

General Syndulla led me to a small conference room not too far from where the clones were being kept and processed. We settled down and, after a few minutes of waiting, we were joined by Tatnia, as well as another individual that I recognized but couldn't put a name to immediately. He was older than me by at least twenty, maybe even thirty years, with white hair and a white beard. After a few moments of wracking my brain, I finally realized who it was, which was shocking. As far as I knew, he shouldn't have escaped from Yavin IV.

"General Dodanna, it's great to meet you," I said, standing slightly to shake his hand. "It's good to see you made it off of Yavin IV safe and sound."

He seemed shocked that I recognized him, taking a moment to look me in the eye, before shifting a look to his Twi'lek comrade. He shook my hand with a firm grip, before sitting down in one of the many seats around the table.

"It was a close thing," He admitted, a shift in his eyes belying just how close it had been. "If General Syndulla hadn't arrived with considerable support from CIS salvage... We would have been looking at a very different scenario."

"I'm glad it worked out," I said with a nod. "And I'm glad that the Rebellion is learning how useful the old droids left behind by the Separatists can be. Even if it means we might end up competing for resources."

"They certainly make excellent disposable assets," Hera agreed with a chuckle, shaking her head and leaning forward. "With what the engineers are reporting from Omega Station, you won't lack droid parts for some time."

"Unfortunately, we don't have the time or support to take them all apart and reassemble them correctly, if that is even possible with what the damaged ship's droid brain did to them. With any luck, there might be some intact droids stored deeper in the ship."

"Well... we did agree that all salvage was yours..." General Dodanna said. "If you can't do anything with them, perhaps we could purchase the parts?"

I gave him a look, leaning back in my chair. While more money would certainly be useful, as usual, assets and physical materials were worth more. After chewing my lip for a moment, I nodded.

"I have a better idea. You take the parts, disassemble them, and build however many droids you can from the good parts," I offered, getting both of the general's attention. "And in return, we get forty percent of the resulting functional droids."

"Twenty-five percent," General Syndulla countered. "We will be doing all of the work after all."

"Thirty, and you can use the Munificent as the base of operations for your repair program," I counteroffered. "There should be plenty of facilities on board to repair droids and plenty of space to store them. Just keep in mind that already functional droids are fully ours."

"We would have to repair all of the facilities... But having an off-site facility for droid repair and distribution... We might even be able to start a minor production facility..." General Dodanna said, almost mumbling to himself as he stroked his beard. "As long as we can move droid assets to and from the station fully, then that is agreeable."

"We will have to come up with some sort of security process to protect the station. The best defense it has right now is the fact that it's lost in deep space," I pointed out. "As long we can figure out a way to do that, then yes."

Again, I stood, my hand reached out to shake each of their hands, sealing the deal. As far as I could tell, this was a win-win for me. We would get twenty-five percent of the repaired droids for our use without having to invest any of our time into doing the actual work. On top of that, if the Rebellion had any sense, they would repair the weapons and shields of the Munificent, giving us another layer of defense. Even the fact that they would be setting up what would probably become an important facility, one attached to our station, would mean they would be invested in its overall survival.

When I sat back down, General Syndulla was the first to speak up.

"I'm surprised you would hand over the control of a portion of the station so easily, even with how unorthodox a portion it is," She said, studying me closely. "Especially after what happened with the negotiations."

"General, I think we both know that the Skyforged Vanguard is incapable of keeping that station running for very long, even with the large infusion of credits we are expecting from our cut of the supplies," I admitted, getting a nod of understanding from both generals, though they looked surprised I would freely admit it. "It's too big, uses too much fuel, and would require too much maintenance. Meanwhile, I know for a fact that having a safe haven to keep supplies and stage assets would be a huge boon for the Rebellion."

"What are you suggesting, Deacon?" General Syndulla asked.

"The main station belongs to the Skyforged Vanguard, and the Rebellion has already agreed to use its manpower to repair it. For the low cost of the *resources* needed to repair it, as well as assistance in keeping it running, the Rebellion would gain a safe haven, a distribution point, and a rallying point."

