

Once we had a chance to "recover" from our mission, I reached out to the shipyards of Mon Cal. Thankfully, in the process of upgrading and modernizing the *Hope*, I was given direct contact information with the leaders of Mon Cal's production. I didn't exactly have the king on speed dial, but I could talk to people high up enough that discussing using a few ship berths didn't require multiple steps up the chain.

Unfortunately, as I had predicted while discussing the process previously, the shipyards were obviously still dedicated to the Rebellion and their own interests. That meant they weren't about to give away anything for free, and I needed to give them a reason to pick my ships over theirs. Luckily, I had plenty of items we could shift around to quell any complaints about me jumping the queue.

After some negotiation, I essentially sold them a few modified freighters we got from various pirates and slavers, as well as thirty-six starfighters. The starfighters were from a wide variety of missions, and, like the freighters, were listed in our public sales locations. It was not an insignificant hit to our inventory, but unfortunately, it was necessary to grease the wheels. I also traded the *Moon Rise*, 4th Groups [Guardian-class light cruiser](#). The ship was way too small to be useful at the scale we were rising up to, so I didn't feel bad selling it off, especially since I already had a replacement ship ready and waiting, *and* there was already quite a bit of restructuring planned in the future.

The entire process really just reconfirmed that one of the things we still needed the most was infrastructure. We desperately needed things like shipyards and repair bays for larger ships. I don't know if we would be dipping our toes into large-scale starship production any time soon, but being able to bring our larger gains up to par on our own, without having to bribe the Rebellion, on top of paying, was something we desperately needed.

It was about six days after we returned from our large-scale mission that the *Gladiator* and the *Vindicator* were sent to Mon Cal for their overhauls. Traveling on both ships were seven members of Clan Galti, forty-eight members of Commander Frost's group, and one hundred and thirteen civilians and new hires. As we had done with the *Hope*, these people would learn the ins and outs of the ship firsthand, so when they returned, they would have a solid understanding of their new positions, whether in engineering or another crew role.

When the modifications were complete, each ship would likely still need another hundred crew members each, as well as a massive team of droids to pilot and maintain it properly.

Luckily, the modification process was scheduled to take at least a month, which gave us time to build and prepare, as well as to slowly hire people for these new crews. Thankfully, our construction teams were up to the task, as they were already a well-oiled, well-funded, well-staffed, and well-outfitted machine. Unfortunately, building homes was not our only issue; we still needed to worry about other bits of infrastructure, like food and other production. We needed to put a good chunk of money into once again growing our self-sufficiency and production capabilities.

The problem was that investing that much money was going to cause a significant cash flow issue. Converting the two ex-imperial ships into usable assets was already costing us four and a half million credits each to modify and update, not to mention the million being spent on the two Arquitens. Thankfully, the latter were being updated in-house, saving us a good chunk of credits.

The only reason I wasn't panicking was that, for one thing, we had saved up a considerable amount of money. Our previous efforts to keep Nirn and the Skyforged self-sufficient, along with the work of our brilliant merchants and brokers, meant we were doing pretty well in the credits department.

On top of that, we weren't restricted to holding back on missions while things were in flux. The groups were a little confusing, since at this point we were just waiting for the return of our larger ships to reorganize the Skyforged Vanguard almost completely, but we made it work. The group structure had worked for a while, but at the size we were, it was time to start mixing things up and preparing our teams for larger targets. We wouldn't always be going for large targets, but I wanted us to be ready for them.

Everyone was doing their part, even my crew, as we continued to go on simple missions, clearing slavers, raiders, and pirates from all over the Outer Rim. There weren't any major large-scale assets found, but what we did find, we sold to the Rebellion immediately. On top of that, our starfighter yards were soon restocked, as was our selection of freighters. Altogether, the Skyforged went on just over a dozen missions, each one earning a good chunk of change for the Skyforged Vanguard. W

Of course, most of the money we earned was invested right back into several projects, the biggest of which was our infrastructure, like food production. I also pulled Miru aside and gave her a specific task, to finally find a way to produce our own explosive devices, something that could completely replace [proton torpedoes](#). We needed a reliable device with comparable power levels, built from things we either already had access to.

