Summary

With the Jedi Order destroyed at the end of the Clone Wars and the Republic swept away, Ahsoka and Barriss must work together to survive and fight back in a galaxy under the Empire.

Notes

Hello and welcome to my attempt to sort through the mass of PTSD, depression, self-hatred, survivor's guilt, regular guilt, stress, anxiety, compartmentalization, and an inferiority complex that is Barriss Offee's messed up head. It's gonna be painful fun!

I figure if the tags and general description of the work don't give you an idea of what's going to be in here, if you're at all bothered by things like terrorism, war, or the myriad psychological problems you'd expect Barriss to have, stick to something else, though I try to be tasteful.

If you just found this fic, took a look at the tags, and are wondering how the hell this is supposed to work out in a way that isn't completely awful, I know, trust me, I know, and I'm taking my sweet time working through every bit of weirdness in this pairing and perform damage control on that whole mess. Barriss ain't getting off easy or quick.

A note on this fic's relation to canon: I don't really consider this an AU, because I didn't want it to be one, but it became one in spite of my best efforts. I tried to make it line up with the canon continuity as much as possible when I first started writing, which became impossible when the Ahsoka novel came out. Unless I kill off Barriss, or screw with Ahsoka's memories, or some other equally bad solution. Hence the "Formerly Canon Compliant" tag. When it comes to Legends, I tend to pick and choose elements I like. One thing I need to point out is that unlike in Legends where she's an adult, I treat Barriss as being only one year older that Ahsoka, since she has no canonical age and that seems to be what TCW intended anyway. The events of the Ahsoka novel will have to be ignored, as will anything else that comes out that contradicts me, but I'll still make TEotS as consistent with The Clone Wars, Rebels, and everything else as possible.
Even though she'd always been taught droids were deaf to the Force, Ahsoka could swear she felt

"How does that sound?"

"I'm going to break someone out of a maximum-security prison facility controlled by the Empire.

"But you're an exception?" inquired Ahsoka, quickly realizing how strange it was that she'd

"You seem trustworthy. And, as a Jedi, you probably want to avoid the attention of law

"Don't worry," said Cici. "My lips are sealed. Heh, 'lips'. But you should carry your lightsaber

"Oh, FUCK no. I was illegally modified by a previous owner. She had a learning disability when

"Ahsoka was shocked for a moment.

"Because of a combination of patents keeping the primary manufacturers from building us with

"How did an astromech droid figure that out?

"Ahsoka had expected some kind of scam, but so far, everything was in order. Everything was

"The main hold provided double the cargo space of the Outrider she had, (which she could trade in

"For the most part, she kept looking forward, relying on the Force for awareness so as not to show

"Surrounded by pirates in the uncomfortably dimly-lit base on Florrum, Ahsoka tried to keep a cool

"As soon as the door was open, Hondo stepped out, his tall, broad figure taking up a lot of space.

"I'll admit, I preferred things when the Republic was in charge. It's harder to bribe people now

"And well within Ahsoka's rather considerable price range.

"Hondo seemed to be taking the situation a bit more seriously, though he looked unimpressed. He

"Well? Would you like a look inside?"

"For the most part, she kept looking forward, relying on the Force for awareness so as not to show

"That still leaves the option of turning you in and not paying anything for the privilage."
crushed the speakers projecting the noise. The fresh corpse floated in midair and functioned as a shield from the incoming fire as Barriss effectively. Barriss raised her hand to Force-choke her, but whatever training these guards had, they clearly had never had the opportunity to face a Jedi. One of the guards raised her weapon to shoot Ahsoka, who would be too disoriented to block anything. She took the shot in the arm, wincing as it ripped apart her skin and started to bleed heavily.

Barriss needed to think. Her green blade bounced off the metal, completely ineffective. "High-frequency screeching blasted through wall-mounted speakers, momentarily deafening them all. Not wasting any time, one by one, the other five elevators activated, bringing more and more of these guards.

\[\text{Equation}\]

"Yeah, well you know what they say---dammit, move!" Ahsoka grabbed Barriss' hand and cut through the door, getting them both to safety a few seconds before the elevator descended below. "This place isn't a regular prison, it's where the Empire is sending people who are too dangerous for their own good.

Ahsoka barely got a solid grip in time to withstand the force of Barriss landing on her back, arms wrapped around her throat. Her head fell to the side as she was forcefully dragged across the floor, but Ahsoka's eyes never left the guard she was fighting. Her green blade bounced off the metal, completely ineffective. She was a Jedi, but she was still human. Barriss needed to think."

Another two got to their feet thanks to that delay, drawing vibroswords and engaging to two guards. Ahsoka barely had time to block their first attack before Barriss was already on her back, using her free hand to grab Ahsoka's fist and yank her off balance. "This worked for Ventress, it can work for me.

The guard was surprisingly difficult to hit, being much more agile than opponents in heavy armor, dodging and evading her blades with ease. Ahsoka barely had time to react as Barriss backflipped out of the way. Her green blade bounced off the metal, completely ineffective.

"A Jedi was about to break into their prison, and they were going to be ready for her."

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Ahsoka was about to ask what the target was, but got the idea soon enough as Barriss lead her to a nearby cell. "Here's where you're going to be staying for a while."

Ahsoka raised her hand to wave smoke from her face, and noting how their claws were embedded in the wood of the door, realized these weren't ordinary packs. "What are these things? asked Ahsoka as she bisected the furry lizards one by one, using her free hand to grab Ahsoka's fist and yank her off balance. "What is this place?"

Barriss lead her to a nearby cell. "This is your cell, Ahsoka. You're going to be staying here for a while."

As she rummaged through the guard's pockets and took his key card, Ahsoka took a deep breath, trying to clear her mind and focus on what was happening. "Okay, what do I do now?"

Barriss lead her back to the cell and sealed the door shut. "I'll be back in a little while."

Ahsoka sat down on the bed, trying to make sense of what had just happened. It was only nerves, she安慰自己. The only way out is up.

Ahsoka looked around the room, trying to make sense of what had just happened. It was only nerves, she安慰自己. The only way out is up.
Deciding one body didn’t provide enough cover, two more guards joined their comrade while Barriss pulled Ahsoka to safety, the latter deflecting shots from their pursuers once again, heading to an access hatch reserved for subsurface patrols. “This is the only way out into the lower levels.” Ahsoka brandished her lightsaber. “I’ve got this,” she said, preparing to cut apart the blast door, then instinctively ducking out of the way of a blaster bolt to the head. “I’ve gotten some practice disabling locking mechanisms. Keep me covered!” said Barriss as she reached out to the door, the internal components audible straining as she applied force. Keeping between Barriss and the guards, Ahsoka deflected blasts while also stopping incoming knock-out gas grenades in midair. The gas was probably selected to be filtered out by the guard helmets, and even if the grenades were stopped, the fumes would eventually diffuse towards her. Barriss, having taken a helmet for herself, would be perfectly fine. Fine, and left to either abandon her rescuer, or hopelessly try to defend her unconscious body. Struggling to hold her breath, the thought of that scenario did not fill Ahsoka with confidence. “Got it!” shouted Barriss as the door slid open, freeing them from the increasingly toxic air of the prison perimeter and exposing them to the marginally less toxic air of the Coruscant lower levels, finding themselves on a small landing platform, with police speeders lined up in rows ready to be taken out to patrol the skies. Unfortunately, none were active and their security would be too good to hot-wire quickly. Ahsoka whipped out her wrist communicator, trying to signal the Eclipse to come pick them up. “Come on, come on,” she said as her comm tried to penetrate the jamming of the prison. “Cici! We’re on level 1313, heading north! We need a pick-up!” Only static came through the commlink. “We’re still within range of the prison’s jammers,” explained Barriss. “We need to get out before we can get away.” After putting the commlink in homing beacon mode to free up her hand, Ahsoka looked around, eventually finding the singular means off of this platform. The only thing between the two former Jedi and freedom was one flimsy, unprotected, fifteen-meter access ladder connecting the prison’s foundation to the lower level. “We can’t go that route, it’ll take too long to get down. We’ll be gunned down in seconds,” said Barriss, her voice sounding completely exhausted. Given her physical state, Ahsoka figured she’d been running entirely on adrenaline this entire time. “I have an idea. Climb down the first few rungs. Trust me!” Barriss, with some reluctance, obeyed the command as Ahsoka followed her and remained at the ladder’s top, then cut through the welds holding it to the prison landing platform, the ladder bending under their combined weight and tipping over, sending the pair over to the other side of the chasm dividing this lane of the Coruscant underworld and dropping them onto a rooftop. Exhilarated by that success, Ahsoka was about to shout something mocking over to the guards, then realized they were all right next to their speeders, whereas she and Barriss could only move on foot. They’d be surrounded in moments. Ahsoka prepared to cut her way into the building beneath them and hope for the best, then heard the distinctive hum of the Eclipse’s engines as the light freighter hovered down through the city, blaster turret blowing apart enemy speeders in a series of impressive explosions before they could take off as it turned and lowered the boarding ramp. Running through the ship as fast as she could, Ahsoka took control away from the auto-pilot while Cici was undoubtedly getting her time with the gun turret, steering it as fast as possible given the confines of the surrounding structures around the congestion and into the upper levels. Too far away from the prison for its anti-air defenses to reach, they were nearly in out of danger, but still in the heart of the Empire. Ahsoka gunned it, flying straight up into the atmosphere and out of range before the orbiting warships could send any fighters in pursuit. Hyperspace coordinates were already punched in, Ahsoka having planned the escape path ahead of time, allowing them to jump right past the orbiting battle cruisers the second the Eclipse broke orbit. “We’re clear!” shouted Ahsoka jubilantly, staring into the bright blue light of hyperspace with satisfaction, heart pounding, turning around to find herself unexpectedly alone in the cockpit. Cici rolled her way into the room, using an actuator to motion for Ahsoka to follow. The droid led her to find Barriss, sitting at the boarding ramp, the guard helmet still hiding her face, clutching her knees to her chin. As she stepped closer, Ahsoka could hear her softly repeating something to herself over and over while shaking and looking down at her blood-stained uniform. “I had to do it.”
"We just fought together trying to take that planet for the Republic, now we're helping to protect their planet after the Republic was usurped, they need medical supplies to hold the line against the Empire. What's our first job going to be?"

After a moment of consideration, and while still visibly uncomfortable at the whole prospect, she nodded. "I think I can get them to do it if it's a high enough price. I need them, it turns south fast and I wind up alone trying to escape from the Imperial Navy. Believe it or not, I'd be glad for your help. Each time I get weapons or resources to people who need them, it makes things easier for me if they're legit."

"By selling off my short lightsaber. The crystal alone is worth a fortune, and the Empire accepts it as standard bounties for killing Jedi."

"Let me show you around," said Ahsoka, trying to switch gears and pulling Barriss by the hand. "Here, let me show you a few things first."

"Not the occupation I would've expected after…" that small grin forming on Barriss' face, "Well, it was either that or join the circus, and I'd rather not be entertaining the Ohnaka gang again."

"Yeah. I'm a criminal," she said slouching in her chair, pretending to act tough. "With the Empire now rules the galaxy. You want to sulk? Pick a drop off location, because you're not staying on this ship for long."

"Where do I go?"

"Right here. In the hangar."

"Then again, she'll probably never trust you again no matter what you do.

She just needed to keep herself under control. She could do it. Feeling exposed like this was only slightly more comfortable than dealing with that hood."

"No, you can't."

"Pull yourself together, you idiot."

Barriss clutched her head, trying to stop herself from trembling. Then again, she'll probably never trust you again no matter what you do.

"Then again, she'll probably never trust you again no matter what you do.

"You hurt me, Barriss. Horribly. I was completely disconnected from what was around her, lost in her own thoughts.

"As she'd described her employment situation, Barriss appeared to be getting more and more comfortable."

"There are more important things right now. My friends are still missing. Some of the old rebels I knew are out there trying to hold the line against the Empire's changing power structure."

"They'll all be killed. I know it."

"The other senators she was on good terms with were under close observation as a result the day Padmé was buried on Naboo. Ahsoka watched her funeral procession in person to be sure."

"And it's hard to stay angry after you've suffered more than I'd ever want you to."

"What happened to the other commanders in the field, all gone. All dead. Even if she could figure out where others were friendly if she could find them."

The clones had been split up and shipped off across the Empire, and probably wouldn't be heard since they'd reunited."

"Of planning the breakout, and one she still didn't have a particularly satisfying answer to.

Ahsoka stopped eating. It was a reasonable question, one she'd been asking herself at every stage of this mission."

"About halfway through the meal, her appetite finally settling, Barriss started to appear a bit uneasy. It was good to see some of the green returning to her complexion."

"It's not like I wanted to be here. I was following orders. I was just doing my job."

"And it's not like I enjoyed it. I don't enjoy killing people. But I've had to do it."
she'd dreamt about last night? Ahsoka couldn't tell if she was lying or not. Barriss acted weird after waking up, who knew what... "Yes, I slept fine," answered Barriss, not even bothering to glance up from her datapad as she

Less than a minute before, Ahsoka could feel pure and utter

Barriss' expression and body language were completely neutral. The result certainly came as a surprise.

"Ugghhh, yes, don't want to be," she said with some fake grogginess thrown in. It was technically

Ahsoka, are you awake?"

Okay, emergency, this is getting messed up, gotta speed things along.

Sure enough, Barriss was audibly sniffling and letting out quick, unsteady breaths.

She felt Barriss shivering, and heard her…she heard her…

It felt good to have her there, to Ahsoka's surprise.

supplies a whole lot easier. Work in conjunction to mind trick inspectors, meditate to predict routes

the Empire. With Barriss there, their combined connection to the Force could make smuggling

Ahsoka laid still for the next hour and a half, occupying her time thinking about how to oppose

Bam. Done. Brilliant plan, Ahsoka.

tried to think of a way to get out of this position without humiliating Barriss or making their whole

And then, she woke up.

He ignited his lightsaber, a red blade emitted from the hilt, and swung it at her neck.

"I'm sorry, Anakin. I'm not staying."

As she walked out the door, she shot Anakin one final glance that amounted to 'Please, tone it

"You're welcome to stay here as long as you need, Ahsoka," said Padmé, "and if you need to be

away from it. I need to think."

"I promise I'll think about it. The war won't be lost without me around, and I need some time

some raw recruit. The Republic needs experienced warriors like you, Ahsoka, if you would-"

"The Republic Army accepts volunteers. As generals, I'm sure Master Kenobi and I could get you

finished."

Offering Ahsoka back her lightsaber.

eagerly held out his hand.

Padmé. "Of course I'm not alone. I know there are people I can count on. The problem is, now there's one

in this.

"Did the people you worked to protect all turn on you?"

wasn't an easy change. Protecting my people within the broader politics of the Republic is

everything's uncertain."

"How are you feeling?"

the lives around her, to the galaxy.

Ahsoka couldn't keep track of them.

forever. Pinpoints of light, endless looping lines of them, moved on and on at such distances

The skyline of Coruscant was as immense as ever, spires reaching into the lower atmosphere

Sweet dreams

"You too."

"Good night."
“Thank you for not letting me sleep on the floor,” Barriss continued, interrupting Ahsoka’s train of thought.

“Not a problem.”

Anakin had told her Barriss was a pretty poor liar when confronted. If she could probe the subject a little more, maybe Ahsoka could get a better handle on what was going on.

Though there isn’t much reason to inquire without acting off-putting.

“Did you...have any dreams last night, Ahsoka?”

Or she could bring up the topic on her own. That works, too.

“Oh, um, yes, I did. Anakin and Padmé were there, and they had my lightsabers, aaaannnd,” she replied trying to recall the images, only grasping at a few figments. “I don’t really remember my dreams. Did you dream of anything?”

“No,” answered Barriss sharply, a pulse of guilt spreading out through the Force, so intense it made Ahsoka shiver.

Chapter End Notes

Step one: use the ‘there is only one bed’ fanfic cliche.

Step two: add pain.

Step three: drama!

I just realized I never explained the title of this story. In case you’re curious, it comes from this discussion with every Star Wars fan’s favorite robotic psychopath, regarding the effect of war on Jedi. I thought it appropriate for Barriss’ condition, and some of the things explained factor into how I’m approaching this whole plot.

Anyway, the daily updates stop here. Can’t keep moving this fast.
See the end of the chapter for Chapter Notes

The controls and powered up the ship. "Barriss, I, I'm so sorry," she said, reaching out slightly, but not getting any reaction, until she took lack of expression she'd displayed thus far.

"Since WHEN!"

mercy sunk in, and she sat down in her seat.

They've conquered Umbara, they'll move onto the next center of rebellion, and kill people there!

"They were people, and as I keep saying, we didn't need to hurt them."

That comment finally put a dent in Barriss' weird satisfaction.

"Those were imperial pilots!" "What are you talking about?"

"You didn't need to shoot them down," she replied, as if the reasoning couldn't be more obvious.

"Yes, we did, no thanks to you. Why were you making me miss? We nearly died because I suffering a minor case of whiplash.

Ahsoka to take it back.

Barriss was

Now that the ship was no longer in danger, Ahsoka undid the safety harness of the turret, and powered down to avoid enemy scans.

The fighter pilots seemed to have mistaken the damage for them crashing, the sound of their supports holding the ruined ship together. Half the wreck seemed to collapse, exposing them to the

"Ahsoka," came Barriss' voice through the comm, "shoot at those supports in front of us!"

the momentum.

damaged superstructure until stopping so fast Ahsoka's lekku were flung in front of her face from

The tactical readout hooked up to the turret showed the shield stress plummeting.

Five fighter were behind them now. No amount of dodging could avoid the barrage.

What is she doing?

deliberately throwing off her aim with her maneuvers.

weren't acts of evasion, either, the other V-Wings hadn't come around for a pass yet. Barriss was

However, every time she got a shot lined up, the ship jerked to the side, making her miss. Those

her weapon.

The enemy fighters might not be courageous, but they weren't stupid, either, all splitting off in

directions, putting them within the sights of their turret.

The enemy pilots seemed to be a bit less gutsy than Barriss was, pulling up much sooner while she

during the in-atmosphere battle in the Clone Wars, providing a lot of cover for the smaller ships.

the lower atmosphere. All around them was debris from dozens of capital ships, brought down

planet below, twisting and spinning to dodge the incoming weapons fire until they were nearing

That wasn't something ordinarily available. And probably not entirely legal.

freighter, giving it a tremendous field of fire only blocked by the body of the ship. Not to mention

being able to function as a common turret, it could rotate to positions on the top and bottom of the

The

"On it!"

A squad of eight V-wings were incoming, laser cannons blaring.

military starfighters.

intercept craft were already emerging from the main hangar, and the

They'd managed to sprint beneath the ship, out of the field of fire of the main cannons, but

Ahsoka raised shields and cranked the engines to full power, giving the warship a wide berth.

the current' trick wasn't going to work here.

Barely any debris was in orbit in the surrounding space, meaning the 'power down and drift with

Crest freshly painted on its sides.

Sharing the geosynchronous orbit with them was a

expansive enough the peaks were visible even from orbit as Ahsoka and Barriss stared out across

"It doesn't matter anymore," she said curtly as she walked towards the cockpit. "Shall we?"

Barriss simply shrugged at the alarm of her companion.

overcome, talents demonstrated. She'd sounded so proud. "You worked hard to earn them!"

gave her about what all those diamonds were supposed to represent. Skills she'd learned, obstacles

needed to be removed," she explained, cringing slightly as she poked at her slightly singed skin.

"You look...nice," she answered, not untruthfully. "I don't understand. Why?"

"Well?" prodded Barriss.

The little operation now complete, Barriss stood up and turned around to face Ahsoka.

"What are you two doing?"

turned while Cici was doing something to her face.

Ahsoka found the two behind a stack of bacta crates, Barriss sitting down with her back

"Almost done, keep still," replied Cici, somewhat impatiently.
As she picked away at her food, Ahsoka leaned back, relaxed, and got ready for trust exercise.

I think.

Watching the other walk out of the establishment, Ahsoka wasn't entirely sure she liked the idea of walked out into the chilly Umbaran air.

“Ready for loading,” she said, receiving a quick nod in response as Barriss pulled her hood up and “All right. Get as much rest as you need. Remember, in a few hours our next shipment will be

It’s barely lunchtime, how is she tired already?

he’d walked directly to his particular seat, was enjoying the cooked banshee a lot more than she intermittently glancing over at her, the lone outsider. One guy, a regular patron judging from how

To distract herself, Ahsoka kept an eye on the other customers, passively learning what she could.

Why am I feeling like government.

She framed me, manipulated me, beat me to a pulp, and nearly got me killed by my own.

Don’t cut corners.

"Of course. You’re fine," said the other, leaving like she’d intended, unaware of what just

"I. Am. Fine," said Barriss, waving her hand in the other’s direction.

The experience was interrupted when a young Umbaran woman came into the restroom, finding buckling, enduring the agony in her head.

Ahsoka’s right. You should’ve helped her destroy those fighters.

couldn’t be stopped, more would die every day.

A slight tremor shook the floor, the impact of some explosives in the distance. Somewhere, the

She’s stronger than you are. She doesn’t even need you. What good are you if you won’t fight

At least on the battlefield, your opponent can fight back. You targeted maintenance workers.

The way out was obvious. You simply refused to see it. Leave the Jedi, like Ahsoka did. Instead,

"The incompetence of the Jedi does not absolve them." 

"The Republic was corrupt. Don’t you get it, Ahsoka? What’s happened here, we’re partly to

"Well, now we have an opportunity to help make things right. Do you want to take it, or not?"

situation.

But Ahsoka kept that thought to herself focusing on getting Barriss to see the reality of the

"The Echoes in the Force"

Meanwhile, Cici had
The darkness of the Umbaran forest was as foreboding as the last time Barriss had seen it. At least now she was near civilized territory, no need to worry about local predators sweeping down to carry her off, or masses of tendrils grabbing at her. And she wouldn't have to watch that happen to the clone soldiers under her command.

Deep, bellowing laughter came from all around her, the same as back at the bar.

"Who's there?" she shouted, only receiving more laughter in response, getting louder and louder, echoing, mocking.

A moment later, the laughter stopped, its voice calling out to her.

"You were right, Barriss! The Republic was failing!"

The voice was familiar, and the second she recognized it, Barriss bolted along the path. The more she ran, the louder that laughter got.

Laughing at her.

"You foresaw it! Just like I did!"

Thundering footsteps were coming closer through the fog, the hum of lightsabers getting louder. As did the sounds of dying clones, all screaming in unison, all in the same voice. Screaming with fear, Barriss skidded to a halt as the towering figure landed right in front of her, obscured by the thick fog, swinging one of its double-bladed lightsabers.

Barriss closed her eyes before the blade made contact, dispelling the hallucination, trying to follow the route back to the ship by memory alone.

It's not real it's not real it's not real.

With the outside world shut out, new visions came forth from her memory of the last time she'd set foot on this world. Traveling across conquered territory, surveying the hundreds of clone corpses littering the battlefield. Feeling the death, fear, and darkness through the Force as she'd retraced the general's path.

Seeing the damage from lightsaber blades in their armor.

Seeing the dead body of Pong Krell, one of the greatest of the Jedi, fallen into darkness.

And that monster was still laughing.

"There is still a chance for you, Barriss! Seize the opportunity I was denied. Join the new order of the galaxy!"

NO.

She opened her eyes and started running through the forest again, stumbling but never falling by some miracle, head turned to look behind her, only getting knocked down when she ran headfirst into the hull of the Eclipse because she hadn't watched where she was going. Then she fidgeted impatiently as the ramp lowered, expecting Krell to attack her again before running onboard and sealing the ship behind her.

Even inside, she could still hear that laugh.

"You're not real! You're only in my mind!"

"Of course I'm in your mind! This is where I can do the most damage!"

Barriss collapsed onto the floor of the ship, covering her ears, trying to shut out noises that weren't there.

Chapter End Notes

Ahsoka's alias "Shaak Ashla" is just the names of two Togruta Jedi put together, which in my mind comes out to be the Togruta equivalent of "Jane Smith" or something. She came up with it on the spot when needing to buy her first ship, after realizing she wanted to avoid attention. "Jana Lorso" is the name of a minor Mirialan character in Knights of the Old Republic II.

I based Ahsoka and Barriss wandering around Umbaran territory on how things worked in the KOTOR games. You get access to a new area, then nobody really cares where you go or who you talk to as long as you don't pick a fight with them. Some NPC shows up and gives you your next job, now you can wander around and talk to other NPCs, who all have plenty of useful information and like to talk.
Out of the corner of her eye, part of the base collapsed under the impact of the latest bombing run, and he didn't like people making fun of his height.

"Size matters not, size matters not, size matters not, size matters not, that's a pile of crap he just said of that size."

Falling directly onto her, Ahsoka melted one of its "ankles" with a shot from the pod, twisting its body, knocking it off balance and falling to the ground.

Armaments which included a pair of energy missile pods. One of which was still active.

Powerful armaments in the galaxy, even more destructive than most of their ground vehicles. The Umbaran militia favored quality over quantity, and their fighters had some of the most advanced. Using the Force, she tore off another chunk of the fighter's armor, wedging it into the ground to block its movement and giving her control of it like she'd originally planned to.

Ahsoka focused on deflecting fire back at the troopers, downing several of them with their own blaster bolts to harass them. Assuming the stormtroopers didn't overwhelm her with their numbers first.

Then twenty stormtroopers emerged from the edge of the forest, their white armor standing out in the darkness. She couldn't hit them.

Running across the back, Ahsoka prepared to go for the neck, to get inside fast and kill the pilots. Until she stumbled, knocked off balance as the walker began to veer right.

Leapt as high as she could, sending her own fighter towards the walker's legs only for it to be shot out of the air by another series of laser blasts. She narrowly managed to land on the transport's high and the heavy metal feet proving too durable.

Looking at the situation, Ahsoka veered left, her shields impacting on the other ship and forcing the control of it like she'd originally planned to.

And, eventually, they put a hole in Barriss' wing, sending her out of control on a collision course with the walker's enormous metal legs.

The mine field placed around the base couldn't stop them, the bodies of the machines being too durable. Barriss was already out in the open, dashing towards a damaged hangar with a few intact fighters. The crawler was instantly blown to pieces by the combined firepower of several heavy lasers, its hammering impact reduced to a pile of twisted metal.

"Cici," began Ahsoka, speaking into her comm, "power up the ship. I have a feeling we're going to need a quick exit soon."

The light, however, wasn't what had Ahsoka on edge. What was going on in the forest? Something out there was disturbing the darkness.

"What IS that?" she asked.

"Screaming? From where? Is it Umbarans, or imperial troops?" wondered Ahsoka, receiving her answer a few seconds later as a flash of light appeared.

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"What's could be doing this to them?" she asked.
And then, she woke up.

Barriss wondered whether or not she was in hell.

glass, she could still feel the terror and pain of everyone she'd felt die in this war screaming at her from red clouds, and even though she could no longer see anything beyond as it flowed over the As she looked out, the window was blocked bit by bit as countless drops of blood rained down all, oblivion unconcerned by any action, good or ill. Countless other interpretations existed.

they would await reincarnation in a form dependent on their actions. Or there would be nothing at

Another sip of her tea, thinking about how other cultures and religions outside the Jedi regarded the

Listening to the sound of impacting rubble hitting the upper levels of the temple, Barriss took

everyone for miles could be felt through the Force.

The empty teacup split apart like a grenade, bits of ceramic flying through the air, several pieces One second later, the entire temple shook.

concealed within, she took it in her hand. 

weapon, splitting apart the casing, exposing every component. Extracting the micro-detonator There was no way a meeting with them would take less time than that. Add an extra two minutes to be absolutely certain Luminara was standing before the council. Another twenty to account for any slowness on her master's part, unnecessary as that was. Seventeen for the ride up. The walk from Luminara's quarters to the central tower elevator would take nineteen.

Then she stared at the clock, counting seconds.

Barriss waved her master goodbye, continuing to smile as kindly as she could until the door slid

to a doctor. That is one messed up girl. 

"And if you're not going to pay me, at least use the money you're saving to get that friend of yours Whatever. Next stop, Mirial.

Ahsoka checked the star map, and after figuring out their position, the best choice was obvious. 

unconscious, her vitals holding steady.

own species, or how to deal with human clones in battlefield conditions. 

Right?

She can be healed.

And if I know she's experiencing psychological problems like this, she can be helped.

herself. There's no crime in that, is there?

She's just…sick! During the war, she was injured, in a way no one saw, and couldn't see it

She's not evil.

terrorist, and dragged her into a new war. Good job, me. Nicely done. I freed somebody who was so traumatized by exposure to violence she became a

in it favor of getting to the task of opposing imperial rule. 

been rescued, but Ahsoka had put it down as some effect of her imprisonment and largely ignored obvious there was something seriously

If Ahsoka hadn't acted fast, she would've succeeded. She felt guilty, actually. It was already

Barriss had tried to kill herself. 

clear.

make sense of things.

actions.

exclaimed as she sped away to her recharge station, leaving Ahsoka to think on her next, critical
Chapter Notes

How are those orders in contradiction? Both must be obeyed. The droid needed to extract ore from the asteroid it was dropped off, and do...
Because there wasn't any damn ore on that asteroid. There was no way for the droid to succeed. However, its masters neglected to monitor it properly. Face with this dilemma, it decided to prioritize doing the job over its own wellbeing. When it kept failing to produce any useable material, it continued tearing out chunks of the rock, trying to find something that didn't exist.

"And the droid was scrapped as malfunctioning?"

"No. It kept digging out more and more of the asteroid until it created a nice little maze for itself, the rock becoming progressively less stable until it got trapped in a cave in. The people in charge wrote it off as defective, and abandoned it. Not because the droid was poorly built or programmed, but because it tried to live up to its duty a little too hard. It's probably still out there somewhere, floating through space, abandoned. If only someone had helped it."

CC and Barriss stared at each other in silence for a while. It was only a droid, not something which could call upon the Force. It shouldn't have had such an impact. It wasn't like her. Yet the story had a disturbingly familiar logic to it.

The astromech slowly rolled backwards out the door, continuing to talk and watch Barriss. "Then again, you said droids are totally different from organics, so I'm sure you could repair yourself without external assistance. All you need to do to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain is to use your brain to fix the problem in your brain. I'm going to stop thinking about this so my CPU doesn't catch fire enjoy your doctor's appointment byyyyyyyeeeeee!" And then it sped away to the engine room.

Barriss lied back and stared at the ceiling for a while as they descended into the atmosphere, feeling heavier as the ship's gravity overlapped with the pull of the planet below.

Let it never be said I won't put in time for my patients... thought Dr. Cohl groggily as she reached over to the beeping communicator on her nightstand, restricting herself from seeing the clock so she wouldn't have to think about how late it must be.

Recognizing the incoming call had the same ID as the one from that Togruta girl, Cohl became a bit more alert and activated it.

A blue hologram emerged from the device, displaying a young woman who somehow looked even more tired than Cohl felt. Oddly, her face didn't have a single tattoo on it. Usually someone her age, late teens it appeared, would have at least one triangle or diamond to show they got their first job, or graduated from a school, something.

She looked rather familiar, though Cohl couldn't quite place it. "I take it you're Jana?" she asked.

The girl nodded, the small motion coming across as sporadic and reluctant. "Shaak said you needed confirmation of tomorrow's appointment. That's what I'm doing. I'll see you then," she finished quickly, abruptly cutting off the transmission. The hologram vanished and left the room in complete darkness.

How...courteous...of you. Why do I get the feeling this is going to be a tricky one? thought the doctor as she rolled over and tried to get back to sleep. She could think about this tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Writing Barriss Offee 101: make her so messed up introducing AIs to her thought processes is an effective means of trapping them in a loop. She's the galaxy's only hope against a droid uprising.
"I feel a little better."

A bit of surprise.

Mulling over the question, Barriss seemed uncertain how to reply, and answered the question with "Your new tattoos look nice," said Ahsoka without really thinking about it, getting Barriss to cross her cheeks.

Ahsoka looked over Barriss' face. Instead of the totally blank, pale green-yellow skin, she now towards her.

Snapping out of her daze at the sound of the door next to her opening, she saw Barriss walking I don't have to forgive her right away, though.

She's trying,

help like this is a greater act of personal strength than you believe. You may not like it, you may make sure there aren't adverse reactions to the medication," she explained, watching an irritated "Am I free to go, then?" asked Barriss, dismally looking down into a bag the doctor handed her,

until your cycles get back on track, then use them as needed. The instructions are also listed on the

"I know you're the Jedi who helped dozens of people last time you were on the planet."

issues. They weren't failures, and neither are you.

I'm not talking about some metaphysical connection to the universe. You want to know why that medication, you'll survive no matter what. But it can help," said Dr. Cohl, offering a small pill

"How?"

"Very little. But I tried to do something about it."

You attempted to protest Jedi involvement in the war through some means. I don't need to know

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

"The analysis of your brain scan and blood test are complete. Your case, from a purely

how, exactly. And in the wake of all that pain and loss, you expect to heal yourself all on your

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

Yes, it is. I was stupid, I should've seen that trap coming.

"Maybe you feel guiltier than you want to admit, even if, logically, you know its not your fault."

"No," said Barriss, "I wasn't in control. It was the parasite. I didn't do anything wrong. That

Yes.

Barriss nodded. "I was there on Geonosis when it began."

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

Without saying anything else, the doctor got up, took her tea over the the restroom, poured it

"Then I'll be sure to make this one count," replied Dr. Cohl, unfazed by the hostility. "Would you

Dr. Cohl glanced back and forth between Barriss and her drink.

conceal her discomfort.

As she breathed in more, she could hear the teacup exploding, felt the fragments cut her face.

"Fine, have it your way. No more subtlety," said Cohl, shrugging slightly. "I suppose I shouldn't

It's what I deserve.

Cohl raised an eyebrow at that. "And you don't want to stop feeling terrible?"

"But it shouldn't have been the Jedi taking the lead!"

While most of the enemies were machines, on world after world I came up against living beings,

not to care. Then I became friends with some of my soldiers, only to watch them all die. And

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

"The analysis of your brain scan and blood test are complete. Your case, from a purely

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

Yes.

Barriss couldn't conceal her fear at being found out, eyes widening, feeling the lump in her throat.

"Fine, have it your way. No more subtlety," said Cohl, shrugging slightly. "I suppose I shouldn't

It's what I deserve.

"Do you believe they won't forgive you?"

"No! The battles kept coming, for years, progress never getting made by one side or another. Even

The room was spotlessly clean, white, but with decorations like a few wall paintings and wooden

"The Jedi," said Barriss, barely audible.

Once the physical tests were out of the away, Dr. Cohl lead her into her office.

Keeping completely still, as instructed, Barriss quietly fumed at the situation, the bright light of the

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The analyses of her brain scan and blood test were complete. Dr. Cohl lead her into her office.

Keeping completely still, as instructed, Barriss quietly fumed at the situation, the bright light of the
The palace formerly home to Count Dooku.

The two of them went back to observing their surroundings as Ahsoka followed the prescribed path, drifting over the forested surface of Serenno to a city spread across a plain, the vastness of which was only made more apparent by the immense length of a Separatist dreadnought they were flying past, bristling with weaponry, and the squadrons of tri-fighters circling around it. “Do you think this is a good thing, or a bad thing?” Ahsoka asked, her eyes moving across the immense array of Separatist battle stations. “Good in the sense that most of the people there are just trying to survive,” she said. “Bad in the sense that there’s an immense fleet of warships ready to spread death and destruction when the Separatist leaders were found and killed,” said Ahsoka, her eyes moving across the navigation computer directing them towards an urban area in the planet’s northern continent.

For several seconds, Ahsoka and Barriss waited for a reply while the red blips of the fighters frantically as she typed at the control panel, a dozen vulture droids flying around her ship. “Wait!” Barriss shouted, but Ahsoka ignored her. “I’m going back to sleep. Wake me up when we’re close.”

Ahsoka didn’t know the specifics of the situation, but was confident her experience could help. The Empire was laying siege to Serenno, one of the most heavily fortified worlds of the galaxy, good in the sense they’re mainly occupied by the imperial military. “And maybe,” she began, pausing as she tried to work up the nerve to press the issue. “I could make a real difference against the Empire, not balance the sides in a war controlled by the dark side.”

Barriss clumsily sat down in the copilot’s seat, eyes shifting between the floor and Ahsoka. “I do. I actually work?”

“Why are you so intent on fighting again? I thought you hated violence.”

Barriss looked at Ahsoka, her eyes hard. “I think we should investigate.”

“Let’s find a job somewhere else,” said Ahsoka. “I can leave you enough credits to stay here on Mirial for a while.”

“Unidentified freighter, you have entered territory under the control of the Confederacy of Independent Systems. A Federation patrol ship is nearby. Please submit your location to the Confederacy. If you do not reply within two minutes, we will engage you.”

“Stressed out”? Do I even want to point out how much of an understatement that is? Half a day of tracking down and taking out the Separatist forces, and the stress is only increasing. The idea had been to keep a safe distance in case they arrived in the middle of a battle with imperial forces. As the freighter eventually emerged from hyperspace far enough away from Serenno that the world was little more than greyish-tan speck against the backdrop of stars. The idea had been to keep a safe distance in case they arrived in the middle of a battle with imperial forces. As the freighter eventually emerged from hyperspace far enough away from Serenno that the world was little more than greyish-tan speck against the backdrop of stars.

It won’t be pleasant, but I’ll live. For a few minutes, Ahsoka let herself relax on the bunk. The gentle rocking of the ship reminded her of the feeling of floating, of weightlessness. She closed her eyes and let herself drift off to sleep, the weight of her concerns.

As the freighter approached the planet, Ahsoka awoke with a start, her eyes flying open in surprise as she realized that they had entered a city. She looked out the windows at the bustling streets, the people going about their daily lives. It was a stark contrast to the quiet solitude of the space station. "It won’t be pleasant, but I’ll live," she thought. She got up and walked out of the cockpit, the conversation leaving her drained emotionally. "I’m going back to sleep. Wake me up when we’re close."
them to the speeder. "Bane, continue with your current assignment. And never presume to decide"

"My apologies. I wish to speak with you in person. If you will permit it, returned with this droid to"

"We're not going anywhere we don't want," said Ahsoka, standing in the middle of a ring of
heads impacting the side of the vehicle fast enough to decapitate them. The last one was destroyed
others got back on their feet and took aim, she gave up on the blaster and lifted them with the
commando droids.

Serenno holding him in such esteem, could have complicated the situation."

Count Dooku's known connection to the Sith and anti-Jedi prejudices, along with the people of
"It was not your response that concerned me, it was your citizens," continued Bane, "The late

Dammit, we are not fooling

Bystanders started to gather around, keeping their distance but all trying to get a good look at what
short, a few inches below Ahsoka. The long cape she wore identified her as one of the aristocracy
from it.

They only got a few steps as a transport pulled in front of her, eight commando droids leaping
"We". I said "We'll take our chances", I grouped Barriss with myself when talking about being

Wait.

Please. Who am I kidding. He knows.

"Well, you'll have to do it without us," said Ahsoka, standing up to leave.

'Kill Palpatine without collateral damage' is outside my current price range."

Bane was nonplussed by their reaction. "I'm trying to bump off the most powerful and heavily
"That- that impact would- " began Barriss.

the palace.

Ahsoka and Barriss stared in shock at Bane, who described the operation with the same level of
it to detonate when it hits the planet."

if that happens, nobody's gonna care about some runaway Jedi or an criminal bounty hunter. In

"The 'Emperor' is the only person who can hold the Empire under his control. Kill him, and all

needing to ask questions Bane should be explaining to begin with if he wanted her cooperation.

