

I ended up dumping my full mana capacity into Julius three more times before I was comfortable with letting him sit up and move around. His wound had been severe, bad enough that I was pretty sure he sure wouldn't have survived without an immediate dunk in bacta or my help. When I was done, I helped him to his feet, walking with him to sit on the ledge of the window I had been standing at.

"Can I-"

"If it's a question about what I just did, no," I said, cutting him off. "I will answer your questions, but not here. Have a little patience, alright?"

"Yeah. Alright. Okay." He said, seeming to mentally fortify himself. "What do we do now?"

"Now we hope no one called the cops," I said, grabbing my communicator. "Miru, how's it look?"

"...Nothing so far, Boss, Racer says there isn't any activity in your area," She responded after a moment. "I'll keep you in the loop."

"Rodger that," I confirmed before switching my comm connection to Nal. "See any movement from up there, Nal?"

"Negative," He responded. "There were some people peeking out windows when the shooting stopped, but none anymore."

"Alright, do another scan around and then join us. Leave the MVR where it is, we can pick it up after we are done."

A quick confirmation from Nal and I hung up, shifting my attention to Tatnia.

"Tat, I'm going to do an internal sweep, cover out here and keep an eye on Julius," I said, trying my best to convey that I wanted to keep him from running just as much as anything else.

"Got it, boss," She responded, stepping away from her window. "Stay safe."

I nodded and stepped through the shattered window, charging my full bound armor as I stepped through the window. Since my magic didn't work with something in my hand, I had to let go of my gun and summon one portion after the other, mentally making a note to invest in straps. When I was covered in my faintly glowing light purple armor, I quickly started scanning the room, making sure every gang member was dead, first clearing the first floor before slowly making my way to the stairs. There were two corpses that Tatnia had gotten while I had been taking care of the heavily armed Weequay.

I double-checked that both gang members were definitely dead, before moving on to the second floor. After I climbed over each of them, I checked the second floor, double-checking every corner of the room. One of the people, most likely the first person Nal had targeted since they were still in their bed, was still breathing, though they were clearly passed out from either pain or blood loss. I summoned a dagger and quickly put them out of their misery, stabbing them in the base of their neck, up into their brain.

I let the dagger fade before letting my armor fade as well, heading downstairs again. I spent a minute locating the lights for the garage area, activating them when I finally did. The light was blinding with my night vision goggles, and I cursed in shock as I pulled them off and clipped them to my belt. As I recovered from being blinded, I looked around the garage area, frowning slightly at what I saw.

There were five speeders and an air speeder, just as Julius said. However, they were clearly not very well taken care of. They had been poorly painted, most of them had things welded or even tapped onto them, and even my generally untrained eye could tell that they were definitely in need of some work. The airspeeder was also poorly painted, but it seemed to be in better shape. The paint job, bad as it was, seemed to be newer as well.

I shook my head and looked around the walls of the garage, near the bay doors, finding the controls after a quick scan. I tapped them quickly, the two bay doors opening noisily, causing all of us to wince as the sound echoed down the street. As I stepped out onto the pad, I could see Nal, just as he was crossing the street to join us.

"Alright, Julius, you feel like you could fly a speeder?" I asked, who stood from his spot and nodded.

"Yeah, I can handle that."

"Good. I want you three to go in there and pick the two best-looking bikes. Fly them and the air speeder back to the ship, drop the bikes off, and everyone comes back to pick up the next batch," I explained. "I'm going to start going through everything while you're gone, see if they have anything else worth taking."

"Are you sure, Boss?" Tatnia asked. "I don't like the idea of leaving you here alone..."

"Yeah, if the TPSF starts making moves, Miru will let me know, and if it's something else, I will hoof it to the MVR," I assured her. "I can handle it, now get going, the quicker you leave, the quicker you can come back."

She nodded, albeit with a bit of reluctance, before quickly picking out a speeder bike for herself. Julius had already climbed into the air speeder, powered it up, and was going through several preflight checks to be safe. Nal was last to pick his, but soon all three were zipping out of the garage and heading down the road. I quickly headed back inside and started working on

scavenging the smaller stuff. The first thing I grabbed was the [impressive blaster](#) that had almost killed Julus.

