

We lifted off of the CIS base within the hour, with Nal, Tatnia, Julius, Pola, and Vaz on the *Penance* since it required more crew to function, and Calima, Miru, and myself on the *Chariot*. We lifted off without any trouble, jumping to hyperspace as we left the planet's gravity field.

Before we split up into two different ships, I went around and discussed the idea of Pola joining us with everyone individually. The general consensus seemed to be to give him a chance but to keep a close eye on him. The issue with that was his primary role would obviously be working on the ships, which meant Miru would be the one more or less in charge of him, even if he stayed on the *Penance* as one of its crew, and I hated the idea of having someone we didn't trust one hundred percent spending any alone time with her.

So, for the short term, instead of having him on the *Chariot*, I set him on the *Penance*, where Tatnia could keep a vague eye on him. Racer was also onboard the *Penance* as well, tapped into the systems to monitor them directly. The idea was to give the ex-imperial enough freedom to show his true colors but have Racer on standby to stop him from doing anything particularly dangerous.

Of course, this was a temporary solution, one I would openly admit was probably overkill. Between his general demeanor, my own gut feeling, and the Calm spell test, I personally believed he was genuine about his desire to stay on board and help out.

Once we jumped into hyperspace, we had just under a full day before we would arrive at our destination. We sent a message to Nevue before we left, including a few images of the *Dark Blade* and where he could meet us.

Unfortunately, despite the long trip, I didn't actually have a solid twelve for thirteen hours to sit down and learn a spell, as we were already half a dozen hours into our day, and skipping sleep seemed like a bad idea when we would be meeting Nevue and negotiating a trade. I would have to get used to skipping sleep to learn spells when I got to Expert level magic, but I was more concerned about being fully awake now.

Still, I did have a bunch of free time, and while a complete spell was too much, picking up a better casting technique for my fire spells that increased their heat and decreased their mana was much more reasonable.

When we arrived at Point Thirteen, we slowly approached from the usual angle, touching down on the moon gently, the *Penance* right behind us. Tatnia and Nal started the process of shutting down the *Consular*-class ship since we would be leaving it behind for a while, before Miru took our new shuttle, which we had named *Brick*, over to pick up our crewmates.

About two hours after we had shut down the *Penance*, which we still had to rename, a [new ship jumped](#) out of hyperspace a fair distance from the moon. Before we could even start to panic, it reached out over the comm.

"*Talos Chariot*, this is *Free Spirit*, come in *Talos Chariot*. Are you there, Deacon?" A familiar voice asked through the speaker.

"It's us, Nevue. Come on down, and we can pick you up with our shuttle, assuming that ship has an airlock?"

"Shuttle? Dammit, Deacon, stop making us look so bad. Alright, coming in for a touchdown. See you in a bit."

About ten minutes later, Nevue, Ayme, and Lario all stepped off the *Brick's* ramp and into the *Chariot's* port hangar.

"It's good to see you again, Nevue," I said, reaching out and shaking his hand before shaking Ayme and Lario's hands as well. "It's good to see all of you. How has rebel life been treating you?"

"Until we saw you guys, I thought pretty well!" Nevue said, shaking his head. "How in the hells did you manage to get your hands on a Lambda, a C70 refit, and a CES shuttle?" "It's a bit of a long story," I said with a smirk. "How about we head up to the lounge, and I introduce you to our new crewmembers and fill you in?"

Together, we left the port hangar and made our way to the lounge. I briefly introduced Calima, Vaz, Julius, and Pola. I also explained who Pola was, which caught Nevue by surprise, but he seemed to accept his story.

"The Rebellion's policy is no questions asked acceptance of all defectors," He assured the nervous engineer with a shrug. "As long as you keep it straight, we won't have any issues."

Once introductions were done, we went over what we had been up to since we had gone our separate ways after the CIS raid. Nevue was stunned to hear that our adventures on Nar Shaddaa caught up with us in such a spectacular fashion, cursing loudly when we got to the part where we were ambushed by an Inquisitor.