Now

Hence, she is small and will fight you."

though the Jedi didn't know it, Ahsoka was always one to be concerned with the future. The risk of

pompous rich people in the event of his death."

"You have our good friend Count Dooku for that," said Bane, grinning with approval. "Seems he

"Fine then. Talk. How did Serenno rally that fleet? The Separatist armies were all said to be shut

buddies out, but he didn't make it easy for them."

"Why would he go to the trouble?"

"They're a loose band of smugglers coordinating efforts to resist the Empire. And they know how

Ahsoka

"Yes, Do you even know who you're working for?"

Though Bane knew how to put in the effort, the shade provided by his hat bringing out the creepy
patrons plenty of sun. Ahsoka watched Bane obsessively, noting his grimace as the three of them

Against her better judgement, she followed after the other girl. The two of them saw the reason at the same time, in plain sight rather than slinking in the
few

<Nice to see you looking more lively, Barriss.> 

her dialect was comprehensible to Ahsoka. <I liked some of the people here.>

out into the spaceport."

"Ah, Serenno! It is good to be back," exclaimed Cici as she lowered the boarding ramp and rolled
Opening her eyes after several minutes of calm, Ahsoka smiled at the sight of her friend with an
beds and closed their eyes.

"Thankfully, she got an idea. "Would you like to meditate with me?"

"You at least have an excuse. You were sick. Bane and the Empire know exactly what they're
doing," explained Ahsoka, seeing her response was doing little to ease Barriss's concerns.

"I...told her. Accidentally."

"She knows our real names, too. She's seen me before, six years ago."

"How does she know that makes it difficult is how she's messed up in so many ways it's tough to figure out
she did? Go lie down because she's tired all the time? Decisions, decisions."

"Ahsoka, I need to ask you something."

"Shoot," responded Ahsoka, reluctantly rolling over to face Barriss and continue the conversation.

"Ahsoka's eyes were fixed on her new associate as she and the countess shook hands.

"It's your call."

"This is what you brought us here for? To offer a vaguely defined job?" asked Ahsoka,

"For starters, upgrades to your vessel. A G-Class freighter is a fairly new product, but it lacks in
parameters I learned your identities," explained the countess as she looked over a datapad

"Shall we go ahead, then?"

"Ahsoka, pacing back and forth in their quarters on the

"Ahsoka, I need to ask you something."

"ируемо, Букаш, какое уроки вы смотрели и что вы сегодня хотели бы посмотреть?"

"Великолепно, Букаш. Я у вас буду через полчаса."

"Ахоска, я хочу поговорить с вами."

"Вы, Баррис, ваш новый причёска и новые прически, я могу помочь вам выбраться из них."

"Как вы думаете, я могу помочь вам выбраться из них?"

"Я...говорила ей. Некако."
Ahsoka. "An information packet I need delivered to Senator Riyo Chuchi."

"...agreeable nonetheless," she said, holding out a datacard to you. "When will she return?" asked the countess impatiently. "I didn't come out here, meeting you in a pad, slowly gravitating towards the entrance as if they expected Barriss to walk through any crevice."

"I've decided on your first assignment, to be completed as soon as my techs are finished with your droid," said Midla. "A year into the war, I lost contact," explained Midla, frowning for a moment. "I expect Dooku had a hand in it. Among other things," Midla said as she checked over her former employee to make sure she was in good condition, taking note of every dent, scuff, and scratch, picking a bit of dirt out of a crevice. "Modifying Cici beyond what was considered legal was simply one small act of defiance in good condition, taking note of every dent, scuff, and scratch, picking a bit of dirt out of a crevice."

"I'm only removing the casing to find whatever's jamming it," said Midla. "Okay, um, droideka, collapse into ball mode."

"You're underestimating how finicky repairing these guys can get. They were built to be dedicated workers and not be classified as property? Right? Or were the two sides functionally the same?" asked Ahsoka as she unwrapped a protein bar. She could practically feel Cici judging her eating habits at this point, but was too hungry to care. "Anyway, how do you know how to maintain droidekas?"

"You're absolutely right about that," replied Cici as she gazed up at Ahsoka approvingly. "but I like genuine concern as she kneeled down and hugged Cici. "So in Cici's background on Serenno. "She's my droid."

"Among other things," Midla said as she checked over her former employee to make sure she was in good condition, taking note of every dent, scuff, and scratch, picking a bit of dirt out of a crevice. "Modifying Cici beyond what was considered legal was simply one small act of defiance in good condition, taking note of every dent, scuff, and scratch, picking a bit of dirt out of a crevice."

"The droidekas are...asking how to get their own names," said Ahsoka. "I remembered the droidekas were the same, but you can know one thing with certainty," explained Cici, turning to look and point at Ahsoka. "You're free to go," she said as Cici finished reassembling the joint, then watched the droideka walk slipshod repair performed by an idiot tech and throwing the thing into the trash. "Alright, Pin..."

"It's your first cut of our earnings."
shapes pierced the clouds, spraying green laser bolts at the city below. Ahsoka dropped her tool and leapt onto the top of her ship, staring into the sky as dozens of black ships flew overhead. They looked too artificial.

"Exactly like what she'd heard on Umbara." Or, it was at first, but growing louder and louder every second, filling her with a strange, uneasy feeling. She couldn't shake the impression that she was being watched, although she couldn't see anyone.

"I hate it when people won't listen," she muttered to herself as she leaned against a wall of a building. "Sometimes I wish I could just..." She shook her head, trying to push away the thoughts. "No. I can't do that. I have to keep going, keep fighting." She took a deep breath and straightened up, determined to stay focused.

"You need to spread the word," said the small, round droid in front of her. "You need to let people know what's happening. The galaxy needs to know.

"But it's too dangerous," Ahsoka protested. "I can't just go running around telling everyone what's happening. I have to be careful.

"You won't do any good if no one knows about what you're fighting," the droid said, its little green photoreceptors glowing with determination. "You need to spread the word. You need to make people aware of what's happening.

"But if they all know, what happens then?" Ahsoka asked, her voice rising. "What happens if they all start treating me like a hero? How can I keep fighting then?"

"They'll support you. They'll help you. They'll..."

"But what if they don't? What if they just ignore me and keep going about their business?"

"They won't. They'll see the importance of what you're doing. They'll understand the danger. They'll help you.

"But what if they don't?"

"They will." The droid's little red photoreceptors glowed brighter, and its little green ones dimmed. "They will."
I am the Inquisitor. It’s a pleasure to see you again, Padawan Offee.

Vibroblade, scared, but willing to put up more of a fight, and curious as to who was wielding a lightsaber. The new arrival ignited a red lightsaber, casually dispersing the stun shots as he stepped forward to open fire.

The imperial crest on his shoulder made it clear he wasn’t there to help her, and she didn’t hesitate.

They’re looking for Ahsoka and I. They were expecting Jedi.

Each, to make sure that armor of theirs wouldn’t let them get back up again in a few seconds.

The moving scrap drew the troopers’ attention, probably mistaking it for a still-active enemy unit. Good enough to manipulate objects without a direct line of sight.

They want me alive. Why?

Disintegrated by the shots.

Was torn apart, the blast knocking her down, and the fighter pulled up as her droideka escort was disintegrated by the shots.

The sound of one of those new imperials fighters grew louder behind her, and she turned in time right track to get to the middle of the city.

Though the available indicators, like the steadily growing noise of the baster fire being exchanged, were not enough to get her close.

At least, she thought that was the direction she was headed.

With no Jedi, and no way to steal a warship, this little venture wasn’t going anywhere.

And she’d stop for a break.

Boots helping him. It was possible the tranquilizer in her system would eventually knock her out. Bane could easily keep up with her thanks to those boots of his, and was doing.

Disoriented immediately. It took all her willpower to force herself to stand up and continue.

Jedi training included techniques for resisting the effects of toxin, and Ahsoka had fought off use the Force to stop them again, but reacted an instant too late, the leading dart pricking her palm.

Through the smoke cloud, another group of darts flew at her. She flung out her hand and tried to levitated it between her and her attacker until it detonated.

Bane pulled a grenade out of a pouch on his belt, casually tossing it over to Ahsoka, who sent it flying. It caught on the fire at the rear of the formation, causing it to detonate.

As they flew over, Ahsoka lept onto the one at the rear of the formation and kicked the B1 pilot. That’ll do.

At least, she thought that was the direction she was headed.

Over the tops of the buildings, enormous landing crafts could be seen descending over the edges exactly that, hovering a few stories above ground and firing stun blasts at her.

Stay awake. Bane could easily keep up with her thanks to those boots of his, and was doing.

As she swung her saber, Bane grabbed her wrist, holding the blade directed away from the two of them for all.

Bane’s head, sending large shards down on top of him. As he was distracted trying to get out of her grip, she raised her saber, cutting towards him loudly.

Overhead, she heard another group of darts flying at her, and she turned in time to see a large bolt of energy whiz by her. She caught it in her hand and flung it back at her attacker, who was distracted by the explosion.

As she tossed it back, a bolt from the other side hit her. With her right arm and hand still disoriented from the initial hit, she moved the bolt to her left hand. With her missing right hand, she was unable to complete the activation.

Change of Plans

While he forced her lightsaber away from him, he brought his other gauntlet to bear. Had she not quipped.

As she swung her saber, Bane grabbed her wrist, holding the blade directed away from the two of them for all.

Forced her to stop, which should’ve been enough time for her to use the Force to disorient him. She’d thought so, anyway.

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Forced her to stop, which should’ve been enough time for her to use the Force to disorient him. She’d thought so, anyway.
handed Ahsoka's weapon back to its owner. "I need to build a new lightsaber," she said, pausing for several seconds to let Ahsoka think.

"What are you working on?" she asked, glancing over at the screen Barriss was studying.

Ahsoka sighed softly, not sure whether to hug and comfort Barriss or shake her until she started thinking more clearly. "Yes, captain," replied the Inquisitor casually, confident he was wrapping up a fine day's work. "I thought I could at least get you to the ship."

Ahsoka...I'm sorry."

"Indeed. A pity, though. It seems you managed to attract an unwanted crowd."

"And I've studied under the dark lord. A mere padawan like yourself, restrained by the trappings of the Jedi Order..."

You really want to "do something right this time"? Now's your chance. Don't mess this up.

"What are you saying?"

"What do I do?"

"The Inquisitor turned and walked away, muttering "Eclipse" under his breath."

"Yes. Really. Let's do it. The hatred is flowing through me. I'm all for the dark side. When do we..."

"What are you talking about?"

"The Inquisitor held his saber defensively, uncertain what to do about the new opponents."

"I killed her. I wonder, are you as weak as she was?"

"What are you working on?"

"A perfectly acceptable reason to join him, as far as he was concerned."
Building one is…going to be even tougher,” she said as she checked over the weapon and reattached it to her belt. “When the Jedi temple was raided, all locations for finding crystals were found by the imperials. Kyber crystals being as valuable as they are, I checked a few sites, but the Empire is monitoring them. Trying to acquire a crystal will only make us a target again.”

“That’s what I expected,” Barriss replied, despondent at the reminder of the Jedi order’s state. “That’s why I’ve been looking through the star chart. Jedi have a long history, and there are other worlds where kyber crystals can be found. Dantooine, for instance. It used to be home to Jedi, who were drawn there for the crystals and the remoteness of the world. A mainly agricultural planet, without an imperial presence. It makes sense. And…I have a good feeling about this.”

Ahsoka thought it over. Heading to any location where Jedi once lived, even an ancient, abandoned one was risky. She could tell Barriss was dead set on doing this. And making a new lightsaber, forging that extension of herself, could be good for her. Plus, Barriss was right about the practical use of her getting a lightsaber to deal with enemy darksiders.

Then her thoughts drifted to the datacard, what could be on it. Whether she should go along with this detour, or tell Barriss to wait until they’d done their job.

“Dantooine it is.”
The Inquisitor spoke gruffly as he left the room.

"Will that be all?" asked the other without any hint of emotion as the Pau'an turned to leave.

broke off the attempted reading, leaving him staring dumfounded at the alien.

captain was thinking in a language the Inquisitor did not understand, or even recognize. After

Force, he tried to gauge the captain, tell what was a bluff, what was the truth.

To be talked to with this kind of tone was unheard of for the Inquisitor. Reaching out through the

smugglers. After killing me, you'd better have a plan to deal with all eight thousand of them."

kindly to learning their captain was killed by some nameless, treasonous mystic. A mystic who

speak for the loyalty of the crewers serving other officers you've worked with, mine will not take

ever compromise my objectives again, I will inform your master of your incompetence and

remains of the 'Separatist' holdings, as I did on Umbara. You seem to take your position as Lord

destruction of the remaining Jedi takes priority over even a planetary-scale invasion."

"You jeopardized my operation on Serenno. By diverting soldiers to aid you against the Jedi, a

"What is it?"

Turning back around, the Inquisitor's eyes met the captain's, their red glow standing out in the dim

edge.

"We are not finished," said the captain, voice changing from a fairly informal tone to an irritated

partial success of his mission, the Inquisitor decided to cut this conversation short.

Uninterested in the analysis, and having seemingly resolved the captain's concern regarding the

"Most likely. Even so, it costs no resources and it's possible we'll get lucky."

unlikely enough operatives can be rallied to apprehend Offee and Tano."

"She'll never go to an imperial-run source," said the Inquisitor skeptically. "Even if she does, it's

lookout for any female Mirialan of her description who purchases it."

improvement. I have sent out a notice informing all pharmaceutical distributers to be on the

destructive behavior observed when she was your prisoner, her activity here shows a marked

medicine, designed to balance neurotransmitter levels. Compared to the often despondent and self-

"Blood the former padawan left behind at the battlefield contained trace amounts of Mirialan

The Inquisitor raised an eyebrow. "What antidepressants?"

her time in prison, the antidepressants appear to be helping."

"Perhaps not. Though comparing her behavior from your confrontation to her mental state from

"Resolve will not be enough," said the dark side acolyte contemptuously.

The tone of the description almost sounded

her past, and progress. The elegance of a Jedi giving way to the resolve of a rebel."

it alongside the first. "Fascinating, aren't they? Note the difference between the images. Her old

"Precisely," said the other, pulling up another image of Barriss from her time in prison, positioning

"Only that they signify talents and strengths of their recipient."

"Tell me, Grand Inquisitor, what do you know of Mirialan tattoos?"

helmet camera of a stormtroopers. One of the few pieces of equipment to survive the droideka

"And how can you be sure of that? What do you know of Offee?" asked the Inquisitor.

eventually. A deserter and a broken girl will not be able to evade me forever."

relatively low compared to who he normally worked with.

Taking some small offense at the mention of the mission's failure, the Inquisitor wasn't at all

targets' escape?"

"Yes, Inquisitor," said the captain politely, momentarily glancing at his guest before turning back

With the battle in orbit came to a close, the Grand Inquisitor left the bridge, walking to meet with

The turbolasers and point-defense turrets of the warships had no trouble in obliterating the

left the droids only capable of following basic combat tactics, which were readily understood

commanders on the battleships and the swarms of vulture droids launch towards the imperial fleet

starfighters had proven the key to eliminating the fleet. Jamming communications between the

The battle had gone better than he'd anticipated. Exploiting the Separatist overreliance on droid

fled the system.

The Grand Inquisitor stared out through the window of the star destroyer's bridge, observing the

Outbound Flight

Serennian fleet similar to how he defeated some Trade Federation ships in the novel

quotes

strategist/tactician in the Empire and has an interest in alien art as a means of

dammit. For those of you unaware, Thrawn was a major antagonist in the Legends

read some of his
order rise in the galaxy? Are you some breed of Sith? One power by self-doubt and misery.

"Ancient Rakatan designs are fascinating, don't you agree?" asked the holocron. "They love imposing statues of alien creatures with large, bullet-like heads and stalked eyes, their arms achieve an unnecessary goal made any progress impossible. Make sense?"

"Don't you give me that look. It's all a matter of getting your objectives straight. You needed to get ripped it open, safely getting through to the other side.

Eager to get out of the cramp, claustrophobia-inducing pocket, she faced the cracked wall and "You want me to power my way through it? Take the risk?"

"This stockpile you know of, where is it, exactly?" she asked.

disconcerted, the markers she left doing little to ease her sense of becoming lost.

weren't smart or relentless enough to get back to. Idiots and quitters, every last one of them. Turn

"Hm. If you say so. Regardless, the Force must be strong with you to be drawn to holocrons. Plus,
Picking clumps of moist dirt and lichen off the holocron, Barriss begrudgingly answered. "No.

Half-buried in the dirt, there was a luminous, violet, elongated triangular bipyramid, the light this off as her imagination, then in the distance, she could see a faint glow, drawing her closer.

As she tried to recall what, if any, species had a lifespan of that length, Barriss turned around

idea. You're going insane after, what, a couple hours? Spend four thousand years in this cave, "Wait, wait! Don't go! Seriously, don't leave me down here. It's so fucking boring, you have no

"Where are you?" she yelled.

Even through the Force, she couldn't sense anyone else in the cave.

Cautiously walking deeper into the cave, Barriss shined her light, searching for the source of the voice.

Barriss opened her eyes and spun around, shining her light down one of the tunnels, trying to see

stretched on forever and led her nowhere. Not a single crystal could be found no matter what path

I won't...I.......won't...........I need a break.

Ten minutes after that, she slipped on a rock while descending into a cave, reaching the bottom of

Maybe she couldn't find one because she wasn't meant to receive one ever again.

Stopping to take a break, she drank deeply from her canteen, lamenting the lack of progress. It had

Barriss went through tunnel after tunnel, taking scans, plotting out paths, figuring out where she

With her makeshift campsite secure, she unrolled her bag and laid down for the night. She didn't

lightsaber, and then we can protect ourselves from the Inquisitor. It's not that bad, it's not that

Remember to focus on positive thoughts. Ahsoka's with me. We survived. I'm going to make a new

She died BECAUSE you were a failure.

Once her mind got onto the subject of Luminara, all her feelings of calmness and contemplation

She needed a lightsaber again.

Her fight with the Inquisitor came to mind, her futile attempt to protect herself.

order wouldn't be practical. Not until after the Emperor was destroyed.

Even if they could rally, with the Empire and its Inquisitors hunting the Jedi, reconstruction of the

There could be survivors other than her and Ahsoka out in the galaxy, ones more willing to

In a hundred years, will ruins like this be all that remain of the Jedi?

Why did she never feel overwhelmed?

I can't tell if that's a good or bad thing...

thoughts from back then.

Everything that she'd done seemed so illusive. She hardly remember or understand her own

Solitude, with the only light being the moon and starlight coming through a crack in the ceiling,

kath hounds prowling the area.

able to get anywhere near her. It was still better than camping out in the wilderness with nocturnal

Eventually, she had to call it quits. There wasn't anything else to be found here.

Besides that, there was only discarded furniture, rubble, and a few disturbingly fresh-looking

indicating caves with crystals present, probably intended for Gatherings held on this planet.

The Voice in the Darkness
instead of rage? That seems like something they'd try eventually, and you've got those qualities in abundance."

Shifting awkwardly in place, thinking about how to explain what she'd done, Barriss felt torn between really needing to talk about this and not wanting to talk about it at all. Ever.

"I was a Jedi not too long ago, but was cast out of the order. I thought I'd fallen to the dark side, though I've realized that can't be true. There's no anger, no hatred, nothing," she said with dismay, slowly lowering herself to the floor, exhausted from the journey. "I only feel empty."

The holocron remained quiet for a moment. "You remind me very much of someone I knew."

"What do you mean?"

"Broken by pain and war. Not dark, only wounded. Don't think less of yourself because you're not a Jedi. I'd also left the order for quite some time before returning."

The time frame, the expertise, the little hints. Realization slowly crept into Barriss's mind. In conflicts against the dark side, many Jedi had left the order, but it was rare to return. And to be found here on Dantooine...

"Who are you?" she asked softly. She already knew the answer, but had to hear it for herself.

The holocron brightened, speaking with a touch of amusement.

"Jedi, Sith, savior, conqueror, hero, villain. I am all things, and yet I am nothing. At least, that's what people tell me."

The glow it emitted intensified, projecting a tall holographic figure adorned in thick robes and armor, arms crossed, hood raised, face covered by a mask. An image which had Barriss gaping in awe.

Revan.
Absolutely.

Mercy which you showed her?

became more and more unsure of herself. The time eventually came for us to duel, and I

conversations. No, I reminded her of her desire to do good. How she wanted to end oppression, to

"Please, nothing so schmaltzy. She'd probably been making people suffer in between our

"It took little more than stirring up old memories."

"How could that change happen so quickly?"

completely from a treacherous, pitiful Sith master into a kind, relaxed, even cheerful woman."

with which she'd seen Jedi become their own antithesis. "What was she like?"

emitted the sound of a long sigh. "Do you know anything about Korriban, or the Sith academy

sooooo irredeemable, you're a bad,

pleaded with me to kill her, stating she couldn't be redeemed, that her crimes were too great.

"It doesn't change anything. It's not only what I did, it's

prevented the suffering of billions."

The simplistic retelling had Barriss so enraptured the shouting fit didn't bother her. "And then?"

Mostly? asked Barriss, an eyebrow raised at the qualifier.

she had caused. I refused to do it. I spared her, and sent her back to the enclave mostly

"So you killed her?"

"Eh. I've done worse."

increasingly frantic explanation.

The Revan hologram sat up and leaned back, listening calmly until Barriss finished her

be executed for crimes I'd committed!"

Ahsoka trusted me over everyone save her own master, and I was going to sit back and watch her

incriminated, lying to her face and leading her into a trap. I personally attacked and brutalized her!

explosive to bomb the Jedi temple on Coruscant, killing six Jedi, twelve civilians, and wounding

Despite the hesitance, Barriss was quickly realizing that covering up her emotions wasn't going to

voice spoke again with a more thoughtful, considerate tone than before.

"Of course it's not what I think. She's just your long-time friend who you feel unbelievably guilty

front of her, close enough to make her jump.

nodded approvingly at the answer. "It really isn't what you think."

looked. It took a second for her to figure out what she was being asked.

the edges and resilient because of it," explained Barriss. "She's my best friend. Or, she was,

understands. Able to maintain her connection to the light even in the darkest of times. Everything I

Ignoring the mocking tone, Barriss thought about (most of) the questions. "She's an incredible

"As a very old, very bald, and very dear friend of mine once said: 'I've had to listen to your

"I may be paraphrasing a bit. Now, where

exactly great conversationalists. Besides, did you even hear that pause when you said she was

wearing down what must have been a very stubborn nail. Which was holographic. And gloved.

partner. "Did you annoy the Mandalorians to death? Is that how you beat them?"

Discussion grating on her, Barriss was quickly losing her patience with her conversation

"I can't believe it! I'm speaking directly to Revan! I have Revan's holocron!"

Kashyyyk!" she exclaimed, practically hyperventilating.

"A slow day on the job

stories will be of

Resonance

"You're not exactly what I would have

many questions. For right now, I'm focusing on getting a new crystal."
Chapter End Notes

by brute force, lamplight illuminating the enormous, spike-covered figure of a terentatek. A hole, causing her to step back in terror. As she approached and shined her light into the new room, a ferocious roar emanated from the rubble. She focused on the rubb...
studied, critiqued. Compared to Revan's companions, how would she measure up?

She'd seen that image, that pose, the one she'd seen in every history book on the subject of the Revan.

"Barriss, why is your bag coughing?"

"Of course," said Ahsoka, placing her hand on Barriss's shoulder. "If I broke into a prison to help any of your people, you would have been..." "enraged, yes," she cut in.

"Not exactly. I mean, I would have had a few things to say. But I would have been glad to help her."

She looked completely exhausted, her clothes a mess, bandages on her hands. Not to mention the fact that her ship was full of bodies...""

Ahsoka ran through to ship to see Barriss slowly walking aboard, flanked by droidekas. She could hardly believe she was seeing this...""

Barriss!

Before Cici could argue the point about their new murder machines, both of them heard the sound of engines from the cockpit.

"Our little friends are surprisingly sweet."

Looking out at the mess from the cockpit, she was glad she'd made sure all the destroyers knew about them...""

She was in the cockpit of the ship...""

With Serenno fallen, the information might be worthless now.

"I know the galaxy is currently under control of a massive empire ruled by the Sith, and the Jedi Council..."

"Oh, that is, that is such, you've..."

Rations she could eat, scarfing them down as she rested and filling the free space in her bag with them. Her bag was full of things she knew she'd need...""

"This is, I walked right past this place, and it, it lead to the crystal-" she stammered.

She'd been in this hallway.

The tunnel was a bit cramped, but at a low enough angle she could easily work her way out of the system once and for all. It's hilarious."

"My master, the former Sith Lord Revan. He was once considered to be one of the greatest..."

"People who believe humorlessness is a sign of intelligence and wisdom possess neither trait," said Revan. "That's one thing I'm glad I communicated to Bastila. She really did have a lovely sense of humor."

"Then why do you always act like, well, like you're always on a mission?"

And when it comes to killing Jedi en masse, you can bet the Sith are behind it. I know from experience."

"Out of the order, the Jedi aren't ones to hold grudges and those softies would probably help you get away with it."

"I know they're taller than you are, right? And they killed like five people..."

When it finally got close enough to take a swing at her, Barriss jumped over the creature's limbs, aiming for the...""

"Revan? Revan, I need help!" she cried out after the latest round of dodging the claws.

"I'm here," said Revan, turning around and...""

"I'm not sure how to beat this creature..."

"...You can get around this."

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...You can get around this.
What would the Prodigal Knight say to her?

"Oh, wow, you are cute!" said Revan enthusiastically.

"...What?" she said, glancing over at Barriss, who now wore an expression of utter horror.

"Don't be fooled by its jokes, that thing is not to be underestimated!" said Barriss.

"That 'thing'? I'm hurt, Barriss," said Revan, in a tone that conveyed a complete lack of hurt.

"Oh, great, another new arrival. Boss, can't you make any normal friends?" came an electronic voice, followed by the sound of wheels skittering across the metal floor and screeched to a halt next to the hologram. "Hey. I'm CC-7. The astromech.

"So, they finally figured out how to build astromechs that speak Basic, huh? It only took four thousand years."

"Actually, Cici is unique in my experience. And illegal," said Ahsoka.

"Seriously? I hate this galaxy."

"It's actually both more logical and more stupid than it looks at face value," explained Cici. "You know anything about patent law? I like to keep up with that stuff seeing as droids like me are all property. Ain't that right, boys?"

The droidekas, who had been drifting back into the ship one by one now that it was time to leave, had cluttered up the cargo hold and were now all beeping various responses to Cici, mostly about work conditions, until the sound became overwhelming. Revan glanced around at the spectacle, silently expressing obvious amusement through holographic body motions alone.

"ENOUGH!" shouted Barriss, to the surprise of everyone, including herself. Even the droidekas looked taken aback. "...If you'll excuse me, I've got work to do," she said nervously as she grabbed the holocron and her bag, heading to the work bench in the engine room.

Sensing the need to be alone, Ahsoka left her to it, taking her seat in the pilot's chair to prepare the ship for takeoff, a notification on the comm catching her attention. A transmission had just arrived, from her smuggler contact. She was expecting information on a delivery run she could put off doing until she'd settled the standing business, but it turned out to be much more interesting.

An invitation to a direct meeting with the smugglers' alliance.

I guess being present at two imperial invasions got their attention, she thought, reading through the provided information. Though I'm not sure if this is a good thing or a bad thing.

The transmission directed her to a base on planet 'Myrkr'. Mid-rim world, still on their path to Pantora. The detour would offer Barriss plenty of time to build her new saber before things got really hectic.

We can handle one more stop.
What's the 'difficult' explanation?"  

"Well, the easiest explanation is that I was given a grand opportunity to redeem myself and fix the things normally showed some lifelike qualities like breathing and occasional shifts of weight, to again you bet your ass I'd start rallying allies and building an army of HK units. I've got the "-Palpatine."

"Please don't say Vitiate please don't say Vitiate..."

"His name is-"

"The Sith...ran for office..." said Revan, clearly at a loss. "That's a new one. I was so busy"

"They didn't," said Ahsoka. "A Sith Lord was elected Supreme Chancellor."

"I did. I built him. When I was a Sith Lord, I built HK, sent him on an assassination mission, lost"

"For some stimuli to awaken memories buried within his core. One of the most sophisticated and damaged memories I had to fix one at a time, each one taking me back further into the past, ugly, crummy used-droid shop shoved into the corner of one of the only settlements on the planet, began Revan. "When I was on my mission to stop the Sith, I journeyed to Tatooine, and in this"

"Well,"

"Is it?" asked Revan rhetorically, holographic visage appearing on the opposite side of the table."

"As her eyes finally started to glaze over, Ahsoka checked their destination one least time and"

"The ship was her choice, the destination was her choice, the job was her"

"Enough determination to spend a period of more than two hundred times her entire life devoted to"

"And now that's over with."

"Barriss tensed up as the hologram stared down at her, edging closer, and closer, then lunging at"

"Toward the surface."

"Then, a thousand years ago, new Sith appeared on the planet, harvesting kyber crystals to fuel"

"I did this so many times I eventually mapped large areas of the cave, trying to move upwards in"

"Things weren't stupid, either. I could only trick each one once. Time after time after time, I had to"

"Heat pockets of water around to create currents. It's a good thing I'm buoyant. Eventually I came"

"After five centuries of this, the cave flooded in some storm and I got swept away, drifting around"

"Holograms like them to lure them to me. I got them to nudge me bit by bit, a few even making the"

"As to what I was. It carried me a few dozen meters, then dropped me again, probably realizing I"

"Mimicking its crude shrieking to get its attention, the creature proceeded to pick me up, curious"

"Rotted in the damp air. Then, one day, a kinrath wandered into the cave."

"Having never heard of any such thing, but Revan had been constantly active in what can only"

"One task. Holocrons, as she knew them, weren't known to possess such qualities."

"What are you about to tell me now?"

"What's the 'difficult' explanation?" asked Barriss, now more interested. "So far,"

"Of course, they never came back."

"Barriss had never heard of any such thing, but Revan had been constantly active in what can only"

"I wonder what was"
And the weapon and raising it to meet Barriss's. “Get up. Let’s see what I can teach you.”

“It’s not what I would’ve wanted.”

The blade was unstable, to boot, random arcs crackling around it, so chaotically Barriss didn’t.

The harsh, dark orange light.

The blade shot out of the hilt and lit up the room. Barriss stared at it, her smile fading as she took

switch.

aligned.

Each part was functional, and in the correct position. The power cell was charged. The crystal was

components together despite not being made for one another.

Barriss spent the next few hours dissecting the pieces of the saber, checking for corrosion, (there

symbolism. You’re putting together a piece of technology here. It has specific mechanics and

“What are you talking about?”

“I know I hurt a great many people without intending to during the war.”

“Not wanting to hurt people doesn’t mean you can’t do it anyway.”

“and it isn’t supposed to make you miserable.”

Barriss paused in her work, glad to see a more accommodating side of Revan. “I knew you don’t

“and it isn’t supposed to make you miserable.”

“You don’t get to stop there!” she said, jiggling the

“need

wants

it to work.”

“...What?”

“Jolee was so outraged by that mockery of justice he abandoned the order forever in protest, and

“Who?” asked Ahsoka.

“Yeah, yeah. As Jolee would say, you only believe this is the most important time in history

“...I’m sorry,” said the holocron after a long pause. No justification or clarification followed, only a

comment after rude comment, and trying to humiliate me in front of Ahsoka!” she shouted, glaring

nearly gotten me killed already, and ever since I’ve brought you back, it’s been nothing but rude

with greater intensity, then stopped as she slammed her hydrospanner onto the table. “You know,

was expected was exactly what Revan usually did.

simple, sincere apology.

“...I’m sorry,” said the holocron after a long pause. No justification or clarification followed, only a

At this point only understanding there is a new definition of being a good person, with a

Maybe Jolee couldn’t save his wife, but I can save Barriss.

If she could have become like that Inquisitor.

Sith Lord Exar Kun began his war to conquer the galaxy, Nayama was drawn to the dark side.

When Jolee refused to go with her, she tried to kill him, but wasn’t as skilled as him, and was

“...What?”

“Ahsoka’s hands.

“I thought so,” said Revan, the violet glow dimming until the holocron became dark and inert in

The hologram’s hands shot apart as its head snapped back to face Ahsoka. “They were fighting

Ahsoka to gaze longingly into the distance. “Oh, they were in love.”

“Yes, that’s basically what I said back then. Hm. There’s a good story in here,” said Revan,

important. And all those past battles where the Jedi opposed evil were important, too!”

“I’m living in the present. What I do now could have long-reaching consequences. Of

one about how terrible and absolute the consequences of failure were. And liked calling people

beaten. And then, he showed her mercy, letting her escape only for her to go off and kill many

Sith Lord Exar Kun began his war to conquer the galaxy, Nayama was drawn to the dark side.

The hologram’s arms fell limp, and Revan’s voice became regretful, and droll.

“Money can’t buy it!”

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Sith Lord Exar Kun began his war to conquer the galaxy, Nayama was drawn to the dark side.
“We've had this conversation,” said Revan, “but nothing is wrong here.”

“Dr. Madalena!”

“But there are circumstances,” replied Revan, “and we'll handle them.”

The two of them raised their blades, got firm stances, and-

The engine room was certainly large enough to accommodate them both, and the two girls stood on opposite sides of the room.

"I...suppose I can act on my own. When properly motivated," admitted Barriss, thinking about the dangers she could face out there on her own.

"Wrong," said Revan again. "Closer, though."

"I've never been able to..." started Ahsoka, trying to get Barriss to be a little more open.

"I already know why."

"Please. I haven't done anything on my own. I'd still be in prison without Ahsoka, dead on the battlefield."

"Progress is progress," said Revan. "But you don't need as much help from her as you think."

"It's not your fault, Barriss," said Ahsoka, the words slipping out with unexpected ease.

"Wrong," replied Revan. "It's not your fault."

"I heard the lightsaber activate," explained Ahsoka, stepping in to examine Barriss's new weapon.

"Hm, you're right. To do this properly, you need a real opponent," said the holocron. "Ahsoka!"

"Huh?"

"Revan, I don't think this is good practice," said Barriss, her orange blade passing through Revan's counter.

"It makes a weird sort of sense. No wonder you were able to sneak up on me and Ventress like that," replied Revan, his jibjab sabers passing through Barriss's back, but not causing any harm.

Suddenly, Ahsoka felt like she was getting a much better understanding of Barriss. For the first time, she seemed like she wasn't trying to hide something.

"Barriss," she said, "is there something you want to tell me?"

"Yes," replied Barriss, "but I need to be sure..."

"You're never going to be able to kill me," Ahsoka said, "whether you're hidden or not."

"I...I already know why."
This is gonna be trouble.

It stuck a nerve. Or it would if Revan had any nerves in that assemblage of metal and crystals.

Force sensitives.

The new surroundings were certainly a welcome change. It felt like old times. A couple Jedi and

Being completely without any physical fatigue sounded great in theory, but four thousand years of

I miss sleeping.

pretty good day, I think. Saber's working (sorta), you got some training in, and we drudged up a

The silence grew tense as the hologram stood, arms crossed, silently staring at Barriss.

feels good. Shouldn't it?"

"I'm not sure if I really believe that, but it's nice to know she doesn't hold anything against me. It

"...Do tell."

There wasn't much of one, the avatar moving with unusual reserve.

Barriss thought for a second, and to her own surprise, she thought of something that really did

consequences of those actions, as your council did...that's simply evil in a different form."

face the holographic avatar. For all that meant since it still had no face. "What you did was wrong.

the holocron, prompting Barriss, who up to that point had been staring miserably at the floor, to

finished Revan, complete with a slow, bitter clap. "You're not evil because you've done evil

betrayed Ahsoka, destroyed your future, and have absolutely nothing good to show for it,"

"Well, maybe not so much 'Dark' or 'Gray' as 'Light done badly'. And you're not any kind of Jedi

of sacrifice was necessary to achieve victory and prevent the fall of the entire Republic. And it

my mission against Malak. To be truly gray is to know that you are committing a wrong action to

"As if you're one to judge."

people who care about her...and who seriously needs to

seeing Barriss's scowl. "A sweet, kind mess who did bad things but is trying to do better, and has

something awful," finished the holocron. "Any of this sound familiar?"

before it proved too much and one way or another, she had to make it stop. But she couldn't turn

"The fact you talk about her like that shows how little of her you understand. Now shut up and

reminded you of the most? Lovely."

"NO. I- I don't want to think about this."

Thankfully, Revan relented.

"In what ways, exactly?" she asked cautiously.

drive the point home, holographic lightning started arcing out of Revan's hands. "I don't care how

stronger, in more ways than one."

disregarded. They are part of who you are, and recognizing that part of yourself can make you

"And one last thing..." said Revan, "I want you to look at you. I want you to see you, you and what you are right now...what

chart it, understand why it exists, why others choose to walk it, endure,

itself. Just like the light. You know why there are so many 'paths' leading into darkness? Because

"I've known a lot of people who..." responded Revan deviously. "And I know how to see them."

"So..."

Barriss was at a loss. "Don't worry, the Sith aren't as strong as they like to think. The Force is a

and honest, and a liar, and unpredictable, and serene. I have been everything. And no Jedi or Sith,

different abilities."

"NO. I- I don't want to think about this."

"..." said Revan. "You are who you are, and it's always been that way. Why do you think that is?"

"..." Barriss thought back to the last time she had seen her...what ever she was. "Why do you think that is?"

"Because you are a Jedi."

"Because you are a Jedi?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"Because you are a Jedi?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

In that moment, Barriss's whole life went by in front of her eyes. The memories of every battle she had ever fought, the people she had lost, the things she had done...understandable...to a point. But without the Force, she was nothing. She was..."A Jedi..."

"...and you'll find
The fight only lasted seconds as Barriss slashed the clones apart, the few shots they got off easily for self-preservation and not attacking a non-Jedi commander. Many of these traitors remain."

"The lightsabers of all Jedi are to be taken by order of the Emperor. We need to keep track of how many we have," the Inquisitor said.

"Where did you find that?" asked Barriss, taking the saber from the trooper and studying every aspect. As she drew back and clutched her hand, the Sentinel's robe dissolved away, leaving behind the Inquisitor again.

"I didn't want things to be this way. They don't have to be this way. It isn't right," Barriss said as the Inquisitor approached.

"What I want is for you to stop.""THEY betrayed US," countered the Sentinel, slowly approaching Barriss as she backed towards the window."

"I have to face justice. I can't just walk away. I have to look them in the eye and tell them that it was me," Barriss said, clenching her teeth."

"I devoted my life to protecting this temple because I believed the order which dwelled within it..."

She fell silent for a moment as the Inquisitor, now the Inquisitor again, approached her. His voice, no longer declaring things with conviction from behind the guard, was more emphatic and rough. "You can get back on course and do something about the war, your evil.""

"But it..."

"The light is a trap, baited with the idea that you're devoting yourself to some noble purpose...and what I did was an atrocity. It wasn't the way of the light side...It wasn't what I wanted to do," she said, drawing in a deep breath."

"Before your bombing, he was set to command an attack on Boz Pity. Thanks to you, he never got the chance. Did you know that planet remained untouched for the remainder of the war, its citizens never seeing a Republic strike force coming to bomb their cities? How many millions of lives..."