As I scavenged that room, finding a few energy packs for the heavy weapon and a small pouch of credits, I also found a bed pushed into the far back of the room. While most of the gang had been sleeping upstairs, the two that had shot at Julus and I had been sleeping in the office. I probably should have seen that coming.

I quickly went over the rest of the room, piling anything worth taking down in the garage. Between how small the gang had been and how little they cared about their own gear, I wasn't finding much. I did grab a few of the more interesting-looking blasters, as well as a few vibroblades. There was even a vibrosword, which I added to the pile despite the fact that it showed clear signs of being a mall store weapon. By the time the air speeder returned, I had about two dozen things pushed into a pile. It landed in the front pad, and Julus, Tatnia, Nal, and Miru climbed out.

"What is she doing here?" I asked, Miru blowing past me to take a look at the remaining speeder bikes.

"Racer can use the comm just as well as I can," She explained, kneeling by the closest speeder bike. "And Nal was worried a few of these wouldn't be flyable.

"And how would I understand him when he comms me?" I asked, crossing my arms.

Nal, Tatnia, and Miru all froze for half a second. The older two looked annoyed with themselves and a bit wide-eyed while Miru tried to recover.

"Nal can translate for you," She said with a smile.

"And for the ten minutes you were traveling, and Nal was with you? And when we split up again to fly these home?"

"I..."

"You guys put me in charge, I need to know these sorts of things before they happen," I said, giving Nal and Tatnia a look. "Bringing Miru was a good idea, but I would have warned you to bring Racer with you or check to see if Calima can understand droid speak."

Before I could say anything, my comm buzzed before letting out a string of panicked whistles, warbles, and chitters. I clipped my comm and brought it to my mouth, still looking at my three crewmates.

"Racer, one beep for yes, two for no," I said, cutting off more warbles. "Do we need to leave right now?"

When two beeps came through, everyone loosened up slightly before I continued.

"How about in the next five minutes?" I asked, getting a single long whistle, followed by silence.

"Fuck, alright, Miru, keep checking the speeders, Tatnia, Nal, help me load up what I found," I said, quickly grabbing the looted gear, credit bags, and chips. "Julus, keep a lookout."

We quickly got to work, rushing to load everything into the air speeder. I could see Miru quickly working through the remaining speeders, peering into gaps with a flashlight. When we were done loading everything up, I got her attention.

"How do they look?"

"They should last back to the ship," She said, still looking upset about what I had said. "But I can't promise much past that."

"That's fine. Julus, Tatnia, pick a bike, Nal, head back out to the MVR," I said, getting a nod in response. "Miru, you have the air speeder. Everyone, take it slow, stay close to the ground, including you, Miru, you might need to pick someone up if their bike breaks down."

The crew broke apart after my last words, Nal jogging across the street and disappearing into the alleyway, Miru climbing into the air speeder, and the rest of us mounting our bikes. It took me a moment to figure out the controls, but thankfully the basic systems were self-explanatory, at least for my extra knowledge. We lifted off and pulled out of the garage, heading down the road with the air speeder out in front.

After a few tense minutes, Nal pulled up alongside us, catching up quickly since he could push the MVR without worrying about it falling to pieces under him. Ten minutes later, we arrived at the *Chariot*, all of our new speeder bikes sliding into the hangar bay on the port side, and the air speeder landed nearby. We spent fifteen minutes shifting the two tri fighters as far as possible to one side, most of the work getting done by the labor droids, orchestrated by Racer. When enough space was cleared, Nal piloted the airship into the hangar bay before we shut the hangar blast doors.

"Well... Good work, everyone," I said with a smile. "Save for a bit of miscommunication, that went rather well. We are going to stay on alert for a few more hours to make sure nobody catches on, but good work regardless."

As we congratulated each other, I noticed Miru was looking down, so I made my way to her.

"Hey, don't let it eat you up," I said, giving her shoulder a squeeze. "Bringing you on the return trip wasn't a bad idea, it just could have been implemented better."