"I will admit, that was the primary reason we sought out the station in the first place," General Dodanna said, his elbows on the table and his hands bridge in front of his mouth. "But, that is a lot of resources to put into an asset that isn't ours."

The room was quiet for a while, everyone considering the conundrum we had found. I really did need the support to keep the station running. Sure, I could shut down two-thirds of the station and cut the costs of maintenance and supplies, but that would just leave the station vulnerable. The Rebels desperately wanted a station like this they could use as a distribution point, something secure they could use as a buffer from their larger bases.

"How about this," I started, getting everyone's attention. "The Skyforged Vanguard goes out, and we do what we do, this time focusing on a larger ship. Something Imperial, probably, a combat ship. Then, we hand it over to you. A functioning warship whose primary role would be to defend the station, but if something should happen, for example, you dislike the way I am running the station, it would act as collateral for losing abandoning an asset you invested in."

"I... It would have to be a significant ship to satisfy some of the more... stubborn and controlling leaders of the Rebellion," General Dodanna pointed out. "Something bigger or more powerful than your *Intervention*."

"That's fine. We've gotten a bit stronger since we took that anyway," I said confidently, dusting off my uniform with a smirk. "We can handle it."

"We would need to discuss this with others, especially Admiral Ackbar, though he isn't who I'm worried about convincing," General Syndulla explained. "But I like the general idea. I think we can pitch it properly. Plus, having an asset specifically for defending the station will be reassuring, especially since we will have more control over the Munificent, even if it remains attached to the station."

We continued to discuss the deal, eventually deciding that the idea of dividing the station up now, without knowing how extensive the damage was throughout all of the ship's decks, was pointless.

We did come up with a basic security system for protecting the ship. Once the station, including the Munificent, was sufficiently repaired, we would turn on its engines and accelerate the station, which at this point was already stopped. We would then put a comms beacon somewhere far away in deep space. People would leave hyperspace at the beacon and then use it to communicate with us. They would then go through the security checks, which would involve passwords, codewords, scans, and visual inspections from cameras posted on the comms beacon, or maybe even stationed ships. If they passed, we would feed them our new location.

It wasn't foolproof, as someone could transmit the location, but since we would constantly be moving around in deep space, our location would constantly change. At the very least, it would give us enough time to evacuate.

Once we finished discussing security, we ended the meeting with the two generals promising to know the answer to my proposal by the next morning. After Tatnia and I left, we headed straight for the *Chariot*. As we were walking, I looked over at my second in command.

"Awful quiet in there," I pointed out, the woman wincing slightly.

"Sorry, Boss. I'm just a bit tired. Besides, you did pretty well," She admitted with a shrug. "I think we could have gotten a few more percentage points in the droid deal if you really wanted to get aggressive, but that's fine. Though, I will say it's unfortunate that we will be spending so much effort to steal a ship only to hand it off to the Rebellion."

"Tatnia, please, you know how we work. Do you really think I would let us invest our time and effort into something if I didn't think we could make a profit off it? I asked rhetorically, putting my hand on her shoulder and giving her a nudge. "I'm sure we can find an appropriate target, one that lets us profit too."

"Most of that was dumb luck," She pointed out, though she was now smiling as well. "You have any brilliant ideas yet?"

"No, but I don't claim to be the only one coming up with good ideas. You guys beat me out more often than not."

"Yeah, yeah, fair enough, Boss."

We made it back to the ship not long after that, both of us splitting off to go to our rooms for a while.

Over the next three days, we spent most of our time split between the ship and the rooms where the clone troopers were being kept and watched over. I sat in for all of the surgeries, the procedure getting so repetitive that, for the most part, they bled together. The clones who had already gotten their chips removed were slowly recovering as, apparently, the symptoms from hibernation sickness scaled slightly to the length of time spent in stasis. Since they had been stuck for over twenty years, the clones had around a week or so of recovery time ahead of them. Luckily, all of the clones were grateful once we were able to explain the situation to them fully. Even better, once the first round of patients had woken up and learned the truth, they could help the next ones.