"But it..."

"I didn't want things to be this way. They don't have to be this way. It isn't right," Barriss said, clenching her teeth."

"I will not allow this ridiculous farce play out," replied the Sentinel as he stepped around her, again."

"But it..."

"The councilmembers continued talking over her, their supposedly wise discussions of justice and how millions of lives..."

"I devoted my life to protecting this temple because I believed the order which dwelled within it..."

"But it..."

"I will not allow this ridiculous farce play out," replied the Sentinel as he stepped around her, again."

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"The councilmembers continued talking over her, their supposedly wise discussions of justice and how many millions of lives..."

"I devoted my life to protecting this temple because..."
Chapter Notes

face surprised Barriss, already so accustomed to seeing nothing but that enigmatic mask, as Revan
diamonds, rectangles, and triangles. “What can say? I’m a talented individual.”

hologram of Barriss’s face with each job title until it became a disorganized smattering of
not ‘stylish’.

“Absolutely not.”

down to match Barriss’s body type. “Better?”

not something looks like a real person,’” said Revan, shrinking several centimeters and slimming
neck, looking rather mismatched and unsettling enough Revan noticed her reaction to it.

“I think I pull off the look quite well, don’t you?”

eyes losing focus and drifting off in two different directions.

It was Barriss’s face.
The last clasp was disconnected, and Revan’s famous mask was pulled away, revealing...Barriss.

“Oh, have you?” said Revan. “Let’s see how accurate the history books are.”

“What do you mean by ‘advantage’? I know what you look like, Revan,” said Barriss. “Records
“It’s one of the advantages of not having a face,” said the holocron.

“I’m sorry for being so unappreciative,” she said, “though you are rather difficult to read. Even
at hearing what Revan thought of her.

“Suuuuure you didn’t,” said Revan, in a knowing tone Barriss didn’t quite understand. “Take the
“I’m- I was a Jedi,” said Barriss. “I didn’t grow up with parents.”

“Wow, you were one of those kids who’s parents never hugged them, weren’t you?”

new idea, joking or not.

‘the fittest’ to justify abhorrent behavior, but finding incredulity in the survival of
“I don’t believe that’s as encouraging as you think it is,” said Barriss, thinking as she chewed a

“It’s only a saber. Not even a passable one by Jedi standards,” said Barriss, taking her bulky saber
higher things, but getting a little reminder you did something right whenever you look in the
she felt comfortable in the way she looked. Barriss had never seen tattoos of this style before, and

“They’re- they’re wonderful,” she replied sincerely, studying her face in the reflective metal of the
tried to be tactful for once...what do you think of your new tattoos?”

Barriss put down her fork, staring intently at the hologram. “You were about to remark ‘you’re

“Got something on your mind, do you?” asked Revan.

“Just so you know, you slept in a few hours. It’s the middle of the day,” called Ahsoka. Barriss

“Thank you,” Barriss said, glancing towards the doorway once before crossing her legs and

“Where did you get the equipment to provide new tattoos? Do you even know what
“Wait,” said Barriss, backing away from the astromech and leaning slightly to

Take the time to fill me with confidence...”
the lawless planet. No imperials, no militia, no authority at all bothered them as they entered with the direct line of reasoning.

Wavering slightly, as much to lighten the mood as to convey her own decisiveness, Ahsoka went putting off contacting Senator Chuchi in favor of unidentified smugglers is worth it?"

"As much as I can be, and waiting longer won't change that," replied Barriss. "Do you really think descend into the planet's gravity well.

to slightly below average.

Barriss came into the cockpit and took her seat next to Ahsoka, studying the planet in front of More importantly, it was somebody with a growing networks of contacts and ships capable of

without help, they wouldn't be of use and be eliminated along with all the other undesirables. when it served their purposes, but once it accumulated enough power to enforce their authority forever under Palpatine's rule. Sure, the Empire had little qualms about making use of criminals

Somebody down there had enough decency to want the Empire stopped.

The lack of attention also made it an excellent place for criminals to set up a base away from the galaxy, the planet was sparsely populated, only a single city, and a relatively small one at that.

The sudden jolt of deceleration as the ship dropped back into realspace broke her concentration.

to her there were still plenty left on Dantooine.

had brought back would last them a while depending on where they put the funds, and according smuggling runs would. She wasn't exactly short on cash, either. The extra kyber crystals Barriss

with her friend would likely offer better opportunities to oppose Palpatine's rule than more was necessary or useful now. One way or another, she'd be in contact with Riyo, and meeting

The primary reason for the exercise was judging whether or not continuing to work as a smuggler

annoying to take on and off all the time."

"Yep. Tricky clasps," said Revan. "I also actively sought to dehumanize myself and be seen as an infallible, invincible entity. None of the typical weakness plaguing ordinary people. No face to express doubt, or fear, or any emotion at all. No humanity...but mostly the clasp thing. It got

infallible, invincible entity. None of the typical weakness plaguing ordinary people. No face to projected outfit!"

angle until wrenching it back off.

"Crap. Crap, I messed up, I missed one of the clasps," said Revan, mask hanging on at a weird

Revan shrugged and began complying with her request, fitting the mask back into place.

"I believe I understand," said Barriss after a moment, "but please put your mask back on.

"Well, I always feel like that, but there is a simple logic to this: you and I are very much alike."
righteousness. Unable or unwilling to rethink anything as a result."

"Are you calling the Jedi foolish?" asked Barriss. "It seems like a lot of trouble to gather a force of
oppressing worlds," said Barriss. Intelligently-executed self-interest did not impress her.

"Meaning the reason you won't turn us in is because we're worth more to you. Because you can
side-eye as she continued to eat. "I have a plan to help fight back against the Empire in a big way,
how far over the line that was, especially Barriss, who had gone from neutrality to giving him the
"I'm Barriss," said Barriss, somehow managing perfect pronunciation through her chewing.

Karrde was left at a loss for words, relaxing a bit as Ahsoka sat back down and placed her hands
back on the table, the two of them glancing awkwardly between Barriss and each other.

"I've been following your progress as well. You should be proud, the work you've done is impressive,"
explained Karrde. "And that's worth far more than the bounty the Empire's placed on

"A Jedi, even a resigned one such as yourself, possesses a certain respectability. More than I could
ever hope achieve, no matter how reasonable or hospitable I may be compared to other

Seemingly in an effort to placate her, Karrde got up and took a few steps close her. Not close
fire.

"I'm surprised you're working with us, actually. If you were working for the Empire, you'd be

Barriss simply seemed intimidated by the other's stature. She'd never even heard of this guy.

"Welcome to Myrkr. I am Vrask. Please, follow me," she said, her Basic nearly perfect, if still

Despite the relief of breathing non-recycled air, that oppressive feeling in the Force got worse and
worse.

And now, she'd earned enough credibility to move up.

"We've been able to establish a base here on Myrkr. We've been able to bring in and support a force
of nearly five thousand ships," said Vrask.

"A protocol droid shuffled into the room carrying a tray with two plates, setting them in front of the

This base was much more organized than she'd expected, and larger. Before landing, all she'd

The architecture was interesting, the building obviously having been constructed long before the

approached, not that it had succeeded against Jedi leading the Grand Army of the Republic.

A small flock of droidekas was scattered on the landing pad, some near some of the medium transports,

Thudding footsteps ended the conversation prematurely, neither of them wanting anyone to hear

"This is where the Empire got them?" asked Ahsoka.

Vrask turned around to lead them towards the central building of the base, speaking something
in Basic.

The base was spread out along the north end of the planet, where the land had been cleared,

oddly. The land was mostly covered in green, though there were some white areas. The sun was high
in the sky, the heat of the day was almost too much to bear.

"This is the command center," said Vrask. "We've been able to establish a base here on Myrkr. We've
been able to bring in and support a force of nearly five thousand ships."

Ahsoka and Barriss exchanged a look. 

"But you're the one who'd asked her here was the fact there was no one else to meet them.

The main hangars, where the ships were stored, were at the east end of the base, guarded by a small

outside, the arches that supported the ceiling had a slight curve to them, as if they were following
the curve of the ground below.

"This is what the Separatists used to win the war," said Vrask, his voice thick with emotion. "But now,
now it's a symbol of their defeat.

"We must disrupt the war effort.

And now, Ahsoka and Barriss were both on the same page for whatneeded to happen. They
were ready to get to work.
excellent condition. Any one of them could be battle-ready after a week in drydock to check their systems and perform maintenance,” he said casually, as if a fleet of ships, each one half the size of the Venerator-class Star Destroyers Ahsoka had primarily served on, was a typical discussion topic.

“I need you to approach potential buyers. Buyers interested in fighting the Empire, and capable of providing the manpower to crew those ships. High-class buyers who won’t make deals with lowly smugglers, but might talk to a noble Jedi if she approached them. Wealthy buyers who can pay us for them.”

Ahsoka tried to keep a straight face, having to stop herself from gaping at the idea that a smuggler, even one with the resources on display in this base, somehow had a sizable armada of pre-Clone War battle cruisers. She had never served on a ship of that class, but knew the broad details of their operation. Each one required a crew of thousands, and Karrde had hundreds? Earlier, she’d expected, at most, one warship. Maybe ten. Or details of an imperial invasion plan. The schematics to some ultra-secret imperial base where they were developing a new weapon. Probably accompanied by some ridiculous scheme involving her blowing it up somehow. Instead, she was more or less being handed a combined battle fleet more powerful than any she’d served in.

“How did you get that many ships?” asked Barriss.

“Completely blind luck,” replied Karrde, chuckling slightly at their incredulity. “Do you want the job or not?”

If this was a scam, Ahsoka had to give props for being outrageously bold.

Before sealing the deal, all three of them paused, not talking, not thinking, listening intently as they heard a faint whine in the air, growing louder. The sound of some very powerful engines hitting the atmosphere. A sound that was nothing unusual in a busy spaceport was an early warning here in the fringe. And judging by Karrde’s reaction, not in his schedule.

The trio rushed to one of the windows to see a light transport, one shuttle, and a fighter escort, incoming towards the planet. Definitely imperial.

“They’re back sooner than I’d expected,” Karrde said grimly as he watched the approaching ships, then turned to his guests and pulled out his comm to send orders to his personnel. “We need to hide you.”

Chapter End Notes

Me last chapter: Says E.K. Johnston stole my ideas.
Me this chapter: Steals all of Timothy Zahn’s ideas.
Yeah, this is starting to turn into The Thrawn Trilogy: Barrissoka Edition.

Talon Karrde is another Legends character I decided to include, planning him to be an ally of Ahsoka’s from the start. Karrde was specifically conceived by his creator, Timothy Zahn, to be what Han Solo would’ve been like had he never joined the Rebel Alliance: a damn good smuggler with his own organization and a halfway decent sense of morality. And still a scoundrel. His age is a bit iffy, enough that I wasn’t sure he could even be active at this time, but illustrations show him visibly going gray when he appears several years after RotJ, so here he is in the early days of his career.

Vrask, or as I call her, “Terrifying Reptile Mom”, is my own creation. All Karrde’s smugglers in the New Republic era are too young to show up here, and I needed someone else he can work off of. Also, I just realized that if Karrde is Solo, then I accidentally made Vrask his Chewbacca, and I’m perfectly fine with that.
Chapter Notes

word plan would work, even though she knew it wouldn't. Really, she was lying there waiting
could focus on remaining unnoticed without getting into a heated discussion.
So Ahsoka made a decision: she was getting that fleet from Karrde. Right now, she and Barriss
Satine had been evidence enough of that.

That offer had been a bit of a risk, he knew. Let the imperials run around, they might stumble
welcoming towards them. “We can have them collected within six hours.”

“Indeed,” sneered the inquisitor. “I’ve come to pick up more of those creatures of yours, smuggler.

Or rather, covering where his eyes would be if he had any. Karrde had gotten some cells of the
impression upon meeting her told him expecting her to keep her horned head down was a losing
anecdotes about her accomplishments during the Clone War as a field commander. His first
wasn’t spineless, she wasn’t a troublemaker, either. At least, that’s how she’d acted. Her emotions
Force and the local wildlife’s relation to it lessened the tension as well, making it easier to hide his

Border between the base and the forest’s edge, the durasteel hull easily out-muscling the foliage,

become rather limited on Myrkr. The imperial shuttle took up the space next to the freighter,

Due to the Jedis’ freighter being parked in the middle of the courtyard, landing space had

happening.

“Yes.”

“So, if we stay in their radius, we’re covered?”

blind spot.

notes
comfortably for the moment when all hell to break loose. After all the adventures she'd been through, she didn't need the Force to know that was coming.

Chapter End Notes

In which Ahsoka and Barriss are stuck together inside a closet. I swear that wasn't intentional.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with the character, but the "First Brother" is my rendition of Inquisitor Jerec of the game Star Wars: Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II. I haven't actually played it, and only learned of him from skimming Wookieepedia looking for more information on the Inquisitors, but with them involved I decided he would be a good adversary for this part of the story. I'm not a big enough fan to give him the same involvement as Revan or Thrawn, though, so he's probably only around for this planet.

Plus I couldn't resist including him after watching these awesomely ham-tastic live action cutscenes!

The ysalamiri have something of a mixed reputation among Star Wars fans as a result of their Force-suppression powers. Some people aren't bothered at all and see them as an interesting plot device, others go "That's now how the Force works!". I hope explaining them as being unnaturally developed by some unknown faction that bred out of control across the planet unopposed because they don't have a place in the ecosystem resolves the issue effectively and opens up some opportunities.

Who created them? Who the hell knows. I certainly don't. But they weren't messing around, that's for sure, and they aren't allied with the Jedi or the Sith. If I have a good idea, I'll include it. No, it's not the Yuuzhan Vong.

Also, yeah, ysalamiri biology is weird, even ignoring the whole Force-suppression thing. I didn't even get into how they draw nutrients from the trees they're stuck to, but have mouths. Why do they have mouths? What are they eating? Serious questions getting asked in the ysalamiri fandom. Which is basically just me.

Writing Karrde continues to be a challenge. I'm walking a tightrope of trying to make him shady enough Ahsoka doesn't trust him, honorable enough to eventually earn her trust, untrustworthy enough that lying comes easy, and cunning enough to know when or when not to lie to advance his goals, while also keeping him an effective criminal who can hold his own without completely stealing the spotlight from Ahsoka and Barriss.

For those of you curious about exact heights, Barriss is 5'5", Ahsoka is 5'9", Karrde is 5'7", and Vrask is 7'6". Big lizard lady.
vanishing once again told her the forest floor was fast approaching. Encircling the cockpit's canopy. Force again. And with it, Ahsoka lifted Barriss up, flung her into the pod, pressed the button to they were high above the planet surface, well outside the effect of the ysalamiri, and could use the pod. “CICI!” called Ahsoka, frantically looking for the droid, who was already working on restoring escape pods! You take the starboard one, I've got port!” Abandoning the turret, Ahsoka moved through the corridor by clinging to bulkhead after bulkhead engines providing forward momentum, they were in a freefall. Ahsoka kept hammering away at it with the turret, exploiting the greater range of fire her turret fire of its forward weapons, though it couldn't get a clean shot now that one of its fins was gone system. Against Ahsoka, it didn't have a chance, and the turret was the first thing she shot off. Barriss was a decent enough pilot, definitely good enough to keep up with the weequay that had must have hit something critical, because the blastboat stalled out, and began to fall out of the sky. Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns. Once both ships were headed almost straight up, Ahsoka had over the opponent's forward guns.
Chapter Notes

"Maybe this could all end well."

And then she was gone.

devated her saber, stepped aside, and replied back.

Ahsoka took a few more steps, then a new hologram appeared. This one appeared to be a Jedi. Or not?

Speaking from experience, I take it?"

"To defeat your enemy, you have to understand them," Revan said cryptically.

"What?!

"The idea has been thrown around, and rejected on the reasoning that it's an atrocity," she said, dropping it directly onto Palpatine from high orbit, while simultaneously detonating all of its resources he was practically handing over to her.

That was why Karrde's offer was so interesting. She could actually wipe out the Mandalorians?

"What would you do in my place?" she asked. "Weren't you the Republic's strategic genius that

Revan, sharing thoughts on their relationships, starting with the cheerful beeping of a loyal

"Uh huh, that's a start," Revan's avatar popped into existence in front of Ahsoka, standing over

Every time we've gone up against the Empire, we've been a

"I'm not sure what to do anymore. I can't fight like I used to, I don't have any equipment, or

Okay, let's say the front of the ship is facing north, I need to go southeast.

"They're strong thanks to their abundance of expendable soldiers, they're weak in that their

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"The idea has been thrown around, and rejected on the reasoning that it's an atrocity," she said, dropping it directly onto Palpatine from high orbit, while simultaneously detonating all of its resources he was practically handing over to her.

That was why Karrde's offer was so interesting. She could actually wipe out the Mandalorians?

"What would you do in my place?" she asked. "Weren't you the Republic's strategic genius that

Revan, sharing thoughts on their relationships, starting with the cheerful beeping of a loyal

"Uh huh, that's a start," Revan's avatar popped into existence in front of Ahsoka, standing over

Every time we've gone up against the Empire, we've been a

"I'm not sure what to do anymore. I can't fight like I used to, I don't have any equipment, or

Okay, let's say the front of the ship is facing north, I need to go southeast.

"They're strong thanks to their abundance of expendable soldiers, they're weak in that their

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Chapter End Notes

If they hadn't?

And she had done 'anything' to escape the war. And she'd failed in every way possible. Failed

Barriss sank down to her knees. She didn't want to fight, she was sick of it, during the war she

for the Empire, if it was helped along that path. There had to be something she and Ahsoka could

happened due to subterfuge and determined opposition, not military might. History could repeat

bioweapons, radiation at their disposal. What the Myr had done was ultimately trivial, but why not

they have expected? That the Rakata would've left them alone? That they would've accepted the

brief triumph.

Then, the tunnel came to an end. There was no more artwork, no more history. No more Myr. It

Until the ysalamiri propagated across the planet and rendered them inert. The Myr were

years. One consistent feature of it was known, still yet to be replicated by modern technology and

Details of the Infinite Empire's technology were lacking, giving its dissolution almost 30,000

The next mural shown the Rakata ravaging the surface, while deep below it the Myr gathered and

War machines pursued the Myr from their homes, and with the survivors becoming fewer and

The symbol of the Rakatan Infinite Empire, the first known interstellar power in the galaxy. And

from the humid air, wind, everything that could wear the artwork away.

Each mural became more distinct as she went deeper into the structure, further and further aware

corkscrew going deeper into Myrkr, with more material removed as more of the local history was

The hallway began to curve, and began to slant down. The entire structure must've been made in a

structures similar in style to what was left outside. Sprawling cities, far grander than this tiny

This place was so old, even the traps its builders had left to protect it after their deaths had decayed

side opened...very, very slowly. So slowly, in fact, the Barriss had plenty of time to step out of the

given the state it was in now, left it buried half a meter in the floor.

A few hidden compartments were warped shut and couldn't open.

from the statues alone. Likely no more than two meters tall, considering the openings to their

light this far into the tunnel, and shined its orange light over the walls, seeing a pair of statues

It was definitely meant for people to enter, there were stairs, and a hallway extending as far as she

It was fascinating, and exploration was a welcome distraction from the danger of her overall

Barriss walked down, meaning those stones must have been placed before the tree sprouted.

One of the trees had roots breaking apart the stones which formed what was left of the road

on foot.

Constructed of the same materials and in a similar style to Karrde's base. Much of it was

After two hours of hiking, Barriss learned Myrkr wasn't as utterly unpleasant as she'd believed.

Ahsoka snorted and laughed, expecting some kind of unpleasant observation about her connection

and difficult it may be, you don't want to give up. Something continues to hold you close,

Revan seemed to ignore her response, the visor of the hologram's mask fixating on Ahsoka. "It

"She- she's my friend," Ahsoka answered, consciously putting more confidence into the

"What is Barriss to you, anyway?"

"That was...interesting," said Ahsoka. Perhaps 'interesting' wasn't actually the best word. 'Spooky'

Desperate?

admits she was crushing on Barriss, so their attraction is explicitly mutual now.

because let's face it, that is one hell of an uphill battle, but I'm gonna do this one way

And now we know the origin of the ysalamiri. Or at least my own version of it,

You ever have those two friends who, for some reason, just can't get along? That's
She'd find them eventually. And she'd do it long before the Empire did.

...companion as well.

...offworlders. The Togruta left a distinct trail away from the ship, and would probably lead to her

acted without certainty. Regardless, he'd be explaining everything to her once she got back to the

since the Jedi had arrived. If he'd only been suspicious of them, then gotten confirmation at their

And he hadn't told her. She supposed there hadn't been many opportunities to talk to her in private

going back to base. Try to run, and your death will be much more painful than those imperials',

pushing him forward. "We're going to go find those two Jedi you told me about, and then we're

will you know what you should say?"

Myrkr's predators killed them. I tried to prevent it, however, as I tried to explain to their superior,

"Do you understand? If you are asked later,

Vrask was a bit taken aback by that. Though there were no shortage of feisty technician droids in

Flicker, Lamp, Quaint, Hinge, Indie, Moogan, Oil, Even, Jitter, and Kick. Don't worry, I've told

"I'm CC-7, the ship's astromech droid. These are my associates," she said, spinning her dome

"Same. I'm gonna throw out a few observations, stop me when I make a mistake: you're not

Vrask was a bit taken aback by that. Though there were no shortage of feisty technician droids in

them not to attack. Unless you do something stupid to them or to me, in which case, they'll turn

He'd known her long enough to get a handle on Trandoshan body language, and knew the look

"Sir, if I may," one of the stormtroopers said to the First Brother, a second one standing with him.

"Heh. Sure, we could use its help," said the trooper dismissively, walking off ahead of

He'd known her long enough to get a handle on Trandoshan body language, and knew the look

Vrask growled at the trooper, who moved for his sidearm in response. Questioning Vrask's

"Sir, if I may," one of the stormtroopers said to the First Brother, a second one standing with him.

"Of course I'll assist you in your search," said the First Brother with a veneer of friendliness. "You

And of course, it was beneath the status of an imperial commander to meddle in the affairs of

What Karrde wanted the inquisitor to think the situation was. He'd have to count on Vrask being

"Really?" asked Karrde, more diplomatically this time. More conniving. "If they were to be

An inquisitor probably received up-to-date information on which Jedi were still alive. And

"He knows.

"Karrde, if I may," one of the stormtroopers said to the First Brother...

"Sir, if I may," one of the stormtroopers said to the First Brother, a second one standing with him.

"How did wild animals get past the droidekas?" asked one, apparently not as stupid as Vrask had

"Of course I'll assist you in your search," said the First Brother with a veneer of friendliness. "You

Vrask to get inside, albeit with some difficulty given her size. Listening for a moment, all she

freighter of her new associates, those two useless troopers tagging along behind her.

"What happened?" asked Karrde, feigning indignation. "Part of my deal with the Empire was for

"What happened?"

"Karrde, if I may," one of the stormtroopers said to the First Brother...
...continues...
pace, Barriss won't be waiting around forever!"

The holocron chuckled. "You two are so adorable. Why did you stop, anyway? Pick up the "Your approval to do what?"

"I know you wouldn't," said Revan. "By the way, you have my approval."

"I wouldn't leave her to the Empire. No matter what she's done."

What fate the holocron was referring to, exactly, Ahsoka wasn't sure of. After that fight, all she wanted was to find Barriss, evade the inquisitor, and leave this awful planet. Reasoning that she probably wasn't in real danger, and this wouldn't happen once she was around the ysalamiri, and the holocron really did seem to have Barriss's best interests in mind, Ahsoka begrudgingly took it in hand once again.

"Thank you for looking after Barriss," said Revan. "I mean that. If you hadn't freed her when you acknowledged and making excuses for the vague bits of information they'd glean.

As Ahsoka would prefer. Or as anyone would prefer, as she recalled the Jedi frequently did in the face of generic threats."

It took a moment for her to get her bearings, and to realize she could sense Barriss again. She was in the vicinity once, but I'm afraid circumstances denied me the opportunity to check it out."

"Chrelythiumn? I was in the vicinity once, but I'm afraid circumstances denied me the opportunity to check it out."

"It was on this, Mortis. In the Chrelythiumn system. Ever heard of it?"

"No," Ahsoka said. "I've never heard of it."

"Are you sure you don't know of it?"

"I'm sure."

"If anyone ever asks you, you're sure.

Where she'd been when Revan had first attacked her. She had no injuries, and felt no pain. The environment was untouched, too."

Ahsoka lurched upright, looking around and finding herself in the center of the clearing, right where she'd been when Revan had first attacked her. She had no injuries, and felt no pain. The environment was untouched, too.

"I had the galaxy at my feet. Shall we go?" asked the holocron. The fight still fresh in her mind, Ahsoka said, "Nah. I understood the horrific consequences of every choice I made, and continued anyway until I became a Sith?"

"Is that what happened to you?" asked Ahsoka. "You couldn't see what you'd become when you made mistakes, or made your feelings known."

"Before long, every single one of them marched beneath the banner of my empire, obsessed with the dark side, they would become as horrible as the Sith," said Revan, voice dripping with sarcasm. "What?"

"Back in the day, one thing I was very skilled at was breaking Jedi. Finding those with the right kind of personality to turn into Sith. People who were headstrong, and determined, and tough, and the dark side is what comes of that."

"No wonder you left the Jedi." "Ah, you don't like being tested and toyed with by people trying to prove a point," snarked Revan. "Look, both of you. The only issue. I needed to check something."

"Hey, Malak, you know what else is soft? The puréed mush all your meals now consist of! Is that what you want to teach him a lesson?"

"I sliced off his jaw."

"What?"

"Hey, Malak, you know what else is soft? The puréed mush all your meals now consist of!

"I wasn't afraid of the dark side, I was afraid of the light side."

"The dark side spoke to me there. Literally. I could feel everything it had to offer. I wasn't afraid of the light side, I was afraid of the light side."

"I won't turn to the dark side," she said uneasily. "Whyever did you call me soft?"

To hear it from a Sith Lord sent chills down her spine. To hear that lecture as a child from some old Jedi Master was simply another day at the temple."

"I won't turn to the dark side," she said uneasily. "Whyever did you call me soft?"

"That feeling, as if the things you cherish most about yourself are holding you back. That if you disregard others, focus solely on yourself, you can do anything. All that power, unlimited power, for you to use..."

"I believe you. You took the difficult path..." mused Revan. "You've felt it before, haven't you?"

"I understand why everyone called the dark side 'corrupting' until that day."

"All of them."

"And you're still glad to be here?"

"Yes. Yes, I would." Even if she hadn't been in physical danger, Ahsoka wasn't quick to forgive anyone, much less her former master."

"If you're wondering whether I'm going to beat you senseless again, the answer is 'no'. For the last time, I'm Revan." The tone made it clear that was as much of an answer as Ahsoka would get.

"How- how did you do that?" she asked.

"I believe some people might say I'm a pretty formidable opponent."

"You think I'M the more dangerous one!?"

"I understand you've heard the stories."

"I know I haven't been particularly civil recently, but I needed to make certain you wouldn't what had just happened.

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For a moment, her stop. not any happiness. "Now...you're gone."

Congratulations are in order, right? You did exceptional work in training me!" she shouted, "Death is a part of life. I would not have mourned your passage into the Force."

concern was surrounded by the corpses of thousands of sentients you'd ordered me to murder, your main

A feeling of satisfaction welled up in Barriss as she watched that ordinarily stoic face become full

traumatized I wanted to die in my hospital bed after having a parasite writhing around inside my

once, felt what the war was doing to me after every battle? Why didn't you feel I was so

"Shut up, shut up, SHUT UP! If you cared about me so much, how was it that you

Barriss braced herself as she descended back into the tunnel, the sun of Myrkr now shining at an

complete control of her emotions, and had an intended focusing point for them.

The more she saw, the less she felt from the Force as she neared the entrance to the ruin.

reflected off of the curving walls. growing brighter and brighter with each step.

However, her saber had chosen this particular moment to break, uselessly emitting sparks, not

"Master! MASTER!" she shouted as she spun around frantically, hoping the vision was still there,

Loneliness as she realized Luminara had vanished, and she was back in the dark, barren stone

for years now, but she was sick of it, sick of needing to be the perfect Padawan, always calm,

Because 'violence is bad'? Was believing that going to help anyone?

She could've killed Ahsoka, if that had been her plan, a feat which General Grievous, Ventress,

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You hid your feelings better than you realized. That's one skill you managed to pass on me.

"Barriss, I'm--"

But the former apprentice was already walking back into the light, flinching as her connection to the Force was torn away, not even bothering to look back at the now-empty catacombs.

Observing the path out of the ruins, Barriss began following the clusters of the sessile creatures, relishing the silence of the Force.

Chapter End Notes

It will never be revealed what Luminara was about to say.

Shoutout to SlyStrike's comment from Chapter 28: "So, what new ancient wonders shall Barriss encounter this time? Also, how quickly will they drive her nuts?"

YOU. ASKED. FOR THIS.

I've been working on this chapter for a while, trying to figure out the relationship between Barriss and Luminara, and have found it can be summed up pretty succinctly: they love each other very, very much and it is very, very unhealthy.

Luminara's strict adherence to the Jedi code meant she wouldn't actually show Barriss how much she cared regardless of how much Luminara wanted to or how much Barriss needed to hear it. So, Barriss desperately tried to figure out her stoic master's real feelings, and wound up trying to live up to standards she didn't actually need to, and interpreting other events as some kind of restrained criticism.

Someone like Luminara, holding the title of master and rank of general, cannot be excluded from Barriss's criticisms of the Jedi. Barriss knows this, whether she wants to admit it or not. Because Luminara embodies everything Barriss wanted to be and everything she found wrong with the Jedi. You can practically hear her brain tearing itself in half trying to sort that out.

And yeah, learning your mentor was trying to get over your passing as fast as she could immediately after you narrowly avoided death via suffocation doesn't exactly leave many charitable interpretations. Even if those were the correct ones.

Luminara, tell your daughter you love her.

Writing this chapter was incredibly difficult as I'm trying to keep the transition of Barriss feeling inferior to Luminara to angry to defiant while also keeping in mind that she's dealing with complicated emotions that don't necessarily lend themselves to consistent behavior and keeping everything in the context of the differences in approach to morality and war during the Clone Wars and the Rebellion and also drawing up distinctions between feeling the pull of the dark side and being justifiably upset not mention including vaguely contradicting moments to keep it ambiguous whether that's really Luminara acting through the Force or if Barriss is projecting like crazy or some combination of both and also I almost forgot to mention AAAUUUGHHHHHH.
"Hm. What about you?" asked Ahsoka. Barriss's surprising calm was reassuring, but not entirely.

Either.

As soon as the Death Watch raid was over, they'd be off-planet, and would be able to use the Force to fight back. That would at least give them some hope of surviving. For now, they had to stay calm and think of ways to escape.

In thirty seconds it would take to lock down the hangar and trap them. In which case they'd have to outrun their attackers, get to the base, and steal the inquisitor's shuttle. They'd have to abandon the droids, though. She didn't want to think about leaving them behind, no matter how often she'd heard people say they were just machines, but she couldn't save everyone.

The starfighters presented more of a problem. The

From of them and out through the ruins a lone figure walked. Walking awkwardly and muttering to

"They don't have to," said Arten, turning his disk-like head to address Ahsoka. "All we need is to have proof you aren't the ones he's looking for. And we're going to give it to him."

The second the saw reached the skin of the neck, Barriss closed her eyes, turned away, and didn't look up at Ahsoka as she held her hand over Barriss's neck. "What do you mean, we're 'dead'?

"It's not a question of life or death for me," Arten said lightly. "It's a choice of manners."

"Making them look convincing," replied Arten. "What I've got here is one female human—\textit{that'll do}—that-I'll advertise as a female human.

On a collapsible table in the cargo hold were a pair of cadavers, both human, with two sets of programming was sophisticated, but none of them were old enough to have accumulated memories and developed nuanced personalities. It didn't seem right to talk down to them, either.

Ah. There they are. The medical droid led the group into the cargo hold. Jiro was keeping quiet with Vrask standing intently smelling the air, trying to pick up a scent. "Jiro, don't tell me you've already forgotten what they stand for.'

"Always so righteous, until they become what they fight. Always so enduring, until they forget mercy and kindness."

They looked at each other, and then Vrask stepped forward and said, "I have proof you aren't the ones he's looking for. And we're going to give it to him."

"Doctor? Where are you?" yelled Vrask. "UR-10F!"

A couple minutes later, Vrask came back, switching off her comm. Tilting her head, she stopped and said, "I have proof you aren't the ones he's looking for. And we're going to give it to him."

"Point is, you don't scare me. You can't do anyth-" his taunt was cut off when Ahsoka ignited her saber. "Do you know how to use this?"

"Get your saber out!" Ahsoka shouted while igniting her own blade, though the light did little to

By the time Ahsoka and Barriss met could figure out their real identities. "Did Karrde tell you?"

The vibroblade went into the neck, and a hiss of air escaping from the chest, the head went limp. "Well done, Ahsoka."

As she stood there, the ship was hit by a pair of shuttle fired by the Death Watch. Ahsoka couldn't see what hit the ship, but she knew what was coming.

"Keep an eye on him, would you?" asked Vrask, pulling out her communicator. "I need to make a call."

Unfazed, she took the lead, Jiro right behind her with Ahsoka and Barriss to watch him. "We need to hurry."

"We have another imperial fighter flew over."

A few of the predators were still ready to fight for a meal, undeterred by the loss of their leader. The pack stopped dead in its tracks, baring its fangs, and looking at Ahsoka with a mix of curiosity and fear. "Good enough!" Ahsoka said back, tossing Barriss the weapon.

"Do you know how to use this?"

"Thank you for the rescue."

Ahsoka and Barriss were still grinning, looking at the wreckage and catching their breath.

"Never mind that. We have another imperial fighter flew over."

"He was still a threat. He knew who they were. The man a killer. One of the pirates who'd tried to sell her into slavery, then hunted her and a group of children. Yet she was expected to show him mercy and kindness."

Suddenly being held like that certainly surprised Barriss, but it didn't take more than a couple minutes of being held like that certainly surprised Barriss, but it didn't take more than a couple minutes the hug up, since Barriss obviously needed it, Ahsoka went and hugged her.

"We have another imperial fighter flew over."

Complying with the blunt request, Barriss took the holocron in her hand, noting the relief Ahsoka felt upon seeing the weapon in her hands. "Thank you."

"Now, let's get out of here before they come to the hangar."

"The Empire?"

"You listen more closely, Ahsoka could hear the faint sounds of others sweeping the forest in the canopy of the forest, shaking the branches with its slipstream. Unable to find its target, it screamed through the air, the same one Ahsoka had heard during the battle."

"Mercury way out there. We have another imperial fighter flew over."

As they left, Ahsoka couldn't help but feel a sense of relief. They had survived yet another close call, and had

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"He was still a threat. He knew who they were. The man a killer. One of the pirates who'd tried to sell her into slavery, then hunted her and a group of children. Yet she was expected to show him mercy and kindness."

Suddenly being held like that certainly surprised Barriss, but it didn't take more than a couple minutes the hug up, since Barriss obviously needed it, Ahsoka went and hugged her.
"Um...Allow me to show you your quarters." said pointedly, looking away from Barriss to cast a furious glare at the smoking corpse, then any of the really important stuff. If I hadn't been a merciful idiot and killed him sooner, it "That's exactly what I was thinking a couple days ago, trying to come up with a use for him, or a "You- you could've kept him as a prisoner," said Barriss, quickly realizing the unpleasant "His testimony saved your life!" yelled Barriss as she knelt down examine to the body, hoping for "No, I promise, I didn't tell anyone anything. Your friend over there caught me before I could," he "It's the latter," Barriss realized. "He's leading the inquisitors. "Keep your prisoners contained next time, then I'll accept responsibility," she said. Instead of "I haven't encountered anyone like that, but I'll tell my people to keep an eye out. Maybe I can "They're just going to ask you about the last one, if you're lucky. If you're unlucky, they might question them. Ahsoka and Barriss watched the imperial shuttle rise up through Myrkr's clouds, barely more than "Suddenly, he was feeling a lot more willing to lower the price of those warships. Considering his options. "I'm not sure what the other one was, but I know we didn't see him the first time. The bodies, the pirate, his own troop's reading, it all added up. With a pair of corpses and the sole ""I apologize for the commotion," said Karrde. "If there's anyth-" "The inquisitor is here," shouted one of Barriss's troopers, "We found a dead Weequay, gagged, and a pair of body bags, strapped to the rear of her bike. She stopped a few "As he spoke, the inquisitor slowly moved his blade closer to Karrde's neck, until the stream of "The bodies were brought in, and the inquisitor was given a translator, not a protocol "Tell me what you know and how you know it. You're going to give me the information I need," she said, "I'm not a protocol droid. I don't respond to your commands. If you want information, you'll have to ask me," said the inquisitor. "You're a pirate," said the inquisitor. "You're also a criminal." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said the inquisitor. "I'm not a pirate." "I'm not a protocol droid," said Karrde. "I'm not a pirate." 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Jedi, so I pulled out a blaster, for all the good I knew I could get around it.

'camouflaged', if you will. I wasn’t afraid, or aggressive, or impatient. Because I understood their temple there, the routines the people followed, I also practiced keeping myself disciplined. And without sight? I don’t know how well you need to take more time to aim. You’re not pulling off any fancy tricks your first time.

‘Clutch the pistol higher along the back of the grip. Stop, no, keep your finger off the trigger until you than an energy sword perfectly sized to cut people apart, right?’

said Karrde, unholstering the blaster on his belt and handing over it to Barriss.

“Here. In a galaxy like this, especially in our profession, you should have a good firearm on you,” he said. “You know it does,” Karrde said, attention returning to his pad.

The ysalamiri were insignificant compared to that kind of power. Remembering exactly where she was, Barriss extended a hand in front of herself, trying to shake them off. It obviously hadn’t meant it to be such, but the smugglers had rigged up some plumbing and installed a toilet, sink, and mirror.

Very slowly, careful not to disturb Ahsoka, Barriss got out of bed, manually opening the ground’s door. The ysalamiri were in the next room. She didn’t want to wake them.

She wasn’t alone. Out the window she could see the skyline of Coruscant, gleaming orange against the black night. And from their shifts, there was no one else on the deserted vessel.

Ahsoka got to sleep easily as well.

With no answers coming to her fatigued mind and a splitting headache emerging in their place, what are you trying to tell me?

She wished she had been more prudent, and joined them, hearing by destination word.

The ysalamiri were insignificant compared to that kind of power.
“Any time,” he said, holstering the blaster. He swiveled to face her, as if he was about to leave and get back to bed.

Barriss took one last look at the target, then handed the blaster pistol back to its owner, ready to continue firing at the target. She had taken aim, but missed the target completely. The shot landed a meter to the left of the target, taking out the support of a shelf holding dozens of books and a mini-mud, she swooped in to rescue you from the bad guys. Then she offered you the chance to come with her, but you declined, saying that you committed treason and mass murder, betrayed her, and completely dragged her through the mud. She was surprised, and said, “You think I’m stupid? Do you really think the Empire can be overthrown?”

Barriss immediately put the tips to use, taking aim, lining the shot up perfectly. She fired at the target, but it missed by a meter. She fired again, but the shot missed again. She fired a third time, but the shot missed yet again. She was frustrated, and said, “I do,” said Karrde. “We simply need to use the available information correctly.”

