**34 ABY, Acclamator Class vessel Vanquisher, in orbit of Aesirus**

“Attention on the bridge”, a shout rang out as Major Sparky von Wagglehorn III strode onto the bridge of the acclamator class vessel, *Vanquisher.* Sparky’s boots clapped loudly on the steel deck plating as he walked purposefully towards the viewport. The bridge was silent as Sparky clasped his hands behind his back, his crisp grey uniform marking a contrast with Sparky’s blue skin. He gazed beyond the viewport at Aesirus, the planet below. Grey-black clouds covered the majority of the northern hemisphere. The lightning from the storms below reflected ominously in Sparky’s glittering red eyes. Sparky executed a flawless 180 movement, and turned to address his waiting bridge crew.

“As you were, ladies and gentlemen”, he spoke, his quiet voice just loud enough to be heard across the bridge. A low, steady murmur arose as the crew returned to their duties. The crew’s noise was punctuated by the metallic clanking of Sparky’s jet black, imperial issue jackboots as he confidently walked towards the command chair. He took his seat, leaning back and cocking his right leg onto his left knee. He hoped his relaxed pose would not betray the conflict and concern that kept pushing to the front of his thoughts. Though he would never admit this to anyone, Sparky still wasn’t fully confident in the Empire’s direction. The previous conflict between Excidium and Imperium shook Sparky to the core, and he wasn’t positive that this next operation wasn’t going to be a repeat of the terrible civil war just months before.

He closed his eyes and attempted to draw on the force to quiet his mind, yet was unable to find the peace he was searching for. His connection to the force seemed all but severed in the weeks since he had abandoned the academy to return to active military service. Sighing, he glanced towards an anxious young crewmember in the crew pit to Sparky’s right.

“Ensign Garrock, would you please hail SoroSuub Corporation HQ?”

“Aye, aye Captain”, the ensign nervously replied. Sparky signed inwardly with disgust. The recent “civil” conflict had left his ship with a crew that was green and ill prepared for any sort of military engagement. The holoterminal built into Sparky’s command chair crackled to life and a miniature, holographic Sullustan male appeared in the air next to Sparky.

The sullustan’s jowls quivered as he addressed Sparky, “Honored Imperial guest, I am the local SoroSuub administrator, Plemy Nakto.” Sparky waited, to see if Plemy continued. He did not.

Sparky sat up straight, adding steel bearing to his now military posture in the command chair as he addressed the hologram, “Plemy. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Major Sparky von Wagglehorn the 3rd, and am currently in asynchronous orbit of Aeserus. While I recognize the sovereignty of the local government, I also understand the sizable stake that Sorusuub Corporation has in local affairs and hope to speak with you regarding a specific resource.”

Plemy’s gaze hardened and he replied, “I can only imagine that your Empire is looking for our Kyber Crystals.” Plemy shifted uncomfortably and continued, “As you’re aware…recent New Republic legislation is precluding me from selling to you any longer, so I’m unable to offer you and sort of deal. Now please leave the system.”

“Mr. Nakto, I’m only going to ask this once. It appears that I’ll need to go to the source. I’m willing to pay a fair price simply for the location of your mining complex for Kyber Crystals. Historically we’ve been more than happy to purchase your crystals directly, but the recent political…upheaval with the New Republic and First Order unfortunately require me to go straight to source to obtain these crystals. Your help has been appreciated, and I’m willing to compensate you for information. Now where is this cave?”

“Now you listen, Major. I cannot, and will not give you that information-”, Plemy choked as an unseen assailant appeared from the shadows behind him and slide a vibroblade against his throat.

Sparky used this pause and replied, “Mr. Nakto, it pains me that you’re unable to willingly assist us. Now I’m not asking you – I’m telling you to give me the location of the cave!”

Beads of sweat started to form around Plemy’s jawline and he stammered, “Uhh, umm…coordinates 41.567, 87.967. But it’s heavily armed; you’ll never succeed in taking the cave!”

Sparky smiled grimly and said, “That’s to be determined, Mr. Nakto. Your cooperation will be remembered and appreciated.” With that, Sparky drew a finger across his throat as a signal for the communications officer to terminate the transmission.

Sparky stood up with purpose and started barking out orders.

“XO! Our assault ships are cleared to enter atmo. Relay the coordinates to them immediately, and set blasters for stun. We’re going to need Sorusuub’s guidance and expertise if we’re to be successful. Tell the commando team at Sorusuub HQ that they are to regroup and return to the ship. Let Mr. Nakto free, and hopefully we’ll gain an ally by letting him live. ”

“Ensign Garrock, open a channel to high command in my quarters.”

“Flight Leader, prepare my shuttle. I’ll need to oversee the…excavation…of this complex directly.”

With orders given, Major Sparky von Wagglehorn III left the bridge to report the news to his superiors. As he walked to his quarters, he could only hope that he wasn’t making a mistake.