

Ahsoka and I spent a while chatting over a small meal before she disappeared to her room, returning with a datapad. She placed it on the table and sat back down opposite me.

"The first thing we should do is confirm that he...well, that he still exists," I said with a wince. "You said you had an image of him?"

She nodded and wordlessly handed me her datapad. On the screen was an image of her and a few younglings. She couldn't have been more than fifteen in the image, and the smile on her face was full of hope. Standing behind her and the kids was a rather interesting-looking bipedal droid. He had a dome-like top on his head, cones on his ears, and almost a metal fu manchu. He was wearing some sort of backpack and leaning over like he was an old person, his arms folded behind his back.

"You did have history," I said, studying the image, eventually focusing on our droid target. "Is there a story there?"

"Yeah, you could say that," She responded with a chuckle. "Maybe I'll tell it to you some time. Or, better yet, maybe Huyang will. He is a storyteller, after all."

I nodded, and when I was finally satisfied with memorizing the image, I cast Clairvoyance. The spell immediately caught on its target, with the floating arrow pointing off in some random direction.

"Well, the good news is that he exists in a state that is intact enough that he is still recognizable," I said with a frown. "Unfortunately, that's all I can really tell. That and it's not core-ward."

"That's enough for now," She said with a nod. "If he had been found. The Emperor would have ground him to scrap or kept him in a vault somewhere on Coruscant."

"Not necessarily. The Emperor has a few vaults around the galaxy," I explained. "But yes, his Jedi vault is on Coruscant."

"His *what?*" Ahsoka asked, looking at me with wide eyes.

"He keeps trophies, like lightsabers and busts," I explained. "Jedi memorabilia that he likes to gloat over. Unfortunately, there isn't much we can do about that stuff..."

"I'm sensing a rather large addendum there," Ahsoka said, watching me carefully. "What do you know?"

"I may or may not know of another vault full of Jedi stuff," I admitted with a wince.

"What? Were?" She asked, her eyes wide.

"There is a Hutt on Nar Shaddaa who likes to collect Jedi stuff as well," I responded. "Grakkus. He has a pretty expansive collection."

"How expansive?"

"Lightsabers, an [Aethersprite](#), Jedi artifacts, Holocrons..." I said, the last bit really catching her attention. "And... some Jedi remains."

I could see the excitement at the mention of holocrons almost immediately shifted to anger at the mention of the remains. It took her a moment to work past the shock, but when she did, her voice dropped an octave, and her whole body tensed.

"Why did you never mention this before?" She asked, her tone a warning that my answer better be a good one.

"Because as much as I want to support the Jedi," I said, gesturing to myself and then around in general since I was currently doing just that. "I wasn't about to drag my team back to Nar Shaddaa until we were ready."

"Deacon... That collection could change everything!" She said, reaching up and running a hand along her lekku. "Even ignoring the fact that he might have the bodies of some of my friends, those artifacts... the holocrons..."

"I know, trust me, I know. But as important as they are, they are not worth your life," I explained. "When we get back, give me some time to prepare and ask if anyone would be willing to volunteer. This is not just another heist. Grakkus has a tight fist on his home, is a brutal monster, and has had time to anticipate people coming to steal his shit."

She let out a long breath, eventually nodding in understanding.

"You're right, you're right. I... apologize for assuming the worst," She said, seeming to collapse into herself, leaning heavily into her chair. "I can't help but... My family is gone, Deacon. And to hear someone had stolen away their legacy..."

I stand and walk over to her, sitting beside her. I reach out and put my arms around her, pulling her into a hug. At first, she simply tenses up, but after a moment, she gives in and leans against me. It doesn't take long for my shoulder to feel damp.

"Your family lives on through you, Luke, Falia, and Ezra," I said softly. "I promise you I will help you gather information on Grakkus, and if it's possible to steal back his collection, I will be standing right beside you when we do."

For a long while, we sat there, Ahsoka letting go of an old-held grief. Eventually, without pulling her head off of my shoulder, she let out a long breath.

"Part of me, deep down inside, tells me that I shouldn't be grieving, not after what they did to me," She admitted, her voice soft, as if she didn't want me to hear. "They were so quick to throw me aside, people who I thought I could trust, who I thought trusted me."

