

We settled in for the ride, a trip across the city to where the *Starcaller* was landed. Part of me wondered if Mara had planned some sort of attack, something to convince us that we needed to move as fast as possible, but as we drove, eventually pulling into the ship berth, no such attack took place.

The ride was quiet and tense, but with the worst trouble we faced being a slight bit of traffic along one of the direct routes.

When we arrived, we quickly hurried out of the transports and into the *Starcaller*. Nal quickly jogged ahead, rushing through the ship to the cockpit to start waking up the starship. Meanwhile, the rest of us climbed up into the cargo hold, the mostly empty space a welcome sight. I purposely walked just a bit slower than everyone else, ensuring that Mara and I were the last ones up the ramp. Just before we stepped off the ramp and into the cargo space, I casually tossed Mara's bags to the side, off the ramp and down to the duracrete below. Mara whirled around at the sound of her bags hitting the ground, her eyes widened with fake confusion.

"What are you doing?" She asked, stepping toward me, as if trying to decide if she should focus on me or rush to grab her things. "Why would you do that? Those are my-"

I stepped forward to meet her approach, moving faster than she anticipated. Her eyes went wide, and she reached for her weapon, but before she could, a green bolt of magic hit her stomach, her body locking up as my Paralyze spell did its job, slowly falling backwards. I continued moving forward, catching her as she was falling, lowering her to the ground.

"Sorry, Mara, but you never really stood a chance," I said, shaking my head as I stood back, looking down at her. "We knew what was going on the whole time."

Neither Vaz nor Tatnia hesitated, pulling out their weapons and stunning the younger woman as she lay on the ground. I barely had time to pull away before they did.

Of course, Cal did not react well to the sudden shift, and had his lightsaber and blaster out in a blur of motion that caught me off guard. In almost an instant, the Force Sensitive had his blaster trained on me, and his lightsaber, a pale orange blade, held out to keep Vaz at a distance.

"Cal! It's okay!" Ahsoka said, approaching slowly, her hands out. "She was an Imperial Spy, one trained by Palpy- the Emperor himself."

"What?" He asked, his weapons not moving, but his eyes now looking at Ahsoka. "Why would she be out here like this, looking for help?"

"It was a trap, one set for us," she explained. "We believed that she was attempting to play as a trapped Force Sensitive, one that needed a rescue. She wanted to get inside our organization so she could leak the location of our planet, Nirn."

"So you willingly stepped into the trap?" He asked, sounding sceptical. "If you knew what it was, why bother showing up?"

"Because of you, Cal," I responded, ignoring the blaster trained on me. "One of our Jedi, Casmot Amescoll, had a vision. When you stumbled into the trap, just trying to help, Mara would have taken you as a consolation prize. She would have brought you directly to Grandpa Palpy himself."

That seemed to catch his attention, and I could see the shiver that went up his spine at the idea of being thrown at the feet of such an evil bastard.

"Can you prove it? How do I know *you're* not Imperials?" He asked, looking over at Ahsoka. "I know even the best of us can fall. How can I know you're telling the truth?"

"Well, she is out pretty heavily," Julius pointed out, looking down at the young spy. "We won't be able to ask her anything for a while."

"What if we took off our armor and let you watch it?" I suggested. "We are leaving now, so we don't really need it on, and without armor, you could take us down pretty quick."

"Save for Ahsoka," He pointed. "Not sure I could beat her, especially if she's gone dark."

"Do I feel like I've gone dark?" Ahsoka asked, stepping closer. "Do any of us feel like we would betray you to the Empire?"

"...No, no, you don't," He admitted after a short pause, before nodding at Mara. "But neither does she."

"Which is the only reason she isn't dead," I assured him, shaking my head. "Would make the situation a lot simpler if she were, but... well, let's just say she has potential and leave it at that."

The humming of Cal's lightsaber was the only sound in the room for nearly a minute, before it suddenly cut out and he lowered to, sliding his pistol into its holster.

"Alright, I'll trust you, for now," He said, letting out a long breath.

"I appreciate that," I said with a nod, before looking behind him. "Stand down."