Rather than having it be a background project, I asked Miru to please focus on the task, as we were already feeling the effects of overusing our torpedoes after the last few missions. They were expensive devices, and restocking them was a significant drain on our bank account. The genius Twi'lek girl agreed, spending a few days settling her other project before getting to work. She reportedly already had a few leads and was hoping to start running some tests soon.

About three weeks after our ships were sent to Mon Cal, several of our projects started to bear fruit. Despite our initial struggle to keep our people fed without spending vast amounts of credits on off-world support, we were definitely managing to do so. We made a few large purchases of automated farming equipment and started integrating it into the process. However, that was not where our recent success was coming from. Somehow, we had managed to miss a large natural food source that was plentiful enough that harvesting it added a major staple to our growing food infrastructure.

Fish.

We start fishing.

Only a few days after our ships were sent off, one of the Mandalorians that Sabine recruited managed to snag my attention after a debriefing. They had heard we had a small quasi settlement on an island in one of Nirn's larger oceans, and they wanted to know if they could visit to do some ocean fishing. I stared at them for so long, my mind locked at a complete standstill, that Ezra noticed from across the room and came over to see if I was okay.

How it took so long for us to realize that the large oceans on our planet were teeming with life, I do not know, but the realization essentially flipped a switch, changing a large portion of our food production capabilities almost overnight.

Previously, a certain portion of our meat came from hunting, and the rest came from trade or domestic animals. The problem was that it's almost impossible to feed a large city on hunting, as you quickly drain the local population, and raising domestic animals takes a lot of space and resources. One pound of meat takes an incredible amount of food to raise, food that in some cases could have been eaten by people in the first place.

Fish and other ocean-dwelling species, on the other hand, are generally much more numerous and faster at reproducing, meaning that, as long as we are careful, we could partially feed a city on fish.

Almost overnight, a burgeoning seafood industry exploded, introducing several native species of clams, crustaceans, fish, and even sea plants to the Vercopa food market. Of course, as I was determined to keep our presence on Nirn from harming the planet, I immediately hired a Quarren specialist in ocean conservation to monitor and enforce healthy fishing practices and regulations. Having grown up on the East Coast, within spitting distance of Gloucester, I knew how badly overfishing could affect an area, both its people and its land.

Perhaps the most surprising development was the few people who went hunting for the ocean dwellers, the ones that hounded Amescoll and his padawans while they were stranded. Apparently, its leather was making several clothes designers rather excited, and while its meat was too harsh and dense for humans, it was perfect for several of our carnivorous citizens. Not only was it popular for our people, but our merchant experts expected it would sell well to those species abroad, as would several of our seafood options.

I was keeping outside sales of our food to a minimum, trying to bolster the internal industry, focusing on supplying our people with food, rather than profiting from outside sales. That might change slightly in the future, but for now, our own infrastructure was more important.

The sudden blossoming of a whole new industry did require a small hiring spree from several worlds with plentiful water, but luckily, we were already in an expanding stage. We ended up using some of our older emergency shelters to set up a small settlement along the closest ocean, connected by frequent transport runs. It was essentially a test run for a more permanent settlement, though with some rather impressive security, as we were concerned about the ocean dwellers possibly making an appearance there. It was unlikely that they would appear, as we saw no evidence of them beforehand, but better safe than sorry.

The settlement already had a population of fifty, with some people moving back and forth as they worked in two or three-day-long shifts before returning to Vercopa. Others had happily moved in permanently, eager to be the first on the ground for what was already looking to be a growing part of our infrastructure.

The new influx of food, including varieties of edible plant life, couldn't have come at a better time, as our hiring spree continued. We had seven ships to crew, not to mention at least four more squadrons of starfighters to fill. We were good on ground teams, but considering four of our seven new starships were over 230 meters long, we had a lot of spots to fill. This meant that when I wasn't out on missions, I was enchanting and scanning new members for their honesty.

