

About fifteen hours after we discovered the carbonite-encased clones, the *Talos Chariot* took off from the large hangar bay. Tatnia, myself, and Allum were all on board, as well as Luke and Ahsoka, with Calima as our pilot. Our hold was full of fifty-three slabs, all hooked up to a temporary power generator and a crude monitoring system, which Miru set up for us. We ended up having to leave the Arrow, our speeders, and a crate of Gozanti parts behind to make room for our cold guests, but that was fine.

According to Ahsoka, Alpha Base was already preparing everything they would need to treat the clone troopers, including removing their bio-chip. I wasn't really surprised that they were so eager to help. One of the Rebellion's biggest deficiencies was truly experienced soldiers and leaders. It was, by its very nature, a rag-tag bunch of freedom fighters, lacking experience and training. Having fully trained soldiers join would always be met with excitement and eagerness.

We had barely jumped to light speed when I stepped out of my room, dressed in my uniform. I had told the crew that it was up to them whether they wore them consistently, but so far, everyone was wearing them nearly constantly. They felt official, like a constant reminder that we were a solid, well-put-together group, with real tangible resources.

As I turned to head to the lounge, I caught Ahsoka coming out of one of the bedrooms. She was looking around, confused about something. After a moment, she walked to the door that led to my enchanting room, which I kept locked because not only did it have my enchanting set up, but it was where we kept our stash of precious metal ingots. She fiddled with the door controls, only to frown when it refused to open. She looked around and spotted me.

"Deacon! Sorry, I... I don't want to be nosy, but..." She trailed off for a moment before continuing. "Why does it feel like you have an entire zoo of near-comatose animals in this room?"

Her question threw me for a loop, my brain trying to parse out what she was talking about. Finally, after a few seconds of looking confused, I managed to figure out what the hell she meant.

"Uhhh, that's a bit difficult to explain," I responded before stepping past her and tapping in the code on the door, which sprung open. Before she could step in, I turned around in the doorway and held my hand out. "So I'm going to say a lot of words, and some of them may be confusing. The important thing is that you understand that when I say Soul, I mean life force. I'm not fucking around with actual souls, alright?"

I knew that I could have told her just to buzz off and mind her own business, but Ahsoka was an ally. Someone whom my team and I would hopefully be working together with a lot in the future. Not to mention, she was someone I would like to think was a friend, and I wanted her to understand what I was doing rather than watching me with suspicion. I turned and walked into the room, leaving the ex-Jedi standing at the door, looking around with wide eyes. I followed her

gaze first to the enchanting table, which very much looked like a ritual table, then to the boxes full of soul gems, before finally resting on the few dozen bars of platinum and gold tucked into the corner. When she was done, she looked back at me.

"Fine... despite that statement being very concerning, I will listen."

"So, my magic has a method of instilling effect into objects that you wear," I explained, pulling off one of my rings and tossing it to her. "It's called enchanting and requires a few things. The first is a specially designed table, like this one. The second is the object you wish to enchant. The third is something called a soul gem..."

I spent about fifteen minutes explaining the process of enchanting. I assured her that despite the name, I was not stealing souls, merely gathering the dispersed life force that animals release when they die. She seemed uneasy about the idea, but after examining a filled soul gem, she seemed to accept I wasn't somehow dabbling in Sith alchemy or anything. Apparently, that kind of thing was hard to ignore. What she was instead agitated about was what I used to make soul gems.

"Are you telling me all of those were once Kyber crystals?" She asked, looking down into the large, full box of filled soul gems. "And they turn to dust when you are done? Do you have any idea how rare Kyber crystals are now, with the Empire cracking down on their sale and blockading Ilum with an entire armada?!"

Instead of responding, I reached under the table and pulled out another crate, clicking it open and turning it to her, showing off the massive pile of Kyber crystals. Her eyes went so wide they looked like they were about to fall out of her head.

"Wh-what? Where did... where did you get these?" She asked, leaning down and running her hand over them. "I can feel them, but I've never seen some of these colors... is that pink? And black? Where did you find these?"