Cal turned around, discovering the five commando droids standing there, their blasters raised and ready to fire. He reached down for his weapons again, only for Ahsoka to step in before he could.

"They are reprogrammed, Cal. They work for us," She explained. "Deacon doesn't believe in playing games unless he can stack the deck."

He eyed the droids, noting that they had lowered and slung their weapons over their backs. After a moment, he nodded, bringing his hands away from his weapons.

"Great, now that we've all calmed down, let's get this part started," I said, clapping my hands. "Tatnia, do me a favor and help Nal get us off the ground. Ahsoka, contact 3rd group and

come up with some sort of timing so we can nail the jump. Vaz, help me move Mara onto a cot. Julus, grab the door, would you?"

We quickly split up, Tatnia heading to the bridge with Ahsoka, while Vaz and I carried Mara to a cot. We then put stuncuffs on her wrists, as well as binders on her legs. I also instructed the commando droids to watch her nonstop, and to stun her if she started to struggle. When we were done, I turned to head to the bridge, wanting to be there when we took off.

"So what happens next?" Cal asked, following after me. "You're calling in reinforcements?"

"More of an escort, just in case Mara had a backup plan waiting for us when we try and leave," I explained. "Not likely at this point, but it's better to cover all bases."

"So after we escape, what happens?"

"Then I'll escort you personally to wherever you want to go," I responded, stopping in the hall, just before the bridge. "If you want to get dropped off on some random planet, we can do that. Hell, in the name of future friendships, I'll even donate a clean starship for you to use as you wish."

"That's.. Generous," He responded, sounding a bit confused. "Why would you go that far?"

"Because, Cal, we are all in this together," I explained, putting my hand on his shoulder. "I was given a task by one of the surviving Jedi Masters, before he passed, to help the remaining Jedi and Force Sensitives survive and thrive. He wanted me to bring everyone together so that we can work towards a better future, out from under the Empire's sway. You're of course more than welcome to come check out our home, but if that's not something you want, then helping you and your group as much as you'll let me is the best I can do."

"I... would like to see your home," He admitted. "If nothing else, it would be nice to see what it would have been like."

"What do you mean?"

"It's... a long story," He explained. "Maybe once we get out of here?"

"Fair enough, we can share stories once we know we are safe," I agreed, nodding towards the bridge. "C'mon, let's grab a front row seat."

When we stepped onto the bridge, Tatnia was sitting in the central pilot's chair, while Ahsoka was at comms and sensors, and Nal was in the co-pilot's seat. Nal and Tatnia were discussing the ship's status while Ahsoka watched her console closely.

"How are we doing?" I asked, catching Tatnia and Ahsoka's attention.

"Ship is ready, just waiting for the countdown," Titania explained. "Running through extra checks while we wait."

"3rd group is set to make a microjump in five minutes. It will take thirty seconds for them to arrive."

"So we are looking to get out of atmo at the thirty-second mark," Tatnia explained. "So take off in three."

I nodded, standing by Tatnia, hand on the back of her chair, mentally counting down. Ahsoka sent a warning through the rest of the ship, and two minutes later, Tatnia lifted off aggressively, orienting the ship upwards before nearly maxing out our thrusters. We climbed fast, pushing through the atmosphere fast enough that our shields dipped slightly.

"Looks like you were right," Ahsoka said, tapping at her console. "About two dozen cruisers just lifted off from the ground to chase us. TIE fighters deployed as well."

"What's their intercept time?"

"One minute," Ahsoka responded. "3rd group arrival should be in thirty seconds. Not even the TIE fighters have any chance to catch up."

"They are just here to chase us out," I explained. "Increase energy to thrusters and focus shielding on our backside."

Almost exactly thirty seconds later, the entirety of 3rd group jumped into the system, with *Hope* and *Forge* both bracketing the fleet. A squadron of MA-wings, escorted by the *Wonder*, our Lancer-class, along with the *Anvil*, our Arquitens, pulled ahead, coming forward to escort us out. As we reached them, they pulled around, flying in formation with us as we pulled away, finally crossing out of the planet's gravity well. With a quick confirmation of our jump coordinates, we made the jump to lightspeed.