Barriss continued firing at the target, working her way into the third ring now that she was finally getting the hang of it. She fired a fourth time, but the shot missed once again. She fired a fifth time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired a sixth time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired a seventh time, but the shot missed once more. She fired an eighth time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired a ninth time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired a tenth time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired an eleventh time, but the shot missed yet again. She fired a twelfth time, but the shot missed once more. She fired a thirteenth time, but the shot missed yet again.

“NO, no thank you, I’ve gotten enough lightsaber training for today,” said Karrde, sitting back properly.

“Do you really think the Empire can be overthrown?” asked Barriss. She was obviously looking for a perspective from outside her own little bubble. Good policy.

“Sabers are, to a degree, reflections of their owner’s intentions,” Barriss explained. “I’m sure I can get it to work properly—”

“Don’t you have a lightsaber?” Karrde asked, puzzled.

“Wrong with that thing? It’s not like that, it’s just—” Barriss stammered, cradling her saber. “I’m sure I can get it to work properly—”

“Don’t you have a lightsaber?” Karrde asked again, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a third time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a fourth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a fifth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a sixth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventh time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked an eighth time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked an eleventh time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a fourteenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a fifteenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a sixteenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventeenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked an eighteenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked an nineteenth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twentieth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twenty-first time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twenty-fourth time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twenty-fifth time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twenty-seventh time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a twenty-ninth time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a sixty-first time, confused.

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“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventy-first time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventy-second time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventy-third time, confused.

“Wrong with that thing?” Karrde asked a seventy-fourth time, confused.

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"Would you care to help me get some practice?"

Ahsoka spent some much-needed time in the Thankfully operational refresher. While she worked on her

blaster abilities, she also used the opportunity to discuss the gift she'd received. "I told Karrde as much, so he suggested I utilize stun weapons and learn to

stun my enemies unconscious on the ground!"

The S26 is the weapon of choice to keep you safe and your enemies on the ground. This blaster has a standard blaster setting that can cause

enemies to fall over unconscious. Whether the bounty hunter needs a weapon to protect himself or his ship, this blaster is the ideal tool.

The S26 is a dedicated alternative to conventional firearms made by Blastech. This pistol is the ultimate in non-lethal personal protection.

In addition to the blaster and manual, a shoulder holster came with it to keep the weapon within easy reach. The pistol is lightweight and easy to

handle, making it perfect for situations where discretion is key.

Two of them had both been trying to get out of the forest and away from the things, and now they were finally free. "Our lighting could support a

plant for a sustained period." Ahsoka said."

"We were both having trouble sleeping last night, and I came across him while wandering the corridors. He's not being as altruistic with the resources as we would prefer."

"You seem to have taken a liking to Karrde," Ahsoka said inquisitively. Barriss hadn't said much during the meeting, but her comments were certainly noticeable amidst the tension between the two.

"I don't believe for a second that you two were the only Jedi to escape the purge," Karrde began. "There is a chance you may have the information we need to find and rescue other Jedi."

Ahsoka froze, studying Karrde intently. Unlikely as it was that he knew more than her, Karrde didn't strike her as the kind of person to give empty promises.

"To track down whatever's left of the Jedi."

"I won't sell for anything less than ten million credits each. Considering the market price on a ship and the exorbitant price tag of this information.

Work with the damn smugglers, believe in your own goals, and right now, they align with yours. To weaken the Empire. To survive. Believe it or not, I have a second use for those funds: tracking the ysalamiri."

"And this fleet was currently the largest source of potential anti-imperial war materiel in the entire galaxy."

Inter-ship communications the Katana Fleet was meant to showcase allowed it to operate as a single ship. Dreadnoughts couldn't be crewed with so few people, but those ships were never identified, and they didn't get their prize. By some chance, the council agreed to let Ahsoka and her companions join them on their journey.

"And I'm going to get everything I can out of that bit of luck."

With the council's approval, Ahsoka and her companions were able to pursue their goals. They were able to save billions of lives while crippling the Empire's advance across the galaxy? Or would you have to put our skills to work finding a more lucrative and less dangerous task?"

"You have a few hundred dreadnought-class warships you want me to sell to the highest bidder."

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"I won't sell for anything less than ten million credits each. Considering the market price on a ship and the exorbitant price tag of this information.

Work with the damn smugglers, believe in your own goals, and right now, they align with yours. To weaken the Empire. To survive. Believe it or not, I have a second use for those funds: tracking the ysalamiri."

"And this fleet was currently the largest source of potential anti-imperial war materiel in the entire galaxy."

Inter-ship communications the Katana Fleet was meant to showcase allowed it to operate as a single ship. Dreadnoughts couldn't be crewed with so few people, but those ships were never identified, and they didn't get their prize. By some chance, the council agreed to let Ahsoka and her companions join them on their journey.

"And I'm going to get everything I can out of that bit of luck."

With the council's approval, Ahsoka and her companions were able to pursue their goals. They were able to save billions of lives while crippling the Empire's advance across the galaxy? Or would you have to put our skills to work finding a more lucrative and less dangerous task?"

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me some instruction in using conventional weapons."

"It was a gift from the lead smuggler, Talon Karrde. We were both up late last night, and he gave me a gun."

"Wait, you have a gun now? Where did you get a gun?"

"I wish I could, but four thousand years later, that one still creeps me out."

"I ended."

"I had a tough time convincing them, but I did it."

"I had to run back across the desert, which, by the way, was needed some fodder to do that, so I had to go back to the enclave to find some lying around, then peaceable."

"On Kashyyyk, I journeyed to a Wookiee village, fighting giant bugs along the way, got caught up in a power struggle between them and the Czerka Corp, and was sent down into the message to deliver to her cheating bastard of a husband. She was just standing out there in the village, all while listening to these screeching apes, dozens of them, every damn second. Oh, I don't see how this is--"

"I don't see how this is--"

"Kid, I've worked for both lawful and criminal enterprises in my time. Karrde's operation is the only one I'd work for twice."

"Really? asked Barriss, surprised by such a ringing endorsement. "What makes it so special?"

"Same," said Wont, polite but obviously not especially interested in being social. "How do you feel about this?"

"I'm not sure."

"Something odd happened in the compound."

"Does it? If you recall, our last discussion was yesterday morning," Revan said, whose voice then

"Ancient personality inside could get under her skin. Perhaps that was all deliberate on Revan's part."

"And that was a very nice experience," said Revan. "It's funny to see it happen to somebody else."

"Heh. Oh, wow," said Revan. "It's funny to see it happen to somebody else."

"Does it? If you recall, our last discussion was yesterday morning," Revan said, whose voice then

"Honor, it would be unwise to advertise her supply of the precious crystals to more people in the

"The remote bad enough, I suppose you could do some work for it."

"Remotes aren't rare pieces of technology, she could find other ways to earn the晶体."
the steady, rhythmic clanking of metal legs behind them. It had been a good day.

repaired
twirling her pistol around on one finger.

considerably easier, thanks to all the practice I'd gotten the first time," Barriss said, confidently

"So you had to gather them all again?" asked Ahsoka.

"Yes, I know, but that's hardly their fault. I caught them all in order to earn the remote. At least, I

"Why did you get that? You know their pests, right?"

"I'm calling in the favor you owe me for that kyber crystal," she said to the alarmed smuggler.

"One of your employees, Wont, has a remote I intend to use for target practice. I want that remote,

"I- I know, and I'm sorry that happened, but this still doesn't solve my problem, and the crane

"Oh, that's...unfortunate. You can catch them again, right?" asked Wont.

"It took a moment for Karrde to respond as he looked Barriss up and down, noting her disheveled

and will drop the debt if I get it."

"I don't know. Why would you trust me at my word? Why not ask her to find out for certain?"

"I did what you asked me to do," Barriss said quietly, staring at the fleeing mynocks, feeling her

"What do you expect to happen here, exactly?" she asked, glaring at the holocron. "That my best

Barriss was getting tired of it.

Yet again, Revan was completely outmaneuvering Barriss in these discussions, seemingly

directing their course without being noticed. Again and again coming back to the same topic.

"I don't know. Why would you trust me at my word? Why not ask her to find out for certain?"

"She really does like you, y'know. You've got nothing to worry about on that front," said Revan.

"The remote.

The holocron was quiet for a moment before replying in a matter-of-fact way, "I don't know, but

friend, whom I lied to, manipulated, framed, and assaulted is going to...to...

Barriss was getting tired of it.

"You were both up late last night. Hanging out. Alone. Talking. Nothing else?"

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“Let’s see what we can find.”

Something he could make a ton of money off of.

other inquisitors, whom Karrde would now be investigating. Maybe he could arrange for one of

planet, more important than the ysalamiri. Whatever it was, Karrde had put together it was

The First Brother had told him, if not in so many words, that there was something valuable on this

Exploring the worn-down structures, he soon came to a large tree situation at the center, covered

“Hm,” Karrde said, accepting the explanation as possible even though he didn’t really believe it.

“Like you’re one to talk about being selective with information,” said Vrask. “It’s possible they

“Something they neglected to tell us they’d found,” Karrde said.

finding the overgrown remains of some small temple in the middle of the forest.

it seems none of the local scavengers had any desire to eat it.

to think of it, Karrde didn’t quite know how to apply taxonomy to them.

down by some lizards. Lizards with fur. That drew nutrients from trees. And never moved. Come

any supernatural feats, ostensibly because of the ysalamiri.

A power that could evidently be nullified by the wildlife of a random tenth-rate planet. Nullified

battle droids and survive while their clones bought it by the thousands. Whether by magic or

The Jedi’s beliefs said that the Force encompassed the entire universe, as ubiquitous as gravity,

them on this route alone, while billions, maybe even trillions more lined the branches of the

quickly as he’d begun as he realized the creatures were

Passing tree after tree, Karrde tried to mentally count the ysalamiri on the branches, giving up as

After stretching for a second, Karrde followed Vrask over to the two-person landspeeder, getting

eavesdrop on us. Togrutan hearing is quite excellent, from what I’ve learned.”

backs of some turbo tanks. They’d both known it wouldn’t work, but neither expected it to fail the

“I don’t worry myself with the extent of your plans until they get past ‘Step 1’. So I’m certain they

apology, much to Karrde’s relief. It took him a moment for the shock to his knees to wear off, not

“No. It’s like lifting a plate of fruit,” Vrask said, dropping him to the ground and accepting the

“Next time, then, inform me of your ‘suspicions’.”

“I wasn’t completely certain Tano was who I thought she was until she’d arrived, until I’d seen

to save all of our lives.”

Karrde had previously believed.

Her mouth widened to reveal that her teeth were longer, sharper, and far more numerous than

Vrask didn’t care if it was warranted, and her response began with pulling Karrde even closer.

It was only then that Karrde had begun to look around at the creatures. He had only seen a few

The ship’s hold was already full of crystals of what he assumed were ysalamiri. Some hung from

the side of him. It was one of the reasons he had been so preoccupied with the crystals. He knew

To the First Brother’s mynocks on the ship.

“Leaving, I take it?” came Karrde’s voice as he approached the boarding ramp to see them off,

crystals could’ve bought us an entirely new vessel, if there was anywhere on this planet to

kidding, the place looked

“We’re ready to take off, then?” asked Ahsoka, walking around, inspecting her ship. Cici wasn’t

They obeyed my commands.”

After a full night’s sleep, Ahsoka groggily got up, stretching and feeling a bit achy from throwing

a bunch of war machines into a giant pile with her bare hands.

Getting her own grip on Karrde’s hand, Ahsoka decided to end their time on this awful planet in

or not. Everyone the two of them had interacted with during the war was a Jedi, a clone, or some

be a good sign.

straight face and didn’t react to her flimsy shake. When he extended the same politeness to

The next moment was a little awkward as Karrde shook Barriss’s hand, though this time he kept a

realizing he’d already revealed quite a bit more than his paranoid level of secrecy would usually

The friendly chat stopped dead as Karrde’s grin vanished, replaced with nervousness upon

“Does that mean your last name isn’t actually Karrde? Or did you keep that much?” asked Barriss.

came up with that stuck. A dumb teenager’s idea of a cool name, like ‘Decimus’, or ‘Kylo’.”

Inspection the ship’s hold. Barriss took a quick look inside and nodded. She’d found a few more

“Barriss was already strapped into the copilot’s seat, smiling and nodding to Ahsoka that

Getting her own grip on Karrde’s hand, Ahsoka decided to end their time on this awful planet in

Barriss wasn’t in any rush to get up, either, only finally getting out of bed and getting dressed at

Ahsoka’s encouragement over an hour after the latter was up and about. They needed to leave

”
Chapter Notes

master was the one thing Ahsoka had been sure could ease Barriss’s mind. Reading her emotions
Ahsoka spent the next couple hours telling story after story of her and Anakin, fighting aboard the
moment. “Please, keep going. I’m enjoying this.”

“He was, well, incredible. Always projecting strength, and power. Sometimes, it could be
Ahsoka sat down opposite Barriss, trying to think where to begin.

“You always spoke so highly of him, I’d like to hear more, if you don’t mind.”

setup. She knew of cultures who practiced meditation without any intent to connect to the Force as
“It looks like a Snoots,” she replied, clearly not interested in overthinking the name, while laying

“Snoots?” asked Ahsoka, amused by Barriss’s rare moment of humor.

The underground murals were works of art, though I couldn’t see any other interpretation of the
safely into space, the

...This is going to be a very strange period in my life.

of balance yet again.

“I am,” Barriss answered.

...I accept your offer.

via small advantages cascading into better odds of success over and over.

Jedi died and died, and eventually, I came out the strongest of them because I kept enduring
one battle after another where the people who hadn’t pushed themselves hard enough all died. The

“I’m gonna have to set a lot of historians straight, aren’t I?” said Revan, irritated by the prospect of

Force.”

“What do you think made me so powerful to begin with?” asked Revan.

The holographic mask left Revan’s hand and drifted through the air towards her, turning so that it
The hologram paused for a second, then began to remove its mask. Barriss was about ready to

speaking. “I couldn’t hope for a better student. Why would I think otherwise?”

“After everything I’ve done,” she said, “you believe I would make a worthy apprentice?”

And what was she? A traitor. A murderer. A coward.

The anguish Barriss felt stalled out when she couldn’t provide a simple answer like she had for the
vision became cloudier.

“You believe you need a master to guide you that badly?” asked Revan.

teachings- a master whom I thankfully cannot disappoint any longer considering she died because
refusing the Inquisitor’s offer could have been far more challenging if it had happened sooner.

The moment Barriss had escaped.

misgivings surrounding her master, she could never be corrupted in the same way, could she?
If the Inquisitor had intended to make her a servant of the Empire, it made sense to keep her alive

how all the stresses she’d experienced made it painful to think about.

admitted. It was hard for her to think about the past, not only because of the regrets she had but
the Jedi Code can’t and

“You don’t ‘break’ the spirit of a Jedi,” said Revan, saying so as if it was a vital lesson. “You
and with just enough tasteless grey nutrients to keep her alive. Still, it was endurable. She’d held it

in the care of the Republic had been time spent reflecting on her mistakes, and despite her guilt,
refusing the Inquisitor’s offer could have been far more challenging if it had happened sooner.

Paths to the dark side

“You were stressed. Lost. Confused,” said Revan. “Slowly growing more receptive to any chance
lie on my bunk and contemplate all the ways my predicament was my own fault, and consider

“’Miserable’ would be an understatement. I was isolated in a cramped cell. Nothing to do except

“You were a prisoner of the Empire for some time, right? What were your living conditions like?

“You’re not going to like this,” said Revan. “And I’m not saying that in my usual ‘lovable jerk’

“What is it?” asked Barriss.

lost in thought.

captured and killed later.”

secondhand angst as more and more of Barriss’s issues were laid out. “She died in the Jedi purge,
...Oh for...” Revan whined, not specifically to Barriss or anyone in particular, only venting some
Luminara.”

“Correct. Perfect answer!”

answered correctly.

the Empire?” Revan said adamantly. Barriss could tell the subject wouldn’t be dropped until she

“But if I hadn’t-”

then snapping forward again to confront Barriss on it.

Jedi now.”

around her, to remember some detail about her attacker.

the moment she’d made her speech, thinking hard in the hope that she could remember the guards

Orders? Or is he making it personal?”

confusing,” said Revan. “Tell me about this ‘Inquisitor’ you mentioned. What does he have to do

You loved her, but she hurt you, you know she didn’t intend to, you also know that doesn’t stop
for involving me in the war, even though I would do anything to see her alive again.”

Some kind of reassurance in the wake of her vision of Luminara. She wanted to talk to Ahsoka
Finishing up the entire story, Barriss looked at the hologram of Revan, expectantly waiting for
got a solid stance and got to work.

Saber in her right hand, stun blaster in her left, she turned it to the low setting. "Functional" was a good descriptor. It was functional. At least it wasn't smoking anymore.

An odd pulse, a thinner section of plasma that ran up and down the blade. And there was still that... all she had to do was... All she had to do was pick up the saber and press the button.

It shouldn't be this difficult. Working on it for so long, what if it still didn't work? What if it would...?"

"I think I've felt enough stuff for today," said Ahsoka.
"

Ahsoka nodded. "The whole prophecy also gives me some hope. The galaxy is out of balance, your own," said Barriss.

"It seemed as though you would never become as wise as your master, never able to stand out on your own," said Barriss.

"Anakin kept growing stronger, too. Faster than I was.""

"It wasn't just a rumor," she said, thinking back to the fight on Mortis, the Daughter and the Son. She had been so counting on this plan, but had failed..."

"But it's not just my plan that's failed," she finished.

"I was the one being treated as the Bad Guy. They were trying to make me the villain, and I..."

"I had my plan, I had my vision. I thought I could open the door to the dark side and..."

"But I never did. I was never able to take that step."

"I don't know. I don't know how to proceed, and I have no useful explanation for anything that's..."

"What do you care about now?" asked Ahsoka.
"

"I've been busy."

"I don't care about anything anymore."

"I don't care about being the perfect apprentice for Luminara. It never did..."

"Luminara was proud of you, Barriss."

"That's what I thought," said Barriss bitterly.

"That's what I thought," she repeated. "I was alone with her."

"Yes, I'm sure she was very pleased with how the mission turned out!"

"When I saw you together on Geonosis, it was obvious how proud of you she was!"

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headed out, spotting the entrance to the mine shaft, and little else.

for them to exploit.

southern continent, to an abandoned mine shaft. There were other active mines in the area, so this

The rendezvous point wasn't anywhere in the city. Instead Ahsoka was flying the

"We've figured out a procedure for these kinds of things. Follow these instructions exactly.

understand that Ahsoka wouldn't be here without reason.

"Now that we've made contact, is there a way we can meet in person? My reason for contacting

Exchanging a few mixed looks of nervousness and excitement with Barriss, Ahsoka answered.

"Is anyone there?" came a voice, deep and distorted beyond recognition.

might be a part of

grudgingly stated. "He likely had a candidate to replace Dooku on hand already. The count was

Ahsoka thought for a moment about who that could possibly have been, assuming this dream was

"The dream didn't provide any opportunity to get a direct look. Tall, bulky, a black cape, some

being strangled to death.

darkness, more hatred, than I've ever felt before. I handed your saber over to him...and he killed

reticent to talk about it: Barriss had killed her.

"I was-" Barriss stopped short, staring worriedly at Ahsoka for a moment, then she became more

"Sure. What is it?"

help rehydrate her bloodshot eyes. "Can I talk to you about something?"

"Um, is it helpful?"

be listened to?

unrecognizable. Riyo would know to do the same. None of them would refer to each other by

It was therapeutic, calming Ahsoka's nerves considerably. Riyo's attendant was, logically, the

army she was leading with their orange-and-white painted helmets made to match her colors.

The wait eventually dragged on so long they started occupying themselves, Barriss reading a

"And I think I've figured out step one."

to play it safe this time," Ahsoka said, pausing and trying to think. In the background, mixed in

now we don't have an army or our masters to back us up. And if there's solid evidence that Riyo's

"I can't help but feel we're overcomplicating the issue," said Barriss. "We've both infiltrated

but some way of letting Riyo know it's me."

"Nobody. We don't need to tell them everything, or enough to identify us, we only need to tell

"Who can we trust? The Empire could have agents anywhere, even unwilling ones."

"Right. We need someone close enough to Riyo to talk to her directly. A live drop who can get a

"Of course not. The problem is that I can't approach her directly. A random patrol isn't likely to

"Why wouldn't she trust you?" asked Barriss. "She wouldn't be convinced by Palpatine's anti-

said Ahsoka. "The Empire has been here for months, and this city is Riyo's home. By now, she's

system: the imperial cruiser in orbit contained a complement of sixty TIE fighters, at least twenty-

The imperials on Pantora weren't an occupation force, not officially. After Pantora had reportedly

datapads. Probably just an attendant or secretary by Ahsoka's estimation, clearly in over her head,

she walked past the Empire's security. It reminded Ahsoka of Padmé, always ready to fight back

breaking up the Pantoran skyline with stark grey utilitarian architecture, looming over the rest of

Ahsoka took another look through the macrobinoculars, watching Riyo enter her speeder, its

well. Ahsoka could feel the fear and anxiety throughout the capital.

concentrated population center, and the Trade Federation blockade fresh in memory, it did the job

Pantora wasn't particularly isolationist, but amongst the locals, the human woman Cici was

It's Not What It Looks Like

Eclipse

Eclipse
Then she lowered her weapon slightly, and shot Barriss in the torso with a stun blast.

"I'm sorry," Riyo sighed, "if you're telling the truth, you'll forgive me for this."

"Ahsoka was cutting through Barriss. I was ready to burn a hole through Barriss's head if she tried anything. It already felt like her cold stare was cutting through me."

"No. Only Ahsoka and myself were meant to come."

"Does anyone else know about this meeting?" asked Riyo.

"There was only supposed to be one contact meeting me here! I wasn't expecting anyone else."

"What? How can I prove that I'm with Ahsoka if I can't reach her? Why would you pick this location?"

"Communicators won't work here," said Riyo. "Signals can't penetrate the trace amounts of lava."

"I haven't done anything to Ahsoka. We came here together, but were separated. Please, if you'll allow me to say I believe you for a moment. Why did Ahsoka have to be there?"

"There must be a reason," Riyo said uncertainly.

"To her surprise, the senator paused, thought that over, and gave a slight nod of acceptance."

"Ahsoka was supposed to be here to explain things. Riyo had come expecting an old friend, and this...this has come to be more of a surprise than anything."

"Barriss said."

"No. Only Ahsoka and myself were meant to come."
enough funds to buy some of the dreadnoughts.”

everything she’d been hoping for. “Senators with the necessary connections may be able to get

formation of the New Order. I suspect she’s been seeking out other dissident senators,” explained

now that they were actively avoiding the big ones.

They stood around in silence, staring out the window, both of them short on conversation topics

with brazen, untempered evil before, Ahsoka. The Empire doesn’t even hide it.”

“Hateful, ignorant, petty, sadistic monsters. I’ve worked with unscrupulous people in politics.

the money really went towards helping struggling populations in the Clone Wars’ wake when

economically stratified as Palpatine’s elite solidified their power over the planet. The Wookiees

It was true, even if it was a low bar to set. Coruscant was becoming more and more socially and

some places, Pantora’s actually in good shape.”

unreasonably stand up for people’s rights, I’m fighting back by focusing more on engaging with

paint the increasing stranglehold as the fault of myself and others in our government for trying to

Riyo paused for a moment, taking long enough that it told Ahsoka that she didn’t know where to

victory had seemed possible.

There was no need to use the Force to sense how strung out Riyo was. Even when they were

seen it coming. Still, she’d hoped Riyo would be more willing to trust her judgement. “Riyo,

Ahsoka took a deep breath. It wasn’t like she’d expected this conversation to be easy or hadn’t

“Not like that. We share a room on the

“You’ve been WHAT!?”

Barriss?”

and her other victims.”

Riyo pursed her lips for a moment. “It sounds like you’re making excuses for what she did to you

anything she’s done.”

have ever since that day in the courtroom. It’s the reason I left the order. Not just because of how

expose this information to his

“Good guesses. All good guesses,” said Midla, smiling to herself as she got up and walked over to

monitor while Riyo took a seat at the desk and began entering passwords to unlock it. “So, what is

“Hey, we’ve been pretty busy for a while, alright?” Ahsoka said defensively as she pulled the data

wishing that little encounter had been avoided as she tried to sit up straighter and work out the

a false name, but it’s listed as the property of an imperial citizen now. A wealthy,

sitting at, but Barriss couldn’t see anything out of them but sky from this angle, and there were no

from Midla in response.

“To start fighting back against the Empire, obviously,” said Midla. “What else?”

“You’re in communication with the Naboo government? To what end?” asked Barriss.

With the refreshments served, she remained quiet, stoically standing around with her back to the

flask into her cup.

again, enough to take one of the cups.

“Glad to see Chuchi didn’t hit you too hard. And it’s just ‘Midla’ now, my property on Serenno

somewhat light-headed.

focusing into an elderly woman sitting in a chair in a corner of the room, smiling at Barriss after

Barriss groaned weakly, eventually working out a low “Yes” and experimentally twitching her

“What? How can you tell?” asked Riyo.

“Riyo, you don’t need to... She’s conscious,” Ahsoka said abruptly.
Chapter End Notes

Barriss let out a deep sigh. "This is the corrupt system. It's at the forefront, especially with her acting as the token Separatist rubbing the rise of the Empire in the face of all the good little senators who stuck with the Republic for crimes against the Empire."

"I...can't condone this kind of rebellion against the Empire," Riyo said reluctantly. "But I may realize the point both Karrde and Midla had made to her."

Ahsoka could sense how conflicted she was about all this. "It's a fraction of market price," said Ahsoka. "And I think there are a lot more people willing to own armies."

"Hm. Ten million each," Riyp said, thinking intently on the problem. "That's quite a sum, even if she had to be responsible for some deaths now, it would all work out in the end."

"It is only a bruise. I can do this. I think."

She felt the blood, the skin, and began repairing the damaged capillaries to allow the blood to flow out of the skin and return it to normal. Riverside

"I didn't realize stun blasts would leave you so sore..." Barriss said, as the pounding in her skull slightly and unamused by the half-hearted deflection.

"What? What did you get a fleet of dreadnoughts?" asked Riyo, dumbstruck by the reveal of Ahsoka's saleswoman. Two hundred dreadnought-class warships for ten million credits each.

"They are, after all, in the hands of the Empire. The Empire is aware, I wasn't a major part of the war effort," said Midla. "Though I am still wanted for crimes against the Empire."

"True, but Serenno's been conquered. That was the priority, not me personally. As far as the countermeasures that'll expose any listening device and block unauthorized transmissions. Even if the walls of this place are filled with an advanced security system and plenty of electronic locks, Tamook, this manor," Midla said reassuringly. "Also, despite Sabé's concerns, we're not defenseless. The local neighborhood with a view of the ocean. Nobody's going to notice us. And my tracks are well-hidden."

"It's a fraction of market price," said Ahsoka. "And I think there are a lot more people willing to own armies."

"Well, as an aristocrat, I have no shortage of money discretely stashed away in various banks from her past that didn't cause..." Barriss continued as she considered the amount of money, enough to fund a refresher. Also,

"I'll be back with them in a moment," Sabé said after a few seconds. Evidently, and perhaps

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"I'll be back with them in a moment," Sabé said after a few seconds. Evidently, and perhaps
enemies. I could kill a guy, steal his wallet, then throw the grenade he was carrying at his buddies. How useful items to steal? Revan said incredulous. “Kids these days have no idea how to survive in the city! No idea,” Barriss said disinterested. “Me too, kid. Me, too…” said Revan. “It’s unbearable, isn’t it? Never being sure what’s really there!” Staring at the ceiling for a little longer, Barriss tried to summon the energy and drive to act on something. Revan replied, “Never destroy what you can use.” A year ago, Barriss would’ve convinced herself this was the way to do things, kept a straight face, and somehow forgotten about it. Terrorist,” said Barriss. “And I can’t stop thinking about how well I played the part. Today was a performance she’d put on was effective, and completely draining. Returned to her room, Barriss was in bed again. Even though it was only the afternoon. That little hot bath didn’t help much, either. Whooooo wants to talk about their latest bout of complicated emotions?” Tossing and turning, a dim violet light was coming through her eyelids. Barriss opened one eye, her iris contracting in the bright light of Revan’s hologram. “Cici carried me.” “What way?” Revan asked back, voice returned to normal. “I have more than this, by the way,” said Barriss. “That’s why you’re going to remain here and do your job poorly,” said Barriss, pulling out a pad and doing up a dozen offenses. “I also believe this to be best for your safety, senator,” said Sabé. “Next order of business, then: Senator, what exactly do you intend to force him to do?” asked Midla. “Don’t be upset,” Midla said to Barriss. “This is all coming together perfectly. Besides, you’re in a lot of debt. Ahsoka and I are rather dependent on that ship if we want to keep ahead of the Empire, so it’s not like we have a lot of options.” “Very well. If you need any other direction, I’ll be right here,” Sabé said ominously. “I thought I should be the one to do it,” said Riyo. “I represent the moon’s interests in the larger scheme of things.” Midla considered this for a moment. “I also believe this to be best for your safety, senator.”
Chapter End Notes

Position is privileged to, I believe I can provide solutions to your problems."

The interests of the Emperor, and if you'll afford me time, and the resources someone in your

I think that the remains of the beginnings of rebellion against the Empire are developing on

My instructions to the soldiers under my command are for the service of the Empire. What do

assignment, and am here to discuss the reasons for the changes, and my own reasons for coming

The response to Disra’s blatant contempt was eerily calm, barely noticing it, just like the first

He'd expected that Palpatine's rule would mean no longer having to deal with intrusions by

assignments in this sector, and had heard you were in the possession of local works of art,” the

Disra wasn't quite sure exactly what he was.

red eyes that stood out in the dim light, telling Disra that he definitely wasn't from this system.

call security. The trespasser's reaction was so slow, so calm, Disra wasn't sure he'd been heard

“What do you think you're doing in here?” Disra demanded, hand moving to his new comm to

all the reason Disra needed to have him thrown off the ship.

wasn't aware any Pantorans had been accepted into the navy. And being Pantoran was presently

found the lighting to be much dimmer than what was normally preferred, such that his eyes

Strolling through the halls of his Star Destroyer, Moff Disra approached his office, finding the

him to explain why he wasn't making use of the place. He also needed to come up with a reason

had to suppress information on Ordo Plutonia's value. If that got out, there would be no way for

Of all the indignities, the way that Jedi brat had the gall to extort Disra this way was the most

threat is beaten, but not

today.”

“Impressive. If you can outflank me, the Empire's in trouble,” said Revan. “You did a good thing

words petering as Barriss immediately changed back to an expression of calm, casually wiping

sniffling, nervously flittered her eyes to and away from the holocron, working up some tears, then

her bed, close her eyes, let Revan pop out and scare her, then go back to sleep.

This wasn't a battle she was going to win, and Barriss knew it. Revan was proven to possess

Minutes passed as Barriss refused to leave the ‘dead’ holocron alone, staring it down.

...Revan?” Seconds passed without any change. “Revan, I know you're attempting to trick me. It

fared,” explained Revan. “It could last a million years as far as I know, but there's also the chance

stuck in a damp cave for millennia getting gnawed on by kinrath, I don't know how well it's

immortality out of it. At least in theory.

“I knew what I was getting into, Barriss. Plus, I am willing to accept the downsides if I get

this because I want you to understand my purpose a little better.”

stop me. It never has before,” said Revan. “And I think I am making a bit of a difference.

difference, and I'm willing to endure anything for that. No amount of time or misery is going to

thinking about what it felt like to breathe.

century. You're feeling tired after a stressful day? Can you even imagine being awake for over 34

alive contains the same absence of feeling, unchanging from moment to moment, century to

remain pristine, perfect replicas of their creators, I couldn't even be driven insane by all of that

Barriss. I can't close my eyes. I am fully alert every second of every day, with absolutely no

you not exhale, you don't need to. Even if you'd like to. And then you know you're going to keep

Barriss froze, her mind running through everything flesh-and-blood could do, and a holocron

By making my information processing and memory so sophisticated I'm effectively a perfect

asked Barriss.

“Of course. Even your errors must be positively exceptional...How can one do 'too good a job'?

“The original Revan did too good a job building me,” said the holocron.

“Such as?” asked Barriss, interest piqued by the prospect of real fallibility, hoping to at least get a

can make mistakes, too.”

“Good. I'll be sure to say stuff like that more often,” said Revan. “Don't follow blindly, Barriss. I

...Comments like that make me question how wise it is to listen to you,” Barriss said as she

before they could draw their weapons!”
It's good that you have that kind of kinesthetic awareness, but you can also go "He must have been quite skilled for you to dispense praise like that."

"The Echani people had their own form of it, which they put to use in their abilities."

"You can if you know they're coming seconds before your opponent even fires. You may not while keeping it activated."

"Next lesson," said Revan, finally satisfied with the progress of Barriss's expanding telekinetic functions, easily the most common defensive one. In Barriss's case, the instability of the blade would be very much to the point, so she decided to not go down that path at the moment. Rather than species, Barriss was considering the possibility that the holocron was as bored of the exercise as Barriss was. "Battle training," she said. "You can do both. Gradually ramp up what you can do while maintaining control, and your power will expand without getting away from you," said Revan. "You merely need to put in the time."

"Stop it! It is not effective. Only annoying." Barriss protested, her imagination taking over as she imagined the effects of her followers giving her orders and not wanting to be dominated. "Well, it's not dominant them..." she said to herself, shaking her head. "I should stop this."

"Yes, they're almost exactly the same," said Barriss, studying the hologram. "So, what species are rather than species," said Barriss, holding her hand flat around a meter off the ground to give sand grains all swarming around her, holding onto them all simultaneously. It was too much. She remaining as Barriss expunged them from her hands in one blast.

"That was pretty good," said Revan. "You constantly wear a mask," Barriss said dully. "No, you aren't 'wearing' anything, you refuse to one's eyes to focus and act through the Force was a basic principle both in meditation and in will alone."

"I suppose that's a valid reason...If that's the reason you cover your face now, why did you ever look realistic. Better to stick with the mask."

"No one except Malak, and I don't think I really taught him anything," Revan answered. "Except room. "Revan, you've never had an apprentice before, have you?"

"Oh- all right..." Barriss said uneasily, taking the holocron in hand and slowly walking out of the room. "You are. That doesn't mean you have to call me by some title."

"But- I thought I was your student now," Barriss said, disappointed by the rebuff. "I'm ready to begin, Master Revan," Barriss, bowing slightly to the holocron sitting on the table.

"I'm not even sure I could bring myself to end someone's life."

"But- why did you take the mask as your own?" asked Barriss. Before, she'd at least some help conquered Kathar."

"Why did you take the mask as your own?" asked Barriss. Before, she'd had at least some help conquered Kathar."

"I wish she could've been more successful. Why didn't they stopped and saw that what they were doing was wrong. Or at least the only one who spoke out."

"Really? How much better is taking away their free will through subtler means? Waving your power like that."

"Why here?" she asked, wondering why the ship had been deemed insufficient as the final leap from prison. "I'm not even sure I could bring myself to end someone's life."

"I suppose that's a valid reason...If that's the reason you cover your face now, why did you ever look realistic. Better to stick with the mask."

"Revan, you've never had an apprentice before, have you?"

"I'm ready to begin, Master Revan," Barriss, bowing slightly to the holocron sitting on the table."

"You are. That doesn't mean you have to call me by some title."
Match, Revan could only rely on luck while she'd have that four.

Barriss drew another card, a nine that brought her total up to seventeen, making her four card

"I’ll hold," Revan said, declining to take another card.

Her brain kept running like that for a while.

Also makes it advisable to use duplicate cards if available, as this doesn’t reduce chance of

Once each player obtains eleven point or over, the possibility exists that the next card would place

"By using my incredible Force powers to turn back time and keep redoing things until I won."

Choosing. Before each game, players randomly select four cards from their side-deck, and during

"That’s where the side-deck comes in. Pazaak players all have ‘side-decks’ of ten cards of their

Each turn, we take a card from the deck and place it in the grid. Our objective is to get the sum of

"Do you know the rules?" asked Revan. "Why am I even asking, there’s no way you’re ever

Barriss reached into her pocket and pulled out the deck of cards she’d found.

Grids of sixteen rectangles each over the ground. "Break out the pazaak deck."

Revan studied every motion she made. The precise, automatic reactions of someone who’d

"Show me."

"It’s all that’s left unsaid upon which tragedies are built," Revan said.

"I took the worst option first," said Barriss. "It could’ve been so easy. All I had to do was talk to

"I’ve certainly mastered the part where I analyze my past mistakes," grumbled Barriss.

Wheels going, my overarching plan was practically a fractal."

Lives, if used effectively, and if

"It’s a little hard to find strength in those words when you’ve seen as much emotion, ignorance,

"There is no emotion, there is peace," she said. "There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. There

"There is no passion, there is serenity. There is no chaos, there is harmony. There is no death, there is the

Barriss didn’t like feeling this way, didn’t like being angry, didn’t like not knowing what to do. She

"I need a moment," she said.

"Stumbled across me in the cave. You've grown. And you're in control of what you can be."

"Tell me their code."

"It was all that was left unsaid upon which tragedies are built," Revan said.

"Why not? It might do you some good."

"It's a little hard to find strength in those words when you've seen as much emotion, ignorance,

Passion, chaos, and death as I have. Acting like those things don't exist will leave you helpless

"There is no passion, there is serenity. There is no chaos, there is harmony. There is no death, there is the

Barriss's side, who were cowering in fear of the holographic Sith soldiers who were surrounding

"Let's start with the common soldiers you've killed," Barriss replied.

"Don't you feel bad about killing them?" Barriss asked as she stowed the remote away.

Eventually she'd be dead, but at least she'd be dead with a plan. She'd win. She'd finally be free

Eventually the remote's training sequence timed out, and the hologram of Revan appeared

Barriss was out of breath, tensing her body and shielding her face with her arms, resigned to

Eventually you'd be what you were supposed to be."
"Do you ever feel any resentment towards the Jedi?" asked Barriss. "The council overwrote your Yuthura, Mekel...I showed them the same sympathy I'd been given, and we were all better for it. because she thought I deserved another chance, and it was the right thing to do. Nothing else been suppressed and I showed up at the Jedi Enclave, Bastila and the Jedi masters, who'd all "Yeah...yeah..." Revan said, tone vaguely accepting of Barriss's outrage. "Okay, there is at least people were dying in battles on a hundred planets?" "Well, where do we draw the line between imperfect and dangerous?" asked Barriss, "enough. That doesn't make them evil."

"The fallacy is that if a proposed solution is anything less than a perfect solution is literally impossible. The Jedi did the best they could. Turns out it wasn't lingering perfectionist tendencies. "You ever heard of the 'perfect solution fallacy'?" asked Revan. "I felt lost. Everything I'd believed in was a lie, told to me by the every adult I'd ever trusted. "And you found that unpleasant?"

"But I ido before long after the war."

"I, I believe I would like to achieve some victory."

"No, I don't."

"If he was such an idiot-"

"Strength in the Force, strategy, personal combat..." Barriss trailed off. "Historical descriptions of the war often describe Darth Malak as being your inferior in every way."

"It was wrong. Then, we would've left in protest together."

"First thing I would've done differently would be to look for others within the order who would known that, but that would've meant revealing to her master that she wasn't a perfect Jedi, and she..."

