

We spent most of the next day relaxing, which Tatnia, Vaz, and I desperately needed. I woke up in the morning in a cold sweat, most of the night plagued by unpleasant dreams I hardly remembered. What little I could recall involved what could have happened and what would have happened if our escape attempt hadn't worked. I ended up giving up on sleep a bit early, walking out into the lounge to find Tatnia already having breakfast.

I joined her, of course, both of us thoroughly enjoying the simple prepackaged food, which despite how basic it was, blew anything we had in the prison and even most of what we ate as we escaped out of the water. I could only imagine how Vaz felt, having spent so much longer inside that hellhole.

Once breakfast was over, I spent the day walking around the ship, helping out where I could, but mostly just trying to settle into being back. It was surprising how much being away affected me, and I mentally promised to be more careful in the future. I wasn't exactly sure how I could have done better given what I knew and didn't know at the time, but I did know that I needed to do better now that I knew how everything could go wrong so quickly.

Eventually, with most of the day gone by, I called everyone up to the lounge. We ate dinner as a crew again, but this time stayed sitting once we were done, as I wanted to have another meeting about what was next.

"Alright," I said once the table was clear. "We have a lot to go over, so let's start with something we can definitively decide on and then move on. The *Dark Blade*, are we keeping it?"

"They are... impressive ships," Calima said, leaning back in her seat. "Strong shields, lots of weapons, decent cargo space if... you include the passengers."

"I know, it's a tempting ship to keep," I agreed, shaking my head. "It has a lot of potential. The only negative I could think of at the moment is how heavily it's tied to the Imperials."

"It does stand out. As far as I know, they do not sell it commercially," Tatnia added. "So anyone using it either stole it or is an Imperial. And with how expensive they are, everyone is going to be paying attention."

"So, keep it and handle the upkeep despite not being able to use it sometimes," I said. "Or sell it to the Rebels, who I know would be very eager to get their hands on it and use the money to buy another ship. Something that might not be as well armed but might be more useful in the long run."

The group was silent for a while as we all thought through our options. When nobody said anything for a minute, I snorted and shook my head.

"So much for this being the easy topic," I said before making a decision. "I'm going to say that for now, we keep it. We can always sell it off later, and eventually, showing off an

obviously wanted ship isn't going to be as big of a deal, at least not when we are around rebels. Unfortunately, for now, it's probably better to keep it off the board, at least until our cover is blown again."

"So what, we keep it but don't use it?" Miru asked. "Or do we just leave it in deep space when we go to any populated planets?"

"I'd say, for now, let's just leave it parked here," I said with a shrug. "The moon is most likely safe, it's got a spot for us to land it on already. We can park it on the surface, shut it all down, and then come back for it when we need it."

Everyone nodded in agreement, and Calima headed to the cockpit to set a very slow course for the moon, dragging the *Blade* with us. She returned after a few minutes so we could continue our meeting.

"So, we talked a bit about it already, but essentially we are on a time limit with the Imperials," I said as our pilot sat back down. "According to the Inquisitor that I killed, he hid the records of the prison break. Unfortunately, I don't exactly trust his competency. Eventually, someone is going to find them. When they do, they are going to come looking for me. Which means worlds with a solid Imperial presence won't be open to us. We kind of knew this would happen, but I was hoping to have a bit more time. Either way, I would rather them be after me for something we did rather than for escaping from that prison."

"What do you mean?" Julius said, leaning his elbows on the table.

"What I mean is, as of right now, we are not wanted by the Imperials, but that is going to change eventually. We may as well do something to earn it rather than just wait down the clock. I'll admit, there is a chance they haven't connected me to the *Chariot*, but that likely hood is vanishingly small. Tatnia and Vaz are definitely connected to me, and Nal and Miru aren't far behind," I explained, Julius nodding in understanding. "I think it might be time to abandon pretenses and go for it. We should find something to steal from the Imperials, preferably a ship. Landing on an Imperial planet will be as easy as paying for space right now, so we still have an opportunity. Maybe even one big enough to snag multiple things."

