

It took us about twenty minutes to cover the distance back to the dome, primarily because as we got closer, we started being extra careful about not being seen. Luckily, the edge of the dome had a deceptively large ferrocrete lip that ran around the entire circumference. It was easily three times as tall as me and, from what we had seen on the inside, had a six or seven-foot-tall wall around the interior perimeter as well. Once we crossed the rough terrain to the side of the dome, we were hidden by the foundation, which meant all that was left was a simple hike to the landing platforms.

Of course, smooth didn't mean short, and we spent the better part of five hours walking around the foundation for the energy shield-protected city. The masks, while keeping us alive and healthy, made everything even more difficult. Thankfully, between our desire to *finally* get off the planet, and judicious use of the respite spell, we did eventually make it. When we arrived, we took cover in a low berm that was about fifty meters from the closest landing pad, which was empty.

"Okay, so I'm not exactly happy about stealing a random person's livelihood, so if anyone spots an alternative, call it out," I said, looking across the civilian section, watching ships take off and land.

"Then it might be better to take the pilot with us," Tatnia said. "It will make things much more complicated, but when we are done, we can just... let them go?"

"Alright, I like that plan. Let's hope whoever is flying the ship we pick lets us follow it," I said with a nod.

After a few minutes of ship watching, Vaz spotted a [YT-2400](#) coming for a landing at one of the pads closer to us. It landed smoothly, its cockpit coming around to face away from us, its landing gear extending down as it landed. After a few minutes, its cargo elevator and its entry ramp dropped down, a speeder truck coming out to greet it. Over the next fifteen minutes, the ship quickly offloaded its cargo before the elevator started to close, and the truck, now piled with crates and packaged, pulled away. The man stood around for a while before climbing up the entry ramp, which stayed down.

"Alright, guys, let's make it happen," I said, standing up from cover and rushing towards the ship.

We started off at a fast jog, picking up speed as we got closer and closer until we were about fifty meters away.

Which was when a barrage of scarlet laser fire punched through the ship, which detonated into a massive fireball, flinging debris in every direction. As small chunks of the ship landed around us, I whirled around, searching the sky for where the attack had come from.

It wasn't difficult to spot.

A [Lambda-class](#) shuttle had come in from behind us, the sound of its repulsorlifts hidden behind the other ships moving around the spaceport. It was painted black, with a symbol I didn't recognize painted along each of its large wings. For a moment, I froze, unable to do anything. There was nothing we could do, with the weapons of the shuttle aimed at us, we didn't have a chance. My magic couldn't help, and there was no way we could outrun it. If I ran one way while Vaz and Tatnia ran the other...

Despite having us dead to rights, the ship slowly landed, its weapons still tracking us as it settled down, clearly not caring about the designated landing zones. After a moment, the entry ramp extended from just behind the cockpit, a dozen stormtroopers pouring out. They made a beeline towards us, their weapons drawn.

"Run for cover," I said, quickly casting my armor on myself, fully encapsulating myself in its protection.

"What?" Tatnia asked.

"When you get the chance, run for cover. And do *not* shoot at whatever comes out next," I said, tensely waiting as the stormtroopers stopped about thirty feet in front of us, guns raised and focused on us. "Focus on the stormtroopers, do not shoot at anyone with a lightsaber." "*Lightsaber!?*" She asked, a hint of hysterics leaking into her voice. "What about you?"

"Just do it, Nia. Vaz... drag her away if you have to."

Before Tania could respond, another person slowly stepped down the ramp. An [armored figure](#), with plates and pauldrons highlighted with red, with a black-gray helmet that didn't have any obvious space for eye holes, just a smooth black finish. I was torn between relief that it wasn't Darth Vader and very worried when I recognized the general similarities to the Inquisitors. The [discus-like](#) lightsaber on their hip was also a dead giveaway.

They silently made their way closer, stopping just slightly ahead of the stormtroopers. For a moment, everyone was silent, the sound of the spaceport seeming to fall away as we stared each other down.

"Greetings, Deacon, it's nice to finally meet you." A fluttery male voice said from behind the helmet. "I've been tracking you for quite some time now."

"Spotted us on Nar Shaddaa?" I guessed, getting a chuckle in response

"Indeed, though at that point it was merely rumor chasing, a few poor quality videos from distant security cameras," He responded, his hands held behind him, seemingly completely at ease. "Intelligence wrote it off entirely as an interesting use of technology, but nothing special."

"Until the prison break?"

"Precisely," He confirmed. "I spotted the reports of a prisoner throwing around impossible powers and connected it immediately. Not that it particularly mattered. We would have investigated the prison break regardless..."

