

I spent half an hour putting on a show for our new friends, demonstrating everything from Conjure Familiar to Grand Healing. I stayed away from my lighting-based spells, considering the connection to the Sith that the Jedi would undoubtedly see. There was a significant chance that Amescoll had seen me using it before as we were fighting the ocean dweller, but there was no reason for me to draw attention to it more than I already had.

As I was putting on my show, it was interesting to look out into the crowd and see the different reactions from each age group. The teenagers watched with wonder, something new and exciting suddenly being introduced after what must have been years of monotony. The older generation, the Padawans, and most likely the parents of the teenagers were shocked but also excited. They grew up learning the Force was the galaxy's great mystery, and now they were being introduced to another. Amescoll looked almost lost. His entire life had been dedicated to the Force, and now his worldview was being soundly challenged. The other two members of his age group looked troubled but not wholly lost like Amescoll. I couldn't be sure, but I assumed that neither of them had a connection to the Force.

When I settled back down into my seat, I couldn't help but smirk at Amescoll's continued dumbfounded look.

"I know it's a lot, but it's nothing to be worried about," I assured him. "I'm the only one who can use it, so it's not like you'll have to deal with many of us. Or any beyond me."

"I suppose... I suppose I will meditate on this, listen to the will of the Force," Amescoll decided with a nod, almost visibly shifting my magic to "something to worry about later."

"Right... Listen, I have to ask... do you and your people want to leave?" I asked. "I can imagine that living here is sort of peaceful, but it's not exactly a five-star resort."

"That... is a complicated question," Amescoll admitted. "We are relatively safe here, even with the ocean dwellers. The Empire has no idea we are here or even that we exist. That is... a difficult advantage to simply give up."

"I wouldn't go as far as saying they don't know you exist," I said, tempering his statement. "Old Palpy has a hatred for the Jedi that is a full-on obsession. He likely assumes you survived simply because the clones guarding you never checked in."

"That's... disturbing to learn," He admitted, a sliver of disquiet passing through his expression before he settled again. "Even so, we have been cut off from the galaxy for far too long. It also sounds as if there are actually people to fight alongside, rather than the Jedi being alone against the horde of the growing Empire."

Words of agreement were muttered through the crowd, and I nodded in understanding. The early days of the Empire were dark, and anyone who stood up against it was quickly crushed flat under its boot.

"In that case, I think I have a solution. I want to extend an offer to join the Skyforged Vanguard," I said, surprising both Luke and Ahsoka. "I know your first instinct is to side with the Rebellion, but I think that would be a mistake."

"And why is that?" The old Jedi Knight asked.

"Because they will treat you like a high-value military asset," I explained. "They will give you ranks, spread you out around to leadership positions and important assets. You'll be put in charge of ships, troops, military structures...Stop me when this sounds familiar."

"They would treat us like the Republic did," Amescoll concluded with a deep frown. "They would repeat the errors from the Clone Wars."

"Exactly," I agreed, glad he could see the issue, before gesturing to Luke. "They are already doing to Luke here."

Luke looked startled when his name was mentioned before internalizing what I had said. He frowned and leaned back in his chair. I looked over at him and gave him an apologetic look, the young man giving me an accepting nod in return.

"He has risen to the occasion, but with just the barest amount of training, they are already heaping command on him," I explained. "He has achieved a lot, including having a primary role in the destruction of the Death Star, but..."

I trailed off, noting that Amescoll was already nodding in agreement. When he focused back on me, he gave me a serious, searching look.

"And what exactly would joining your people entail?" He asked, locking eyes with me.

"What are you looking to do?" I responded, surprising the older man. "For a while now, we have been focused on expansion, filling out a fleet, and growing our operations. That will soon transition, however, to a more resource and money-focused direction. Our primary source of income at the moment is raiding Imperial and pirate assets, then selling them to the Rebellion for a steep discount. We also do our fair share of salvage and recovery. Once our growth has stabilized, and we've gotten comfortable with each other and our assets, we will most likely start to expand again."

"And where would we fall in this?" He asked, still looking confused.