"That... okay, it would definitely make a statement," Tatnia admitted. "Are you sure?"

"Unless anyone can think of a reason not to, other than just enjoying the time it takes for them to figure it all out?" I asked, waiting for someone to speak up. "Then I say we push for one big heist and take advantage of the fact that they don't know who we are yet."

"What kind of target are we looking for?" Nal asked. "Is there something specific?"

"We are looking for a ship to increase our effectiveness, something that we can use to create a proper fleet," I explained. "Something that isn't too expensive to keep operational, and

that staffing will be easy as well. That said, if we get handed the opportunity to steal something big, we should take it. As long as we can get away with it."

Tatnia shook her head, rubbing her face as Nal smiled. Vaz was as calm as ever, though I could see a smile coming through.

"Why do you make it like we are window shopping for a speeder?" Tatnia asked, looking back up at me. "So we just show up and steal something, easy as that?"

"No, of course not," I said, shaking my head. "We start by finding something out of the way, where the local Imperial presence is light but still present. Then we land under the guise of looking for a shuttle ship, something that will fit in our hangar, as well as supplies. We go about our business while Racer finds out what he can about the local fleet, how often they land for downtime, and everything like that. Then when we have a better idea of their schedule, we wait patiently for our time to strike."

"I... I hate how much that makes sense," Tatnia responded, looking upset at my plan. "It can't be that easy, right?"

She looked at Nal, who simply shrugged.

"Plan depends on certain parameters being true," he pointed out. "But if we find somewhere they are... why could it not be that simple?"

"I think you're confusing easy with simple," I added. "The plan might be simple, but it's gonna put us up against a crew, whatever stormtroopers they are carrying, and probably some sort of base security. It's gonna be dangerous, but I think we can handle it, especially if we pick our target well."

"What would be our next step after we take this Imperial ship?" Vaz asked. "This crew is too small to keep two ships active and in good shape."

"We could *probably* do it," Miru disagreed before continuing with a wince. "It would suck, and we wouldn't have much free time... and we would be working the droids really hard... But we could do it... maybe."

"We won't be pushing that hard," I explained, shaking my head. "Once we pull whatever asset we manage to get our hands on, we will work on finding some people to staff it, though I am hoping we could minimize some of the new crew requirements by using droids."

"And then?" Tatnia asked.

"Then I want to check in with General Syndulla," I responded. "I'm hoping they have made some progress on locating more CIS bases. I desperately want more raindrops and repair droids for the new ship."

"They might have crew droids as well," Miru pointed out. "We could buy some crew droids, but the CIS had some actually good pilot, crew, and gunner droids we could use for the new ship. There wasn't any in the last batch, but there might be in the next."

"Right. Once we have our new ship equipped, I want to test our crew a bit on some easier targets, maybe by hitting a small Imperial target, or even raiding some of Jabba the Hutt's resources."

"What's our plan to deal with him and our bounties?" Miru asked. "I don't mind having money on my head... well, I do, but I don't plan on leaving the ship anywhere that could be a problem."

"Killing him would probably work," I admitted but shook my head. "But he isn't exactly an easy target. We can spitball some ideas, but we might just have to ignore it for a while until we are ready to deal with it, which would hopefully be after we raid another CIS spot."

We continued to discuss our options before we started looking through a few datapads, looking for a fringe Imperial world. We whittled the list down to a few options and let Racer do his thing, digging just a hair deeper than surface level to see what he could learn.

With the meeting over, Calima returned to the cockpit, Nal and Tatnia went to deal with the *Dark Blade* now that we were orbiting the moon. The plan was for Nal and Tatnia to pilot the *Blade* while Calima landed the *Chariot* on the moon. Nal and Tatnia would then land the *Blade* on the cargo pad left behind by the rebels before donning their EVA suits and walking back to the *Chariot*. Miru wanted to join them, but since we didn't have an EVA suit her size, she was going to teach the other two how to shut down the ship entirely so it didn't waste fuel.