"In a cave on Dantooine," I explained. "If you'd like, I could show you and Luke exactly where sometime. But this isn't even a fraction of what the cave contained. There was enough crystal in that cave for a couple thousands of lightsabers. Probably more if you were careful."

"Dantooine? That... How did we not know about it?"

"Because it was a very well-kept secret of the Jedi Enclave that resided there," I explained. "So when the enclave was destroyed nearly four millennia ago by Darth Malak, the secret was lost."

"... how could *you* possibly know that?" She asked. "I barely know anything about that time period, and there was an entire *class* about it at the temple."

"Because I am the reincarnation of Revan, here to create a new empire," I explained with a shrug. "Wanna join up? We have great benefits."

She stared at me, her eyes wide again, her mouth hanging open as well. After a long moment, I finally lost it, cracking up and laughing. Finally understanding that I was joking, she punched me in the shoulder, her own annoyed smile on her lips. I kept chuckling even as I rubbed the spot she hit. At that moment, I was pretty sure I had gotten a glimpse of Ahsoka before the darkness of the galaxy had settled over her. Before the Jedi Order tossed her to the side and her Master murdered them.

"No reason to be violent. If it helps, I promise that whatever Jedi group Luke starts after this war, I'll keep them supplied with naturally grown Kyber crystals, even if I have to find them myself."

"You seem pretty confident that's going to happen," She responded, ignoring my remark about her punch. "Something you'd like to share?"

"Sure," I responded, the Togruta leaning in to listen. I grabbed one of the pink crystals and handed it to her. "You can have this one."

She frowned and accepted the crystal with a confused expression, the dark pink chunk of Force-connected stone about twice the size of anything that could fit into a lightsaber. She looked lost for a moment before finally realizing I had made a joke. She scoffed and rolled her eyes but didn't push for more. Instead, she slipped the crystal into her pocket and nodded.

"Thank you. I will put it to good use," She said, before looking past me and around the room. "So what sort of effects can you achieve with this enchanting?"

"Well, I can increase your dexterity, your strength, your resistance to fire, cold, or shock-

"Shock? Like electricity and lightning?" Ahsoka asked, suddenly very interested.

"Yeah, it's one of the main types of magic combat spells," I said, holding my hand out and sending a single, low-power spark of electricity to the stack of ingot against the wall. "You've seen me use some of those spells. But to answer what I know you're thinking, I don't know if it would help against Force lightning. If it was just electricity, it would, but it's also full of malicious intent and rage, fueled by the dark side. I could make both you and Luke something with that enhancement, but I can't promise it will actually help."

"I... couldn't pass up a chance to get some protection from one of the Sith's most powerful weapons," She responded after a pause. "Even if that chance is small. You don't mind?"

"No, I've got no problem making you and Luke something. It will probably take the rest of the trip, but I'll get them done."

"Do you mind if I observe?" She asked, looking genuinely curious.

"You can watch if you want, but it's not very exciting unless I fuck up," I explained. "Grab a chair from the lounge and a pair of safety goggles from Miru's workshop. I have time to make one now, but I will make the other tomorrow."

She nodded and left to find a chair and the goggles while I grabbed two soul gems and sat down at the enchanting table. She returned and picked out a simple metal cuff with carvings in it that almost looked Celtic, handing it to me so I could get to work.

Over the next seven or eight hours, I concentrated on the cuff, making sure to go nice and slow to make the defense as potent as possible. I could feel the progress I was making, the process was significantly easier than it had been when I first started. Pretty soon I would be ready to try using three soul gems instead of two.

By the time I finally finished, I looked around the room, not surprised to find it empty, though the chair was still there. I quickly cast Clairvoyance and followed it to the first deck, where I found Ahsoka meditating on a cargo crate, her legs crossed as several small objects floating around her. Luke was nearby, doing the same thing, though he only had one object, and it was stationary in front of him, floating at eye level.