"Anywhere you want," I explained. "Would you like to be a pilot? Or maybe one of your Padawans would like to shadow a ship captain to learn the ropes so that they could maybe get their own ship during our next expansion? Who here does the cooking?"

It took a few seconds, as they were caught off guard by my question, but eventually, one of the Padawans raised their hands, followed by one of the teenagers after one of their peers nudged them.

"Well, I'm sure the cooks at our cafeteria would love the help if you would like to continue that," I explained. "Don't get me wrong, I would love for you to join us on the ground teams, but I wouldn't demand it. The only requirement I would have for all of you is that you continue your training, at least as far as it takes to learn how to properly center yourself."

"You would put yourselves at risk for harboring us, even if we choose not to fight?" The older man said, unable to hide his surprise.

"You're sentient beings, not robots," I explained with a shrug. "I'm not going to demand you do anything. The Skyforged Vanguard is committed to defeating the Empire, but we are not a military. There's room for negotiation, and we aren't just going to designate your role. The Republic should have never forced the Jedi Order into the position it was in. Which, actually, is another reason why you should join us instead of the Rebellion."

"What do you mean?"

"If you listen to the Rebel leadership, the first step they want to take after defeating the Empire is to reinstate the Senate and begin demilitarization," I explained with a frown. They seem to believe that the Empire's spirit will simply disappear into the void just by planting a flag on Coruscant. They also seem to have forgotten what started the Clone Wars in the first place."

"That... is absurd!" Knight Amescol said, his eyes wide. "We witnessed firsthand the corruption and decay stagnating the senate, and they wish to simply breathe new life into its rotting corpse?! Do they have no idea what it was like watching the Senate pass laws that crushed and starved the Mid and Outer Rims? At the time, we thought there was nothing we could do, not without tearing down the system, but to work and fight to return to that state? Are they ignorant of their history?"

"Senator Mon Mothma is the leader of the Rebellion," I responded, answering his question. "She knows very well what the senate was like. My hope is that by growing in influence and power, the Skyforged can push the Rebellion to reconsider their stance and come up with some sort of solution."

"I... I would need some time to discuss this," He said, looking over his shoulder to the rest of his group. "This is... You offered a solution to our dilemma of leaving or not leaving. What was that?"

"Commuting to work," I responded with a smirk.

"...I'm afraid I do not follow."

"We have a relatively secure base of operations, one that is a two or three days long jump from here," I explained. "With some basic security restrictions, we can keep this planet's location a secret and have you guys involved with our operations. We could even see about getting those field projectors up and running to get rid of the ocean dwellers. Then we can get you some better housing and resources and basically turn this planet into a refuge for any Force-sensitive people we find."

"Would... that be dangerous?" Amescoll asked. "Pulling us all together like that?"

"With the right security in place and the right safeties in place, we can minimize the risk," I assured him. "If Palpy had a way to snap his fingers and divine your location..."

"We would already be caught," He finishes for me. "So, what, we would be restarting the Order?"

"No, absolutely not," I stated, shaking my head. "The Jedi Order is dead, and my people will not fund an attempt to rebuild it. This will be something new. Something that grows from the ashes."

For a long moment, the space was quiet, as what I was suggesting filtered through the small crowd.

"This... is an incredible offer," He said, chewing the inside of his lip and glancing at the woman who kissed his cheek. "We would need to discuss this before we can come to a decision."

"That's fine..." I said with a nod, trailing off. "How about we give you a few days?"

"That is... probably more than we would require," He admitted, looking at us in confusion.

"As we mentioned, our original mission was to find Professor Huyang," Ahsoka explained, easily catching onto my intent. "But that was simply the first part. We were also planning on traveling to a location that contains Kyber crystals so that Luke and two others on our ship could locate their own."

"Ah, I see. You were on your way to perform the Gathering and wanted Professor Huyang to assist," Knight Amnescol said, nodding in understanding. "Very well, we shall await your return. You may take Huyang with you since he requires recharging anyway."

"Fantastic," I said with a smile. "In exchange, we have some food and other things you might have missed..."