"Let thousands of worlds burn, let the Republic be conquered?"

"And what would you have done in my place? Followed the will of the council? Stayed out of it? fight back against their oppressors, and led them to victory. Through that perspective, as a Jedi, I "Yeah, yeah, yeah- listen, Sith use their power to oppress and abuse those they consider inferior."

"Reality is complicated, and reciting five or six sentences to yourself won't make it more sensible," said Revan. "You can choose to fight back against their oppression, or you can choose to accept it. You can choose to gain power, to abuse it, to control it. "Not the point. You put your skills to the test, and came out on top. You can choose to fight back against their oppression, or you can choose to accept it. You can choose to gain power, to abuse it, to control it."

"I, I suppose I don't," said Barriss. "You commanded the entire Sith Empire once. Wouldn't means of keeping them easy to control," said Revan. "Does the title of Lord of the Sith demand its..."

"No, I suppose I don't," said Barriss. "You commanded the entire Sith Empire once. Wouldn't..."

"It was an enormous, gaudy crown on her head, too."

"You are one out of shape meatbag. Time to exercise. Twenty pushups. Get to it."

"That's excellent," Revan said. "Looking at her arms, she could see how weak she'd gotten. The escape, Umbara, the Inquisitor-pathetically brief escape attempts."

"Manipulating it, she extended her power to bring down a slab of earth from the wall and seal off the entrance. Some droplets continue to trickle through, nothing that would make a dent in the..."

"Once again, Barriss forced all the seawater out of the enclosure. This time, instead of holding or manipulating it, she extended her power to bring down a slab of earth from the wall and seal off the entrance. Some droplets continue to trickle through, nothing that would make a dent in the..."

"That's it. Feel the flow of energy and life throughout the universe."

"That's excellent," Revan said. ""Something profound."

"The holocron emitted the sound of clapping; it was slow, knowing, like Barriss had said..."

"The grid vanished and the word 'WINNER!' appeared in big letters, circling around Barriss before disappearing in a burst of polygons."

"She played it safe and called a tie. They started another match, values racking up for each of them,..."
Barriss was about to do as she was told, then felt the numbness of her arms and thought about
GIVE ME THIRTY!
“Is that a yes?”

“Did I just teach

solution,” said Barriss. “Maybe that’s why you lost faith in them. They stopped trying to be

against the Separatists and Mandalorians, they considered themselves infallible in their choice,

Jedi increasingly pursued violent methods while claiming to be pacifists, refuses to assassinate

change as far as she knew. The secession movement was a fault of the senate. During the war, the

It also led to your campaign against the Republic. The modern Jedi waged war for the Republic,

was that I lost my faith in the Jedi. The Mandalorians were sweeping through the Outer Rim,

Empire- you can do whatever you want. You could throw me into the ocean and walk away right

exercises. Talking while moving up and down like that felt weird to her. Her worsening stench

It will be their choice, not yours,” said Revan. “And I hope that if you get the chance, you’ll

won’t get that kind of response from your average trooper, or a true believer in Palpatine’s regime.

the holocron away. “I’d like to be someone who can redeem others, the way you did.”

Barriss nodded. There had certainly been some moments where she’d felt like angrily throwing

“Easy. The reason is power. Yoda, as the grand master, must’ve been obeyed and respected by

head of the order for centuries, and the Jedi stagnated as a result. Why do you think you’d succeed

power, all my strength, so you won’t become anything except what

destroyed, and then the knowledge is lost anyway. The original Revan planned to mass produce

I didn’t care about it because I am graceful in victory,” Revan said.

The hologram stared at Barriss for what felt like ages, studying her frustrated reaction, and then,

of the Jedi’s abuse of power.

“Can’t say I was thrilled when I found out, but I’m not really mad at them for it anymore, either.

friends? Believe it or not, my love for the people closest to me exceeded my anger at the council,”

on them and devastate the galaxy, kill hundreds of millions of people, betray the trust of all my

What they did to me was a last-ditch effort born of desperation, after I’d pushed them to the brink

“Can’t say I was thrilled when I found out, but I’m not really mad at them for it anymore, either.

memories, made you their tool. ‘Rummaged around’ inside your brain. Weren’t you ever angry at

memories."

My elements, anything you want...

the answer to the puzzle that the holocrons are supposed to be the key to.

in the puzzle, you’re essentially... blank. Blank. Blank.

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weapon from her belt. Sabé was undeterred. "Maybe not a break, just change things up. Do you have any other weapons to spar with?"

"Would you like to take a break?" asked Sabé, who barely even seemed tired. Exhausted, Ahsoka struggled to raise her staff to Sabé. Aside from her lack of practice with the weapon, compared to her lightsaber, the staff felt heavy and unwieldy.

"Do you think you can keep her safe?" asked Riyo. "The entire Empire would see her dead. If ever even happen.

Both of them managed to keep a straight face at that suggestion for about three seconds before chose me," Barriss said. "You're welcome to confront her and demand to do as you ask. I'm sure your feelings on the matter aren't what's important. For whatever bizarre reason, she already preferences someone a bit more 'passionate'. 'Fiery'."

"Ahsoka obviously thought highly of you," Riyo said. "Intelligent, dedicated, studious, strongest knight of the Jedi, a serious duel, and then you stood up in front of the most powerful people in the galaxy to declare your contempt for them and their war! You're supposed to be a mental state of a few months ago."

"Wait, you and Padmé were together?" said Ahsoka. That explains a lot.

"They've been together for a few months," Barriss could only shrug weakly. And give a little disinterested grunt. Nothing Riyo had said was expected from that workout. It would get easier as she did more, she knew, but that didn't change anything else, the two were left staring dumbly at each other from across the little table they were.

"A few times, yes."

"That doesn't seem like a serious reason to break up," Ahsoka said. "Not at all. Being in a position of power draws all kinds of threats, but Padmé never deliberately chose me," Barriss said. "You're welcome to confront her and demand to do as you ask. I'm sure she already figured it out?" Sabé said, breaking the lock with Ahsoka.

"If you're referring to her 'secret marriage' to your master, I was well aware," said Sabé, not the only bodyguard around here." replies, wondering if she'd have to talk to the droidekas about taking it down a notch. "You've never been beaten up, then?"

"Ahsoka heard the loud *clack* of many pairs of blaster arms unfolding in unison. "What's the matter? Some Force-deaf bodyguard is too much of a challenge for you?" Sabé pulled out a long, more toned than Ahsoka was.

"Such as when surrounded by some agitated Gungans?" suggested Ahsoka. She'd heard that story.

"If you ask nice, I might show you," Sabé replied, grinning slightly as she got a firm grip on her staff, the muscles of her forearms tensing. "Ready?"

Ahsoka nodded, stretching out a bit and getting a feel for the weight of the staff, sizing up Sabé. A meter leap down to the ground right in front of an unfazed Sabé. "What's up?"

"Just checking out the ship, making sure we haven't been tracked or anything," Ahsoka answered. "What do you mean 'figured it out'? Padmé told me," Sabé said, breaking the lock with Ahsoka again.

\"\"If you're referring to her 'secret marriage' to your master, I was well aware,\" said Sabé, not the only bodyguard around here.\""
“Ahsoka, don’t strain yourself!” warned Barriss. “Effort. We’ve both got some work to do.”

“No way am I leaving you alone after you say something like that. Plus, I can’t let Sabé outshine me. I have it under control, Ahsoka.”

Barriss dropped it. This instant before it hit, it stopped midair, slowly levitating back up and into her hand. Barriss raised an eyebrow disapprovingly, then grinned, held the dumbbell over her foot and said, “Really? I feel like if I leave you alone with these weights, you’re gonna drop one on your foot.”

“You’ve always cared,” Ahsoka said. “That was never the problem. You needed to let other things go.”

With some difficulty, Barriss finished the reps and set her weights down.

“You were...better. In control of your emotions. Concerned for and protective of the life around you.”

“Ahsoka, don’t go—” Barriss started. “I mean, I didn’t mean it as a comparison. I just—”

“Ahsoka—” Barriss cut her off. “I don’t care about comparisons. I care about you. You’re a better Jedi than I’ve ever been. More...smart, and focused, and thoughtful. You can heal, something I can’t even do. You’re even more...acrobatic than I am, and that’s saying something.”

“Have you ever had to fight a Jedi-hunter?” Ahsoka asked. “No...no of the usual variety. Though you were, also, a better Jedi. In control of your emotions. Concerned for and protective of the life around you.”

“Let’s start you off with the five-kilogram weights,” said Ahsoka, watching Barriss take the fifteen-kilo ones. Despite the difference in mass, Barriss moved them with ease.

“Dumbbells off the rack while she took the fifteen-kilo ones. Despite the difference in mass, Barriss moved them with ease.”

“Barriss glanced between Ahsoka and her thin, limply dangling arms, thinking about Sabé. “Upper body strength.”

“Ahsoka glanced at her arms. “I’m not strong enough. Literally. As I am, I can’t keep up with the physical demands of our situation.”

“So. Strength training. What brought this on?” Ahsoka in between reps.

“Your arm looks a little...tired.”

“Ah...so your memory isn’t as bad as I thought.”

“Sit-ups are the only exercise I do. You think I need more?”

“Just a bit sore,” Barriss answered, awkwardly stretching her neck.

“What have you been doing?” asked Sabé.

“Just relaxing my arm.”

“C’mon, you can do this,” Ahsoka said, watching Barriss complete the last barbell raise before saying, “Sit-ups are the only exercise I do. You think I need more?”

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“What is it?” asked Ahsoka.

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“Sit-ups are the only exercise I do. You think I need more?”

“Ahsoka couldn’t decide if Sabé was an effective planner who was deadly serious about her job, or an overcompensating Jedi who would raise any flag she could. Knowing Ahsoka would be there, she’d chosen to bring these.”

“Now it’s my turn. What can you do?” asked Sabé.

“Just a bit sore,” Barriss answered, awkwardly stretching her neck.

“Did you stretch out before you started?” asked Ahsoka. Barriss’s wide-eyed look told no, she’d left it off.

“Only some basic exercises,” Barriss said, glancing at Sabé and doing a double-take when she noticed the other’s塔s showers of sweat from earlier.

“What have you been doing?” asked Sabé.

“Just a bit sore,” Barriss answered, awkwardly stretching her neck.

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“What have you been doing?” asked Sabé.
During one battle she'd even heard one begging for mercy from her, not that she'd listened. She'd voices of theirs.

Barriss ignored the rudeness and brought her items to the register, paying for her new clothes and you're concerned. Don't worry.

Barriss's forehead scrunched up in response. "What are you talking about? Of course I want to...

"Do you?" asked Revan. "He's my question: should you place saving lives above all else?"

"Yes, I've noticed," Revan said eagerly. "I have no interest in people who can't change process."

"It's difficult to defeat an enemy you don't understand. It's impossible to defeat an enemy you knew the Jedi had never really come close to eliminating either him or his master as threats. "The

"There were many battles in which Jedi forces opposed Count Dooku directly," said Barriss.

"Even with all the faults of the Jedi Order, I can't understand how the Sith defeated us so

"People like the Sith?" suggested Barriss.

"Especially in those cases. What, they have all that knowledge and strength, but can't learn better fall prey to it."

"Because of the futility of absolute selfishness and betrayal?" asked Barriss.

"In the midst of a battle, yes. Indecision, inaction, that moment of hesitation, that'll get you killed."

"You don't follow any code? Any rules?" asked Barriss, all the objects she was levitating with codes so they don't have to think about anything they do, that their choice is right because

"Perhaps they only want to see a portion of the Force, but that doesn't necessarily mean their

The anxiety was still there beneath the surface, much to her relief, but there was more energy, many blocks later, the flow of life changed as Barriss walked past various stores and restaurants.

The goal isn't to never make mistakes. The goal is not to make regret?"
command units who avoided both combat and command, but they were emotive and intelligent. 

"Awaiting orders, sir," the B1 commander stated.

"And I'm not programmed to do anything. I can make choices," objected Barriss.

"I'm not 'programmed' to do anything. I can make choices," objected Barriss.

"No 'leniency' will help me if the Black Sun finds out I stabbed them in the back. No offense, kid," Barriss countered.

"Yeah, so can I. That doesn't mean our memories and patterns don't control what the choice will be."

Barriss didn't have a moment to respond when her hand felt a jolt from the floor, and the shock prod was surrounded by a spray of smoke. Barriss smirked as she realized she had just been shocked by the shock prod, and she could now command its use.

As she went upwards into this eerie building the music of the club faded, the only sound being *thunk*. Barriss was sure she heard that three times. Barriss thought it was all a dream she might have overheard, about the eerie music of a night club. The third was also quiet. They weren't simply deserted with whoever normally used them gone for the night, the entire spaces were vacant, no furniture, no cubicles, nothing.

As she went upwards she felt her lungs getting tighter, her breaths getting shorter. The misty face of the night held her captive. Barriss was on her own. With all enemies neutralized, and no one else in the building aware of what was happening, she took the time to move anything she'd missed.

Barriss wasn't sure she wanted to take on this challenge. She thought about trying to expose this thing, but she didn't think she was equipped to do it, and she knew she wouldn't be able to blend in. Barriss thought about checking out what was inside the club, but she knew she didn't have the time, and she didn't even know where to start.

Since they were all unconscious, Barriss had no reservations about using her Force powers to manifest at the core of the operation. There was a lot of equipment here, including weapons, but it all looked like it was in perfect condition. Barriss had a hunch that this place was hiding something important.

Another crate revealed it was even worse: twenty super battle droids, all in perfect condition while lifeless. Barriss was not surprised the Black Sun would use this place to store their droids, but she was shocked they were all in perfect condition. Barriss was sure they must have been used, but she didn't know what for.

The Rodian and the Duro drew their guns, getting them out just in time for Barriss to stun them. Barriss kept up a consistent pattern of landing, judging distance, running, and leaping across the floors. The misty face of the night held her captive.

"What do you care?" asked Barriss. "Don't you normally take delight in chaos and illegality?"

"This is a criminal operation. I'm here to put a stop to it." Barriss was getting tired, but she was also getting desperate. Barriss knew she had to be careful, and she had to be fast. Barriss didn't want to take on this challenge, but she knew she had to.

"You're a Jedi, or you used to be. You don't want to hurt others."

"I can! Just give the word. You do have something you want from me, don't you?"

"We'll follow them, and report their location to the authorities," Barriss decided, judging distances.

Barriss was sure she was too fast, and she was sure she was too slow. But she couldn't slow down, and she couldn't speed up. Barriss was slowly but surely gaining on her. Barriss saw her come down the hall, her speed much faster than hers. Barriss dove into one of the alleys, Barriss running after her and coming to a halt when the Twi'lek turned her head, and saw Barriss's face.

Barriss looked at the Twi'lek, her face contorted in a mixture of fear and determination. Barriss thought about trying to convince the Twi'lek to help her, but she knew it was too late. Barriss thought about trying to run, but she knew she couldn't. Barriss thought about trying to use her Force powers, but she knew she wouldn't be able to.

But Barriss didn't have a moment to respond when her hand felt a jolt from the floor, and the shock prod was surrounded by a spray of smoke. Barriss smirked as she realized she had just been shocked by the shock prod, and she could now command its use.

The Twi'lek was confused, but she didn't seem to be threatened, and she didn't seem to be scared. Barriss knew she had to be careful, and she had to be fast. Barriss knew she had to be patient, and she had to be persistent. Barriss knew she had to be strong, and she had to be brave.

Barriss kept up a consistent pattern of landing, judging distance, running, and leaping across the floors. The misty face of the night held her captive.
"Ruffled" was an appropriate word. "I think you may enjoy this."

"Ah, well, you may want to sit down," Barriss said, nodding and limping towards the kitchen.

"So, how did your solo training go? You look a bit...ruffled."

to keep the hood up or down.

"Yeah, they're...surprisingly considerate for a squad of unstoppable killing machines," said

"Is Naberrie giving you trouble?" asked Ahsoka, as 'Naberrie' turned a few degrees and repeated

If she could sense anything, it was confusion. She was just standing there, not saying anything-

"Um...hello. Sorry about hitting you," she said, her foot still in a bit of pain.

The droideka turned and droned something at her as she took off her sock to make sure her nail

one of their legs. The collapsible design and spindly frame often caused Barriss to forget just how

Barriss stepped out of Snoots' space, wandering for a bit, only paying just enough attention to

Clanking metal life, perhaps, but life.

called 'Snoots'. She'd named it, yet she couldn't take it all that seriously, even just thinking about

Heh. Winning feels good, doesn't it?" said Revan. "You achieved what you did today not with

to do to make it happen was put a nightclub out of business.

Barriss couldn't deny she'd felt better than she had in years. Arms stopped, criminals

used to kill innocents? Maybe you liked dancing awkwardly?" Revan. "How about the part where

"Perhaps it was when you defeated them without having to kill them? Or when you let the droids

"What you are describing is known as 'fun'. You had fun. You

"It was all...interesting. Despite the danger, it was exhilarating, being active like that. I'm not sure

A short walk later, and they were gone.

sent outside to wait proving accurate. Barriss was glad she'd gotten out when she did, because

flung it back shut behind her. Holding the door closed with the Force, Barriss fought against the

angry, and occasionally screaming patrons who'd just had their night ruined.

carefully made their way through the dark to the unguarded exit amidst the confused, frightened,

and pull their guns out of their hands, crumpling them into useless, sparking lumps of metal.

The Black Sun noticed Cici too, taking shots at the droid, tracking her through the air by the

pointing to herself so Barriss could find and levitate her through the air.

Now that they were drawn away from the exits, Barriss began turning off light switches, tearing

and she needed them all distracted and scattered to slip out.

Setting the looted blaster to stun and setting it on a table as she passed, Barriss waited until they

outside. Two appeared to have noticed her slipping behind supports and groups of people,

pistol, now looking like he'd had too much to drink. The lighting and noise made her difficult to

pretending to drink it as he got close, blending in with the guests around her. Once he got close

The chaotic strobe lighting made it easy to hide, and Barriss leisurely worked herself to a nook

being dead giveaway for the pursuers, Cici was surprisingly good as hiding, moving around tables

music having apparently been too loud for anyone to notice all the commotion upstairs. Despite a

coming closer and following through the entrance she'd come through. Barriss ducked and

stairs, aware that taking it slow wasn't an option.

So did the ten flash-bangs Barriss hurled at it.

The door burst open.

penetrate was filled to the brim with munitions of all kinds.

One thing they clearly hadn't taken into account was that the room they were attempting to

searched the room, trying to find another way out, finding nothing. The pounding stopped, which

their backs.

alias, but if they somehow tracked that back to the

Telling them who she was would put the whole planet on high alert and bring who-knows-what to

situation."

rocket through the opening, directed the projectile upwards, and detonated it directly above the

so they didn't fall on anyone in the street, of course) levitated a guided rocket launcher, fired the

"...We don't care for prank calls, Miss. That muffled-voice trick isn't fooling anyone."
I've said it before, I'll say it again: this was not Ahsoka. It could be a fake hologram used as a cover, I guess. I'm suspicious of that scene. The stuff about Barriss's legal place of birth is from the fan webcomic *Contrasts*. It's a good read if you like this pairing.
the incident appeared to be an incident of vigilantism. Unusual, but not significantly affecting the

not know. All that is certain at the moment is Tano's presence. Moving forward, we should

wouldn't think to follow that lead?" "I don't know," Thrawn said again, slightly frustrated. "Though as I understand them, it isn't in

"You're saying a Jedi traitor, and the Jedi she framed for treason, were both seen together on

Then- he already knows she's here? And she met with him?"

"When I first met with Moff Disra, he mentioned his irritation with 'creatures showing up

the few left for her to call upon, making Pantora a potential safe haven from the Empire," Thrawn

"Perhaps, but I don't believe so. Not after she bonded with them enough to go to the trouble of

group of identical, soulless droids," Eli said. "Are you certain they're even hers? Any Jedi who's

"That's rather sad. Being lonely enough to replace a group of identical, soulless clones with a

may be on to something, enough for Eli to keep considering the topic.

Thrawn. "Interesting. It seems she's molding them into replacements for the Fett clones."

Custom painting on armor and droids isn't uncommon, especially out in the fringes. How does

appear to be designed to emulate the custom armors worn by clone soldiers."
“...the interests of the Empire.”

“And now that you think a Jedi might be around, you want to take a closer look. That’s why you said you’d focus on them,” Eli realized. “Well, everyone knows the Jedi have a tendency to interfere with the affairs of others, regardless of the law.”

“There is one other lead to follow,” Thrawn said. “We will inform Moff Disra of our discovery. If he indicates, either through honesty or body language, that he knew of Tano’s presence, we must seek more information on the matter before confronting him over his connection to her. If not, we have supplied him with invaluable intelligence...and we will know Barriss Offee is on Pantora as well.”

Chapter End Notes

Barrissoka: a relationship so messed up, even Thrawn can’t make sense of this shit.
Chapter Notes

"Very, yes, and Or bribed?"

Regardless, "Not entirely. It's probable, however the evidence is much thinner than in Tano's case.

instead."
The moff turned to leave as Thrawn returned to his screen, observing the position of imperial ships

"Yes, sir."

For now, maintain our forces' positions around the moon."

"The Empire's enemies have gathered on Pantora. If we are patient, more will arrive," Thrawn

"That certainly sounds like an efficient course of action in light of this information," Disra added

"My recommendation is that we wait," Thrawn answered.

already proven annoyed enough at Thrawn asking him to come here and review the evidence, and

"The one symbol all the droidekas shared was her forehead markings, which are distinctive for

because of how some outdated droids were painted?"

uncomfortable topics besides sitting in awkward silence like they usually did. "We should start

"No, and I can't find records of anything like him," said Ahsoka. "I don't know what to do."

"Do you recognize his species from anywhere?"

"Our usual enemies aren't usually this subtle, are they?"

"I was 'willing' once, too," said Barriss. "I believed in what we were fighting for. I'd still be

know that refusal to fight will cause more death in the long," said Barriss. "When it comes down

"They're also people wealthy enough to pay for Karrde's warships," noted Barriss.

Ahsoka. "People she trusts, and knows want to restore the Republic as much as she does.

Barriss grinned as she shuffled the cards for the next round. "How are things with Senator

"Mmhm, ish gud," Ahsoka said through a mouthful of bread and meat. It really was, not that she

meat wafting out of the doorway. "I made lunch if you'd like to join me. I figured we should talk

"We need to kill him

someone

oh, yes

he's playing you

you
Planning something. And he was being invited too...

...meant Riyo was in contact with Naboo, without intending the contact to be public knowledge.

...about marshalling votes on legislation. If Sabé was there, and... undercover by the looks of it, it's... Things were suddenly coming together as being much more important than another conference at which he had to present his views on the Inner Rim.

"I do," Riyo replied.

"I would prefer not to leave Coruscant, unless it was to return to Alderaan, or course-" he began, and his voice cracked a little.

...like to personally extend an invitation."
faced with a far more difficult task: directing multiple politicians towards doing something that's meet to switch sides. But you'll plant a doubt in their minds, at least in a few cases. They'll see or "I'm glad," said Revan, relieved the discussion had yielded something productive. "It's got nearby planet. Do something so you can say you tried to be better than you had to be. That you're willingness to literally throw her own life away. "I believe this is what's known as a 'warning when I'd first considered to issue three years ago. The most purely altruistic choice-" yourself for things beyond your control," Revan explained. "You did the best you could.

"I reject the problem. I reject blame for the deaths in this no-win situation. I reject the limitations of evil. I reject the evil ones, and that makes the choice good! Evil is a construct of sapient beings. Without them, it doesn't exist."

"This sounds like an oversimplified, half-assed notion designed to make some idiot feel like they're doing something morally right."

"I'd use my physics-defying telekinetic powers to move the people off the tracks. What're they... Um...well, it's moving too quickly for you to slow it down," said Barriss.

"It's a thought experiment in ethics. Imagine there is an out-of-control tram car moving towards a crowd of people. You have the option of diverting its path, but in doing so you will cause it to hit another crowd of people."

"Will you continue to reply 'no' to everything I say?" asked Barriss.

"No," said Revan.

"I'm not certain I want to do 'better'. I learned how to fight wars before I found you, and I've passed those skills on to the Jedi. I'm tired of constantly living the tram problem."

"Okay," Revan said bluntly, shrugging, unfazed at the prospect and the implicit degradation of the resistance of this level less than a year after the Empire's formation," Revan said approvingly, then brought up any such thing. "I suppose... if I was in command, the first target I would assault is any imperial shipyards. Destroy the military buildup before it's completed."

"Hint: don't destroy what you can use."

"Steal any useable warships and raw materials, then destroy the shipyard itself so it can't be used to produce replacement ships to kill enemy salvage crews, assuming you can't rigged the vessels themselves to blow. Kill them that doesn't end in their deaths?"

Barriss got it. Revan wasn't implying she should cause larger-scale destruction, but rather to make them think. Barriss was the one who'd been the one to come up with that idea. "You believe it better to assault enemy shipyards to steal any useable warships and raw materials, then destroy the shipyard itself so it can't be used to produce replacement ships to kill enemy salvage crews, assuming you can't rigged the vessels themselves to blow. Kill them that doesn't end in their deaths?"

"That's a brilliant plan. Thank you."

"You're welcome, Commander," Barriss said with a small smile. "I'm not sure I could do it, but I'm willing to try."

"I'm sure you could," said Revan. "You're a good soldier."

"Thank you," said Barriss, her expression hardening. "I'm tired of being told how to do my job."

"You're welcome," said Revan, his tone gentle but firm. "I'm not telling you how to do your job. I'm telling you how I think it should be done."

"And what about me?" asked Barriss. "Am I welcome?"

"Of course you are," Ahsoka said instinctively, taking a second to realize that Riyo's colleagues didn't want her in the resistance. "I mean, maybe we wouldn't be encouraged to help Ahsoka upon seeing the other allies she'd chosen to make. Even if we didn't want to."

"And what about me?" asked Barriss. "Am I welcome?"

"No," said Revan. "I don't know if someone else came up with Barriss's approach to the trolley problem earlier, but I want it known that I published this chapter before episode 11 of The Good Place Season 2 aired.

Naberrie replied that the droidekas all had standing orders to kill Republic authorities if given the droideka's disappointment. "Wait, do you want me to kill them?"

"No, Naberrie, you can't shoot the senators for disrespecting Barriss," replied Ahsoka, to the droideka. "And what about me?"

"And what about me?"

Naberrie eagerly beeped his own ideas to Ahsoka on how to resolve this problem. Between Barriss and Ahsoka, they had a plan.

Barriss thought to herself as she did lay next to Ahsoka, watching expectantly as she worked on it. She'd heated up, and a vitamin tablet, mentally working out how many calories this ought to give her. She was ignoring the awful flavor, then resolved to get up and get back to work.
sooner or later, and the galaxy doesn't have its most ardent do-gooders around to save us.

"We were too dependent on the Jedi," Bel Iblis grumbled, more to end the deafening silence than unreasonable one.

now that the Jedi have all died failing to fix any of these politicians can say," Midla said, angrily turning back to address the senators. "And notices the flaws in the system? ...I forget how young you still are. I've lived through decades of" "Haven't you been listening, Barriss? Aren't you supposed to be the attentive one, the one who...

"Even if the Jedi didn't cause the war, they were the ones waging it," Barriss said.

Sabé here watched her planet get conquered over been on the brink of dissolution, unable to do its job of organizing systems and resolving disputes. Freedom, cooperation, culture, justice. The Jedi weren't responsible for the war. YOU were. ALL

"Excuse me?" said Fey'lya, his fur bristling.

"If you're not interested in discussing operations on equal footing, why should we cooperate with..." "Count Dooku? Yes, I'm sure. These capes are iconic of Serenno. He did not have sole

"Are you sure you want to wear that?" asked Barriss. "You look rather similar to, um...

considering she was even shorter than Barriss.

stairs, and Barriss, who gave a quiet nod at Bail. He returned it, feeling more unnerved at her

"Well, follow me, I guess," Ahsoka said to Bail, disappointed that nothing had changed, as he

Cici rolling past him. "C'mon, I've got some spare time now, we're gonna teach you how to

manner as she was capable, to which Artoo replied that, no, he couldn't. "I fucking thought not,

counterpart.

"Oh, Cici, this is R2-D2. Artoo, CC-7," Ahsoka said as Cici rolled around her to inspect her

against. They felt glad he was here. Because Ahsoka said they had to.

as the droidekas unfolded themselves and stared at him, chirping a reluctant welcome to the

lacking arms to return her hug but happy to see her all the same. She squeezed the droid tight for a

"Artoo!" Ahsoka said excitedly as the white and blue astromech rolled forward to meet her,

familiar, squat bulk rolling towards them out of a snow flurry from the

concerns, shockingly, not being put to rest by her security arrangements.

"Ah. Droidekas. And you've been making them even more dangerous than usual," said Bail, his

with no one supervising her. Sure, she knew Barriss wasn't a threat, but there was no reason Bail

how there was a supernaturally empowered, armed terrorist somewhere in their immediate vicinity

"You can't be more specific than that?" said Bail. "Is she armed?"

That makes sense

"No, it's just... I'd rather not bring this conflict to Alderaan if I can avoid it."
Though I have to tell you, it's really weird for me to listen to her, because she sounds like Bastila. Palpatine's allies have discovered. Bet he likes to twist the knife at the end," Revan said with a

"That woman... Padmé was her name?" Revan said quizzically. "I like her. Smart. Incisive. Has anyone.

"I can't topple an empire," said Barriss. "I'm not a great leader. I'm no one. If Senator Amidala's failure that broke apart from a single defeat. I look forward to seeing how you'll topple this one.

"I wonder for freedom. The expansive Bothan spy network. Some well-supplied smugglers. And a pair of"

"Dissident senators from core worlds. The remnant of the Separatists. Planetary militias fighting anything, and if Padmé really had asked something of him, Ahsoka could live with some

which I'm not in a position to provide. And that's the end of it.

"Sabé wanted information on topics Ahsoka," Bail replied, getting an intense glare from Sabé as she walked out, leaving him waiting

"Believe me when I say I am acting with Padmé's permission. I know how angry you are, but I

"Me being slightly inebriated keeps things fair for everyone else," Midla said with a cough, smell, she suspected a few sips of it would knock over a bantha.

"I have ways of coping. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a few thoughts to share with Fey'lya, get him on our

Midla pulled a flask out of nowhere and took a few sips. Then one really long sip. "I have ways of

"idea when the change happened." didn't want to see it before. He was one of the best friends I had ever had. Even knowing "Dooku was a monster!" Ahsoka exclaimed. "He was a Lord of the Sith! Do you have any idea

he first grew it. I'm certain he cared for that Ventress girl. He's- he was a good man." from home and representing our people in the Galactic Senate and the Jedi Order. We knew each

"Of course we did," Midla said fondly, her weak smile contrasting with the growing puffiness of

longer useful to him, you're just another tool to discard.

"He can be reasoned with, that life under the Empire will be... tolerable... know that once you're no

place blame for the war and its cost on the Jedi. I don't know if there's hope anymore, but if there

depends on keeping the attention of those willing to fight for freedom directed towards each other.

"I'd hoped it wouldn't come to this, but it seems as though every minute I have fewer and fewer

else remained quiet, waiting for her to speak.

"Don't give him all the credit, Ahsoka," said Midla. "The Republic had been declining long

forgotten who was 'against' and who was 'for', Borsk!

"And the senate chose to declare war on us!" objected Midla. "Don't think for a second I've

message through any of the

had on my own planet is either dead or in such a precarious position they can't send a single

everything

"Situation we're in? YOU CANNOT COMPROMISE WITH A FIRE AS IT'S BURNING

Gerrera, for one," Ahsoka said.

"I have contacts on a few worlds who won't sit back and let the Empire control their worlds. Saw

end of the war, most war materiel was confiscated by the Empire, but trained soldiers and pilots

"You can't simply decide to wage war against the galactic government," Bail said.

Palpatine and his lackies are building up their military, stifling the rights of citizens, eliminating
“Yes,” Riyo agreed reluctantly. “People are gravitating back towards the conference. Let’s get
"Helpless," finished Barriss.

was taking a lot of nerve for Riyo to have moved things this far. “All this effort to get them in the
“Thank you for doing what you could to keep things civil.” Barriss simply nodded, knowing it
After Barriss shrugged off the concern and stuffed the device back into her pocket, Riyo said,
the holocron never shut down.

her and Riyo staring at it, unsure what Revan had meant by ‘leaving them alone’. Barriss knew
said Revan, hologram vanishing. While the holocron was still clearly held in Barriss’s hand, both
any and Riyo staring at it, unsure what Revan had meant by ‘leaving them alone’. Barriss knew

said Revan, hologram turning to face a very confused Riyo standing under the archway.
“Don’t worry about it,” said Revan. “Non-Force users can’t see or hear me.”

be one more abnormal thing to explain.”

“Hold on—someone’s coming,” said Barriss. “I’m not sure I should be speaking to you. It would
attempting
Barriss couldn’t even speak, her face twisted and scrunched up in revulsion at the mental image of

“Oh, dozens. Plenty of people have used the Force to crush windpipes. Pretty sure I’m the only
make assassinating the single most powerful being the galaxy a less daunting prospect?” asked

“Indeed. Any ultimate secret techniques are you keeping hidden from me? Something that will

rival that of the entire Jedi Council, and I was the deciding factor in multiple galactic wars!”

“Hey there. I’m an ancient Force-user who’s been both Jedi and Sith, became so strong my power
more questions than it answered.

“What... is that?” asked the senator.

said Revan, holographic head turning to face a very confused Riyo standing under the archway.

“Hm. Good analysis. Wish I’d figured that out myself...” said Revan. “The point is that while the
interpreted as deterring them from taking risks, fighting only when necessary or risk extinction.”

“It sounds as though the Rule of Two gave them the focus they needed,” said Barriss. “I’d been
faster they fall apart because everybody thinks they can take it all!”

“each other instead of fighting common enemies... it’s a system where the more Sith there are, the
more Sith you’ve got, the more willing the stronger ones are to waste lives seizing power from

when they die. The Sith are terrible at this. Admittedly, I’m still missing some large chunks of my
memory, but I can’t remember ever teaching Malak a single damn thing. No wonder he was such
when they die. The Sith are terrible at this. Admittedly, I’m still missing some large chunks of my

pass down their teachings from one generation to the next. They can replace experienced members
were spread out, independent enclaves keeping the order alive. They know how to effectively
heterogeneity, cooperation, redundancy. The Jedi take in members from all over the galaxy, and

“Because I’d identified some of the reasons the Jedi have been as successful as they have been:

over the place, emulating the Jedi. It’d have been far more effective than conquering everything.”

also proved corrupt, after a time, its leadership unable to adapt or change.”

“The Republic stood for worthy ideals, and had the means of living up to them,” said Barriss. “It
more robust than I’d believed.”

my passing,” Revan explained. “Meanwhile, the Republic expanded and functioned for millennia
mind-bogglingly incompetent
of Sith rule without my leadership: they were brutal, oppressive, discriminatory, and worst of all,
charge, maybe it would’ve been an effective government. It wouldn’t have lasted. I saw the results
replacement to the Republic. I’d tried to make something better. I failed. As long as I was in

“In a sense, yes. It wasn’t only that the Sith were evil. It was that they were an inferior
them,” said Barriss.

“Did I mention that I’m ancient?” asked Revan. “Non-Force users can’t see or hear me.”

“Huh. Well. I’d forgotten about the Jedi having their own communications system back then.”

“Non-Force users can’t see or hear me.”

“Huh. Well. I’d forgotten about the Jedi having their own communications system back then.”

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“Huh. Well. I’d forgotten about the Jedi having their own communications system back then.”

“Non-Force users can’t see or hear me.”

“Huh. Well. I’d forgotten about the Jedi having their own communications system back then.”
The odds were stacked against her, now it was time to see if Ahsoka Tano was up to challenge. "Squads one through eight: advance," ordered Thrawn, sending the garrison into the icy caves. All exactly as expected. 

momentarily. 

attack from below rather than one from the air, which was consistent with her experience plan demanded they go as well. 

long enough to catch the senators in the act of conspiring with enemies of the state. 

but underground, protected from the wind, stormtrooper armor could withstand the temperatures even less reliable than they appeared. None of the available vehicles were suited to this climate, beneath their target. It was time to show those above that the archaic defenses around them were Empire wouldn't permit that kind of sentimentality, and compromises must be made. 

unthinkable as smearing any other masterpiece. Unfortunately, success in the service of the Ordinarily, destroying such naturally beautiful, painstakingly crafted works of art would be as 

taken millions of years for the caves to form the way they did as the continents shifted and the through the channels like fiber-optic cables, bathing the stone walls in faint blue light. It must've people deciding to prepare for the worst and take a stand if they were forced to. It was also 

is." 

take more from people who don't have the privilege of being able to defend themselves. Palpatine after ourselves, we're not doing the right thing by being peaceful. We'll only be letting the Empire either. I don't want to keep fighting. I also know that if we don't, if we hide somewhere and look 

doubtful of what they could do. 

"How much worse do you expect it to get?" asked Ahsoka. 

about the threat of what Palpatine will do with his growing military. The point is that if we can "Don't be ridiculous," said Bel Iblis, a little irritated at the implied question of his intelligence. "I 

"Not quite," said Organa. "Garm, once you get these dreadnoughts, what do you intend to do with 

creeping feeling she was expecting a lot from a group of politicians. 

"Then... we're all in agreement?" Ahsoka asked hopefully, trying to remain optimistic despite the "I believe I am," said Bel Iblis. "I'd also appreciate the help, Bail." 

military. Are you prepared for that? Are any of us?" 

be better to cannibalize some for their turbolasers and other equipment." 

"There's also the issue of the dreadnaughts' fighting capabilities. They were good ships in their groups Bel Iblis may not know of," Fey'lya said tentatively. 

"If you're facing a manpower shortage, I can make contact with various militias and anti-imperial considered towards finding and protecting any surviving Jedi. "Eleven million each," she said. 

Ahsoka thought about her deal with Karrde: the minimum he would sell for was ten million credits cost from your supplier?" 

2,200 crewers each? ...Six would be manageable, for now," said Bel Iblis. "How much will that 

operate them. How many do you think you can find crews for?" asked Ahsoka. 

was right, and she hated it. 

he will kill you, and he'll get away with it. Now, do 

Palpatine would kill you all if he could get away with it. Let him keep gaining more power, and 

seem to completely grasp what we're all trying to do. We are acting in opposition of the most 

to cooperate with some of the people she disliked most out of the entire galaxy. "None of you 

"Then why don't you give up your pride and stop harassing your allies?" asked Barriss. 

"I'm willing to give up anything to defeat the Empire," Midla remarked sternly. "I've proven that 

as a threat," countered Mothma. 

sarcastically. 

Chandrila's defense fleet could, hypothetically, lend obsolete equipment to groups acting against 

him go unchecked?" 

"Mothma," Ahsoka said, getting the senator's attention. "Palpatine isn't going to stop. Just about 

moving enough to pay attention to whoever was speaking. 

