

Once we escorted the General off of the *Chariot*, we finally got a closer look at the *Intervention* and the rest of the hangar bay. The *Chariot* was parked on one side of the hangar, with the *Intervention* on the other. Between them were four raindrops, seemingly finished, as well as several crates, which I assumed contained the rest of the loot from our most recent CIS raid. The C70 itself looked good, fully repainted with the same colors as the *Chariot*, white with royal purple accents, its new name printed in black along the side of the forward block of the ship. I could just make out the slight bulge the new shield generator made in the back spine of the ship. The two new weapons placements looked good as well, as did the one we had moved to a better position.

As we approached the ship, four B2s approached us, painted in the same style as the original five stationed in the *Chariot*. They scanned us all quickly, and while none of them had their weapons pointed at us, they did seem to settle a bit when they identified us.

“Identity confirmed,” The lead droid said in a deep, artificial voice that I could feel in my bones. “Greeting Boss.”

“Holy shit...I didn’t know you guys could talk,” I said, pausing to wait for a response, only for the combat droid to say nothing. “Uh... return to your patrol.”

“Affirmative.”

We all watched as the droids moved, spreading out to watch all angles of the hangar. I shook my head and made my way to the boarding ramp, climbing on board and into the cargo bay. Miru was there waiting for us, a big smile on her face.

“Welcome back!” She shouted, wrapping Tatnia up in a big hug. “How was the trip?”

“Very successful,” I said happily, looking around the cargo bay. “How did everything go here?”

“Really well. Everything on the *Intervention* went smoothly. Even got started on the droid stations.” She said, gesturing to the turbo lift. “The B2s charge on the second deck, right outside the turbolift. I’m working on the repair droid space right now.”

“That’s good. Where are Vaz and Pola?”

“They are out testing the *Brick’s* systems a bit since we finished its upgrades as well,” She explained. “I think you’re going to like what we managed to do with it.”

Miru led us through a tour of the ship, showing off the new secondary power generator and the upgraded shields, pointing out where the new turret stations were. We passed the droid room, which had been stripped down and completely reorganized. Inside were two repair droids

working on a much more space-efficient setup that would allow what looked like eight droids to charge rather than the previous six.

"I didn't know how you wanted to split the new repair droids, but I figured you would probably put more here, so I knew we would need more space," Miru explained.

"Good call. Is there enough room for ten?" I asked, looking around. "Can they take turns or something?"

"Shouldn't be a problem."

Once the tour was over, we headed out of the ship before deciding to work on the cargo crates waiting out in the hangar. With the help of the labor droids, we loaded everything onto our ships. We put half of the supplies, a decent-sized container of tri-fighter parts from two of the six we bartered for, as well as the extra parts from when the other four were turned into raindrops, into the *Chariot*. A crate of B2 parts quickly joined them, as did one of the two CIS tool sets and some of the original parts for the *Brick*, which Miru wanted to keep for emergency repairs. The second set of CIS droid-specific tools was moved into the *Intervention*, as did the other half of the supplies and another crate of B2 parts.

We were just starting to discuss where we should put the BX droids when Vaz and Pola returned, landing the *Brick* smoothly in the hangar. The shuttle looked good, with almost all signs of its age fixed completely. It sported a new coat of paint as well, once again white with purple highlights and accents.

It was also sporting some obvious upgrades. The engines looked a bit bulkier, and a quick walk around showed that they had an extra thrust module attached between the two original thrusters. According to Miru, it added a significant amount of thrust without drastically changing the ship's height or length. As we continued to move, Miru pointed out other changes, including an improved shield projector, a new top-of-the-line energy generator, a swath of upgrades made to make the shuttle much harder to pick up on scans, a more powerful double barrel ventral cannon, and two energy torpedo cannons mounted beside the forward facing heavy blaster weapons, under the cockpit.

As far as I could tell, just about every aspect of this ship was tuned, cleaned, or replaced by a better version. Miru had taken an old but decent shuttle and turned it into a ship to be reckoned with, all while keeping the ship compact enough to fit inside the *Chariot*.

"So... how much did it cost?" I asked as I looked around in the interior, which was a bit more cramped but would function much the same as before.

"Ummm... thirty thousand," She said with a wince, shifting like she expected me to be upset. "But we could probably make about five of that back if we sold more of the old parts!"

“No, I like the idea of having spare supplies,” I said. “It looks good, Miru, and we made most of that back during our mission. Money well spent as far as I’m concerned.”

By the time we finished the short tour of the *Brick* it was already starting to get late. Rather than push everyone to finish loading everything, I informed the B2s from the *Intervention* to patrol the whole hangar. With Racer's modifications, when on patrol, the battle droids defaulted to a much more gentle protocol, which basically just meant no lethal stuff until they were fired on.

With our stuff protected, the whole crew took an early dinner, gathering in the *Chariots's* lounge, talking about the last few days, and just generally catching up. When we got into the discussion of how our mission to Dantooine went, I couldn't help but smirk and reach into my pocket, pulling out one of the beskar pieces I had been experimenting with.

“Can you tell what this is?” I asked, reaching out to Miru and dropping the metal into her hand.

“Uh... no, not off the top of my head. But I could figure it out!” She assured me as she turned the coin-sized chunk over in her hand. “What is it?”

The young Twi'lek passed the metal to Pola, who squinted at the metal but shook his head after a moment. Vaz handled it next, and after a moment, her eyes went wide, quickly shifting them to look at me.

“It's beskar,” I finally answered. “And it's a relatively pure sample, which means I can make an infinite amount with the right resources and a lot of time.”

“It has been a while since I have seen any,” Vaz admitted, tossing it to me. “Where did you find it?”