We discussed the numbers and logistics of getting some supplies off of the *Starcaller*, as well as loading on a powered-off droid. When we reached a conclusion, one of the Padawans led us to a far corner of the hangar, where several containers were stacked up and tucked away. Together, Ahsoka and I pulled one down and cracked one open. Inside was a torso for a robot, a design I didn't recognize.

"Our emergency generators broke when we moved up here," They explained. "So rather than leave him hanging around, susceptible to the weather and accidents, we took him apart and stored him with the other parts."

"Parts?" I asked, I looking confused. "Like other droids?"

Rather than answer, the Padawan pulled down another box and cracked it open, showing off its contents. I had no idea what I was looking at, but Ahsoka knew instantly.

"Lightsaber parts," She explained. "I'm glad you saved these, Professor Huyang would have hated to lose his collection."

"We already expect a talking-to for shoving everything into unlabeled boxes," The Padawan admitted with a wince. "Won't hear me complaining, though. I miss the old man. He made the first few years bearable, helped teach us a lot of the games we use to pass the time, and helped us... adapt to our new lives."

The Padawan, who was just about my age, so the title was a bit strange, looked back at the main group, who were huddled around Sabine and Luke as the latter told the story of the Death Star run. Funnily enough, Sabine was listening with just as much interest as the others. I noted that our guide was looking fondly at one of the female Padawans, who was standing behind one of the teenagers, her hands on their shoulders. He excused himself after a minute to join his partner and child.

Once he was far enough away, I let out a low whistle.

"I... never imagined we would find survivors," Ahsoka said, shaking her head. "And... They've changed so much..."

"Not surprising, to be honest," I responded, shrugging when she looked back at me. "This sort of environment, the trauma they must have gone through, it's not surprising that things slip and change. Especially without the rigid teaching of the Masters around to reinforce everything."

"I know... but children?" She asked, chewing her lip. "It flies in the face of everything we were taught."

"Ahsoka, the Force is in all things, in all life. Doesn't it make more sense that people who trust the Force, let the Force guide them, would celebrate new life rather than refuse to create it?" I asked. "Attachments are dangerous for Jedi because they have nothing supporting them. Attachments can pull them down into darkness because they have nothing to keep them stable. But look at them."

I gestured to the small crowd. As we both watched, they talked, laughed, leaned on each other, and whispered in each other's ears as Sabine told a story I didn't recognize. They were close, drawn together by trauma and the need to survive. They looked nothing like the Jedi from the Jedi Order.

"If one of them lost someone, would they really be alone?" I asked softly. "Or does it look like everyone would come together to support them, to keep each other stable and mentally healthy? Attachments don't put people like them at risk because they have a dozen other attachments anchoring them down. The Jedi had *nothing* like that. I imagine Yoda would have listened and offered advice if you needed help, but I can't imagine Mace Windu letting you cry on his shoulder."

Ahsoka snorted, reaching out and slapping my stomach as she shook her head.

"No, I can't imagine him allowing that," She agreed. "I'm... Well, I'm not disagreeing with you. It's just shocking, is all."

"I'm glad they have adapted," I said. "I feel much better about inviting them to join us, knowing they have."

"About that. Would you really let them work in the cafeteria?" Ahsoka asked, looking at me with a raised eyebrow. "I think I know you well enough by now to tell when you have a trick up your sleeve."

"Of course I would let them, I wasn't lying," I assured her. "But they are, all of them, some level of Force-sensitive, with some training. They won't ever be satisfied with just working in the cafeteria. They can all feel the Force calling out to them. Most, if not all, of them would answer that call."

"So you only offered because you knew they would never actually go for it?" She asked.

"I only offered the base location idea because of that. I would have still warned them about working with the Rebellion and offered them a place to stay until they figured their lives out," I explained. "Any of them that volunteered to join after that, I would have likely accepted."

"The Rebellion isn't going to like this," She stated. "They would have wanted access to them. Not to mention this planet as well..:"

"Well, Rebellion is going to have to get over it," I responded with a shrug. "I'm not gonna hold back to make them feel better."