"Yeah... I figured someone would come looking eventually," I admitted with a shrug. "Didn't think it would be so soon."

"The Imperial Intelligence network is vast and deep," He responded with a subtle shrug. "You managed to catch quite a bit of attention, throwing around abilities and power like you have. Watching your prison escape was very interesting."

"Let me guess, they uploaded the footage off-site as well?"

"Correct! Watching you throw around lighting, summon shades as you did... and all with such control," He said, seemingly genuinely impressed. "Even now, with that interesting full-body shield... I can hardly detect your presence. If I wasn't watching you with my own eyes, I wouldn't have been able to pick you out of a crowd... fascinating. Oh, but let me introduce myself. I am Jago, Fourth Brother of the Inquisitorius."

"... I wish I could say it was good to meet you," I responded.

"Oh, don't be like that, I'm sure there is much we could learn from each other," He said, stepping forward again. "Imagine if we combined our knowledge of the Force. With what I have learned from my training..."

"Was that... are you trying to recruit me? There is no way you were given the go-ahead for that. The Emperor would never willingly let you guys learn what I could do," I responded, continuing when the dark Jedi tensed in reaction to my words. "If the Emperor really wanted me captured, he would have sent more of you to make it easy, not risk it with just one of you..." "

Despite his face being covered, the dark Jedi, or wannabe Sith, was still plainly upset by my guess. Still, to his credit, he recovered almost instantly.

"I came after you alone because I wanted to offer you training. While your skills are impressive, you clearly lack finesse. Become my apprentice, and together we could become powerful enough to kill the Emperor..."

As the dark Jedi talked, the pressure emanating from him continued to rise. It felt dark, twisted and seemed to pulse with anger, which was disturbing and unsettling considering coming from an outside source. It took me a moment to swallow the rising urge to run and respond.

"Really? I mean, how powerful could you really be, your not even the Grand Inquisitor. " I asked, working hard not to flinch when an incredible pressure seemed to double, weighing down on me. "I just want to make sure that you have the proper levels of training to teach me."

"You are mocking me?" He asked, taking one stomping step forward. "Choose your next words carefully, I can just as easily torture your secrets from you as learn them from you willingly."

"So quick to shift from being my teacher to being my torturer," I said, shaking my head. "Your not-"

A blast of formless and invisible force slammed into my chest, driving me back, my feet sliding skidding across the ground. Somehow I managed to stay standing, shocking myself more than anyone else.

"I tire of your insolence. Troopers... kill the two other two. I will handle the upstart force user," He Ordered, clearly not having a high tolerance for mocking. "Prying his secrets from him will be a fun challenge."

I could hear Vaz and Tatnia turning and running, so I stepped to the side, keeping myself between them and the Stormtroopers. The white armored soldiers got a few shots off but, after a moment, ran off to chase my two companions, leaving me and the Inquisitor alone. I could see his head turning to watch them run before looking back at me.

"One last chance. If you beg for forgiveness, I will order them kill your companions quickly."

I raised my hand and rushed at him, my hands glowing as I did, conjuring a sword to my right hand as I cast sparks with my left. I aimed the spell at his chest, the lighting reaching out, only to be blocked by his saber, only one blade out so far. As his red saber caught the spell, I swung my sword down, trying to catch him off guard, only for him to pivot his block and extend the second blade, the saber catching my conjured blade, which shockingly did not disappear when it hit his saber.

The two very different weapons clashed, sending out a noise any Star Wars fan was familiar with, sounding like a hot iron bar on ice, spitting and crackling. There was also a low creaking sound that I hadn't expected, like the sound of rending, tearing metal. I stopped my sparks spell, my hand glowing again before I cast flames, a burst of fire spraying from my hands. The armored Force user attempted to block it as they had the sparks, but as it was just fire, it did nothing to slow the spray. The dark Sith wannabe shouted and pushed me back with a Force-enhanced shove, forcing me to stumble backward.

They quickly stifled the flames that licked up their chest, their armor now stained with scorch around the edges. As they did that, I took a moment to examine my sword. Hitting the

lightsaber had drained a slightly larger amount of mana than just keeping it activated, but I could easily keep it going for a while.

My mana slowly started to tick up, and I used it to conjure up a dagger for my offhand before once again charging the Inquisitor. It was subtle, but they were clearly hesitating when I charged them. The fact that it was because they were used to *chasing* their prey, not defending against it, wasn't hard to figure out.

The armor-clad Force user had just enough time to get into a prepared stance before I was on them again, striking downwards with my sword, following up with a thrust from my dagger. They blocked and struck back, the pressure of their anger palpable. As they lashed out at me, I brought my sword up to block, then my dagger to keep him from pivoting the second blade into my leg.

