

With the Munificent now fully powered down and disabled, the engineers began to inspect some of the more important systems, primarily life support, around the station. Most of the critical systems broke the station up into four quadrants, each a corner of the station. There were four central life support centers, one for each quadrant, as well as several secondary systems supporting each of the centers. Heating was a more dispersed function, with heating coils built through the structure that kept the station at a livable temperature. The system to make the rooms pleasant to stay in was another function entirely. The engineers were also concerned about the overall superstructure, the external hull integrity, internal power distribution, and several other systems and functions. The list seemed to go on and on, but the engineers seemed confident that it wouldn't take more than a few days.

According to the head engineer, the biggest concern after making sure the life support systems worked was the hull integrity. Any space vessel that spent a long time unpowered and unpressurized was considered, for safety's sake, to be at risk of failing once it was repressurized. There were several ways to tell if that was going to become a problem, and most of them could be done from the central control room. Thankfully, the control room was at the very heart of the station, and seemed to be undamaged.

Once the engineers had access to the internal structural sensors, we started to get a solid idea of the state of the station. As predicted, the general superstructure was intact, save what had been cut off by the damaged droid brain, but was also slightly warped. It would be impossible to repair that without a major shipyard facility, but given some time and a repair crew, any faults caused by the bend could be fixed. The lead engineer didn't predict any major issues since we wouldn't be taking the station through any tight maneuvers. We would just have to deal with the slight warping and hope any faults would hold until they could be found and patched.

The hull of the station had a few issues, many several dozen holes caused by micrometeorites striking the station. Unfortunately, the single main power core we had running couldn't handle everything it was already doing *and* the shield systems, even on low power. That meant we needed to activate the other power core or a bunch of the smaller backup cores.

It was during that process that we made a rather shocking discovery.

On the second day, we made our way to the third and final power core room, the fourth having been cut out during the droid brain's crude repair attempt. Unfortunately, it was severely damaged, with the primary power core exposed by a massive crack, caused by falling debris. The engineer was optimistic about its eventual repair, however, saying it would only take ten or fifteen thousand credits to get it going again. That would take quite a few parts, however, so for now, we split up into three groups and spread out around the station to start finding and activating the smaller backup power stations.

My team, consisting of Nal, Miru, an engineer, and two soldiers, made our way to the only backup generator already running. According to the station readings, it was running at the

lowest power setting, and if we wanted the shields back up and to possibly take a little stress off the only function major core, we would need a whole bunch of the backups running at full.

When we arrived at the backup core, Miru and the engineer started the process of checking it over. It didn't take long for them to finish, load it up with fuel, and crank it back to full. When we were about to leave I stopped and frowned, looking over at Miru.

"Was there any information about what the core was powering?" I asked. "Or was it just on and idle?"

"Ummm... hold on, I can check," Miru said, walking back to a console and tapping away on it. "It says here it was disconnected from everything but the Tibanna gas facility."

I frowned, trying to understand why my brain felt like that was important. Tibanna gas was important because it was used to power blasters and a whole bunch of other stuff, but why did I feel like that was important right here in the moment?

"I... want to go see that," I said, still frowning, pulling out my comms and connecting Ahsoka and Tatnia, who were leading the other groups. "Guys, I'm going to check up on the Tibanna gas facility. The backup core that was still running was connected to it, and... it feels important."

"Alright, Boss," Tatnia responded.

"Very well, keep us in the loop," Ahsoka said, before both of them disconnected.

It took us ten minutes to find our target, as we were forced to move around several broken doors, a caved-in hallway, and one stretch of halls that was still under vacuum from a micrometer impact hole. The engineer made a note of each of these issues for later address.

The Tibanna facility was a warehouse for gas storage and the facilities necessary to take large shipments and break them down into smaller ones. It would arrive at the station in large pressurized containers and would then be frozen in carbonite for safe transfer to smaller facilities or stored on ships.

Frozen in carbonite.

We stepped into the facility and immediately spotted what the backup power had been powering. Tucked along the side of the warehouse, stored next to several massive gas tanks were at least four dozen carbonite slabs, all hanging from the ceiling, all hooked up to power so they would be kept stable.

Inside each slab was a single person. I stepped closer and immediately recognized the face. A clone trooper, sealed inside carbonite with a surprisingly calm expression. We stood in silence for a long while, my eyes wide as we processed what we were looking at.

"Being frozen in carbonite is a form of stasis," Nal said, finally breaking the moment. "Used by ancient spacers."

"They froze themselves... because they knew they were stranded in deep space," Miru added, her energy growing. "The chance of them ever being found was astronomical without you, Boss... but they didn't know that. They must have thought this was a one-in-a-trillion gamble..."

"We... we should wake them up!" One of the Rebel soldiers said, rushing to the nearest slab of carbonite. "They've been trapped for over twenty years! We-"

"No, don't touch anything!" I shouted, reaching out and snagging him by his jacket as he ran by. "We have no idea what state they are in. We have no idea what the carbonite has done to them. Not to mention... we have no idea if they are even on our side. They served what became the Empire after all."

"Are you suggesting that we just leave them?"

"Of course not. I'm suggesting we don't crack them open on a station with no active medbay and no security measures," I explained, releasing his jacket. "We need a controlled environment, somewhere we can let them out and help them if they need it. First, though, I need to call Ahsoka."

Ten minutes later, Ahsoka and Luke were standing in the large warehouse space, staring at the rows of soldiers. Our teams had reorganized and split back up, going to continue the job of getting the station's shields running, leaving us three alone with the long-frozen troopers.

"This is... insane," Ahsoka finally said after spending a long few minutes just staring. "I never imagined we would find anyone alive, never mind in stasis..."