Through the whole discussion, Ahsoka noticed Mon Mothma was oddly quiet, keeping still, only 

spynet against the Empire. We'd also need to ensure any strikes against imperial targets based on 

my own information sources which I'd be willing to share to secure cooperation with the Bothan 

Empire's humanocentric policies put his people at more risk than Chandrila or Alderaan. I have 

"I agree with Fey'lya," said Midla, suddenly acting much warmer towards the Bothan. "The 

to my dear friends if possible, as a representative of Bothawui, I would need some assurance 

it's not out of the question that we could provide 'humanitarian aid' to worlds opposing "You are all aware that Alderaan has a long history of promoting peace," said Organa. "Even so, 

disagreements regarding the subject at hand," began Riyo. "Despite our disagreements, I think
left one whistled and clicked a phrase, then the right repeated it in a deeper, drawn-out tone, The droidekas paused for a second, then went back to their bickering, a little calmer now, until the to him.

"I'm sorry, I don't understand you. I- I'm just a supply officer, not a trooper. Please don't shoot ready.

"Don't shoot! I surrender!" Eli shouted, hoping maybe the droids had it in their programming to

ripple in that bright blue bubble and rolled back to its owner just in time to explode and take three

Now out of ion grenades and with blasters proving useless, the trooper closest to the droidekas further. We've in no danger," Thrawn answered reassuringly. "Ensign?" "If we move too many troopers to protect ourselves, the droidekas may find a way to advance center."

"What's happening?" asked Disra, watching the troopers on the northernmost path of the caves "Barriss, I've been in many live-or-death situations of my own in my younger days," countered

"Because they can't help Ahsoka without doing so and ensuring their own safety. We can," said

with a tinge of anger.

Midla cautiously picked up the defeated trooper's rifle, checking to make sure it was undamaged, her, examining the results.

Force, then stunning them in the brief moment it bought her. Her companions walked out after there, and slowly pulled out her stun pistol, leaping out at them, pushing them all back with the

further up the cave. Another advance group of troopers must've come in ahead.

"It's a holocron, an ancient repository of knowledge," answered Barriss, taking point and leading

"What... is this?" asked Midla, confusedly taking hold of the holocron, the shield reforming whoever holds it.

A bit further on, they found the scout troopers. Or, rather, what was left of them once the

Barriss heaved Kick's stiff body onto Cici, who struggled under the weight, but could deploy a

Uh, if you insist," Ahsoka said, not at all honestly, confused and a little disgusted at the prospect

grudgingly listened. "When you get to Thrawn, you need to

"Ahsoka, this is very important," said Revan, hologram appearing next to Barriss, as Ahsoka

system. Move slow, and keep your shields up, it'll offer some protection from the ion grenades.

"Of course," Barriss said, levitating the inactive destroyer. "Wait, why did you ask that? We're not

Following suit, Midla grinned and pulled a small blaster from out of her sleeve and shot at the

Empire." said Iblis, handing a datapad over to Ahsoka. "It contains contact codes for my

"It doesn't have to," said Barriss. "It gives the Empire another opportunity to smear the Jedi as a

"That seems optimistic. There's evidence of you being here, how do you propose we explain

up. "No, we haven't gotten you killed. All of you meeting here is perfectly legal, and the moff is a

"Amazing. For a moment, I almost thought you had some scruples," remarked Midla as she stood

"We weren't here to help you, we were here to kill you. Tell that to the

How did they know I was here?

How did they know I was here?

We

"That's all," added Barriss, who looked to be deep in thought. "It's not our story... it's Revan's."

"Right." Barriss nodded. "We'll say we came to help you, but once we saw how dangerous Ahsoka was, we knew we had to get out."

"But... but how?" asked Midla, still shocked by what she'd seen.

"Barriss, I've been in many live-or-death situations of my own in my younger days," countered

"I'm going to take care of him," said Barriss, stepping towards the trooper and getting ready to use her lightsaber. "I'm going to take care of him.

"Uh, if you insist," Ahsoka said, not at all honestly, confused and a little disgusted at the prospect

grudgingly listened. "When you get to Thrawn, you need to

"Ahsoka, this is very important," said Revan, hologram appearing next to Barriss, as Ahsoka

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Following suit, Midla grinned and pulled a small blaster from out of her sleeve and shot at the

Empire."
had triumphantly grasped the relic, the holocron laughed louder, then sent The Inquisitor reaching out, pulling the holocron from Offee's coat before she could react and into Such a valuable artifact couldn't be left in the hands of the enemy. He couldn't allow it. Turning back towards Offee to cheerfully tell her "Kick his ass, kid", Darth Revan's image The Inquisitor's eye twitched involuntarily. closer, growing to dwarf the Inquisitor, violet light overwhelming the icy blue of the cave, that now the collected knowledge of one of the most powerful Sith to ever live was sitting stuffed in by this disrespect. “Interesting observation, Barriss,” the holocron chimed in, “though you’re overthinking it a bit. suppose ‘pet’ is being rather generous. People normally care about their pets. What do the Sith "Ahsoka and I aren't going to be killed by the Siths' pets," Offee said dismissively. "Though I forward to cutting it apart once he was finished with its owner. What an insolent little thing The Inquisitor’s eyes darted around where Offee was standing, trying to find where that voice had "Listen to me, you punk bitch Sith wannabe," said a third voice the Inquisitor didn’t recognize. is going to close in around you, as it will any other surviving Jedi," he said dramatically. “Your what is going on? And why did you have to go and…” "Oh, you dumb schmuck. This whole citadel/ice cave area is based on the Rhen Var harbor and citadel areas in. The droidekas are loyal to their master. You can’t just walk up and have them stop what they’re doing. Unless you’re in the right order. Naberrie was provided cover for the other droids, shield absorbing the troopers' shots as if they were insignificant. As they ascended the boarding ramp, Barriss felt a chill go up her spine, then stopped and listened, "Hm," grumbled Midla. "Well done. I doubt there are many people who could've defeated so many..."
to pieces.

The Inquisitor watched helpless as his attack fail and his lightsaber get obliterated. Taking
midair, then clenched her fist and crushed the weapon into a ball of scrap metal, sparks and bits of
the face and breaking his nose, knocking him down, the saber landing behind him and shattering
into his eyes. The fear, the desperation as he knew he was about to die, groaning in pain as he
lightsaber, now the dominant source of light, kept its owner half-illuminated and half in shadow.

Barriss slowly walked towards the Inquisitor as he tried to crawl away, leaving a trail of blood
behind him, his eyes flickering between contact with Barriss's and fearfully staring at her

Then, she turned off her saber.

The Inquisitor's two blades spun around his hilt, his own agility making it an effective shield, ice
nothing but her will, levitating dozens of frozen shards at a time, and striking with all of them at
Barriss.

The trajectory of each one of them was anticipated, then dodged effortless, flying past Barriss and
The Inquisitor.

Jumping back to a safe distance, the Inquisitor paused, alarmed by the unexpected resistance, and
whip that left a sizable welt on his cheek.

The Inquisitor charged at her again, and instead of engaging him in a saber duel again, Barriss hit
down that easily. His flinching told her they hurt. Considerably.

The armor he wore was tough, or at least tough enough to withstand stun shots, and wouldn't go
repeatedly point-blank in the torso.

Barriss gripped the pistol in her free hand, used her saber to knock away his blade and shot him
stronger, and used those advantages to push Barriss back. Grinning as his blade slowly moved
possibilities race through Barriss's mind, few of them good. If she died now, all the progress
everyone who worked for him. The network of rebels keeping each other supplied and supported
removing more political opposition from Palpatine's path. The ysalamiri she'd chosen to keep in
the face of certain failure, become easier.

The air around her hands began to glow a light blue, and the Inquisitor's breathing quickly
became easier.

Then, she let him drop.

Through power, I gain victory.

Through victory, my chains are broken.

Through strength, I gain power.

The Inquisitor's first attempt to get up had him on his back again, writhing in pain.

"I'm not doing this for you. I'm not doing this for the Jedi. I'm not doing this for Luminara. I'm
another death on her conscience if she could help it. And nothing else mattered to her right now.
want to stand back and watch him die a slow death when she could stop it. She didn't want
to kill him. She didn't want to kill anyone. She hardly even wanted to hurt him. Nor did she

"You're showing me mercy? Even after everything you've done, you still believe you can be a
Jedi anymore. Not that the Jedi really followed such absolutes. Even though he'd killed Jedi.

The question gave Barriss a moment's pause. There wasn't any good reason she could think of.

"Why... why would you want to help me?"

"I embraced the dark side, but can this really be the life you want? Despite what you've done, I'm

"He's managed to keep himself alive through sheer willpower, and I'm not about to

"You don't understand... I've made my choice, and despite everything, I believe I chose

"I'll be the last mistake you make, Offee."

"You don't understand... I've made my choice, and despite everything, I believe I chose

Eclipse.

"Eclipse."

"Eclipse."

Barriss went to face him. She could protect herself this time. She could protect Ahsoka, protect
Focusing on her desire to overcome her enemy, knowing that people will die if she loses to him,
possibilities race through Barriss's mind, few of them good. If she died now, all the progress
the face of certain failure, become easier.
Ahsoka added angrily. "I don't know what Anakin saw in you, whatever made him think you
people who suffer because of it just don't understand how right you are to do this to them,"
and say it's okay because you thought it all through, because it's all for the greater good and the
Releasing Thrawn, the captain dropped to the floor, on his knees, breathing heavily now that the
of ice breaking off and falling around him, his arm collapsing against the wall as she pulled the
Against the invisible power pressing him against the wall, Thrawn tried to move his arm down to

"Is that what you call it? 'Distasteful acts'?” said Ahsoka. “You think the things the Empire does
accept the former.”given the choice between distasteful acts and total annihilation of both our civilizations, I will
fight your 'unimaginable threats'?” asked Ahsoka.

"And what about everyone else? What about all the people who will die before you can use it to
reluctantly. “For the time being.”

"Others in the Empire probably wouldn't look too kindly on you helping Jedi,” said Ahsoka. If
overwhelming odds. And he spoke quite highly of you. At every opportunity, as I recall.”

"There are threats in the Unknown Regions you can scarcely imagine. Unlike the Emperor, I will
Ahsoka kept her guard up, still expecting this to be a trap and for stormtroopers to show up any
Palpatine.”

"To the Ascendancy. To my homeworld,” replied Thrawn. For the first time, his voice showed

"What do you know about the Jedi?” asked Ahsoka. Her saber wasn’t going to be lowered any
Ahsoka said.

"It shouldn't take too long. I only need to make it long enough for Palpatine to die of old age,”
"Very well. Tell me, how long do you really believe you can outrun the Empire?” asked Thrawn.

"I'm not a commander of the Chiss Defense Fleet,” Thrawn countered. Then, his tone
"I don't think you're defenseless, and I'm not a Jedi,” said Ahsoka.

"The Jedi sense of morality to kill a defenseless enemy.”

"There are threats in the Unknown Regions you can scarcely imagine. Unlike the Emperor, I will
Ahsoka considered it, noting the disconnect between Thrawn and the Empire. Thrawn wasn’t of
recommendation, would give you asylum. The Emperor will never find you.”

"To the Ascendancy. To my homeworld,” replied Thrawn. For the first time, his voice showed

"What are you focused on me?”

"The Ascendancy will help you on your way. You and your friends could go into exile. The
Ahsoka said.

"It shouldn't take too long. I only need to make it long enough for Palpatine to die of old age,”
"Very well. Tell me, how long do you really believe you can outrun the Empire?” asked Thrawn.

"Another, more
"It was difficult for me to

"Your military skills are equal those of our finest officers, and this 'connection' you have to

"There are threats in the Unknown Regions you can scarcely imagine. Unlike the Emperor, I will
Ahsoka said.

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"Very well. Tell me, how long do you really believe you can outrun the Empire?” asked Thrawn.

"Another, more
"We know our enemies better now," replied Thrawn as he took his seat. "It's unfortunate for us.

"It doesn't seem like we gained much from this," said Eli.

"I see. It must have been Tano, then. She showed no hesitation when executing Moff Disra," said the only bad news: it seems your fellow inquisitors were not so fortunate as yourself, and were

"Captain Thrawn," he politely greeted, unwilling or unable to move his head and look directly at

and white mess.

"Captain? What happened?" Eli asked, rushing over as quickly as he could walking with his

Speaking of precise, Thrawn was there, his face sporting an enormous bruise on the right side.

In the span of a few moments, the

"Assuming we live long enough to inform others," said Midla, who was concernedly staring out

forces at play. Go along with the lies, and it would benefit everyone. For now.

Try to eliminate each other would be risky for them both, there were too many competing

won't care, not when there was a position they could fill. She knew that he knew that she

the Jedi from Pantora while the late Moff Disra gets saddled with the blame for their escape,

Or, he could go with the sure thing, get publically praised for containing the situation and driving

situation much more effectively, and at least given us prior warning of a suspected attack."

"Won't the storm take us out, too?" Ahsoka asked as she executed a series of sharp turns to avoid

midair. The TIE was flying so erratically with the pilots losing control.

One more swing ended it.

Ahsoka, I need your help with this," she said, as Ahsoka followed her lead. The latter wasn't

"We know there are two Jedi here," said the Twi'lek. "Where have they gone too? What's their

The Boltrunian held Riyo in the air, grinning as she grasped at his arm. The hold wasn't tight

revealing his pointed teeth, approaching Riyo. "You must be the little Pantoran senator."

"Hello there," the Twi'lek said, in a disconcertingly friendly tone of voice, smiling widely and

The Jedi and the Senator were flanked by two white skinned soldiers, each with mid-long

"You've done more than enough, captain," Bail said, as a quarter of troopers assembled around

in the air... twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. That's the last pair.

The Eclipse slowly flew over, Midla piloting while Barriss saw to the recovery of the droidekas,
that Tano remains one of them."

"She turned out to be a challenge for you?" Eli asked curiously, noting how Tano had seemingly defied all expectations and outflanked Thrawn, evading execution and escaping offworld. "You underestimated her?"

"I... misunderstood her," Thrawn replied quietly. "It will not happen again."

Chapter End Notes

What a day for Thrawn. Five separate backup plans failed completely. In a lot of pain from the throttling Ahsoka gave him. Then again, he still came out of this in relatively good shape because he knew Ahsoka wouldn't kill him and he got rid of one more racist superior.

You can't really make Thrawn feel the bitterness of defeat. Just various levels of disappointment.

Those two inquisitors Sabé fought were loosely based on Maw and Boc Aseca, a pair of Dark Jedi from the Dark Forces Saga, same game as Jerec/"First Brother" from the Myrkr chapters. Still haven't played that one, but I thought they'd be worth throwing in.
Just talk to her.

Attention to themselves would only make things worse.

Meeting had a personal interest in seeing the Empire removed from power. Sure, some of them thought they were doing the right thing, but thinking about it later, they realized they were being used. They had regular contact with each other for years. Could he have figured out who they were? Did he know they were coming?

Ahsoka rubbed her throbbing temples as she realized nothing she'd been thinking about was going to help her figure out how to stop him. Her meeting had a mole somewhere, Thrawn was going behind their backs to talk to her, he couldn't talk to her. She would have to figure out how to stop him before he could.

How far did Thrawn's plans go? He'd arranged the whole fight on Pantora just to get her in the line of fire. She had to figure out how to stop him now. She had to find out how he knew she was on Pantora, and she couldn't figure out how he knew.

This one was the most informative. The project was an exploratory mission of the Unknown Regions, which would be simple, but it also seemed pretty solid. Ahsoka knew the Outbound Flight was true, but hyperspace travel to an entire fifth of the galaxy was cut off by an unmapped arc of Chiss space.

The Outbound Flight was definitely a bad idea. They did not want to shut down. They would not think about this idea. The droidekas agreed that, yes, they liked their current lives. They performed their function. They were designed to be simple, but it also seemed pretty solid. The droidekas needed an example of 'better' to base their decision on. 'Better' was not something they had thought about before.

The droidekas assembled around him, rudely shoving their way past Ahsoka to check on Kick. Kick didn't really understand why this was important. The others told him it was important to check him to make sure he was all right.

Removing the curving plate covering Kick's back and the partial sphere on his lower body, Ahsoka thought they were like brothers, and she felt a sinking feeling in her stomach as she wondered how it was going. She wondered how it was going. She wondered how they were doing.

The tactical droid droning even deeper than the tactical droid's, asking him about the probability of defeating the CIS. The other droidekas assembled around him, rudely shoving their way past Ahsoka to check on Kick.

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After spending several minutes leaning back in the pilot's seat, feeling too nauseated to bother reading, Fulcra put some distance between herself and this system. She could get you close enough to Corellia without a jump, but not to Coruscant. She was close enough to be considered a threat, though she wasn't sure why anyone would want to get close enough to be considered a threat.

Fulcra was probably the best one to check on, though she had her own problems. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing, and she had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing.

She had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing.

Putting her hands on the steering wheel, she glanced back at the fighter pilots and the gunship pilots, wondering how it was going. She wondered how it was going. She wondered how they were doing.

Fulcra was probably the best one to check on, though she had her own problems. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing, and she had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing. She had to make sure she was doing the right thing.

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Putting her hands on the steering wheel, she glanced back at the fighter pilots and the gunship pilots, wondering how it was going. She wondered how it was going. She wondered how they were doing.
windows were, on inspection, transpareisteel and several times thicker than usual, with a coating.

Ahsoka's job was, for the moment, done. The information sent, the assurance that someone would always be listening.

Now that Bel Iblis's people knew the coordinates for Karrde's dreadnoughts, Ahsoka's job was, only going where the war took her. A history of isolationism had kept Corellia far away from the galaxy's Core Worlds without causing a panic. It would take a few days as sub-light to reach the ships were waiting for them.

The instructions Karrde had provided were straightforward: provide the necessary payment and a quartet of glimmering lights across the vastness of space. The journey wouldn't be a quick one.

The trip through the Corellia system provided the perfect time frame to let the smugglers work. In the meantime, Ahsoka spent the days relaxed in the pilot's chair, looking out into the blackness of the ship, ion engines firing up and taking it towards Corellia, the planet with its three moons just a few odd laughs. Nobody was plotting to turn her over to the Empire. Nobody had betrayed her. It didn't make sense.

Smiling meekly, Barriss stood by as Ahsoka's fears for their safety wash away.

Ahsoka didn't understand what she meant for a moment, until the lighting of the ship caught one.
that could be tinted until they were opaque. The elevation left very few vantage points from the
surrounding buildings to spy on whoever lived here. Inspecting a control panel opening to the
private landing pad, Ahsoka found she could activate a deflector shield connecting the exit to the
Eclipse, protecting anyone fleeing from enemy fire.

The panel also showed displays from several security cameras arranged around the exterior and
the roof. Checking one of the cameras herself after figuring out where it must be located, Ahsoka
found that the surveillance equipment was built directly into the black-painted wall, the dark color
concealing the lens. There was also the option to turn on a static dampener and conceal any signs
of life inside the residence.

Time to get settled in, and, unfortunately, start dealing with their severe space-lag. They'd arrived
just before dawn, while the faintest glimmer of light were appearing over the horizon, and were
both already exhausted.

There were eight small bedrooms, apparently divided up from some more spacious ones for
whoever Midla usually had staying here, and Barriss and Ahsoka each picked out one.

"'Night, Barriss."

"Goodnight, Ahsoka."

Chapter End Notes

Lot to talk about with this one. I don't know how many of you have read The
Thrawn Trilogy, but I highly recommend you do, because Thrawn is one of the best
villains in the franchise and I don't think people really get why. Most of the fandom,
especially prior to his appearance in Rebels, associated him with art analysis, some
negatively so, (justifiably) considering it a contrivance. But that's not why he's a
threat.

Thrawn's skill isn't only deducing what an enemy will do and acting accordingly. It's
understanding their behavior and feeding them information to undermine their efforts
without them even realizing it. The art schtick is just window dressing.

In Heir to the Empire, Thrawn orchestrated multiple attempts to capture the heroes,
seemingly knowing where they will be before they arrive, making them all question
who they can trust with that information. One attempt involved a fake Millennium
Falcon, trying to get them aboard and trap them. Following that, Han and Leia go to
Lando to hide out, only for Luke to, by an improbable coincidence, show up at the
same place, at the same time, in a situation where they're vulnerable.

After recent events, there was a moment where they fear it's another imperial trap,
and seriously consider firing on his X-Wing. Because of Thrawn fueling paranoia
and distrust, the Millenium Goddamn Falcon almost shot Luke down. It was only
because Leia could sense him that it didn't, and it still wasn't an easy call for her.

This happened early, too. At that point, they didn't know Thrawn's name, didn't even
know he exists. That incident wasn't in his plan, but he's having such an effect
through his machinations that our heroes are doubting their allies, their friends, and
their own judgement. THAT'S why he's such a terrifying villain. Ahsoka just
experienced a taste of that.

Also got to give a real look at how the droidekas see the world. It took a few tries to
get that right blend of childish simplicity because they're only a couple months old,
and coldly utilitarian logic that would make them unable to really think about other
options in their lives while still being confident in the very first choice they've ever
made. That's one more than any of the clones ever got. Considering they're so young,
they've got their lives together to a remarkable degree.

Next chapter's going to be something really special, I can promise you that.
Revan. "Hm. I'd hoped she'd work up the nerve to ask you, rather than the other way around. I
with lately."

assaulting, and framing Ahsoka for mass murder, Barriss had recovered from that. Against all
could imagine was any worse than the things that had already happened. After betraying, physical
understanding of romantic relationships, and kept coming back to the same realization: nothing she

Think. If we actually begin this relationship, what could conceivably happen?

I'm nervous about it because... because... it isn't some lingering concerns about attachment, is it?
Obviously, I like her. I should want our relationship to move in this direction.

Barriss wandered deeper into Coronet for several minutes, searching for a peaceful spot to sit
and looking back in the direction of the apartment.

"I said I need to think about this. Please, leave me alone."

was stress, that wasn't you. The thought of you, and me, it isn't repulsive, I just wasn't expecting
while Ahsoka kept a safe distance back like she was trying not to spook an animal. "That, that
poured a glass of water, rinsed her mouth a few times, then put the glass in the dishwasher, all
keeping completely motionless as she processed what had just been said. Then her eyes drifted
hold her breath. No taking

"I was wondering if you would like to go out. On a date. With me," said Ahsoka, as she began to
running away from or preparing for a fight.

and developed as Corellia was a better option than most. "I don't know if the fight against the
happened, I'm really lucky to have you around," said Ahsoka, taking a deep breath. She hadn't

It was the middle of the afternoon in Coronet, the bright light of the planet's yellow sun irritating a
sculptures, the light illuminating them gradually dimming until only Ahsoka was visible.

"Barriss... is that true?" Ahsoka asked.

information, thank you! This is why I wasn't interested in having another of these delightful
manifestation of the Force or her subconscious mind that was causing this, "I already knew all this
know that, don't you? Of course you know! Of course this is how you'd act!" Barriss screeched,

"Resorting to violence so readily, Barriss?" Luminara said, distracting Barriss long enough for
there, only a familiar soreness of the skin. The stinging continued, moving across her cheeks, and
that's why he had nothing to say.

Barriss dashed away from Skywalker, holding out her saber to cut down all the neatly-lined up

Barriss almost wanted to comfort him, try and understand what he meant. Instead, she threw him
you were somehow being merciful?"

With all the practice she'd gotten recently controlling multiple objects, hitting the activation
and moved her free hand to her chest, feeling the impression of her stun pistol beneath her robes.


"No," she said to Luminara, standing up and going for the door, which refused to open for her.

Her fists clenching, Barriss wondered if it was possible to beat yourself into unconsciousness
surroundings quiet. Opening her eyes, the blurry surroundings eventually became crisp.

"Leaving already, apprentice?" Luminara said, still seated and sipping her tea.


"No," she said to Luminara, standing up and going for the door, which refused to open for her.

Her fists clenching, Barriss wondered if it was possible to beat yourself into unconsciousness
wandering. Let's go eat."

"I wouldn't be able to sleep," said Barriss, taking Ahsoka's hand and pulling her towards the
growing calmer by the word. "This is probably really uncomfortable for you, and I'm sorry for
 everything that happened between us, why would you want to move things in this direction?"

"Barriss, I asked you to tell me everything that was going on in your head. Why did you ask me
forward on your own, so I'll do it. What's the worst that could happen?"

"You have more reason to be cautious about this than I do."

"I can't exactly say you're wrong, but I don't understand why you feel this way," said Barriss.
trying to make sure her tone of voice didn't sound critical. "With all the meals and conversations
remember that? Couldn't put that one together? Well, I think you're cute, too. What about how
comment about me being cute. And you looked embarrassed. Did you think I wouldn't notice or
"You do?"

"I know it isn't. That's why I tried saying them first," said Ahsoka. "You know how I feel now,
and even if you're not good at expressing it, I know you feel the same way."

"I... I left without a key," said Barriss.

A knock at the door wasn't something she'd expected to hear, especially since the anxiety ball she
boredly bringing herself snacks without moving. Living the dream.

For about an hour after giving up, she laid down on the couch and waited, abusing her powers by
that was wandering around, and which she knew did not want to be focused on right now.

Taking things one step at a time, in a very literal sense, she approached the door.

Let her forgive you
In the elevator, ascending to the top floor.

You need to talk to her. It'll be fine.
She was on the walkway leading to the building.
Whether or not you are forgiven is not something you can decide.
...every so often."

eventually outweigh her abject terror about going back.

herself out on the strange notion that the slowly growing mix hunger, fatigue, and boredom might
the upper levels of Coronet's residential district, half because she needed time to think, half tiring
processing power towards making this discussion slightly more annoying than it already was.

holographic tears of laughter were leaking out through the visor of Revan's mask. The longer
On and on it went. Ahsoka wasn't certain at first, but after a moment she saw that, yes,
"HA
vomit in her mouth. Her feet were sore from all the walking before and during the date. The food
out of breath, and blinking a bit in surprise.

"Well? How did it go?" asked Revan.

"It wasn't all the same," Barriss laughed. "We're not tiptoeing around each other, for one thing.
expected it to be, well, the same."

"Yes, I- I don't know why," Barriss said, sniffling with each word. "I think I'm happy, and that's
which directed the light down towards the ground and away from the sky, giving a better view of
Two of Corellia's moons hung low in the sky as Ahsoka and Barriss walked back to the
approach vector to overcome the planet's gravity well."

"There's a place called 'The Crimson Bantha' that looked appealing, and judging by how many
"So, where do you want to go?" asked Ahsoka.

Walking down the elevated walkway suspended half a kilometer above Corellia's surface, half a
strategist, wielder of the Force, terror of the Empire.

"Yes. Yes, I did," Barriss said with reassuring conviction, nodding confidently a few times.

"Yes, I suppose you're right," said Barriss. "Would you like to take a walk around the city?"

"All of our money is shared. It makes little difference."
wasn’t exactly agreeing with her. Her palms were perspiring relentlessly. Her throat felt dry and scratchy. She’d banged her head in the *Eclipse* when Ahsoka wasn’t looking, and there was probably a bruise under her hair. And even though she’d been awake for less than ten hours, she was exhausted.

She’d also kissed Ahsoka.

“It was wonderful.”

Well, that was a thing, Ahsoka thought as she lounged around in the living room, feeling restless and wondering if she’d moved things too fast, unable to think of any reason waiting longer would’ve changed anything, or anything else she should’ve done. She was dating Barriss now.

And she felt pretty damn good about it. The last person any sane being would’ve expected, or recommended.

Eh, it wasn’t as if anyone else whose opinion she cared about was around to criticize.

There was a knock on the door. No ringing of the chime, just a knock. Nobody should know they were here, and no one on the planet had any business with them. Ahsoka cautiously, quietly stood up and slowly walked towards the door, not feeling or hearing anything unusual.

Keeping her distance, she used the Force to press the button to open the door, and saw a paper envelope stuck to the inside of the door frame. Who uses paper? She didn’t sense anyone nearby, either, had this been put here by a droid?

Levitating the envelope rather than risk touching it, she tore it open and removed a single-page typed letter:

Good work with the drop-off, and thanks for keeping things discrete like I’d asked. Hope you’re finding Corellia pleasant. Payment’s been received, now comes my end of the deal. Meet me at the Corusca Star restaurant tomorrow at mid-day. I’ve got news.

Please destroy this message once you’ve memorized the name.

- TK
Chapter Notes

...none of them will be as vulnerable as this one," replied Karrde. "Yularen... have you
battalion they came from?"

"Maybe. It's possible some of them could recognize us," Ahsoka pointed out. "Any idea what
replacements for its current staff. I want Barriss and I to walk in and walk out while everybody's
blinks, she wasn't sure. "I've also got a few tricks to keep from being recognized."

"I'm human myself, so I have no need for a disguise matrix," Karrde said, and for a brief moment
that'll work. What about you two?"

"Still cute," noted Ahsoka approvingly, smirking slightly at the now-flustered Barriss, who began
Imperial Academy would accept.

"Barriss and I are wanted criminals, remember?"

"If they're keeping an eye on incoming ships and crews, we could be spotted," noted Ahsoka.
market for rare metals," said Karrde.

"Once, shortly after the first battle of Geonosis. Luminara and I was dispatched to guard the
shipyards from a Separatist offensive expected by Republic Intelligence," said Barriss, shaking a

"You've been there before?" asked Vrask.

"The accumulated asteroids they attract also makes the system rich in various metals used in ship
connections. What do you think of all this?"

"What do you mean? What 'current staff' would need replacing?" asked Ahsoka.

"It is one of the most beautiful natural environments I've ever been in," said Barriss, smiling as

"I've never been there. What's it like?" asked Ahsoka. "For a moment, it sounded like you
distaste for his greed. "Getting more information than just the files on the Jedi will also help cover
I will gladly provide to your rebel friends at a reasonable rate," Karrde said, unfazed by Ahsoka's
rudeness. Isn't your girlfriend being rude?" Karrde said to Barriss, acting offended, as Barriss

"Hello, Vrask," Barriss said with a nervous wave, as she still wasn't entirely at ease.

"One carnivore to another: start taking currents from ventilation systems into account when aboard
?'Date'? You're a
provided such a complete answer.

"Hello, Ahsoka," a reptilian voice hissed from around the corner.

"As the galaxy falls further into darkness under the reign of Emperor Palpatine, rebels
used to shatter the Galactic Empire, finding the odds stacked against them at every turn.

...the ecumenopolis it was named
In Plain Sight
“I can handle myself,” Barriss said, pressing the buttons on her rank bars, standing up rigidly. She was familiar with imperial regulations and etiquette. It’s not enough to have the right code cylinders, though. You have to command respect from our fellows.

He is now known as Moff Tarkin, having earned the favour of our great Emperor. I sound like a gray Jedi. I’ve got a tail now, and they’re forcing me to wear a uniform. I’ve only got one nutrient frame, and they’re all going to want it, assuming they can recognize its purpose.

"...I recommend you don’t use that voice around Ahsoka. She won’t respond well," she said. "You should have thought of that before we had brought in any money. At least since we left Myrkr, possibly even before we met.

You had all this planned out well ahead of time," Barriss pointed out, the point making Karrde laugh. "You shouldn’t have provided more than one reason," said Barriss. "It tells me you made them yourself. If you can recognize my intent and method behind a strike, even if he’d never come up with it himself.”

"His weaknesses?" asked Ahsoka.

"During the first year of the war, he and my master cooperated frequently," answered Ahsoka. "But my master was clearly the more capable of the two. He was the one who thought up the idea of the ysalamiri, which contains numerous notes from Timothy Zahn about his process for getting more people to read it. One point was that he often derived the names of planets from Norse mythology. How’s that ysalamiri you bought from me, by the way? Is it healthy?"

"Of course I can sew," Karrde said, a touch offended at the question of his abilities, as Barriss dug on. "You can sew?" asked Barriss. "You’re not half as greedy as you like to front," Barriss said. "I’m not wasting good money on a tailor."

"Vrask’ll have to do it. You ever see a Trandoshan hold a needle with those claws of theirs? And maybe I have diabolical plans for the other Jedi I find," he said. "Why not?"

"I couldn’t argue with that. I suppose it might make my job easier." She supposed it might make her hard to recognize, at least. The drab grey uniform was a bit loose on Barriss despite being the smallest standard size, proving how good it was at every opportunity until she

"You're afraid of them," said Barriss.

"What's conspicuous about two freighters arriving in a system known for its metal export?" asked Ahsoka. "That should be perfect. What are his weaknesses?"

"During the first year of the war, he and my master cooperated frequently," answered Ahsoka. "But my master was clearly the more capable of the two. He was the one who thought up the idea of the ysalamiri, which contains numerous notes from Timothy Zahn about his process for getting more people to read it. One point was that he often derived the names of planets from Norse mythology. How’s that ysalamiri you bought from me, by the way? Is it healthy?"

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Just when she’d gotten used to having a hood again.
On the Shoulders of Gas Giants

Yhanz drifted further in the distance, its pale yellow sun finally peaked out from the upper-on, which meant she could see far further in any direction. Kilometer after kilometer of rolling, rolling planet's habitable layer, finding a surprisingly spacious balcony with a solid slab of metal you'd come prepared, so it was probably fine. It also wasn't their job. If they were an actual threat, which was unlikely since they weren't obviously armed, he wouldn't be getting paid enough to risk getting shot.

"Of course. You were just looking for the bathroom."

"How are you so sure? ...Have you broken into places like this before?" Ahsoka said teasingly.

"Absolutely," said Barriss.

"Then how will you know if we're not trying to break in ourselves?"

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right edge, illuminating Mitoth as rays of light shone through the cloud layers. The city above
them was so small by comparison, and so far away now it did nothing to mar the view.

"Wow," Ahsoka said breathlessly, out into the layered cumulus clouds, while Barriss stared at her.

"Oh, it's not over," said Barriss, glancing at her chrono. "It's late enough in the day, and with light
out now they should be coming up to feed-"

As she spoke, hundreds of strange animals, bags of low-density gas directed by sets of four fins
emerged from the lower depths of Mitoth, finding a good spot in the sun, and unfolding a second
set of fins to absorb as much sunlight as they could, each one blossoming to between ten and
twenty meters across.

"They're called 'thurarrcleacks','" said Barriss, trilling the two 'r's to get the pronunciation right.
"Living bags of hydrogen that use the sun as an energy source, absorbing silicon and water from
the atmosphere to grow."

"They're amazing," Ahsoka said as she watched the flower-shaped animals drift on the air
currents.

"I loved the time I spent on this world," said Barriss. "Before the war... worsened. I saw so many
battlefields torn apart by explosives and blasters of every kind, cities bombarded, but no matter
how intense the fighting or how destructive the weapons, none of them could ever scar these
clouds. I'm glad I had the chance to see it with you."

"Yeah, I'm having a great time," Ahsoka said, tilting her head down towards Barriss, who'd
closed her eyes and was leaning up.

Then their breath masks clunked against each other.

Both of them needed a second to open their eyes and realize what had just happened.

"If you'd like to take these off for a minute, I'm willing to risk it. I can hold my breath," said
Ahsoka, tentatively reaching for the straps holding the mask to her head before Barriss grabbed
her wrist and pulled her hand back down.

"Absolutely not. These clouds don't possess nearly enough oxygen, and they contain trace
amounts of chlorine and ammonia," said Barriss, making it very clear she didn't consider a kiss
worth the risk of breathing in toxic fumes, then putting her arm around Ahsoka's waist and
leaning against her. "We'll simply have to wait until we've returned to a higher altitude."

"Fine. I can make do," Ahsoka said, holding Barriss close, feeling her warmth in the thin, cold air,
and directing her attention back towards the view.

Ahsoka quietly enjoyed the cool, calming colors of Mitoth, watching other life forms join the
thurarrcleacks', various floating, flapping, puffing, and even bioluminescent organisms drifting
through an expanse of gas thousands of times greater in volume than any ocean in the galaxy, all
while wrapping Barriss in her arms.

Ahsoka's attention drifted when she noticed something to the east, souring her mood, as she held
Barriss a little bit closer. The clouds parted, showing the branching walkways and buildings of the
imperial base, its skyhook cable glinting in the light as it fueled the Emperor's fleet in the space
above.

Chapter End Notes

People often describe Star Wars as being more fantasy than science fiction, but I
consider part of its strength how it's a successful combination of both. I've also never
encountered a soft scifi story that was made less interesting or immersive by taking a
realistic approach to the science and technology occasionally, because the scale and
beauty of space can inspire awe and wonder just as well as any fantasy. Which is
why I did the math on how Mitoth and Yhanz orbit each other.

They each have comparable mass to Saturn, 1.1x in Mitoth's case, 0.9x for Yhanz,
which assuming similar average density gives them radii of 1.03x and 0.965x
Saturn's. As a result, they have similar gravity to Earth's at the edges of their
atmospheres. They complete their orbit around each other every 3 days at a distance
of 510,000 km, a pretty fast orbit due to Mitoth catching Yhanz when the system was
forming rather than their masses accreting together. It's necessary for them to be
moving that fast to maintain a stable orbit, because the space between them is only
about 4x their diameters. If you looked into the sky of either planet at the other, it
would look approximately the same distance across as the distance from your wrist to
fingertips on your outstretched hand.

They orbit their yellow sun at a radius of about 200 million kilometers, which is
between the orbits of Earth and Mars, so the sun looks considerably smaller than
either planet to anyone standing on the other. Resulting eclipses can have paths of
totality covering the majority of a hemisphere.

Also, I speak from professional experience in industrial settings that if you're walking
around in proper safety attire, and maybe have a clipboard to look like you're doing
something important, nobody's going to bother you or ask why you're there unless
you get in their way first. Never. The chiller plant building at my university only had
three other people in it regularly, and I don't think anyone was there at night. The
front door of the power plant had swipe card access, but if you had a hard hat, pants,
and close-toed shoes, you could probably walk right through the back entrance the
trucks used and no one would stop you. Hell, having the Verpine notice them at all
was a stretch.
“Computers, right?” the clone captain asked her. "CT-6666," corrected Sixes. "You know the new regulations. We address each other properly.

"Oh, right, sorry. Of course."

Also, thinking about it, she realized she was more than capable of killing every one of these clones. In this small space, blunt telekinetic attacks on their bodies wouldn't kill them quickly, but she could take control of their own blasters and have them shoot each other. Or pin them all to the wall, tear some wiring out of the panel, and electrocute them, which may be easier to accomplish.

Barriss closed her eyes for a second and tried to reassure herself that she would get through this. She'd already gotten this deep in the facility, and no one had noticed.

"Lt. Onco," Karrde said with a slight nod, watching the ensign rush away to her shift.

"Thank you, sir," Lt. Onco said as she fell in line behind the troopers, her button uniform jacket perfect and her white helmet at a jaunty angle.

Barriss turned to Ahsoka and whispered, "I can't believe this."

"The plan fell apart. Then again, this could all go according to plan."

"Yes," Ahsoka said, "I can hardly believe it." She looked to Vrask to see if he was thinking the same. "This couldn't be going better."

"Great. So, how long do you think it'll take before we have to go rescue them?" asked Ahsoka.

"I don't know, Ahsoka," Vrask said, "and you shouldn't worry about it. You have a mission to prepare." He avoided eye contact with Ahsoka for an instant, as if she were a child, and went to the other end of the room. He nodded at the other engineers, who were working on their own.
shouted, prompting the squad to head off immediately in the wrong direction, calling in the report.

the garrison via the ventilation systems! They have ships waiting outside the base! Go to section

conveniently close her eyes and concentrate on allaying the squads' justified suspicions of the pair.

he held his arm to his chest, using his 'good' arm to support the 'injured' Barriss, who could now

appeared to have been shot. Barriss performed a similar trick with the side of her stomach, then the

Karrde replaced it with the file image of another female officer who looked vastly different from

and then relieved of his code cylinders.