When we were done, Nevue skimmed past what he was up to, explaining how they had secured their current ship and its cargo about two weeks after we separated and performed a large raid a few weeks ago on an Imperial shipping company. When we were both done sharing our stories, Nevue brought up the Lambda shuttle.

"I can understand why you would want to pass it on, it's not much use if you don't have a place to land frequently," He agreed, with a nod, spinning the holo-projected image we provided. "They are great troop transports and support craft, lots of firepower... And considering who the owner was, it would be in top condition... Have you gone over its Navicomputer log?"

"Racer went over it with a fine toothcomb," I said, turning to look at the droid. "Did you?"

The droid whistled, bleeped, and warbled before going silent. I looked at Miru for a translation.

"He said its records are intact, but he never reviewed any of them."

"Rebel Intelligence would want me to buy it for that alone," Nevue said with a nod. "How much?"

"Not gonna drag you guys through the coals on it. I was thinking maybe a hundred and seventy thousand?"

"I might be able to swing that..." Nevue said, sounding unsure as he reached up to touch one of his horns. "Could you go a bit lower?"

"Really? It might as well be brand new, Nevue, and it's worth at least two hundred," I pointed out. "I know the Rebellion's issue isn't money, it's ships. I could ask for more than it's worth, and you would still probably cave. I'll go a hundred and sixty-five, but that's as good as you're gonna get."

"Alright, alright, you've got a good point. That's a good deal, and I shouldn't ask for gilding when you've already offered a trim for free," He said, reaching over the table to shake my hand, sealing the deal. "Now, to complete my secondary mission. Our slicers have finally broken through the first few layers of the encryption on the CIS computer core. We have a new target to raid, and they want you at Thila Command to go over a plan."

"Dammit, really?" I asked, hypothetical, leaning back in my seat. "And right after we spent a whole meeting working out our schedule..."

"Well... we could spare a few days if it's something important," The Zabrak admitted. "Is it important?"

"I wanted to visit a planet for a day, investigate it for a potential scavenging operation of sorts," I explained. "And I wanted to use a large portion of the profits from the Lambda to buy upgrades for the *Penance*, the *Chariot*, and the *Brick*."

For a moment, Nevue was quiet, chewing on his lip before leaning in.

"I'll need to confirm it, but what if you brought the ships to Thila Command? We have enough room for both of your ships easily. You could leave them behind with Miru, and our technicians could help her upgrade your ship. We can even pick up the parts. We have plenty of ships waiting for the eventual Yavin IV rescue mission."

"That... would work, I suppose..."

I looked around at the rest of my crew, gauging their reactions. When no one showed any signs of major disagreement, I looked back at Nevue.

"Alright, we will accept your hospitality."

With our negotiation over Nevue, Ayme, Lario, Tatnia, Nal, Pola, and Vaz piled into the *Brick* again. Once Nevue was back on his ship, my crew went back to the *Penance* to start her back up, undoing the process they had gone through just a few hours ago.

After a while, Nevue contacted us on the comms and informed us we were welcome to use Thila Command as a temporary port, and that they would even pick up our supplies for cheap. Given how many black market pies the rebels had their fingers in, I was hopeful we could get our hands on everything we needed.

Soon we were ready to leave, with two of Nevue's crew piloting and preparing the *Dark Blade* for travel. Once they were ready, they gave us the coordinates for the rebel base and we set out, jumping into hyperspace. The trip was predicted to be surprisingly short, even shorter than the last time we made the trip, since the ancient B-7 we had been traveling on had a class four hyperdrive, while we were currently limited to the class three that the *Chariot* had.

Once we were on our way, I sat down with Miru and Calima to discuss what kind of upgrades we should be looking out for. Miru had a holoprojector displaying the structure of both of our ships so we could plan our modifications.

"I already recommended some extra power and shields for the *Consular*-class," Miru said, bringing the [deck plan](#) for that ship up. "I say we replace the shield generator with a bigger, more powerful version, and add a secondary reactor. We could even probably sell the original shield generator to make up some of the difference."

"Where would we put it?" I asked

"The more powerful shield might need some more room, but it's along the hull, so we don't need to worry about things getting in the way. We can just expand the hull," Miru explained. "We would have to do some restructuring, but we should have some replacement hull parts on hand anyway. The second power generator, on the other hand, is going to need its own space."