"Yeah... I just wanted to help."

"You are going to help. We rely on you to keep our gear working," I pointed out. "Without you, our speeders would look like these."

I gestured to the C-PHs that were parked through the large hangar door. She winced, and I chuckled.

"Let's head up to the lounge and unwind a bit. Julius is going to want some questions answered, and you're not starting on those speeders until tomorrow."

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With his adrenaline fading and the experience of almost dying behind him, Julius was surprisingly patient in seeking me out to talk about what he had seen. And by that, I mean he actually managed to wait until we were alone to ask.

"Okay, we're back at the ship. Can you explain now?" He asked.

We were in the forward cargo bay, the rest of the team having already gone up the stairs to the second deck. He had grabbed my arm to get me to hang back, which Tatnia had noticed, prompting her to stop as well.

"Why should I?" I asked. "It's not really any of your business."

"You used it on me to fix a blaster wound that should have absolutely killed me," He pointed out, in a hushed but frustrated tone. "How does that have nothing to do with me?"

"...Fine, come on," I said, gesturing back to the cargo bay.

Both he and Tatnia joined me as I walked to a clear space before charging my armor spell and casting it on myself.

"The truth is, I have a sort of... energy inside myself, and-"

"He is a space wizard," Tatnia said bluntly. "Does all sorts of magic. It's karking insane, crazy, but there it is. Show him the frost spray one."

I rolled my eyes at Tatnia before holding up my hand and casting frostbite, ice magic spraying out and hitting the floor about five feet away. I slide my hand a bit to arc it along the

metal deck, small ice crystals growing from the impact site. I cut off the spell and looked back to Julius. His hand was on one of his pistols, and he was staring at me with wide eyes.

"Wh- Are you a Jedi?" He asked, looking at me like I was about to leap at him.

"No, I don't use the Force," I answered. "And even if I did, the Jedi were a group. Having a connection to the force doesn't automatically make you one."

"Boss, immediately adding that fact does not help people believe that you aren't a Jedi," Tatnia said, shaking her head. "And you do it every time."

"I... Dammit, that's a good point," I said, slapping my forehead and dropping my bound armor spell. "Either way, Julius, I'm not using the Force, this is something different."

"How do you know?"

"How do I..." I said, trailing off when I realized it was actually a decent question. "Because I know what the Force is, even if I'm not connected to it. This isn't it, it's something else."

"What is the Force?"

"The Force is a galaxy-spanning, all-encompassing semi-sentient energy field that allows people who are sensitive to it to tap into its power to do various physics-defying things. It reacts differently to different emotions, and if you lean too far in any direction, you risk becoming an insane rage-driven psycho or an emotionless monk. However, the raging psycho is more likely unless you are actively trying to go the monk route. There is also evidence that it influences the universe on a larger scale, including, but not limited to, allowing people to see glimpses of a future or possible futures."

Both Tatnia and Julius were staring at me with wide eyes, Julius with his mouth hanging open.

"Yeah, now you know why I don't want to be grouped in with them," I said, shaking my head. "A frankly disturbing amount of the galaxy's most terrible events in history happen around, too, or are done by Force users. But that's not important."

I said, stepping closer to the now nervous-looking young man. His hand was no longer on his blaster pistol, but he still looked more than a bit uncomfortable.

"The important bit is that you have a choice."

"And... what is that choice?" He asked, gathering his courage.

"You can either go back to your job as a security guard, back to your normal life... Or you can leave with a space wizard, join his crew and kick ass across the galaxy," I said with a smirk, holding out my hand. "I can't tell you where you will end up, but I can tell you it's going to be one hell of a ride."

For a long moment, he stared at me before looking down at my hand. After a few seconds passed, he took it, giving me a single strong shake.

"I was planning on leaving this planet anyway, it reminds me too much of Zandev," He explained with a small smile. "We used to dream about exploring the galaxy together. The least I could do is make our dream a reality."

"Good to have you then, Julius. Now come on, let's get you a bunk so you can rest for a while," I said, putting my hand on his shoulder and leading him to the stairs. "You can go get your stuff and move in properly tomorrow."