Meanwhile, I was going to head to my room and work on my magic. It had been a long while since I had any free time to learn a spell, and while I didn't have enough time now, I wanted to look through what I could learn and plan my next spell.

I sat down in the chair that was technically for the computer in my room and summoned my grimoire, cracking it open and almost immediately dropping it when I realized there was a *lot* of new stuff inside. I couldn't resist the urge to jump out of my chair and shout out in excitement. Not only did the section on Adept spells unlock, but there were several additions for other bits for me to learn.

That included an "upgraded" form of the Clairvoyance spell.

I quickly started reading through the new additions, pulling out my datapad so I could make a list of everything. I immediately realized that the Adept class of spells was the largest of the three levels I had access to by far. I didn't exactly count, but at a glance, it looked to be almost as many spells as the novice and apprentice levels had, *combined*. This was massively exciting, especially considering how interesting the spells looked, but I tempered myself when I remembered that an Apprentice-level spell took around seven hours to learn, give or take an hour. That meant that I could expect the Adept spells, which had three matrices in each one, were going to take around eleven to thirteen hours.

I would have to dedicate an entire day to nonstop matrix tuning if I wanted to learn a spell with any sort of consistency. I might be able to stumble through taking a break, but judging from past experiences, trying to break the spell up into multiple sessions would be near impossible.

Promising myself to go through the spells in more detail when I was done, I started going through the smaller additions, the real-life equivalencies of perks from the game. The first I read through was the clairvoyance upgrade, something I had been attempting to brute force for a while. I skimmed through it for now, but from what I could tell, it was a way to focus the spell to make up for being less familiar with whatever you were searching for, which was exactly what I wanted. When I got around to learning it, a whole new world of options would open up for me and the crew.

Dismissing the daydreams about some of the treasures that awaited us, I focused on the rest of the additions, skimming through the grimoire, making notes as I went. Almost all branches had additional tips for making my spell casting more efficient or more impactful, similar to what I had previously done for my shock spells. By the looks of things, almost my entire arsenal was covered in some way.

At the end of the Restoration section was some sort of skill called Recovery, which was basically a method of circulating your magic to temper your magic core, making your mana regenerate faster. It would create a significant boost, so understandably it went to the top of my list of things I wanted to learn. Right above that on my list was a method of making my conjured weapons a lot more dangerous, and make *everything* I conjure easier to maintain.

I kept reading and adding to my list, eventually starting to go through the new spells, getting more and more excited about my options. The transmutation spell was interesting, but the description made it clear that there was no way for me to take advantage of the game-breaking money trick from the games. While turning the pages away from the spell, I idly wondered if that was something that the entities had modified to keep me from basically printing credits. I decided it didn't matter because with the upgraded clairvoyant spell, money was going to quickly become a much smaller issue.

As I skimmed through the book, new healing spells, more conjured weapons, more conjured constructs, and more destruction spells, all got added to the list. When I was finally

done going through every new entry into my grimoire, I realized that time had just become my new enemy. I now had an incredible amount of stuff that I wanted to learn on top of the missions and projects that the crew would be attempting.

On top of all that, I could now finally learn the spell that had prevented me from starting to enchant things, namely the Create Soul Gem spell. So far, I had ignored the Soul Trap spell because I didn't have any soul gems, but with this new spell that could finally change. Unfortunately, instead of being a way to just conjure a soul gem from nowhere, it was the spell you cast on a crystal or gem to turn it *into* a soul gem. It was also how I would know if a material could be a soul gem in the first place, as the casting would fail if the crystal wasn't compatible.

"Guess I need to add "various gems" to the next shopping list," I mumbled to myself, shaking my head before diving back into my grimoire.

I had a lot to do and not so much time to do it in.