“On Dantooine, off a couple of Mandoalrians who have been dead for four thousand years. Give or take a hundred or so,” I explained, chuckling when. “We finally have something to make some proper armor.”

“You... robbed a grave?” Pola asked, looking conflicted.

“Not a grave, at least not exactly. Four thousand years ago, Mandalorians were a lot different than they are now, or were even before the Empire glassed their planet,” I explained. “They had a long history of war. With the ancient Jedi, with the first Galactic Republic, and with themselves. These particular Mandalorians were raiders, killing and harassing the civilians in the area. I... don't really remember why, but if I had to guess, they were trying to get a rise out of the nearby Jedi Enclave. They got put down for it, and some of them were left where they fell.”

“...I suppose that makes it a bit better,” Pola said, sounding only partially convinced.

“Tell you what. If we run into any...” I trailed off, giving Vaz a questioning look.

“Coverts,” She responded.

“Coverts that don’t immediately try to kill us, I will offer to give them some beskar as payback for their 'ancestors' help.”

This seemed to do a slightly better job of satisfying the young ex-Imperial. Miru, on the other hand, looked a bit worried.

“You do realize that... I have no idea how to do that sort of forging, right?” She asked, chewing her lip nervously, clearly not wanting to admit she couldn't do something. “I mean, when I want a particular alloy, I order it. I know stuff about like heat treating and tempering, but its different temperatures for different metals, and I have no idea how any of it works, not to mention I don’t have any of the right equipment or forge or anything that I might need! I-”

I reached over and put my hand on her shoulder, calming the frantic mechanic, who stopped suddenly, squeezing her eyes shut.

“Hey, it's okay. I wasn’t going to ask you to do this. To be honest, I’m not sure what we will do about it, but giving you even *more* work was definitely not on the table.”

“What are our options?” Nal asked, though it sounded like he was just thinking out loud. “Would searching for one of these coverts be our best bet?”

“Oh, uh, good luck tracking one down,” Julius said, getting a few looks. “What? I might have done some research when Vaz pointed out my dad might have been Mandalorian. Lots of people are looking for them, including the Empire, and no one has really had much success.”

“If we went that route, we wouldn't need to look. Just make a couple trades using beskar, brag about having more, and they will find us,” Tatnia pointed out.

“What if we just put an ad out?” I suggested. “Mercenary crew, looking for trained armorsmith, must have training in exotic metals.”

“Umm... I know basic forge stuff,” Pola said, getting everyone's attention before anyone could respond to my question. “Sometimes back home, we had to get creative replacing tools.”

“How basic?” I asked with a raised eyebrow.

“...Basic enough that I wouldn't have to unlearn any bad habits,” He admitted with a shrug. “I know enough to forge tools properly. We even sold them sometimes. With some research, I could figure it out.”

“You do understand that we need to be able to trust this armor with our lives?” I pointed out, making the ex-Imperial wince. “And looking good is important. Not nearly as important as getting the job done, but still something we need.”

Before Pola could say anything, Vaz spoke up in her usual calm confidence.

“I will assist him with this,” Vaz said confidently. “With my knowledge of armor and his skill with tools, I believe we can produce serviceable armor.”

I looked between the two volunteers, my skepticism obvious. Pola sank a bit in his chair at my lack of trust in his abilities, but Vaz explained the discrepancy.

“Boss, we will not be making the armor from the ground up,” She explained. “That would truly be beyond us. We will be forming protective plates and affixing them to an undersuit or body glove. Similar to my own armor. We can purchase ready-made suits.”

“So all you have to do is form the plates... okay, that sounds much more realistic,” I said, nodding. “Make a list of what we will need to buy, and we will make sure that where we go to recruit will have what we need.”

I tossed the chunk of beskar to Pola, who caught it, just barely managing not to bumble the catch and drop it.

“Next question, when we are ready to go recruiting, do we bring the *Intervention* with us or once again leave it here,” I asked. “It would be a pain to come back here *again*, but it really depends on how well the Rebels did, obscuring the ship's origins.”

Racer warbled and trilled, spinning in place a single time, responding to what I said. When he was done, I looked to Miru, who snorted and shook his head.

“He says that there is only so much they can do to hide a ship that everyone knows was recently stolen,” She said. “That said, he and the Rebel slicers think they did a good job. That, combined with the change in energy signature and weapons layout, should give us a pretty camouflage. Until we go to a directly occupied planet and get busted for having a fully armed warship. It can't retract its weapons like the *Chariot* can.”

“Yeah, I figured that. Well, we won't have that issue for this, we aren't going anywhere near an occupied planet,” I pointed out. “Still gonna have to be careful, though.”

“Do you... have any idea how many we will be... recruiting?” Calima asked, having stayed quiet up to this point, as usual.

“We need a pilot and captain since I plan on staying in the *Chariot*. At least for now,” I responded, leaning back in my chair. “A copilot would be good as well. Beyond that, it just comes down to who we can find. We can fill in the rest with the naval droids. I don’t want them near any decision-making, but as long as they are well-maintained and frequently wiped, they should be adequate. Right?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t had a chance to look at any of them yet,” Miru responded. “Same with the BXs. But from what I know, they are adequate. Might look into upgrading them.”

“Well then, that’s your next project. We can fly it around, but if it gets attacked, it’s a sitting duck,” I pointed out. “Tomorrow, we will meet to pick our destination. Then, while we get everything loaded, you and Racer can start working on that. Depending on how far away our destination is, we might have a mostly staffed ship by the time we get there.”

With business done, we relaxed for the rest of the night, once again sinking into a casual reunion, the first time we had all eaten together in a long time. Eventually, when everyone was done, we all headed off to bed. I spent an hour doing Recovery meditating before turning in for the night.