We fought in a blur, cutting and slashing, blocking and stabbing. It quickly became apparent that while he was a better swordsman, potentially because of the Force given danger sense, I had more flexibility. It became especially apparent when he first managed to hit me, slashing his lightsaber against my arm, only for it to deflect off of my armor, draining its reserve but ultimately doing nothing. I quickly refilled the drain and pressed the attack, trying to take advantage of his shock.

While he might have been better, my conjured armor and my gifted skill with the blade meant I was holding my own and then some.

As we fought, my mana slowly refilled, taking its sweet time as I constantly recharged my bound items. I whirled around, jumped back, and threw my dagger at him, only to dismiss it when he tried to swipe it out of the air with his saber. As he did that, I charged and conjured a flame atronach, holding it back for a second to shoot the spell behind him. He spun around to see the suit of flaming armor, cursing.

"How? What Force magic are you using?" He shouted, seething in rage as he pulled down the dark side. "Wh-"

I directed my atronach to charge him, bum-rushing him as it raised its hand and cast flames at him, forcing him to raise his hand in return and block it with a force barrier. At the same time, I threw an ice spike at him, only for it to shatter when he blocked it with his saber. Despite that, shards of ice still hit him, breaking his focus as the atronach continued to charge him, blasting him with fire before finally slamming into him.

The ominously red lightsaber blade stuck out of the atronach's torso, the Fourth Brother managing to bring his lightsaber around at the last second, plunging it into its stomach. The atronach hung off of the blade, lifeless, prompting the Inquisitor to laugh.

"It seems your constructs are still susceptible to-"

The atronach, destroyed by the lightsaber blade, detonated in a ball of explosive fire while making physical contact with the Inquisitor. The resulting force tossed him back, tumbling and sliding along the ground. His pained scream cut out when he smacked his head on the ground.

I slowly stood up straight, walking over to the Inquisitor's smoking form, kicking him over. A good third of his outfit was burnt off, revealing a light green skin tone underneath. His helmet was a mess as well, cracked and chipped, his armor plates melted. He groaned, trying to find his saber, only to see it several feet away. Reaching out, he tried to pull it closer, using the Force to and dragging it to him. Just before it reached him, I drove an ice spike through his arm, then another through his left leg.

He screamed, his free hand gripping and pulling at the spike of ice in his arm, his lightsaber flying past us and bouncing along the ground. I kicked his free hand away, charging another spell, my hand glowing.

"Hey! Hey! Shut up!" I shouted, kicking his side. "Call off your troopers! Call them off, or I will drive another one through your chest! And order your pilots out here!"

He activated some sort of communicator in his helmet. He repeated himself a few times, but there was no response.

"T-the Troopers aren't responding!" He practically shouted. "And I flew myself. I tried, I-"

"It's fine, Deacon, we are fine."

I whirled around to see Tatnia, supported by Vaz, slowly making their way to us. They were both limping, with Tatnia holding her side, a blaster wound under her hand. On top of that, Vaz wasn't wearing her mask and was clearly suffering for it. Still, they were both alive.

"Thank god," I said, sighing in relief. "Go on, you two get on the ship. I'll be in to fix you up in a second."

They both nodded, making their way to and then up the entry ramp of the Imperial ship. When they were gone, I turned back to the Inquisitor, who was trying to escape, whimpering as he pulled at the still creaking ice spikes. I kicked away his hand again, putting my foot on his chest. I charged up a calming spell and cast it on him.

"Who knows I was here?" I asked. "You were looking to become more powerful. If you tell me the truth, I will help you be one with the Force, more powerful than you could possibly imagine."

"I told the Grand Inquisitor I was investigating rumors that didn't sit well with me!" He said fervently. "I didn't want them to know about you, I wanted your secrets for myself."

"But there are records of me, of the prison break?"

"I hid them," he explained. "They might be found eventually, but not for some time...Wait... what mind tricks are you playing on me!? I-"

My hand glowed, and I drove a final spike of ice into his head, the icy spear punching through the already cracked and damaged helmet, killing him instantly. After a long moment, I stood back and conjured another flame atronach. Mentally I ordered it to burn the dark Jedi's body until it ran out of power or I left its range. When it aimed its hands downward, and flames spewed over the dark Jedi's corpse, I turned and headed to the ship, only to stop and turn around, quickly grabbing the double-bladed lightsaber that sat nearby. With my prize in hand, I turned and jogged back to the Lambda shuttle. My crew needed healing, and I wanted off this fucking planet.