Rather than interrupt their meditation, I gently placed the cuff next to Ahsoka on the corner of the crate she was sitting on. After that, I went upstairs to check on Calima and Allum, making sure they were good, before crawling into bed and calling it a night.

When we finally arrived at Alpha Base three and a half days after we left the station, both Luke and Ahsoka disembarked wearing enchanted cuffs. Luke had gone as far as to ask me to help test them, asking me to shock him with and without it on his wrist. He confirmed they worked and that my ability to heal away things like minor burns and aches from meditating all day was the best thing ever.

As we made our way down the ramp and into the hangar reserved for us, we were greeted by nearly a dozen people. More than a few of them shared the same face, though a few seemed to be a bit older than others. Ahsoka headed straight for one of them, not hesitating to give them a hug.

"Rex, it's good to see you again," She said, the bald, salt-and-pepper bearded clone nodding as he returned her hug.

"It's good to see you too, Commander," He responded. "I heard you found a whole lot of my brothers."

"We did, fifty-three to be exact," She answered, pulling back and patting his shoulder. "It was quite the shock."

"I can imagine."

"This is Deacon Roy, leader of the Skyforged Vanguard," Ahsoka said, turning slightly to gesture to me. "His second in command, Tatnia. Without their help, we would have never found them."

"Good to meet you both," He said, holding out his hand, which I happily shook. "Thank you for helping my brothers. We should talk more once they are being properly checked over."

The frozen clone troopers were slowly and carefully unloaded from the *Chariot* and guided to a singular large room, where they were hooked up to monitoring equipment. Several medical droids and doctors, a few of whom I recognized from my time healing people from the Yavin rescue mission, scanned and took notes about the clones as they came in.

Eventually, everyone was transferred over to the new room. We watched from the sidelines as doctors and medical droids continued to scan them. General Syndulla joined us once things had settled down. She greeted us each with a handshake.

"We have medical teams working to prepare the surgery rooms as we speak, as well as three medical synthesizers working to put together the rapid aging cure injections," She explained. "We should be able to start within the hour. Any luck identifying the highest rank?"

"No, General, none of the usual changes to the armor are present," Rex explained, brushing his beard before shaking his head. "Either they are all troopers, or they never bothered to change their armor."

"Unfortunate. Ahsoka, I know you wish to be there as they are treated, to assist and keep them calm, but..."

"We can't risk them identifying me, even just by my voice," She agreed with a nod. "As small of a chance as it is, it is not worth the risk."

"As long as you don't say anything, there's no issue," Rex tried to counter. "I don't think there's much point in sending the Commander away, not when hibernation sickness means they will be completely blind."

"Better safe than sorry, Rex," Ahsoka said, the technically younger clone eventually frowning. "I'll be waiting in the observation area should anything go wrong."

The ex-Jedi patted her long-time friend's shoulder before starting to leave the room. Before she could get far, Luke caught up and left with her. Rex was clearly annoyed at the necessity of the situation but eventually let out a sigh and focused on his brothers.

While we were all waiting for the process to begin, Captain Rex finally got a good look at Allum. Somehow, despite looking nothing like his genetic donor, the "older" clone trooper recognized him for what he was.

"One of the face changers, eh?" He asked. "I considered it once I got the treatment, but I could never commit to it. Got one other here that did, though."

The clone captain gestured to the nearby gathering of several other clone troopers, all here to support their brothers. Only one of them had a modified face, though it was much less dramatic than Allum's, as they could have passed for a close relative of Jango Fett rather than his clone.

"I didn't have much of a choice, captain," Allum explained with a shrug. "My chip was damaged during a head injury just before the... order came through. The war was still technically going on when I ran, rather than getting accused of treason. My soon-to-be wife smuggled me out to her home planet, where I was quietly given citizenship. I had no choice but to change my face since there was no Rebellion to seek safe shelter in."

Rex nodded in understanding, slapping Allum's shoulder. I couldn't help but smile at the instant camaraderie between brothers. They continued chatting before Rex eventually guided Allum over to the rest of the troopers, introducing him to the group and leaving Tatnia and me alone to wait.