"Would they really attack us?" Luke asked. "On sight?"

"I don't actually know," I said, shaking my head. "I assume Ahsoka has explained Order 66 to you?"

Luke nodded solemnly, standing close to his temporary teacher and fellow Force-sensitive.

"Well these guys were probably already in stasis when it was given, so chances are, they never heard it." I explained. "But ole Palpy had a long time to work on his plot. I wouldn't

put it past the bastard to find some way to make sure all clones eventually received the Order. Maybe a timer? Some sort of sith bullshit? I don't know. It's not worth the risk either way, especially since we shouldn't let them out without medical support."

"It's not. We... I..." Ahsoka struggled to say anything, her controlled and calm facade completely falling away.

I could practically feel the convoluted emotions she was feeling, even without the Force. I stepped closer and put my hand on her shoulder, giving her a gentle, reassuring squeeze.

"It all falls on Palp's shoulders," I said. "They were slaves. Worse, they didn't even have any control of themselves. The fact that Rex managed to hold off the chip as long as he did was incredible. The other clones would not have stood a chance."

"We were supposed to protect the Republic," Ahsoka said, stepping forward to put her hand on one of the clone troopers chest. "Instead, we got caught under it when it tumbled to the ground. How did we not see it coming? How did we not see this coming?"

"Because the system was broken. Because the Jedi were defending the Republic, not its people."

All three of us spun to see Allum standing at the entrance.

"I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how it all happened. How one person was able to bring the Republic to the ground and corrupt it into the cruel Empire," He explained as he walked closer to Ahsoka. "The only explanation I could imagine was that the system was broken long before the Clone Wars. Nothing with a solid foundation topples like the Republic did. I don't think it's the Jedi's fault, not really. How could it be when the entire galaxy fell for the same trick. For all that makes you special, you're not infallible."

"... He's not wrong. This isn't your fault. It's not even the Jedi's fault," I agreed. "Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of places that the Order could have done better. A *Lot* of places. But being guilty of other... lapses in judgment doesn't mean this one is laid at their feet. They may have fucked up, but they didn't pull the trigger. Even as early as the Blockade of Naboo, it was already too late."

Ahsoka was silent for a moment, nodding silently. Seeing that she needed a minute, I focused on Allum.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "You really shouldn't be walking around without an escort."

"I came to see my brothers," He said simply. "It's been a long time since I last saw any of them."

Ahsoka whipped around and focused on Allum, her eyes going wide.

"I *knew* you felt familiar!" She said. "I... assume you got your chip removed?"

"No. Well, yes, but not on purpose," He responded. "I was injured, smacked in the head shortly before Order 66 was given. I was lucky, I got brain damage in *just* the right place. One in a million. I recovered just in time to see my brothers go insane and start murdering the people they had fought beside for years. Vakim and Dazem helped me slip away when I refused to help hunt down more Jedi."

"Wait, wait, wait, are you saying you're a clone?" Luke asked, voicing my own question. "What about the rapid aging? And you don't look anything like them!"

"Any medical droid capable of facial reconstruction is also capable of changing the way a face looks," Allum explained with a shrug. "And for a bit, I did age rapidly. Then, when we joined the Rebellion, I found out that there was a treatment for it."

"I'm sorry, what?" I asked, suddenly very focused on Allum. "There is a treatment for the rapid aging? Ahsoka, did you know that?"

"I did. It was developed by [Null-class Commando Mereel Skirata](#), with the unwilling help of a [Kaminoan](#) geneticist, [Ko Sai](#)," She explained. "The cure was given to the rebellion to help disseminate to any clones who wanted to defect, with the caveat that they all be given a choice to retire, should they choose to."

"Almost none of us do. War is all we know," Allum admitted. "We were made for it."

"That's fantastic, I had no idea!" I said, slapping Allum on the shoulder. "Here I was thinking these poor souls only had a half-life to look forward to. Does that mean Rex isn't an old man?"

"He is older than he should be, because he disappeared shortly after we separated," Ahsoka explained. "He and two other clone troopers took refuge on a desert planet. It was General Syndulla and her team that convinced them to join the Rebellion actually. Luckily, the treatment has some minor restorative effects on clones who haven't been treated. It is limited but noticeable."

"That's good. The more clones that we can free from what the Republic did to them, the better. So, what's the plan for these guys?"

"We will have to take them back to Alpha Base," Ahsoka said, Allum nodding in agreement. "The inhibitor chip removal requires special equipment to be done safely, and the

anti-aging treatment requires several special injections. The Rebellion will likely need to spend some time generating them."

"If they need help, the Skyforged will happily volunteer their time to get them what they need," I offered, Allum looking over at me with a happy smile.

"We will need to get in contact with someone at Alpha Base first," Ahsoka explained. "They will know what else is needed if anything is."

We discussed our options for a few more minutes, eventually deciding that Ahsoka, Luke, myself and one or two of my crew would return on the *Talos Chariot*. It was the obvious choice since it could hold all of the carbonite slaps, while *Intervention* could hold everyone we would be leaving behind, just in case they needed to evacuate.

As Ahsoka left to contact Alpha Base, Allum stopped me from following.

"Boss, I want to apologize for not mentioning my past beforehand," He said. "At this point, I've spent so long as Allum..."

"It's alright, I understand. Not everyone is interested in talking about their past," I assured him. "Besides, It's none of our business unless you want to make it our business."

"Thank you, Boss," He said with a nod, before looking back at troopers. "I hope they are alright."

"I'm sure that they will be," I assured him, patting his shoulder. "And if not, we will find some way to help them, I promise you that."

The ex-clone trooper nodded, and after a few seconds, I left, turning and leaving the warehouse behind. Allum hung behind for a while before jogging to catch up.