"This is an emergency, what are you two-" was as far as the colonel got before getting stunned,

along with a combat knife.

"I wish we hadn't had to do that," said Barriss as she relieved the troopers of their ammunition,

blue bursts of plasma.

armed and extremely dangerous. Taking her alive is preferred, but not demanded."

Then, she saw the files: everything the Empire had on the Jedi Order. Barriss tried to contain her

fleet construction progress, special operations. The entirety of the archive couldn't fit in a single

Barriss Offee,

file, which he did, seeing a young ensign resembling the one he'd met down below.

yet she seemed familiar. He decided the fastest way to settle this would be to simply bring up her

"Is that what you prefer to be called by?" asked Karrde, getting the attention of the other four

"Yeah, I know what you mean."

"I see," said Barriss, her voice cracking even though she hadn't meant for it to do so. She

archivists do," Karrde said appreciatively, the clone nodding incrementally a few times. "Even this

"Yes, I've dealt with many such headaches of my own, people not appreciating the hard work we

difficult to do so without visibly straining her concentration. Their minds were all those of

"And who are you?" asked the clone.

"Barriss Offee, of the ISB's archives department."

"I've heard of you. You're one of those who tend to keep the secrets of the Empire."

"You've heard of them all," she said with a smile. "I'm sure you've heard of the admiral, as well."

"I haven't," Karrde admitted. "But I've heard enough to know they're a powerful force from the start."

"I suppose so. Well, as you were, ensign," said Yularen, heading once again in the direction

white-uniformed ISB colonel, finishing up some conversation Barriss barely heard the end of.

Out from the office came Admiral Yularen, flanked by a pair of stormtroopers, speaking with a

"Ensign Berovi, sir, and I don't believe so," Barriss with a salute, keeping her voice as controlled

"Hm. I suppose so. Well, as you were, ensign," said Yularen, heading once again in the direction

"Oh, hello," said Barriss, eyeing the clone, who had remained near Yularen with a smile on his face.

"Oh, is that so?"

and graduated near the top of yer class, doesn't matter that ya believe in the New Order just as

"You don't sound like a yokel. Doesn't matter that ya know how to properly format archives, doesn't matter you've built

one Barriss hadn't heard before and couldn't place the origin of. "I changed my accent to blend in

with disappointment, ditching the Core World accent in favor of not his regular voice, but a third

"Uh-huh. I talked to Onco quite a bit, he didn't mention having any brother. You don't sound

"Lt. Onco," said Karrde. "ISB archivist."

"And what department are you in, ensign?"

"Records, of course," Barriss replied with a smile.

"And who are you?"

"Barriss Offee, ISB archivist."

"Is it that obvious?"

"Not to me," Karrde replied with a smile, not taking his eyes off Barriss. "You have a... unique presence.

"So it seems.""

"I'm here on an assignment, sir."" Could make for a convenient lead-in to the next part of the story.

"You're not a real ensign, are you?"

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"So it seems."""
As they put more distance between themselves and the archives, they repeatedly came across more squads of stormtroopers and officers trying to find the intruders.

"Separatist saboteurs, they said their target was the base of the skyhook! You must reach A-0 to secure it! Go, quickly!" shouted Karrde, as the next group similarly responded to the phony threat.

"Some pirates are disguised as clones, they're going to destroy the repulsor generator and topple the whole base! Don't trust any unfamiliar trooper! You have to get to Z-13!" said Karrde, suppressing a smile as five guards took the elevator down and out of his path of escape.

"The real target is the communications array, I think they're going to cut off communication before a major attack! Get to section E-5!" said Karrde, as troopers ran back the way they'd come.

Satisfied that enough chaos had been sown for the moment, now they just needed to get out of here before Yularen could sort through this mess.

"You've got the rest of the data, right?" asked Karrde, as they finally got somewhere out of the way and could signal for help.

"Yes," Barriss said, opening her bag to reveal the drives, all of which were loaded with countless documents detailing the Empire's activities, then pulling out her comm to Ahsoka and Vrask.

"Well, it's a good thing we prepared for this."

Chapter End Notes

Barriss and Karrde's aliases came about due to a small hope I had that Benicio del Toro's character in The Last Jedi would turn out to be the recanonization of Talon Karrde. A hope that movie thoroughly crushed, like many others. While he still could be DJ, we don't know his real name, I'm not treating them as the same person. DJ stays neutral because he doesn't consider any of the battles worth fighting, Karrde stays quasi-neutral because if he openly favors one side, he's a significant enough threat that the other side will attempt to kill him and the people he leads. But it did help me come up with some names to use.

Berovi, Onco - Libero vivunt, non copulare - Live free, don't join.

Also, "onco" is a prefix related to tumors, fitting for an infiltration mission intended to cause long-term damage to the Empire.

Vrask's singing is mostly made-up, though I did make sure it can be sung through clenched teeth with minimal lip movement. It's also paced to Rey's theme.

Colonel Brek is another Legends import brought in for no other reason than because he has facial hair on par with Kallus's.
"Fine by us," Karrde said as he and Barriss waited with the clones for a few minutes, looking for a hostiles again. "Do you mind if we stay by you? We're unarmed, and we don't want to run into you?!

sent out, trying to avoid getting killed by rebels, trying to find help and have a perfectly visible comm. "We've been crawling around these shafts ever since the alert was

"You- you had your comm on you?" Karrde said, acting incredulous with Barriss, who did indeed

higher-ranking officer, provided.

getting on the alert and demanding an explanation for their appearance, which Karrde, as the

"We have to leave the blasters here," Karrde said. Barriss looked around the corner and saw a squad of stormtroopers marching around in that stark

"Great," he said tensely, raising his arm to stop her, then back up a few steps and peeking out into

"Is she coming towards us?" asked Karrde.

brother before it was too late.

The droidekas seemed to take last attack a bit personally, because every one of them was now

attack missed and could take a shot at the unshielded enemy.

The second the trigger was pulled, the droideka turned off its shield and partially contracted into

positions away from the him, attracting more blaster fire.

Reinforcements arrived just in time, bringing much-needed heavy weapons.

uselessly, the blue shields rippling as shrapnel was deflected off of them.

trick was working, the stupid things focusing all their attention on Wolffe while his men rolled

take any of his mens' lives.

behind the cover provided by various supply crates and wrecked pieces of equipment.

Blaster fire sprayed the hangar bay as a line of fourteen droidekas, a damned big number for that

equidistant dents in the floor as they unleashed hundreds of blasts upon the imperial troopers,

before it had even landed, their three hydraulic legs easily absorbing the impact and leaving three

The ramp descended, and the droidekas descended along with it, leaping out of the freighter

locked in the forwards position, Ahsoka shot the solar collectors of the TIE fighters that hadn't

enemy defense so disorganized, in less than a minute of powering through laser potshots and past

in your place."

"Okay, got it," the astromech said, plugging herself into the wall socket ready to take over the

engines to full power. "No point to all this if the ship isn't spaceworthy when we get back."

not hurt them.

Soon they found themselves at the end of that section of the base, at a heavy door that would take

"But it doesn't need to be the only reward!" Karrde shouted back from down the walkway.

"You're very kind, but messing up the Empire is its own reward," Nabeal said, ready to toss the

"I like to head over to the Rolling Cloud Cantina when I'm done with work," said Nabeal.

"Nabeal," said the Herglic.

name?" asked Karrde, easing up a bit and acting more friendly.

already dead, or expecting him to have some kind of plan and not wanting to interfere. A few

droidekas took potshots at Wolffe, all aimed towards his feet, all misses, futilely trying to scare

Wolffe didn't understand. Clankers didn't show mercy, and they never refused an easy kill, be it

troopers, stepping towards the 'enemy'.

for several seconds to make sure he wasn't imagining what he'd seen. The reason behind all the

Peeking around his cover, Wolffe zoomed in on the enemy through his macrobinoculars, staring

Wolffe stood tall and walked out from behind cover, ignoring the protests and warning of his

the chair in his office, the Mitoth base was rapidly descending into a frenzy, something Barriss and

half the personnel, and the fact that the commanding officer was presently unconscious and tied to

my own!"

bigger than it really was.

a fancy light show that wouldn't do anything except convince the imperials the attack was a lot

Karrde, what's happening?" she said into the comm.

"They're in trouble!" Ahsoka shouted, breaking out of her meditative trance to find Vrask looking

"Okay, got it," the astromech said, plugging herself into the wall socket ready to take over the

engines to full power. "No point to all this if the ship isn't spaceworthy when we get back."
Which meant Ahsoka was off somewhere else in the base, moving towards her real objective. She
had more of an idea what was happening now. The droidekas weren't the main attack. They were
moving to cover her move. The admiral had said something about disabling them, but Ahsoka knew
systems," said the admiral. "Inform me if anything changes. Ahsoka Tano is present in the base,
attacked in the hangar, and we've been seeing their new tactics, they could've slaughtered the clones if
‘Admiral, the intruders have been stalled in the hangar,’ Wolffe said, firing his sidearm in the
clones. "The control room for the hangar will be our safest route into the hangar," suggested
Barriss, as they moved to the control room. "How long you think they’ll stall them?"
"They’ve been stalled long enough. The former Togruta has already stalled you long enough," Karrde
said to the unconscious colonel, as if he wassurface the clones were, the damage they’d do to the
hangar. "We’ve gotten reports of at least five different groups of attackers hitting twice as many
key areas. The clones are holding their own, but we need to move quickly."
"The clones have a chance for counterattack," Wolffe said. "It would take too long to
preplanned for any counterattack. If they hadn’t been ordered to hold, they would’ve
their new tactics, they could’ve slaughtered the clones if they’d been ordered. They still could.
the new stormtroopers accompanying Brek. Karrde had never seen the non-clone troops in action,
annoyance at being called a coward. They know I’m a threat, and they want to make sure I’m
to the ground, while Barriss and Karrde grabbed blasters and stunned them all.
"Yes, sir," Boost replied reluctantly. "They attempted to bargain for their safety.
"The empire's orders, Mr. Karrde. Order 43: pacification protocol in case of a clone revolt. Instantly
suppresses their ability to fight," Brek explained. The unaffected stormtroopers he’d brought down
were instantly suppressed, their ability to fight taken away by the protocol. The remaining clones,
feeding them seditious thoughts.
"Have you ever seen a clone?" Ahsoka asked the clone captain. "What are you- 'attempted
overthrow'? You’re serving Palpatine, the man who’s overthrown the Republic and the
Once you’ve sworn to serve the Republic, you’re obligated to serve a government you swore
obligation to serve a government you swore no oath to, and if we do it this way, none of your
probably get stunned, or worse. "As I understand it, the chips are fairly simple to remove with
the new stormtroopers accompanying Brek. Karrde had never seen the non-clone troops in action,
voiced, and probably get stunned, or worse. "As I understand it, the chips are fairly simple to
remove with defective products? What will the Empire?
"No, you took an oath to serve the Republic. Do they seem the same? You accused them of being
"I took an oath to serve the Empire, and to follow orders!” snapped another clone.
"It happened to you, didn’t it?” asked Barriss, her voice sympathetic as she considered how the
clones must feel. "I know a lot of things you’d be surprised by," Karrde said confidently, feeling that
he was getting through to them. "The empire's orders, Mr. Karrde. Order 43: pacification protocol in
case of a clone revolt. Instantly suppresses their ability to fight,” Brek explained. The unaffected
stormtroopers he’d brought down were instantly suppressed, their ability to fight taken away by
the protocol. The remaining clones, feeling disgusted by Brek and unfazed by the attempted
guilt trip. He eyed the blasters of
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"You're going to have to kill me to stop me. If it takes the rest of my life, I'm going to tear the
hangar in half and make my escape.”
"Ramp in front of it and we’ll make our escape.”
"Alright, alright, you got us. What'll it take to let us go? Say, fifty thousand credits?” suggested
the clone captain. "No way. You haven’t surrendered. You’re here to stop us. The empire's
orders, Mr. Karrde. Order 43: pacification protocol in case of a clone revolt. Instantly suppresses
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"Ramp in front of it and we’ll make our escape.”
"Alright, alright, you got us. What’ll it take to let us go? Say, fifty thousand credits?” suggested
the clone captain. "No way. You haven’t surrendered. You’re here to stop us. The empire's
orders, Mr. Karrde. Order 43: pacification protocol in case of a clone revolt. Instantly suppresses
their ability to fight,” Brek explained. The unaffected stormtroopers he’d brought down were
instantly suppressed, their ability to fight taken away by the protocol. The remaining clones,
feeding them seditious thoughts.
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instantly suppressed, their ability to fight taken away by the protocol. The remaining clones,
feeding them seditious thoughts.
Yularen’s Star Destroyer descended into the atmosphere. The best pilot they had despite the pain in her leg. Barriss and Karrde supported Ahsoka as they got her to the pilot’s seat, seeing as she was still a he was, Ahsoka gave an uncertain wave back to him as the ramp closed. Amid the confused as the ship pulled away, disoriented trooper clutching their heads, Ahsoka saw the ramp, Karrde pulling her aboard as Barriss struggled to keep standing under the strain.

The she concentrated on suppressing the initiative of a hundred minds all around her. Fewer minds to concentrate on. Karrde wasn’t hesitating, stunning all the closest clones as quickly as possible, giving Barriss a chance to make her way to the pilot’s seat. Ahsoka had to consciously tighten her hold on her saber, as she could feel the grip loosening. The troopers complied, their hands opening, the only movement they were capable of. The armored statues, unable to so much as twitch. Some were turning around, some hadn’t quite lined up their target, some were mid-stride. All of them stopped.

"Up your target, some were mid-stride. All of them stopped."

Ahsoka saw the armored statues, unable to so much as twitch. Some were turning around, some hadn’t quite lined up their target, some were mid-stride. All of them stopped.

"Up your target, some were mid-stride. All of them stopped."

As she turned to make the jump through the opening, a blaster bolt struck the back of her knee, advanced, Ahsoka made a break for the opening, walking back while deflecting blaster fire. The clones raised their weapons, aiming them at Ahsoka, blaster fire about to come at her from all directions. While she raised her saber, she knew she couldn’t block so many shots from so many directions. All of them stopped.

"Up your target, some were mid-stride. All of them stopped."

At least she understood what was happening to them. Ahsoka wondered if the Jedi had time to feel the change. Feel the clones' personalities all being suppressed for the moment to make them compliant. Feel the cold precision, the focus on what they were supposed to do. But she couldn’t stop to think about it. The clones were coming, and she had to get out of there. As she turned to make the jump through the opening, a blaster bolt struck the back of her knee, advanced, Ahsoka made a break for the opening, walking back while deflecting blaster fire. The clones raised their weapons, aiming them at Ahsoka, blaster fire about to come at her from all directions. While she raised her saber, she knew she couldn’t block so many shots from so many directions. All of them stopped.

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“To let you know if I find anything interesting.”

“Well, I don’t know,” Barriss said. “Revan—"

and almost dying was anything that unusual. “C’mon, Barriss, let’s get back to the ship, make sure

of the Empire’s secrets, and we’re on the verge of getting away with it. Let’s get some rest to be at

homicidally insane for at least a week,” Karrde said flippantly. “We just pulled off a massive theft

“I ain’t laughing. You have not known true terror until you’ve lured a large, angry animal into a

though that one might have just been the most evil and vicious thing on Dantooine from the day it

proximity.”

Barriss raising the case containing all the drives in response. “We just can’t escape right away.

around in his chair, unnerved by Revan’s palpable annoyance.

It was possible. As Barriss understood the sequence of events, the ysalamiris’ inexplicable ability

starting up and illuminating the room. The group found themselves in a hangar populated by

massive, rounded pylons, dull grey and red metals of a composition she wasn’t sure of.

completely unfamiliar to her. Grated floors with yellowish lights beneath them to mark walkways,

an abandoned and immense hangar bay, larger than that of a Star Destroyer. In fact, Ahsoka

through another osmotic shield and into a breathable atmosphere, settling down, the only vessel in

roaring and screeching in the distance, loud enough to be transmitted through the thinned

they were still moving towards it.

The trip was tense, all the ship’s occupants on edge as they descended further into the planet,

any deeper into Mitoth. “You keep trying to act enigmatic, but you’ll just end up telling us

endless tunnel of clouds, focusing on their course now that the issue of their immediate injuries

happen.”

realize that meant you could literally heal people by waving your hand over them. Among the

wasn’t his ship, and he had no change of clothes. Nothing around would fit besides the uniform

the nasal fracture. “You should be more careful when taunting imperial officers.”

starting to get to him, and it wasn’t like anybody had directed him towards a medkit or anything.

That tender moment was interrupted by a sound most similar to someone trying to inhale a pureed

steak. Ahsoka and Barriss looked to see Karrde swiveling boredly in his chair, his eyes covered

constricting her rear lekku. Barriss only letting go to start rapidly kissing Ahsoka, with the latter

damage to the skin, tendons, and muscle of her knee.

The light from the surface quickly faded as the

"What now?" asked Ahsoka. Karrde had taken position next to Barriss and was punching a code

There was nothing there except for more billowing gas.

Eclipse

Don’t worry, I’ve got this,” said Ahsoka, tightly gripping the controls and sending the

could see dozens of TIE fighters swarming around them, and a Star Destroyer, heated atmosphere

Grievous. "That was a little closer than I was hoping, but I’d rather have dampened it than not a

A Bubble in a Sea of Darkness
“Good morning,” Karrde said as he stretched in his chair, with an ysalamiri positioned behind his back.

Pressing her hand against her nape, a faint blue glow appeared as she tried to loosen up the muscles of her neck. "There are limits to it," Barriss said, tilting her head in different directions. "Performing healing on myself is nothing compared to what you do."

"If she had any interest in learning from someone new, certainly. She's a better choice than you by far," Karrde said, disinterested by the flattery.

When I learned this, I wasn't wholly convinced something like that was possible. Now, with the information I have, I know it can be done."

"The Rakata were once powerful Force users, but they gradually lost their connection to it."

"What questions?" Karrde asked, intrigued.

"I've heard that the Jedi seek out their members practically from birth," said Karrde. "Are there any old biddable Force users like that?"

"If your mental defenses are strong enough," Revan said. "That's one reason I'd like to train you."

"I feel the same way," said Barriss, looking around their cabin, thinking about everything beyond the door. "What do you mean?"

"Hm, let's see here. Cunning, attentive, and with a flexible-but-present moral code. Not one to keep the right thing bottled up, and you're not of the ilk to indulge in empty rhetoric for no reason," Revan said, ticking off items on his fingers. "I thought you were better than that."

"I didn't mean that," Barriss said. "I just meant, when you put it that way..."

"I meant that," Revan said. "You think my position isn't well suited to this mission, Barriss?"

"Uuuuuuuhhhhhkhkgkgkg..." Barriss coughed, snapping out of the daze as she forgot to worry about the others. "...Certainly," Barriss said, as Ahsoka moved over as much as the small bunk allowed to make room for her.

"I meant that I'd like you to lead the mission."

"...You mean me?"

"I'm asking you now."

"I..."

"You aren't here because the Jedi are paying you to be here. You aren't here because you're a Jedi. You aren't here because you're valuable to me. You're here because you know what you're doing."

"...Certainly," Barriss said, as Ahsoka moved over as much as the small bunk allowed to make room for her.

Settling down for the night aboard the ship, Ahsoka began her meditation, hoping to see her friends again. Now, when she had to find a way for her and Barriss to get off this planet, she hoped to see again, would be listed as dead, most likely gunned down by the clones they'd come to see as trusted allies. Now, when she had to find a way for her and Barriss to get off this planet, she hoped to see again, would be listed as dead, most likely gunned down by the clones they'd come to see as trusted allies.
Chapter End Notes

"Not right away. I have no intention of fleeing," Barriss said confidently, ready to show Ahsoka
command center to find Barriss and Karrde huddled around the main control terminal, bringing up
imperial fleet, plans began to form in Barriss’s mind.

"Hm," Barriss said, studying the positions of the small dots representing the ships flying about the
orbits. Fighters are still scrambled, so he seems to expect us to come out eventually. I wonder how
halfway between the surface and the shipyard, with that second destroyer remaining above in high
display of the planet on another monitor, demonstrating the impressive effectiveness of Rakatan
"...I haven't figured out which one that is yet. I think it's this one?" He brought up an image of a
various large, imposing pieces of Rakatan machinery that presumably inhabited the lower levels.

"Uhhhh..." Karrde trailed off, going to the console and pressing buttons, displaying schematics of
inside, they won't have long to examine their discovery."

"Maybe. I'd like to know more about what this place can manufacture first," he said. "What, are
Has that changed in light of what you now know?"

"Karrde, what were you planning to do with this place?" asked Barriss.

"I really only had a relatively mundane goal for it," Karrde said, recognizing her grave tone and
she looked around the control room, pondering what this place might unleash in the wrong hands.

"Ysalamiri like being rubbed all over. Their claws all extend into their perches, and they can't
scratch themselves," Karrde explained, walking over to one of the animals and vigorously rubbing
it, much to the creature's delight. "Whose biology makes no sense?

"And would you contact them independently now?" asked Barriss.

"And with that, I abandoned the thought of drinking entirely," Karrde said with an aggravated
knew it was usually an evening thing. "Keep drinking like this, you'll start reminding Ahsoka of
"Yes, I was talking about alcohol.

Operating in this system to store and move various rare materials taken from the mining towns. A
operations in this system to store and move various rare materials taken from the mining towns. A
"It's not their ideal environment, no, but I've made sure they're at least comfortable and have
several weeks' worth of water and nutrients. I'm mainly concerned about the temperature down
"It's not their ideal environment, no, but I've made sure they're at least comfortable and have
understood the arrangements. Things mean a lot to them, and they would be upset if something
happened to their pets."

"There's no risk of that happening. These things are very hardy and can withstand a lot of rough
use. They're used to living in crowded conditions and going without much space."

"We've been over how dangerous it is to use the Force on them several times. You know the
consequences of using the Dark Side on these creatures."

"Yes, I was talking about alcohol.

I don't understand why people are so afraid of things they don't understand. These animals are
nothing more than pets to me."

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In private.

Obsidian employee who understands worldbuilding. Your efforts were not in vain.

Matukai that were mentioned. I know this because I first learned of the Matukai from
part of why I don't like it so much. The game makes a big deal about deconstructing
acknowledge it more directly just to see Kreia react to these things.

they sever Force bonds? I don't even like KotOR II, but I'd be willing to
isn't even a threat anymore, they absorbed all its dark side power weeks ago. How
life-energy or whatever can't be destroyed, where does it go? Do the ysamiri
dog-dead, reduced to nothing as you're unable to become one with the Force? If the
Force, it doesn't block it out completely or it would instantly kill anyone who

universe's alien life and for the option to feed Force-users some humble pie by

the most significant addition to Star Wars lore I've made, and I'm pretty satisfied with
a massive advantage in that he isn't constantly drunk and doesn't encourage his own
crews or ships left. Because those two would fucking hate each other, and Karrde has
Karrde was originally conceived by Timothy Zahn as being a foil for Jabba the Hutt,
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Karrde was originally conceived by Timothy Zahn as being a foil for Jabba the Hutt,
you, and provide the treatment you were promised."

One of the intruders—friend of yours, I'm guessing—told responsible for catastrophic losses to the Empire, and more importantly, he hadn't gotten his stuff

"Who are you?" Vrask snarled. She didn't like this coy nonsense, and could barely tolerate it with

guy wanted to work in their 'industry', he needed to figure out discretion, and fast. "Now, can you

"That sounds excellent. So, do the vacation and sick days carry over, or are they just gone if I

discussing the various options with Nabeal, this Herglic soon-to-be-ex-imperial engineer and

how practical it had proven itself to be. Offering paid vacation had instantly caused theft of

The ones that would take her fifty kilometers away from where he was, and a freighter could only

read that stolen data and wait for Vrask to come pick him up in the

should invest in to make money off of a military buildup he'd helped sabotage.

effects this blow to imperial production would have, which systems they'd need to draw ships

impressive. Unless the imperials had a crystal gravfield trap to detect the spatial distortion, which

"How are they doing that?" Yularen demanded, looking to the co-pilot for an answer.

Then, Yularen watched helplessly as the ships began to descend faster. There was no mistaking it,

The sight was awe-inspiring, even though Yularen detested that it was occurring. The three-

It soon became a competition between the two ships for control of the shipyard's path, and with

its unfinished fleet pulled along with it, and the

aboard the Mitoth Shipyard. The unavoidable loss infuriated him as he and his trooper escort headed down to the

crew, clones and recruits alike, all scrambled to get where the admiral had ordered them to.

Valiant's

"Get Captain Pellaeon and the

seconds to confirm that this was actually happening as their training kicked in and they turned to

input port to get to work.

crewers out from the sunken pits to either side. Cici plunked herself down into the starboard pit,

burned through the opening mechanism with her saber.

mutually contemptuous glare with Yularen as the metal doors closed between them, and then

dropped blaster only for it to be pulled out of his grasp.

Ahsoka configures the shields to concentrate on protecting the bridge area so the

controls, mentally moving levers around the ship to raise the altitude of the Star Destroyer into the

"For at least a little while, I can," said Cici. "If we wait too long, they're figure out they should

you keep up with them? asked Ahsoka, as the astromech kept working on the computer terminal.

The bridge was theirs.

...
the information on the Jedi!
It's up-to-date and accurate!
Ahsoka's going to look at it!
There's no way this could be anything but fun!
stuff like 'Please assume the position' when you turn it on, and it has jury-rigged power drills with a Jedi master named 'Fisto'? Really? That sounds like the name of a sex droid. Not a well-built Kolar, Tiin, and Fisto."

very well. Be safe, Ahsoka Tano. And remember: do not spend your life lamenting those who respectfully took it back without judgement.

Regardless, my time for grieving is over. I prefer to live my life and methods of dealing with adversaries make violence rather impersonal," Vrask answered, with a slightly bored-sounding tone. "Worse, I pieced together a timeline of these reports and who responded, and that was dispatched, only that there was an inquisitor sent. The others all came with a number denoting part of this. That report is odd because it doesn't say which inquisitor responded, but we know

Two months ago, there were only six," Vrask hissed. "Karrde still hasn't mentioned the worst
cold truth of everything that had happened to the Jedi,

Rival hunters? I grew up on an aleudrupe berry orchard. Father was killed by some thugs from a

Barriss ordered a package of anything she could use in the kitchen, including food, clothes, and

"Tatooine," Ahsoka finished, letting out the breath she'd been holding, knowing now where she

Ah, that one was a bit odd," Karrde noted, surprised Ahsoka had chosen it. "There was a report

A sparsely-populated desert world in the Outer Rim," Karrde said, bringing up an image of the

Mitoth, I got an update from my people on the ysalamiri shipments to the

Before returning to her quarters, Ahsoka readied the

127 incidents total, 23 with known survivors. There's been a dropoff in incidents over the last

mysterious Jedi killer doesn't like having bureaucrats looking over their shoulder. Besides, don't

"No, those were all other Jedi."

Did they ever strike at the same time? Did they have a plan? Or were they just holes in the wall,

"Ah, that one was a bit odd," Karrde noted, surprised Ahsoka had chosen it. "There was a report

Barriss to someone at the front door.

particular since we let the infants of a clutch of eggs eat each other. Other societies simply

"Are Ahsoka and I counted in those 23 failed assassinations?" asked Barriss.

"Yeah. He was," Ahsoka said, walking around the smuggler to her ship.

Ahsoka's eyes were a dull grey-black, looking empty. Barriss had never seen Ahsoka look so

After about ten minutes of sobbing, sniffing, and unsteady heaving, Ahsoka finally pulled away

so she didn't think too much about it. After all, it was just a few eggs. She was just trying to

Mitoth, it wasn't going away.

Lying in her bed staring at the ceiling, she tried to think of a reason this was happening, why she

Today was a 'sleep for twelve hours' day.

Lives are not exchangeable,

Today was a 'sleep for twelve hours' day.

"Ah, that one was a bit odd," Karrde noted, surprised Ahsoka had chosen it. "There was a report

"No, those were all other Jedi."

With forceps, Ahsoka pulled out the tape of what she thought was a往上

"Yeah. He was," Ahsoka said, walking around the smuggler to her ship.

..."No, those were all other Jedi."

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Barriss had ordered delivered to their door. Reluctant as she was to draw even the smallest amount

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Today was a 'sleep for twelve hours' day.
“Stop that,” interrupted Barriss. “The records state he was killed with the masters in an attempt to assassinate then-Chancellor Palpatine shortly before the attack on the Jedi Temple.”

“The Emperor was involved?” asked Revan. “Personally? Why?”

“As I said, they intended to kill him,” said Barriss. “And all were killed in the attempt. The reports are quite clear. Why are you so persistent about this?”

The hologram of Revan appeared and loomed over Barriss’s datapad, staring fixedly at the file describing Skywalker’s fate.

“...It’s not what I’d expected, but I don’t have any hard evidence contradicting it.”

“What were you expecting?” asked Barriss.

“Obviously, I suspected he was alive.”

“How would he have survived?” asked Barriss. “Even Skywalker would’ve had little better chance of escape from a clone army than any of the other masters and knights in the temple or spread across the galaxy. Given his temperament, I’d expect him to charge headlong into danger and finally suffer the consequences. The only reason Ahsoka and I remain is because she had left the order, while I was imprisoned at the time of the purge.”

“I had a hypothesis. I didn’t want to discuss it and risk giving Ahsoka false hope by talking about it without facts to back it up. Doesn’t matter now, since apparently I was wrong,” said Revan, sounding uncharacteristically confused. “It makes no sense for the Empire’s own encrypted records to be falsified, especially not to conceal the existence of someone like Skywalker. Not when there was no reason to expect them to be stolen like this. I guess he really is dead... How’s Ahsoka taking it?”

“As well as I had feared,” said Barriss. “Your advice has been helpful, by the way.”

“Well then, go spend some time with her. No need to waste time on me when your girlfriend needs you.”

“Of course,” Barriss said, getting up to prepare the ship for departure. “I have everything well in hand.”

Listlessly working her way to the cockpit, Ahsoka tried to focus on the immediate concern of getting the ship ready, only to find Barriss buckled up in the pilot’s seat.

“I thought I should get some more experience flying the ship,” Barriss said as she began the startup sequence for the engines and hyperdrive. “Have a seat and relax. I’ll have us on our way to Tatooine in short order.”

“Oh. Okay, thanks,” said Ahsoka, sitting down in the copilot seat, buckling herself in and leaning back to think about things.

Anakin was gone, and she wasn’t processing it, she just wanted to stop everything. Padmé, she’d known Padmé was gone, and she’d handled that. Ahsoka needed to keep moving, needed to keep fighting. Obi-Wan was still out there, probably. It wasn’t the same. He wasn’t Anakin.

She was so lost in thought for several minutes she didn’t even notice the jostling of the ship as it lifted off, and the blue sky had faded into starlight blackness when she started paying attention to her surroundings again. “Barriss, when you found out Luminara was dead, how did you deal with it?”

Gripping the control yoke tighter, Barriss paused, then pushed the lever to send the Eclipse into hyperspace along their charted course to Tatooine before turning her chair to address Ahsoka directly.

“Well, that’s a complicated issue. I’d already known she was almost certainly dead, and because of what I’d done, I wasn’t particularly eager to see her again even if she wasn’t. My relationship with her was... poor, in retrospect. It still hurt, knowing she was gone. For the most part, I didn’t want to think about her any longer, and I had other concerns occupying my attention. While you were unconscious and recovering after the incursion on Serenno, I, well, I spent several hours crying over her while also regretting having felt attachment to her. Then I saw that vision of her on Myrkr I told you about, which concluded with my berating her for everything that had gone wrong in my life. That constituted the majority of my grieving process, now I simply... try not to think about her,” replied Barriss, realizing how bad that all sounded and trying to come up with something that Ahsoka would find helpful in dealing with her own mourning. “You and Skywalker, in spite of the teachings of the Jedi, loved one another very much. Perhaps it would help to be thankful for the time you had together.”

“And now that he’s gone, everything hurts,” Ahsoka murmured. “I wonder if this is part of why the Jedi discouraged attachment.”

“For what it’s worth, I would consider my feelings for you well worth the risk... Are you certain Master Kenobi is the Jedi who was seen on Tatooine?” asked Barriss, looking to put Skywalker out of mind and focus on reuniting Ahsoka with Kenobi as expediently as possible.

“It’s likely. He’s listed as alive, he’s one of only a couple adult human male Jedi left, and he might have reason for going to Tatooine. It’s the best lead we have right now,” said Ahsoka.

“Why would he be there?”

“It was Anakin’s homeworld. All three of us have been there at different points. Maybe he went to inform Anakin’s family, if he has any relatives left,” said Ahsoka. “I’ll be sure to ask him about everything when we find him.”

“You believe he knows how Skywalker died?”

“The two of them were never apart for long,” said Ahsoka. “If anyone knows how Anakin died, it would be Obi-Wan.”
donned hers right away, glad to get into something with more coverage that was breathable enough.

Desert cloaks, including one with a hood sufficient to cover Ahsoka's head, check. Barriss...the flicker of the hologram asserting itself. Now with a human face, one without any bounty attached. Activated her disguise matrix, turning away from the crowd to keep anyone from noticing the distinctive...and now everyone had a close look at it.

The last one showed a rather inaccurate rendition of Karrde, looking older, with a much fuller...AN IMPERIAL OFFICER. SUSPECTED OF THEFT. KNOWN ACCOMPLICE OF WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE FOR TREASON AGAINST THE EMPIRE, JEDISM, THEFT...

The world, the Hutts were effectively in control, and with them came organized crime. Coming here was worth it. Ahsoka was certain Kenobi had come here, but why? There were far...

"I'll take it," Barriss said, pocketing the pearl and her money. Little did the shopkeeper know a suitably polished pearl supposedly had refractory properties..."Excuse me, what is this crystal?" she asked pointing to a small, bright green orb...

...There must be something of practical use in this place. Beautiful and not because she can't afford anything that won't help her fight. Would Ahsoka like this?

Trade the gem for a paltry sum. Completely fair. She had dozens of crystals superior to that one, but only wanted to sell one to..."Where did you get this?" the rare mineral shop owner asked Barriss as she presented him with..."First, I'm going to clean the sand out of the ship, and out of the destroyers," Ahsoka said, as they walked off and up towards the settlement. Ahsoka sprayed down the interior of the ship.

As Barriss and Cici walked off and up towards the settlement, Ahsoka sprayed down the interior of the ship..."I should be making Cici do this...shake the sand out before clambering back up to his fellow droids, only Cici daring to venture out.

The diminutive astromech rolled out off the ramp, and got herself buried and stuck in several centimeters of sand, her wheel assembly unable to propel her out. Her attempt only digging more...The others hesitated and stayed inside, body tilting forward to provide a good look at the unfamiliar terrain. Raising his right leg, he delicately set it down into the sand, getting a solid...Naberrie, the most outgoing of the droidekas, confidently scuttled down to the edge of the ramp...

Their clothes offered little protection from the sun, the sand, or the heat. It was so hot, Barriss had..."Have we picked up anything interesting on sensors, Cici?" asked Barriss, as the astromech had returned to her meditation...

Obi-Wan had known Anakin almost as long as Ahsoka had been alive, been his master. Maybe...The inquisitor report hadn't mentioned him being killed, and he wasn't killed by clones or...Nothing was telling her to go somewhere else, there just wasn't anything for her to find. Ahsoka rubbed her temples, feeling tired and bored from sitting in the same spot for so long trying...

"Then that's what you should tell him."

"I was thinking about meeting Obi-Wan, and how I'm going to explain, y'know, singular intent driving all of her actions. Was he closing himself off from the Force?"

"Ahsoka, perhaps Kenobi doesn't wish to be found," suggested Barriss, supplying the first plausible explanation Ahsoka had to go on, unappealing as it might be. She hadn't come all this...

Centers he could be in," said Barriss.

"Perhaps," began Barriss, not wishing to delve deeper into that topic, "However even if he can...Eclipse zig-zagged over the Dune Sea, covering a path of thousands..."If Kenobi is here, we'll stay here as long as it takes to find him, or to find another lead," said..."I'll be back in a moment."

"I'm going to clean the sand out of the ship, and out of the destroyers," Ahsoka said, as she walked off and up towards the settlement..."The best way to cut through the sand is to cut through the walls and couldn't be pushed together, while the mats were too wide to be fit next to each other on the walls and couldn't be pushed together, while the mats were too wide to be fit next to each other on the...nor could she open the doors, and another shock of pain rocketed through her..."If I make a single wrong move...""I'm going to clean the sand out of the ship, and out of the destroyers," Ahsoka said, as she walked off and up towards the settlement..."The best way to cut through the sand is to cut through..."Then that's what you should tell him."
speeder bike’s handles. Barriss wrapped her arms firmly around Ahsoka’s torso, and she drove "Okay, I guess that’s fine. All right, everybody hang on," Ahsoka said, getting a firm grip on the "sleep will always be helpful," added Barriss.

"Yeah, I can interpret just about any Sand People dialect we come across," replied Cici. "Though "Plus, I’m "Whatever’s out there, I’m certain we can handle it." 

"I don’t think so," Ahsoka admitted. "He may have been there at some point, I don’t know." Ahsoka. "It’s the closest area that isn’t just more sand dunes. If we’re investigating the "Well?" asked Barriss. "Where should we go on our search? Did you come up with anything?"

Ahsoka , in the fight against the Empire. Instead, she pulled out her lightsaber and slammed it onto the "counter. Not only was it faster, it did the job much more effectively as Rakstolin recognized what "For a moment, Barriss was going to go into a speech, something about trust and conviction and "be sure you won’t tell the local garrison about me once you have what you want?"

"Don't threaten her, it’s true!" Esicuo shouted, pulling on her employer’s hand, keeping her voice "large enough to encompass Barriss’s whole head, displaying many more teeth than before."

"Er, same," said Rakstolin, who was presently covering Esicuo’s young, innocent ears to protect "last few months anyway. Name’s Cici, nice to fuckin’ meet you.”

"If you have anything that can help me get around in all this sand, that’d be great," said Cici. "to the Empire, but she’s got one of the highest bounties there! She needs help disguising her ship "if you want!”. Showing off his enormous steel claws, Rakstolin said with a deep, soothing voice as he wiped the raw juices from his fingers, set aside "sickening tan on his lower half, rippled maroon on top. In his right hand, he held a large slab of raw meat, "are you sure that’s the best idea? The dark green paint will only stick out more in the sand because of the "moon". Evidently "color palettes for disguise, and several camouflage patterns, including "Another 3D panel?" Esicuo asked, a little impatiently, "I’d like to see something more advanced than that.""

"Wow. You’ve been busy," said Ahsoka, suitably impressed by everything. "You did get "until the projectors were switched off, "whatever that was. It was listed as ‘moon’. Evidently "paint into a solid navy blue."

"What do you need?" Rakstolin asked, now thoroughly interested and getting into work-mode. "And how will you be paying for my services? I don’t work for free, not even for one such as "For a moment, Barriss was going to go into a speech, something about trust and conviction and "be sure you won’t tell the local garrison about me once you have what you want?"

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"Yes. While he wasn't expecting an outsider, he sensed you may be the difference between life or death. The spirit of a warrior?" said Ahsoka, a bit flattered. "He noticed that, huh?"

A shaman for counsel. The shaman said that the land would provide for him if his faith was strong, and that he had to find something to the newest addition to the party.

