 4th Group had returned from their mission, having somehow secured a ten-million-credit paycheck from the Rebellion, as well as a five-million-credit addition to their debt. Unfortunately, I couldn't sit in on the debriefing, but I was looking forward to hearing about it from Sabine or Ezra eventually.

When our downtime was finally up, we called the final briefing for the mission, gathering all of the captains and ground team leaders in one of the largest meeting rooms the *Fury* had.