"And like that, we are in the clear," I said. "Good job, everyone. What's our time to get to the first jump point?"

"About two hours," Tatnia said, tapping on her console, leaning back in her chair.

"Alright, just enough time to sit around and do nothing," I said with a smirk, Ahsoka chuckling. "How about I cook something quick and easy, and we sit down and unwind a bit?"

That got a few excited comments, and I patted Cal as I passed him, making my way to the small kitchen in the ship's common room. Thankfully, we had some fresh food stocked, and making quick and dirty taco filling was pretty easy. We had to use flat bread as the shell, but it was good, so no one complained.

As we all crammed into the small common room, Cal seemed a little lost, poking at his food while watching all of us casually eat.

"So what, all of this is normal?" He asked after a few minutes. "Save a Jedi from an Imperial planet, escape with a captured spy, a huge fleet of ships comes to escort you out... must be time for dinner?"

"Are you telling me you haven't gone on your own share of adventures?" I looked at him, raising my eyebrow. "You're a Jedi, I doubt you can go a few weeks without doing something crazy."

"It... certainly feels like that sometimes," He admitted, shaking his head. "I guess it's strange to see people just accept it and act casually about it."

"To be fair, this was honestly a bit... simple to get worked up about," Tatnia admitted. "We didn't even get shot at. We jumped before the TIE fighters could get in range. Honestly... it was kind of boring."

"Has... that happened before?" Julius asked, happily making a second taco. "I mean, we usually get chased out by blaster bolts. Or worse."

"I'm not sure," I admitted with a frown. "To be fair, we don't usually go to places that are safe and secure. It's usually pirates, slavers, or Imperial bases."

We continued to eat, eventually finishing off the food, before everyone spread back out through the ship. There were just a few too many people to comfortably hang out in the common area, so after eating, people happily spread out, giving Cal, Ahsoka, and I some privacy.

"So, Cal, you feel up for filling us in?"

The Jedi let out a long sigh, nodding as he leaned back in his seat. We had claimed the small table, with Ahsoka sitting beside me, and Cal on the other side.

"Like I said, it's a long story," he repeated, shaking his head, his voice a little rough as he recalled his past. "A while back, I managed to uncover a planet similar to the one you described, what you called Nirn. It was protected by a nebula, making it almost impossible to navigate safely. We managed to find a solution to that, and wanted to use the planet as the final stop for escaping Jedi, a place where they would be safe from the Empire. It was a beautiful planet, a paradise strong in the Force. There was even an ancient Jedi temple there."

For a moment, an old memory took over Cal's eyes, as if he was seeing the planet again for the first time.

"What happened?" Ahsoka asked gently.

"A friend was forced to betray us," he explained, shaking his head. "We didn't know it at the time, but he had a daughter. She had been taken by the Empire, and he was forced to spy on us, or they would kill her. Eventually, he revealed the path to Tanalorr to the Imperials and... I was forced to kill him. We did rescue his daughter, but it was too late. We barely managed to escape, and we've been running ever since. At first, we ran because we were being chased, but now it's the only way of staying ahead of them."

"Why not try to settle down somewhere in the outer rim?" I asked with a frown. "Set up a small community, maybe on a world that is labeled as inhospitable."

"With what resources?" Cal asked bitterly. "We can barely afford to keep the ships running and everyone fed, how are we supposed to build a community anywhere, least of all the Outer Rim?"

I winced, understanding the problem. With my own need for growth and the desire to give my people every edge I could get them, I worked hard to drive profit in every way I could. Cal and his friends were Jedi, at least at heart, so they didn't have the same instincts for pulling profits from fights as we did. It made sense that it left them struggling to come out on top, their basic needs draining their accounts and cash.

"Well, the easiest way to solve that issue is to join us on Nirn," I offered. "Not only is Nirn hard to navigate to, due to a few different issues, but it also doesn't exist on any starmap I've been able to access. Just a single star system floating in the void. Safe, protected, and alive with the Force, much like how you described Tanalorr."

"... I need to see it first, I can't make a judgment until I see it for myself," he eventually responded. "Then I need to meet my people. I don't make decisions by myself, not anymore."