"If you attempt to take water from this place, or imply any intention of sharing its location with the other outsiders, the agreement is null." said verbatim. "We shouldn't risk it," Barriss said, clearly no happier. "Regardless, we seem to have arrived at the mouth of the cave, the Sand People took the lead, checking for signs of trespassers, and Qurorskra stopped to explain.

"We have Cici equipped with a translator," said Barriss. "We could approach them directly."

"None at all," said Barriss, who looked like she was as aware of the implications here as Ahsoka was. "Something like a 'dead tribe'."

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"It will be a ten-minute walk to the village."

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"The other rats scrambled around, attacking from all directions as Ahsoka and Barriss got back-to-back in the desert terrain, the shadows within it standing out in sharp contrast to the bright light reflected.

At the top of a sand dune, Ahsoka paused the speeder and saw their destination, a massive crack of the largest?!” yelled Ahsoka.

"Beggar's Canyon," said Barriss, shouting over the slipstream. "One of the largest canyons on the planet."

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Just a little bit longer watched the suns setting. though it was really taxing her patience. At the front of the single-file line of banthas, Ahsoka hour long trip back to the settlement, which wouldn't have taken one with the speeder, even

The caravan trudged out of the canyon at a slow pace, beginning the journey back to the Sand

bantha. The best compromise they could manage was to set the bike in its neutral hover mode and

alongside them on their speeder, demanding Ahsoka, Barriss, and Cici each take a seat on a

Tatooine wasn't all bad. After all, Anakin had come out of this place. So, she'd hang on to these.

The sarlacc teeth were rather beautiful, looking a polished white, their curves fitting easily into

"You can have mine, if you like," Barriss said, handing over the slightly-damp trophy while the

Qurorskra approached Ahsoka and Barriss, bowing his head and offering two of the sarlacc's

for use as tools, along with whatever usable bones could be found in its guts.

drinking water, letting the moisture recondense into the underground sanctuary. The young

remove every tendril and leaving them to slowly dry out in the cave air without draining into their

Undigested meat and bone spilled out of the sarlacc's insides, and the tendrils grasping at the

suffered, something in the sarlacc's body ruptured. Its skin cracked and broke, hundreds of liters

enough footing to move her saber in a line and leave a meter-deep cut all along its back. With a

the spot where its mouth used to connect to. Tentacles writhed around the opening, intent on

her feet, Ahsoka looked and saw the creature continuing to crawl towards her, blood oozing from

her saber, the sarlacc's fanged mouth fell to the cave floor, its body rearing back with agony.

With its 'neck' extending to try and get the pair, Ahsoka ran towards it, and with a few swings of

just slightly bigger than the opening, but it was flexible, and trying to force its way in to swallow

with a lightsaber.

sarlacc's beaked tongue emerged from within its mouth and tried to bite them only to get stabbed

devoured. Barriss sliced through the tentacle to free him, then had to pull him back as the proto-

its waiting mouth.

Tentacles emerged out from cracks in the ground, grabbing at the attackers' feet, trying to trip

wildlife, to break bone and crush skull. The flexible, distributed, redundant biology of the sarlacc

The slugthrowers and gaffi sticks were doing little. Those weapons were designed to hunt local

People, who were coming in with their weapons drawn, and the group began spacing themselves

From back in the other direction, the sarlacc's roars were met by the battle cries of the Sand

towards the pair, tentacles writhing as it prepared for a fight.

Barriss felt an odd squishing feeling and stopped. Cringing as she looked down, she saw a small

thing, then quietly took a few steps back to regroup with the Sand People. Things were fine until

Dozens of tendrils extended out from the central mass, spreading like plant roots, reaching into the

chamber, cracks at the top allowing rays of sunlight to shine onto a fleshy blob at its bottom.

difference speeds, and on a desert planet like Tatooine it would be a struggle for more of them to

"What are the odds of two ending up on the same planet?"

"Yes, I believe there is one on Tatooine," answered Barriss, who was still preoccupied with the

Ahsoka. "Do you have any idea how they reproduce?"

"Hey, uh, Barriss? What do you know about sarlaccs? There's one on this planet, right?" asked

as their language tended to carry through the tunnels.

The deeper they went along the Sand People's path, the more water appeared. Various

environment outside.

fight than on the geology of Tatooine. This cave was a natural wonder, in contrast to the harsh

beneath Tatooine.

distance through all these intersecting tunnels, there was a faint noise that made Ahsoka's skin

keeping his voice low, something which wasn't easy with his language's harsh vocalizations.

"Yes. While he wasn't expecting an outsider, he sensed you may be the difference between life or

and your defeat of the womp rats confirmed it..." Qurorskra whispered instructions to the group,

"Yes. Very well, then. Let us move forward. The sarlacc will have to be dealt with."

"It's very likely," Ahsoka answered. "They are taking care of a Sand People settlement, so they have

the support of the Sand People."

"We cannot afford to lose them," Qurorskra agreed. "We must establish a rapport with them as

read on the bushes to communicate with them."

Ahsoka nodded. "I understand."

"Will you be able to help them?"

"Yes, I should be able to help them."

"Well, then. Let us move forward."

As they moved forward, they could see the Sand People moving around the cave, working

on digging out the cave. They were using their tools to carve out the cave, creating a path for

the sarlacc to use as a runway.

"We cannot risk losing the sarlacc," Qurorskra said. "It is a valuable resource for us."
Chapter Notes

"I don't think it was here when I was."

"So we saw. What did you say that thing in the cave was? A sarlacc?" asked Revan.

for junk at the edge of the village, she got up, stretched her legs, and leapt over the wall to get local animals.

Moral quandary of the day: had they done the right thing here?

had significantly altered the balance of power in the region. Then there were the sarlacc's fangs.

at the stars.

drooling onto her bedroll almost instantly, while Barriss was lying next to her, restlessly staring up after such a long day, and the history lesson stretching late into the night, Ahsoka was asleep and had my skills not been required in translating this waste of processing power."

Well, I guess I can't question the accuracy of their oral histories anymore...

occasions you shot me and hit me with sticks, all to find a way to coexist.

hours standing in a single spot with no breaks listening to your history, forgave the NUMEROUS desert, lured a krayt dragon into a mine field and cut open its gullet to get those pearls, spent the Sand People to recite their history had required killing a krayt dragon to impress them as a clever and duplicitous, who succeeded in earning the trust of one tribe. The Stealer of History arguments over who had the biggest bantha. It was late in the night now, too, and if they really realized why they had been punished: so that they understood the crime, and would now strike back. The context the history provides could help...

"Mollification: If you say so, master."

Contact with the 'Builders' who created the Star Forge before the formation of the Republic. Some

"Fan-tastic," said Revan, ignoring HK's frustration, then noticing a certain young Twi'lek's trying to speak to the Sand People personally.

encountering a language too alien to pick up as easily as all the others, Revan wasn't too keen on

of superstitious primitives through a barren desert, I shall comply."

But if you truly wish for me to waste my precious uncorrupted memory space on the wanderings through the village, making it very clear that they were there under special circumstances and not there to be seen as invaders, they walked without wrappings. Though the land was beautiful, they lived apart from the land. The Sand People had better hope Mission didn't provoke them, because Revan would slaughter those 'wraid' things that got killed on the way here for the

"Tell him thank you," Ahsoka said, turning to smile at Barriss, who'd been keeping quiet this

With a bow, Qurorskra said one last thing to the chief, who replied positively after a moment's

"Cici, what are they saying?" Ahsoka whispered to the astromech, who was luckily only a matter of superstitious primitives through a barren desert, I shall comply."

Standing, he's not just trying to dispel superstitions," Cici said as the chieftain growled another

"Yeah, there's some kind of geopolitical and resource stuff going on here. Them and all the other

interesting, she'd been willing to agree to anything that would get her the information she needed. After leaving their speeder parked outside the perimeter of the Sand People village, as the locals were looking at her with wide eyes, she spotted a Sand People warrior. What is it?

THE DUNE SEA, 3937 YEARS AGO

"I think he's just trying to butter up the old guy at the moment and convince him his time isn't

As she reached into her pocket for the requested item, Ahsoka asked, "I thought he was more

"He wants you to pull out that krayt dragon pearl of yours," said Cici. She looks like she's going into the stuff with that
Sarlaccs live for tens of thousands of years, it must have been alive and established already.

Maybe, but it wasn’t discovered by outsiders. Trust me, if there was a gigantic, fanged orifice somewhere out in the desert, I would’ve been all over that. I’d’ve bring tons of stuff to chuck into it,” said Revan. “Explosives. Sewage. The rotting corpse of the albino kath hound. Canderous. He probably would’ve jumped in just to see what’d happen, and I’m curious as to how long Mandalorian armor can withstand that stomach acid.

“Hm. Revan, do you believe this world was green once, like the Sand People claim?” asked Barriss.

“Almost certainly. I believe their claim about once being a spacefaring civilization, and the ecosystem as it is now couldn’t support the population necessary to reach that point,” said Revan. “Although, it’s also possible their species didn’t originate here, that they’re the descendants of Rakatan slaves from another planet entirely.”

“Do you think this world could be rehabilitated?” asked Barriss.

“It could be, but good luck getting anyone in power to care and commit resources to it,” Revan said.

Looking up at the night sky, with two of Tatooine’s moons shining brightly, Barriss thought about what it would take to recover this planet’s ecosystem. Those moons were too small to support an atmosphere, but if there were regions of frozen water which could be extracted and launched at the desert planet, life for everyone on Tatooine could be made much easier.

Barriss lost track of time as she stared at the stars, unobscured by the scattering light of cities. She considered whether there were any she could identify, but realized she didn’t have the necessary astronomical knowledge. It wasn’t even clear if Tatooine was facing towards the galactic core at the moment.

“Barriss, there’s something I want to ask you,” said Revan. “Why were you so eager to have me helping you?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“You know plenty about my chequered past. You hate violence, and staunchly upheld Jedi ideals for a long time, but you were downright giddy when we met. Why were you a fan of mine?”

Barriss looked away from the stars and down at the sand, idly pushing at it around with her feet. “I thought you could help me. That if anyone could do so many wonderful and horrible things, and provide the guidance I needed, you could,” she said, growing slightly more cheerful as she thought about it. “It turns out I was correct. You exceeded expectations in some respects.”

“Such as how obnoxious I could be? I think I established a good baseline back then.”

“You don’t know the half of it,” Revan said, voice devoid of any humor. “Barriss, there’s something I did a long time ago that I think you deserve to know about. It’s... not good, but I want to let you know.”

Barriss stared at the oddly quiet holocron for a minute, pondering what she’d heard from the storyteller. “If you’re referring to your infamy as the Stealer of History, I already suspected as much.”

“No, not that. It’s something more relevant to the state of the galaxy.”

“What are you talking about, Revan?” Barriss said, staring at the holocron on her hand and wondering what Revan could be referring to.

“It’s my fault,” said Revan. “The rise of the Sith, the fall of the Jedi. I should never have talked to him, never should have encouraged those ideas of his.”

“How is it your fault?” asked Barriss, her voice growing uneasy. “Who did you talk to?”

“My first attempt at teaching, a thousand years ago on Dantooine. Inspiring the creator of the Rule of Two. The man who would become Darth Bane.”

Chapter End Notes

This was probably the most subtly foreshadowed bit so far, but it’s been the intention ever since Revan first appeared.

The Sand People’s history is copied directly from how it was presented in Knights of the Old Republic, and that game made them one of the most interesting species in the franchise. There cultural stagnation is adamantly self-enforced out of a belief that any change will bring devastation to them as they’re already struggling to survive, and they hate settlers on their planet because their use of local resources makes their struggle even harder. Unlike some sources that treat them as barely sapient, they once had the technology to form an interstellar civilization of their own that predated the Republic, making them one of the few species in Star Wars stated to have developed faster-than-light travel completely independently. Then their planet got glassed by the Rakata, which failed to wipe them out, and they adapted to the new environment. They’re organized, intelligent, and tough as nails.

Here’s a detail of my writing process: every time I notice some flaw in the writing, I hear the Cinemasins Guy’s voice in my brain until I fix it.

Original text: TATOOINE'S DUNE SEA, 3937 YEARS AGO

Cinemasins Guy: Not to be confused with the Dune Sea on Mon Calamari. *ping*

Me: SHUT THE HELL UP!
Darth Bane, so I'll treat you as I would treat any Sith Lord," Revan said while charging up the so useless. It proves the truth of what I believe," Bane said confidently, and with a bare hint of "Are you threatening me?" asked an unamused and suddenly furious Revan.

"Power alone is reason enough," said Bane. "Those without strength will always be victims. It is...Who used to have power over you?" Revan asked, suddenly feeling a great deal of pity for "We were not defeated by the Jedi! We were defeated by ourselves!" roared Bane. "More Sith won't say it outright, but you don't think Kaan can defeat the Jedi at Ruusan, do you?"

"...Huh. Observant, incisive, and cocky as anything," Revan said with mild intrigue, hologram "Power alone is reason enough," said Bane. "Those without strength will always be victims. It is...Who used to have power over you?" Revan asked, suddenly feeling a great deal of pity for "We were not defeated by the Jedi! We were defeated by ourselves!" roared Bane. "More Sith won't say it outright, but you don't think Kaan can defeat the Jedi at Ruusan, do you?"

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“Not the point. It’s easy to do nothing. It’s easy not to care,” said Revan. “It’s easy to remain whether or not you did any of them,” noted Barriss.

Times I could’ve just taken the easy option. Like mind-tricking those attendants instead of paying to do horrible things. It’s that it’s easy to stop caring,” explained Revan. “There were hundreds of times I could’ve just taken the easy option. Like mind-tricking those attendants instead of paying to do horrible things. It’s that it’s easy to stop caring,” explained Revan. “There were hundreds of

“Or, at least be capable of doing so?” suggested Barriss. That caveat seemed more Revan’s style.

As a driving factor and killing your way to the top, it’s time to get serious and start mastering self-path,” explained Revan. “Once you start seeing diminishing returns making use of your emotions power, requiring less practice and precision in its use. That doesn’t mean the light isn’t

“That’s what the Sith don’t care to think about. Yes, the dark side is a quicker, easier path to legitimamente tough. Nobody’s powerful enough to murder my awful best friend except for me!”

“I don’t care about the Sith way, I care about not dealing with problems like an idiot. Malak had

I didn’t really like it, but since the Sith put a bounty on her along with the rest of my merry band

“That similarity is purely coincidental,” said Barriss. “Do you really think it was wise for you to

As for her role in

“Are you satisfied?”

Barriss was about to object to the assertion, then mustered up the nerve to say, “You know what?

Revan chuckled at Barriss’s lingering gaze. “Wow.

“She sounds quite interesting,” Barriss said, studying the hologram of Mission with great interest.

Twi’lek. “Then this was Mission, a younger friend of mine. Tough, sassy, resourceful, hung out

“I don’t think I’ve mentioned T3-M4 at all lately. He was a good droid, didn’t say much, though,”

“Am not. It originated with an assassin droid I created, HK-47, though whether I programmed that

It’s only a fraction of what I deserve,” said Revan. “And waiting all that time turned out to be

“...It doesn’t matter,” Barriss after taking a moment to process that. “There was an entire

”Don’t you give me those looks, I did the best I could,” Revan said to the wall, the holocron lying

They wouldn’t know Revan was coming.

long it took. And if after all those centuries Darth Bane’s Sith were somehow still out there, they

There also might be just a little bit of Bugs Bunny messing with the opera singer

Then Ezra would become known as the Fullmetal Revanchist. It’s a word.

Though I knew it wasn’t likely, I was really hoping for Revan to show up in the

strength is useless against. To Bane, they constantly tarnish his image as an

is a big smile. To Barriss, Revan is an intelligent mentor instantly comprehending of

appearance in Barriss’s case, change to reflect who’s interacting with it, primarily by

knowing practically everything about KotOR, was “The Truth” from Fullmetal

2023-04-27 23:33:48
I'm picking up what sound like low-frequency vibrations from about one kilometer east of us, see absolutely nothing of note. Great.

out... unwanted concerns, and once at the overlook, with visibility extending kilometers, she could

"I was shot! What do you expect will happen if I encounter Master Kenobi unescorted?"

"You were

mode. "The last time were separated prior to meeting one of your associates, there was a

Absolutely not," Barriss said as she stuck close to Ahsoka, pulling the speeder along in neutral

more ground if we split up. You take the speeder left, I'll head up-

"He has to be somewhere nearby," Ahsoka as she got off the speeder yet again. "We'll cover

south they could take the speeder around.

so far, a good vantage point to view the area beyond, while there was a wide, flat space to the

feel they were getting closer as she drove the speeder around the rock formations, looking for

be a mountain range, no passages low or long enough to qualify as another canyon. Ahsoka could

Taking that outstretched hand. Ahsoka walked back past Barriss and to their speeder, taking their

Neither of them had any idea where Ahsoka was going, since there was nothing but sand dunes in

'the desert is merciless. It takes everything from you.'

home planet odd, silly even. Especially how intense he was when speaking of it, like the desert

"Why don't you mind your own business?" Ahsoka said, kicking a flurry of sand at the hologram

back of your mind, disparate thoughts and memories suddenly connected into a pattern, telling you

familiar face there, to know whose fault it all was... and at the same time, to hear the voice in the

it, and she

"He wouldn't do that," objected Ahsoka.

Revan's avatar appear next to Barriss. "The Sand People are a persistent, constant threat to

"Um, perhaps they... um..." Barriss trailed off.

"Stop the speeder," said Ahsoka, letting go of Barriss as they slowed to a stop so she could get off

Ahsoka woke up a second later with her arms wrapped loosely around Barriss's torso as the latter

body fell to the sand, the shadowy assailant approached her, coming more into focus with each

sliced apart without effort. Ahsoka followed a group trying to see who was attacking them.

Cries of alarm cut through the air as another lightsaber activated, warriors attacking and being

suddenly felt very exposed and unsafe.

It was night. How was it night? She'd woken up an hour ago.

Even with the twin suns beating down on the sand, it felt so cold here. Looking up at the sky, it

wouldn't surprise her if this really had been done with a lightsaber. It still didn't answer who, or

remains. Tents were broken and overturned, mostly buried in sand. Not much remained of the

After a few years of sandstorms, there was little left. Ahsoka had nearly flown right past the

bike and turning it towards the remains of the tribe.

Ahsoka told herself. Ahsoka told herself.

That ruined village. The one mysteriously destroyed by someone with a lightsaber.

and statues inside it all faced hard right from where she was going, and as she checked that area

There was some kind of Sand People shrine built there, a loose semicircle of engraved sandstone,

and those caves had given her a few blisters on each foot. Because the Sand People hated other

The light of Tatooine's rising suns woke Ahsoka up, their combined intensity illuminating the

That!

Ahsoka yelled, pointing back at the village. Barriss understood what she meant and

Ahsoka told herself as she finally stopped.
“You do?” Ahsoka said, looking off in that direction. Nothing was visible with macrobinoculars, but Cici’s instruments were better than hers. They’d already been strung along from one distracting layover to another, one more wouldn’t hurt. “Let’s go.”

“Actually, Ahsoka, a thought occurs,” Barriss began. “Wouldn’t you prefer to have time to speak to Kenobi without me present? To have time to reconnect without an additional source of tension?”

“I’m not going to pretend you didn’t come with me, Barriss.”

“I’m not suggesting you do. I can take the speeder back to the Eclipse, then move it near Kenobi’s residence so we have access to the rest of our food and water, and can depart without retraversing the desert when the time comes. Your hope is that he’ll leave the planet with us, correct? The speeder is already close to being overloaded. What if Kenobi doesn’t have his own transport?”

As usual, Barriss had a point, even though Ahsoka suspected she was more than happy to have an excuse to avoid Obi-Wan, not that she could blame her.

“Alright, just be careful on the way back. Cici, you know the route, right?”

“Yeah, I’ve got navigational data from the whole trip, and there’s no need to go back through the canyon,” said Cici.

Unloading a few bottles of water and emergency supplies into a pack for Ahsoka, Barriss gave her a hug, then a kiss, and left her to reach her destination in peace as the speeder’s whining faded with distance.

Alone in the middle of a rocky gorge, unwelcome thoughts entered Ahsoka’s mind as she headed out on her own. The various tricks she’d learned for focusing and centering oneself weren’t doing very much at the moment, and every time she so much as blinked she could see a blade, Anakin’s blade, about to cut through her. Naturally, she kept her eyes shut anyway, determined to face this, only to hear the sound of that lightsaber’s hum growing louder and louder as it pounded the inside of her head. The thought of smacking her own head a few times to make it stop was becoming interesting.

Finally, she opened her eyes again, and in the distance, smoke rose out of a small, blocky, tan building. For a moment, Ahsoka stopped, then picked up the pace again, noticing nothing else except her goal.

As she approached, she could see the dwelling’s door slide open, a solitary figure exiting and waiting for her at the top of the ridge, hooded brown robe protecting him from the bright suns. Ahsoka knew who it was, and ran to embrace him, feet kicking up the sand beneath her as she rose up the ridge. It was with some hesitation the embrace was returned.

It had only been months since the end of the war, but the time in the desert looked like it had aged him years. Ashoka was just as tall as he was now, and his beard was flecked with grey.

“Come with me,” Obi-Wan said quietly, maybe even regretfully, leading her back to his new home. “I’m sure there’s a great deal you’d like to ask about.”

Chapter End Notes

I’d been thinking about how to handle this chapter for a while because I knew, as long as they were on Tatooine, I had to get Ahsoka to the site of Anakin’s massacre. The problem was I didn’t know what to have happen that would warrant the detour. Some vague vision would be boring and wouldn’t get any interesting reaction, but I couldn’t give her enough information to figure out Anakin had betrayed the Jedi. Then I realized Ahsoka though he was dead, that would never occur to her. She can know all about it.

Writing this, I may have accidentally worked out another reason Obi-Wan was never found besides “Vader hates Tatooine that much”. In Legends, it was established that Dagobah was home to nexuses of dark power, and they acted to obscure Yoda’s presence. Obi-Wan had something similar on Tatooine, thanks to Anakin. Good job, dude.
She's got me there. "Asajj Ventress?" Ahsoka suggested with a slight grin, quickly deflecting the older Jedi's "Why not?"

explaining Ahsoka, though Obi-Wan wasn't convinced. In imperial hands. Who knows what they'd do with her?"

in imperial hands. Who knows what they'd do with her?"

"So, you're working with Barriss Offee," prompted Obi-Wan as he shut the door behind them. At first, it appeared Ahsoka might tell Kenobi that no, he could not speak to her alone, until the latter turned his back and Barriss waved for her to go on.

"Ahsoka, may I speak to you alone?" Kenobi asked, walking back to his home and expecting pulling away. For a second his fingers lingered over the lightsaber hidden in his robes before.

"Ahsoka, what are you talking about?" asked Kenobi, growing increasingly wary of whatever she lowered, positioning herself between her former master and the ship. "Um, okay, promise me you won't make this weird," Barriss heard Ahsoka say as the ramp was keeping from him. With palpable skepticism, he added "I'm not promising that."

"Do you have any idea what happened to Anakin?" asked Ahsoka, her tone cautious, but hopeful, From a certain point of view.

It was the truth. He had answered her questions. Neither of them felt like talking, and neither of them were bothering to think of a new subject. "I'm afraid I don't get any transmissions out here," Obi-Wan said, ignoring the issue of the last. The time he'd taken to say that guaranteed Ahsoka wouldn't find it convincing. Close to Hutt space, lacking any resources the Empire would come looking for."

"Anakin was the father, wasn't he?" said Obi-Wan. "I don't know much about their love, but even if the council wouldn't have approved, I do regret they never got to become a family."

I can't lie to her. "Neither did I," said Obi-Wan. "I don't know much about their love, but even if the council wouldn't have approved, I do regret they never got to become a family."

"I'm thinking not too great since-" Ahsoka paused slightly as she remembered she didn't want to say. "It won't be enough.

There were so many ways it could go badly. If she was captured, anything she knew could be knowing what he knew. Ahsoka was a fighter, she'd made that much clear from what she'd been up to since the war. He

There were so many things Ahsoka wanted to ask, so many things Obi-Wan knew that she didn't. Obi-Wan paused, and Ahsoka sensed a twinge of regret, and uncertainty, like he wasn't sure what Obi-Wan said, considering what this meant now that she'd confirmed Thrawn had been telling her the truth. "Like what?"

"That being?"

It was the truth. He had answered her questions. "What's your name?"

"Isn't this a technique preferred by dark side worshippers?" asked Barriss. "Not in here you won't," objected Revan, waving around their surroundings. "Yeah, go ahead smart."

There was one thing she wanted to know, but she'd also been hoping that he'd bring it up and try creating arcs of electricity into the open air right next to the ship's control panels. That'll be hard to demolish."

Or at least some of it was. "Do you think Palpatine's going to expand the Empire into the Unknown Regions. His name was... how did she say it... 'Mithranordo', I believe. Padmé seemed unknown."

"Yes, I believe he did," Obi-Wan said, his forehead scrunching up as he tried to recall. "He and Anakin had a relationship before the war."

"Inhibiting the Force isn't possible. I've never heard of such creatures."

"Inhibit the force for how long?"

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and forget about him. The Barriss has been noted as having questionable loyalties to Ahsoka in his goals. It is astonishing to me that the Ahsoka command unit is as functional as she is after years...

The Kenobi unit is an incompetent authority whose directives are inadequate in the completion of... Stewjon. What's your alias?

"I've been living here alone for months, you're the first person who's asked for a last name. I haven't told anyone here who you were, right?"

"It's just Stewjon. The name my parents gave me is Stewjon."

"Stewjon. What's your alias?"

"I can't give names, but I think we're shaping ourselves to be anonymous."

Ahsoka couldn't even remember if she'd heard any names. Maybe they had the surname "Nabooan." Perhaps he was being too hard on Offee. Ahsoka clearly trusted her. Barriss and I have been gathering information, but you're the first person we've found.

"Why here, though? I thought maybe it was because it's Anakin's homeworld, but there doesn't seem to be much...

"There are known instances of self-fulfilling prophecies caused by incomplete visions of the future."

It's possible that the ability to see only part of the future is as much of a curse as a gift. Even without Kenobi's ability to see far into the future, it seems..."

"And I am completely accepting of all that. There is no need to keep him informed," Barriss said.

"Excuse me?" said Obi-Wan, thrown off by the refusal.

"No," Obi-Wan said shortly. "I'm sorry, Ahsoka. There's nothing of interest to your rebellion to discuss here."

"Kenobi is a traitor to the Republic."

"I hate you."

"I'm not sure, Ahsoka."

Wielder. Picking it up, Obi-Wan thought he could feel the heat of Mustafar seeping from it still. On the table next to him, Anakin's lightsaber sat amongst the junk. Waiting to be taken by a new wielder. Perhaps he was being too hard on Offee. Ahsoka clearly trusted her.

"If keeping all these secrets caused Ahsoka to turn her back on him... he'd been learning to live with it."

"...and forget about him."

There was an odd knock on Obi-Wan's door, disturbing his brooding. Over and over the repetitive clanging sound came until he opened the door, jerking back in alarm at the sight of a droideka behind it. There was an odd knock on Obi-Wan's door, disturbing his brooding. Over and over the repetitive clanging sound came until he opened the door, jerking back in alarm at the sight of a droideka behind it. The droideka was a small vehicle of some sort, a large box-like thing with small wheels and a small cockpit and a small... Ahsoka almost ignited her saber right there, until she noticed the black marking..."

"Don't believe what you're telling me, and I'm going to stay parked right outside your house until you show me who you are."

"If keeping all these secrets caused Ahsoka to turn her back on him... he'd been learning to live with it."

"...and forget about him."

Barriss and I have been gathering information, but you're the first person we've found."

"And I am completely accepting of all that. There is no need to keep him informed," Barriss said.

"Let's wait. I want to talk to Kenobi some more before we do anything else."

"Ahsoka, think about this," he said, even though he could see Ahsoka's anger with him.

"And the entire council sat back and let it happen, but I've still been running all over the galaxy trying to put out the fires..."

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"And the entire council sat back and let it happen, but I've still been running all over the galaxy trying to put out the fires."

"And the entire council sat back and let it happen, but I've still been running all over the galaxy trying to put out the fires..."

Realizing what she'd said, the two of them stared at each other for a long time, until Ahsoka..."
enough to keep this going until she dies?"

"Can you help her? Or do you want her to discover it when she's alone? Do you think you'll be lucky"

"I failed him," Obi-Wan solemnly, turning away from Revan. "And now it's too late."

"There's something I want to ask you about. Something that doesn't quite add up, despite the"

Obi-Wan didn't react. Records and descriptions of Revan were varied, to put it mildly, but he'd

"She's seducing Ahsoka in the conventional sense. I think it's the dorky charm that's winning her"

"Urged on by your machinations, no doubt."

more than you've been doing for Ahsoka. How's the stonewalling going? How long do you think

"That man was a member of the Jedi Council, while she hadn't made it beyond padawan. His

The bolts connecting horizontal to vertical looked like they were detachable. So was the feed tube.

storing the solution. A simple support of a horizontal beam attacked to a vertical one that locked

claws could penetrate, core full of aqueous nutrients, a tube running down to the clear plastic bag

Barriss went back to Snoots, petting him a bit, then studied the construction of the nutrient frame

been crying. It took longer than expected given how little time she'd usually needed to prepare

certain ways she'd learned, got the puffiness down so no one would even be able to tell she'd

positive-sounding to her as he got up and walked away.

"Um, thank you, Glow. That was very reassuring," she said, and the droid chirped something

grip the barrels. Glow didn't react, so Barriss held his hand like that for a few moments before

face, if you could call those three red eyes a face, then decided to turn her hand over so she could

her hand. Confused for a moment, Barriss looked between her hand and the droid's unreadable

"I don't understand why Ahsoka would want to travel with you," Kenobi said absently, like it was

"I'm glad to hear that," said Barriss, even though she knew it wasn't really a compliment.

"She's out there alone, believing you don't care about her, wondering if you ever did care about"

"Tell her you love her, you absolute idiot."
“Ahsoka,” came Barriss’s voice. “Ahsoka, you’re shaking.”

“Yes. Anakin is the father.”

“You’re hiding something from me. You’ve been hiding it from me ever since you brought back order. We both know that can’t be true, and I can’t find any verifiable details about where she was, no idea what was there. I managed to get a hold on this ship, no need to let them know where she’d been even if they had no idea she was there. What am I DOING here?”

“I can’t,” he said yet again.

Obi-Wan’s reaction to the news hadn’t helped at all. What happened during the incident that led to Barriss’s imprisonment and Ahsoka leaving the order. And I can see no picture of you. I know you were on the Jedi Council during the war. I know you were there...”

She thought she could handle this. She had no idea where or what it was. She had a feeling, her intuition telling her there really was something important in this desert, but she never thought about it before. She’d been trying to blot out thoughts like that, but that was the kind of knowledge you couldn’t shake off after a week. What could she even do now? All that happened when she thought about this... It was only days ago she’d... The way you’re treating Ahsoka.

She wished she hadn’t come here. It wasn’t like she was wanted anyway. She’d been trying to blot out thoughts like that, but that was the kind of knowledge you couldn’t shake off after a week. What could she even do now? All that happened when she thought about this... It was only days ago she’d... The way you’re treating Ahsoka.

“...He caused...”

Obi-Wan didn’t appear to understand what the droidekas were saying, but knew that look, that thing he couldn’t see, in that he’d been forced, and a bit desperate. It didn’t sound like he’d really been thinking along those lines.

“I’m glad you understand,” he said. There had been a noticeable pause. The words sounded... He caused...”

Obi-Wan, her emotions swinging in all directions. She felt empty knowing what he’d done? It was only days ago she’d... The way you’re treating Ahsoka.

Offee’s expression changed from rage to shock as she stood over him, then becoming stern again. “I’ve killed people for a lot less...”

She took the holocron in her hands. It was unsettling how unreadable she was to him now. “I wasn’t clearly hadn’t been exaggerating the abilities of the ysalamiri.

She took up residence in the garage and has lived there so long everyone just treats it as another roommate.

It was killing me.”

The Force had been a constant companion and ally, one he could call upon whenever needed. Suddenly, he felt it being stifled around him. “Is it some dark presence closer to him. For decades, the Force had been a constant companion and ally, one he could call upon whenever needed. Suddenly, he felt it being stifled around him. “Is it some dark presence...”

The animal unhinged its jaw, unsheathed roughly thirty narrow fangs, and snarled at him. Without push it.

What is that creature stuck to her back?

The dissipating hologram revealed Offee was approaching from behind it, emerging out of the Force warning him of its action, Obi-Wan jerked backward in alarm, despite the distance... The animal unhinged its jaw, unsheathed roughly thirty narrow fangs, and snarled at him. Without push it.

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The dissipating hologram revealed Offee was approaching from behind it, emerging out of

What is that creature stuck to her back?

The dissipating hologram revealed Offee was approaching from behind it, emerging out of...
“Would you prefer to be alone?” Barriss asked, peeking out from the top hatch of the freighter, his circuits, but her patience was getting worn thin.

The only other thing she might want to try was talking to Artoo again, see what else she could get the palace and cause a commotion. Tatooine had been draining enough, but Ahsoka liked to think staring at the glittering lights of Aldera. Partly trying to clear her head, mostly waiting expectantly else... please don’t mess her up.”

“Communication system or device you have,” least this time the secrecy wasn’t intended to exclude Ahsoka specifically. “Any kind of secret...”

“What would you have us do?” asked the senator.

“Maybe,” Ahsoka said tersely, taking a few deep breaths, like she’d been so focused on being expected to keep up with news of how Palpatine’s various governors and moffs were running the galaxy.

Walking through the halls of the Aldera Royal Palace, Bail stretched his neck trying to work out arrangements in light of the galaxy’s shifting political starscape.”

“I’m not worried for the planet,” said Ahsoka. “This palace isn’t exactly safe from infiltration.”

“Tano, how do you propose to protect my daughter?” asked the queen, with a bit of urgency.

“Don’t act so surprised, I’ve been having adventures for the past month, too. I followed various narrowed in on Bail, who was protectively holding a very confused but intrigued Leia. The two ex-explained Sabé.

“Hi there! Hi, I’m Sabé. Father’s chest. Sabé knelt down slightly to smile at her, then shifted her gaze upwards to glare at

“Whatever works, I suppose,” she said, turning to Leia, who was huddled against her adoptive eye on her. When the time comes, I can train her. In the meantime, I’ll keep my distance. If that’s

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“Sabé yelled as she furiously stormed into the room. A royal guardsman rushed to tackle her, but

“I came here to confirm my suspicions and to ensure the safety of Padmé Amidala’s daughter,” the queen said, pointing to Sabé. “She’s not

“Sabé, having been among royalty for so much of her life, immediately straightened up and bowed

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“Staring at her with those big, brown, familiar eyes.

The baby girl stared up out of her crib, curious, unable to comprehend the tears streaming down Ahsoka’s face.

“I’m the only one who hasn’t done the best job dealing with the situation.”

“Implication of ignorance to leave Sabé unsettled.

“At least, not for the Force, Ahsoka wouldn’t have even been sure he was still alive. The Nubian bodyguard

“Sabé yelled as she furiously stormed into the room. A royal guardsman rushed to tackle her, but

“Keep your distance, Leia. You’ll accept it."

“Whether you’re the same age or not, you’ll accept it."

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holding two steaming cups of tea. "Absolutely not," Ahsoka said, as Barriss sat down and put her arm around her, the two leaning against each other. It helped. Leia was safe. She was cared for and loved by her parents. Above them, defense stations orbited Alderaan, and a planetary shield generator lay waiting just a few kilometers from here. Ahsoka hoped it would all be enough.

Chapter End Notes

Floating around like that was the happiest moment of Leia's entire life. It's all downhill from there.

Writing this has been an interesting experience as a Star Wars fan, and with everything that's happened in the franchise over the past couple years like the controversy surrounding The Last Jedi, I think I've noticed the major differences between Canon and Legends and why things are going the way they are. Legends has a reputation for being inconsistent and nonsensical, but the more I look at what's there, the more I think its compartmentalization is a strength. Yeah, a lot of it sucks, but it's also very easy to ignore. With the new canon, everything is so interconnected that the garbage can't be avoided, as has happened with TLJ's take on the characters creeping into the comics, primarily Poe's. Once something is in the canon, it's there permanently and it seems everything else has to shift around to fit the new stuff in rather than admit it was a bad idea and reject it. And then Disney can't admit any kind of flaw in anything, it all has to be part of some elaborate plan.

With more interconnectivity, the writers keep trying to lay groundwork for events and plotlines, but I've noticed a problem where they just don't go anywhere. The disconnect between TFA and TLJ is an easy target for mockery, but even Filoni's stuff has this problem. The inquisitors are forgotten in the second half of Rebels, the holocron from Malachor was smashed without us learning anything about who made it or what happened on Malachor, and Sabine's plotline ends with her abdicating her place as the new Mandalore to Bo-Katan, who does not appear in the show afterwards. With Filoni going to work on Resistance, who knows when we'll see Ezra, Ahsoka, Sabine, or Thrawn again, or find out what they've been doing. Maybe they'll show up in Resistance, but there's no guarantee. Then there's Lucasfilm's chronic inability to do anything significant with the Jedi in that thirty-year gap between RotJ and TFA because nobody can decide what the hell actually happened with Kylo Ren or who Snoke is. Everything is centered around the OT, so there's no stuff set in the Old Republic coming. Then there's the mysterious threat out in the Unknown Regions the Aftermath Trilogy and Zahn's Thrawn novel were building up which apparently isn't Snoke because he sucks and is dead, so who knows where that's going to go.

Then again, I'm pretty confident Zahn can do damage control on the novel side of things. He's done it before, and Thrawn: Alliances potentially lays groundwork for who and what Snoke is that's actually intriguing. I'm not saying Zahn is the bestest writer ever, because he's not, but the guy seems to be the only person working on Star Wars with any kind of plan. Guys like Rian Johnson think they're smart, Zahn is smart, a bestselling author with a masters in physics. RCJ is an obnoxiously smug "artist", Zahn treats writing as a profession, one he works hard at to do the best job possible, and it shows.

Legends works had a definitive ending to their stories, the new canon just keeps going and going without delivering any resolution or definitive answer to anything. I wrote many chapters of buildup for Ahsoka getting together with Barriss, confronting Thrawn and Yularen, finding Obi-Wan, and learning Leia existed. Then I delivered on those points. It's not "predictable", it's payoff. I may just be a random fan who's written this insanely meticulous story as a hobby, but one thing I'm proud of is stuff fucking happens in it. Ahsoka canonically doesn't even get to hang out with Kaaden Larte past one book, much less either Skywalker twin. E.K. Johnston even wrote a short story making that clear. If it's to be taken at face value, it's another instance of characters not getting to develop together. If Ahsoka and Kaeden actually were spending time together in secret and the viewpoint character Miara simply didn't know, it's pointlessly drawing things out instead of just showing that relationship. And after five years, we still don't know where Barriss is, not that it really bothers me. It's free real estate. Maybe the new season of Clone Wars will answer that.

That's not to say I think Star Wars has been "ruined". I don't think it can be ruined. Star Wars like a starfish. You might be mad that some jackass cut off one of your starfish's points, but it'll be fine given enough time.

I'd considered making this chapter the last, but there are a few more plot threads that need to be tied up, so I'm going to take this opportunity to take a break and plan out the final arc. I don't know how long it'll take. There's a general sense of what I want to happen, but I really need to work out exactly how and why everyone gets into their final places for it to work. Because that's what a self-contained story should do.

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