"Of course you do," I said, that response getting her to shift and look up at me. "Emotions like that aren't kind enough to be simple and easy to figure out, Ahsoka. There's nothing wrong with feeling conflicted."

"A Jedi shouldn't let such things get to them," She responded, shaking her head and looking away.

We sat in silence again. I wracked my mind, trying to figure out what I could say, before remembering one of the older Star Wars stories.

"Do you know the old version of the Jedi Code? Before they bastardized it after the Old Sith Wars?"

"I... know there have been different versions over the ages, and I know they have varied over time," She admitted. "It sounds like you do, though."

"I do. Emotion, yet peace. Ignorance, yet knowledge. Passion, yet serenity. Chaos, yet harmony. Death, yet the Force," I repeated, the words coming easier than I thought they would. "The old Jedi realized that having emotions was normal and okay, that letting them rule you was the error. Using them to pull the Force, to bend it to your will, was something that was dangerous, but having those emotions was only natural. While the modern code requires a Jedi to shed what made them alive, the old code acknowledges their existence and encourages you to rise above them."

"I... I like that. It's less restrictive than the code I was taught," She admitted. "And you're saying that I shouldn't feel guilty that I feel this way but that I should rise above it?"

"Exactly. I know it's easier said than done, but removing yourself from the emotions is like pretending it never happened. Rising above it requires you to acknowledge it and move on," I explained. "It's a much healthier way to handle things. The Jedi... they were just repressing things. That might work when the worst thing you encounter is a little smuggling, but..."

As I was talking, I could feel myself starting to a tangent. Realizing that this was not the time or place for that, I stopped myself.

"I'm sorry, I'm being preachy," I said, shaking my head. "The Jedi had a lot of faults, but at the end of the day, the individuals just wanted to help. I shouldn't harp on them like that."

Ahsoka gave a wet chuckle, shaking her head.

"I don't disagree with you, Deacon. I've had a lot of time to consider where the Jedi Order went wrong," She pointed out. "What were you saying?"

"Well... before the Clone Wars, the Jedi could handle repressing their emotions because, in all honesty, how many truly terrible things did they have to deal with?" I explained.

"But the war would have been too much. You were already seeing a spike in people turning to the dark side, just like you did during the conflict with the Mandalorians."

"There... were a lot more people turning during that time," She admitted, pulling gently away from me to sit up straight, sliding away just a bit. "Every one of them felt like losing a brother or sister."

"If I had to guess.... The Jedi Order would have torn itself to pieces even if the war hadn't ended how it did," I said with a frown. "There were too many Padawans and Knights exposed to too much death and violence, all of them trying to desperately to repress it, to pretend they didn't have emotions. The Order would have splintered into groups, with large swaths of them falling to the dark side, or at least a darker interpretation of the Jedi teachings, as the trauma bubbled up and twisted people."

"So what should we do differently?"

I jumped, having no idea that Luke had come out of his room to join us. I turned to watch him sit down across from us, where I had been sitting before. Ahsoka stayed perfectly still, so she must have felt him coming.

"You should be more aware of the existence of emotions. You should be more open to anger, not to let it control you, but because the best way to move past and beat something, is by understanding it. By knowing what scares you, what makes you angry, what you hate, you can learn to step beyond it and let things go, or at least acknowledge your weaknesses, so that you can compensate for them," I explained. "Honestly, including a professional psychologist, familiar with the dangers of the Force, with whatever order or group comes next is a solid bet."

"The Jedi had mind healers," Ahsoka pointed out.

"Maybe, but how often were they seen? And did they not just repeat the teachings in a different tone?" I asked. "The galaxy has been building up a lot of trauma, and for some reason... Those with powerful or special connections to the Force often get stuck in the middle of that trauma. If someone tries to revive the Jedi after this is all done, a lot of the people they will recruit are going to have real trauma. They will need help, not just the Force. "

Ahsoka was taken aback by my statement and opened her mouth to disagree... only to stop. She closed her mouth and looked thoughtful for a long moment before eventually shaking her head.

"I really wish I could deny that statement, but I'm finding it hard to," She admitted, looking particularly disturbed. "Why can't I say it's not true? Why does that *feel* true?"

"I don't know, but don't forget, they often do incredible good by being there," I pointed out. "Maybe they are there because the Force knows that without them there, the situation would spiral into something so much worse. Or maybe Force sensitives are drawn to the Shatterpoints, which are often in difficult moments. It's impossible to know."