In fact, I enchanted so much that my massive stock of filled soul gems finally ran out, and I was forced to finally restock. Previously, I had gotten my Kyber crystals, which I would convert into soul gems, from Dantooine. When I was first starting to enchant, I had taken a small batch of Kyber from the [Crystal Cave](#), then later at a second location I found by scanning the planet. I could have certainly attempted that again, but at this point, I had taken enough from the planet. Dantooine had some significance to the Jedi, so stripping it bare, even if I left the Crystal Caves alone, felt wrong.

Instead, I led a small mission to the [Fyrth System](#), where a specific Kyber crystal called [Opila](#) could be found. It was mostly mined during the Old Republic from various large asteroid fields in the system, but seemed to have been mostly forgotten about over the thousands of years since then. Luckily, I remembered it pretty vividly from the KOTOR games, as it was one of the more powerful modifiers you could add to your lightsaber.

During the Old Republic era, finding Opila was difficult, but for me, it was as simple as using Clairvoyance as we flew slowly through the asteroid fields. Within a day, we had an L-2783 from the salvage fleet filled with asteroids, with dozens of droids smacking away at them, pulling out piles of the electric blue Kyber crystal.

After securing a significant amount, I went on a "hunting trip," with one of Commander Frost's ground teams. We went back to the same planet as before to kill thousands of the same, out-of-control creatures that roamed the planet by the millions.

With my stocks replenished, I could finally return to my task, which, while daunting, was not impossible. Every mission we took was another few days of enchanting as we traveled, and my downtime was spent making at least a few items a day.

About a week before the Gladiator and Vindicator were scheduled to return, Miru called a meeting to demonstrate her developments in replacement missile systems. She had several things to show off, not exactly surprising considering she had been working for three weeks, taking full advantage of her funding.

Several people, including Tatnia, a few of my captains, Commander Toggle, and myself, took a trip to the Nirn's moon, where Miru had set up a demonstration. There, she showed off a few possibilities, starting with a high-powered [energy-torpedo](#) system. This was what the CIS

[Vultures](#) used, and could essentially be mounted anywhere there was space. They were slightly less potent than explosives of similar size displacement, but the fact that they one, never ran out of ammo, and two, traveled through space extremely fast was definitely a positive. Unfortunately, they only flew in a straight line, meaning they couldn't be shot off in a bombing run as the starfighter skimmed a ship, the target needed to be in front of the weapon.

She showed off a few alternate explosives, things we could mine ourselves with only minor additions, but none of them compared to the power of a proton torpedo. In the end, it was her own design that impressed us the most.

She claimed the idea came from the process used to generate an energy torpedo. But rather than creating the projectile in the starship, the missile payload was a plasma generator designed to fire exactly once. By combining that detonation with a tube of compressed high-energy gas, the energy of the plasma explosion was magnified several times, resulting in an explosive yield only slightly less powerful than a proton torpedo at an absolute *fraction* of the cost. Better yet, we could supply the necessary gas ourselves and produce most of the unit in-house, further driving down costs.

After watching several test fires of the missile system, tentatively called a plasma dart due to its shape, annihilate some old scrap armor plating, we decided to give it a shot. Miru agreed to make a small batch for live fire testing, and if it worked well, we would start working out a production plan for them.

As the day of the Gladiator and Vindicator's return approached, I called a halt to outgoing missions. We had major plans for restructuring, something that would be much less confusing if we had everyone around to share their opinions and input. Rather than just waiting, we used it as a sort of holiday, one to celebrate our growth and development as a group, both Nirn and the Skyforged.

My crew and I celebrated with our own party, with the group coming to our home for a barbecue of sorts. I kept it pretty simple, but Nal happily took a crack at cooking some of the new crab-like crustaceans that were becoming *very* popular.