"How about the conference room on the second deck?" I suggested, pointing it out on the plans. "The primary lounge is just as good of a meeting place, if not better because it has the holoprojector in the middle."

"Hmm... I would like a little more space... what if we pushed the secondary storage bay back just a bit? That's another meter of space... we could fit a sizable generator there. Maybe increase available power by two-thirds."

"And you can connect it properly there?"

"Yeah, CEC ships are made for this kind of thing, Boss. You could tap into the main power almost anywhere in the ship."

"Good. How much will that cost?"

"If we can convince the rebels to buy our old shield system, which considering it will work with a lot of their older CEC ships, then... forty thousand credits."

"How much would adding two more quad turrets cost?" I asked. "Like we have in the back?"

"Uh.... another fifteen probably..."

We continued to discuss the upgrades for a few hours, Calima chiming in occasionally to put her own two cents in. Eventually, we settled on a general plan. On top of the reactor and shield upgrades, we would be adding two more quad turrets. One would be on the underside of the large, cone-shaped escape pod under the bridge, and the other on the underside of the aft end of the ship, near its engines, where it would have a clear view for targeting starfighters.

We would also be *moving* the quad laser that sat in the back to on top of the central tall block along the fore of the ship, drastically increasing its firing arc. It would require the removal of a single crew quarters to do it, but there were plenty of beds all over the ship, so that wasn't particularly important. In fact, the other two gunner controls would also be sacrificing quarters, both a stateroom on the first deck and two quarters in the forward pod, and the ship still had plenty of beds.

The [Talos Chariot](#) was also getting a significant upgrade to its shields and power generation. The hull would most likely need to be expanded for the shield upgrade, according to Miru, but once again she wasn't concerned. Instead of getting one additional medium-sized reactor, the *Chariot* would be getting two smaller ones, each tucked into the corner of the up-to-now unused back room of the ship's top deck. They would stay opposite the stairs and take up a significant amount of the room. Together, they would provide just about the same amount of power as the additional reactor being added to the *Penance* would provide.

I was tempted to add more weapons to the ship, but in all honesty it was already surprisingly well armed. It lacked the turbolasers that the retrofitted and upgraded *Consular*, but considering we were going for more of a small-scale carrier than a heavy hitter, that was fine.

Once we were done with the general plans, Miru headed down to her workshop, Racer following right behind her, planning on spending the rest of the trip working up some official plans to work off of. She was clearly excited about the upgrades, especially when I made it clear that she would be leading the process, as I trusted her to keep the rebel mechanics from fucking shit up or taking shortcuts.

When we finally arrived at the Rebellion's temporary command base, we were immediately given guidance to land, heading to the same spot we had before. Once again, Thila's massive mountains and valleys passed under us before we reached the rebel base. This time, we were directed to a larger hangar bay with room for the *Penance* and *Chariot* with room to spare.

As we exited the *Chariot*, the other half of my crew walking down the front ramp of the *Penance*, I spotted our welcoming committee. General Syndulla stood by the entrance, flanked by two guards. Beside her, however, was a Togruta woman, probably just around my age. Standing just behind her was a young, blonde-haired human male. The lightsaber at his hip and the dual lightsabers clipped to the Togruta's belt meant they could only really be two people.

I was honestly surprised how easy it was to control my fanboying. Maybe it was because they both looked so... normal, standing there, just waiting. Luke's behavior was so familiar it hurt, trying his best not to look nervous as he was introduced to new people. I could see my younger self in him like I was looking in a mirror, though I had considerably less riding on my shoulders. Ahsoka, on the other hand, carried her confidence much more securely, tempting me to try and rattle her a bit.

"General Syndulla, it's good to see you again," I said, reaching out to shake her hand. "I appreciate that you're letting us use your space."

"Just remember that when it's time to talk about who gets what after this raid," She responded with a smile. "This is-

"[Ahsoka Tano](#)." I finished for her with a smile, holding my hand out to the once-Jedi Padawan. "It's good to finally meet you."