The lounge area was quiet, save for the steady hum of the hyperdrive and the occasional warble of R2 as he interacted with the ship's computer.

"I know this is a lot," I admitted. "But let's focus on one thing at a time. Let's find Luke and the others their crystals, and then we can go back to Omega Station and discuss Grakkus. One step at a time."

Ahsoka and Luke nodded in agreement, though we did need to explain who Grakkus was and why they were important. Luke was particularly happy about the existence of so many holocrons, after Ahsoka explained what they were, as it meant teaching future Jedi would be significantly easier. Eventually, after continuing to talk for a few more hours, we went our separate ways, spreading out through the *Starcaller*. Despite assurances that she was fine, I could tell that our conversation weighed heavily on Ahsoka. Still, I hoped that it would help her move on, and that stealing the Jedi artifacts from Grakkus would help as well.

I did make sure to look up the Hutt on the Holonet, just to make sure he was still out and about. According to what I could find he was still living on Nar Shaddaa, just like he had for a long time.

The trip continued despite the emotionally draining discussion, and eventually, we dropped out of hyperspace around the planet that Alpha Base was built on. Rather than drop out of hyperspace in the thick of it, we pulled back by a considerable amount so that we had a chance to reach out, share passcodes, and warn them that we were incoming. They technically already knew we were, but that wouldn't stop a poorly trained, jumpy gunner from sending us to an early grave if we surprised them.

The transition from space to atmosphere, once we dropped out of hyperspace, only took about fifteen minutes, including the trip from our drop point to the planet. There were quite a few capital ships flying around, including one massive [MC80 Star Cruiser](#) and a trio of smaller [MC30s](#). The MC80, in particular, looked familiar.

"What is the *Home One* doing here?" I asked with a frown, peering through the forward viewpoint. "Isn't that Admiral Ackbar's Flagship?"

"It is. The squadron was stationed there before we rotated to Omega Station," Luke said with a frown. "I wonder why it's here now, and with so little of its fleet. There are usually several dozen smaller ships with it. "

"You need to be careful dropping information like that, Deacon," Ahsoka warned with a frown. "Being able to identify a Rebellion ship on sight, despite having never seen it before, as well as the Admiral in command of that ship, is going to make people nervous. For some unholy reason, we don't question where you get this information from, but there are plenty of people who will."

"... Yeah, fair enough," I admitted. "[Draven](#) really wouldn't like that, would he?"

I could practically *hear* Ahsoka's eye roll from behind me as I name-dropped the Rebel Alliance's Head of Intelligence. Luke gave me a look as well, shaking his head before focusing on the console in front of him.

The pair of them guided the *Starcaller* down to the surface, where we landed around the outskirts of the Alpha Base mountain. Luke decided to stay on the ship while Ahsoka and I headed to find the young Force-sensitive and her sibling. It took a bit of cajoling, but I eventually convinced Ahsoka to wear her uniform, which she looked great in. More importantly than that, however, was that we put off a united front. It was impossible to deny that Ahsoka had joined the Skyforged, not when she was wearing our gear and with our symbol on it.

We made the walk from the base of the mountain to inside, where we were guided through the Rebel stronghold, through dozens of corridors, to a massive section of the mountain, the living quarters. I could tell that the space was new, freshly carved from the mountain, because of the roughly hewn walls and simple fixtures. Still, it was clear they were staying true to the idea of the base being incredibly tough, as the freshly carved rooms were heavily reinforced with durasteel frames and more.

Once we were in the living quarters, it didn't take long for us to find our way to the room where Sheora was staying with her recently rescued charges. I tapped a button on the door controls, basically ringing the doorbell. It took a few seconds to open, but when it did, it revealed Sheora. She looked good, having finally recovered fully from her rather harsh stay on Foless.

"Great, you guys are here," She said with a nod before turning back into the room. "You to behave yourself for a while, I've got to take these two to talk to some people."

Falia and Claron, both looking excited and impatient, nodded rapidly at her request.

"Good. It shouldn't be more than an hour or two, and when we are done, I'll walk you guys to the ship," She said with a smile before waving and turning to us. "As for you two, there are some people who want to meet you."

Ahsoka and I shared a look before I nodded.

"Very well," I said, stepping to the side to let her through. "Lead the way."