More than a few of them were not happy about the idea of working with the Rebellion. Instead, they demanded that they be dropped off somewhere. Still, the vast majority seemed to be at least entertaining the idea of hanging around.

We also received word that the powers that be accepted the bargain we made, as long as the ship we managed to get was of good enough size and quality and not stolen from allies. Some of the more controlling leaders wanted to demand we leave a ship behind as collateral,

but General Syndulla was able to shut that down. I struggled to imagine what they could have meant but brushed it off for the sake of my sanity.

With our new deal set, Tatnia, Allum, Calima, and I left Alpha base behind, setting our course to Omega Station. On the way, I spent some time working on my enchanting, practicing on a few strength and dexterity-enhancing rings. I didn't have anyone to hand them out to at the moment, but I could feel myself at the cusp of being able to handle a three-soul gem enchantment, so practice was what I needed.

Thankfully, my practice paid off because, on the last full day of travel, I successfully struggled through a full, three-soul gem enchantment. It was a strength amulet, one for me to wear while I was wearing my armor, and I could easily feel the difference when I put it on. It wasn't exactly an incremental increase, but it was definitely noticeable just from moving around.

Of course, it also took nearly twelve hours and nearly broke my mind. When the enchantment was finally done, I spent a good while drooling on the enchanting table, unable to remember who, what, or when I was. When I eventually recovered a basic sense of sentience, I made it only a few steps out of the enchanting room before I collapsed. Which was where Tatnia found me three or four hours later.

"Boss!" She shouted as she rushed to me, her words not entirely making sense. "What the hell, Deacon? What happened?"

I felt her roll me over, and my eyes struggled to focus on her face. Attempted to tell her I was fine, but only a slight groan came out. For a moment she looked like she was about to panic before she looked around and spotted the still-open enchanting room door.

"Did you over do your enchanting again, Boss?" She asked her voice taking a turn for annoyed.

I managed to nod slightly, but apparently enough for her to pick up on. She let out a long groan and shook her head.

"Shivering Hells boss, you scared me. Thought we might have picked up something dangerous at Alpha Base," She said, struggling to help me to my feet while adding. "We need a medical droid or something in case you get hurt, by the way."

I did my best to help as she mostly carried me to my room, laying me back on my bed before dropping into my chair.

"Didn't using your magic help with all this?" She asked. "I've never seen you this bad."

I let out a long groan, which transitioned into a sigh of relief as I managed to cast Respite on myself. I followed it up with a few castings of Fast Heal and repeat Respites. After draining my magicka, I held up a thumbs up.

"Thank you, Nia," I said genuinely. "I tried to enchant with three soul gems for the first time."

"You haven't gotten nearly this bad before," She pointed out.

"I've been enchanting for... like twelve hours?" I admitted. "It does a number on my brain. But it should get easier every time I do it."

"Well, maybe next time you have someone nearby to help, just in case."

"Do you want to sit in the enchanting room for twelve hours?" I asked, "I'll be more careful next time, but there's not much I can do beyond working hard and getting better."

"Did you at least do it?" She asked, looking curious. "The enchanting, I mean."

"I did. It turned out pretty good, as far as I can tell."

After a few seconds of silence, where I was letting my mana refill so I could cast more healing and Respite, Tatnia stood up from her chair and made her way to the door.

"Try not to fry your mind for a few days, at least," Tatnia said as she stopped by the doorway. "It would be hard for you to lead the team if you became a vegetable."

"I'll keep that in mind," I said, managing to sit up slightly. "Thanks for the help."

She nodded and left, the door sealing itself behind her. When she was gone, I looked down at the amulet I had just finished, sitting in my hand, before putting it on my nightstand and crawling under my blankets. I earned an early night.