

The trip back to Nirn was uneventful, and I spent most of it catching up with enchanting and spending some time with Ahsoka. We had taken to sparring most mornings, at least when we could, and with a day basically just waiting to arrive at our destination, we spent some extra time relaxing on the couch.

When we finally stopped at the security checkpoint, which at this point had grown considerably since we first established it as a legitimate point in deep space, rather than just a random, arbitrary point where we would stop and kick the proverbial tires. Most of it was sensory drones, the kind used to scan cargo ships and the like for illegal goods. They were incredibly expensive, but well worth the cost.

Combined with internal scanning equipment, they could get a pretty thorough view of what was going on with a ship, and could easily detect hull auditions like trackers. Meanwhile, our internal scanners were responsible for finding anything on board. We basically handed out hand scanners to a significant chunk of the crew and broke the ship down into quadrants. The bigger the starship, the more scanners we handed out. Again, costly, but worth the investment.

Returning to Nirn, as always, was a refreshing moment. We handed off the black box and data core before I went off and did my usual rounds, spending several hours catching up and going over what I missed. This time around, beyond the usual slow growth, we had received several shipments of salvage from the various places we had visited while looking for Separatist records and intelligence. While we had only found what we wanted at our last stop, we had found a good chunk of semi-used and broken but recoverable assets. Most of it was only suitable for parts, but even that was plenty useful.

When my rounds were over, I settled in to spend a few days unwinding and working on magic, when we got a message from Cal, looking to meet up with us to discuss moving his people to Nirn. They asked to meet on neutral ground, somewhere safe, where we could meet some of the people with him. They wanted to talk about what Nirn and the Skyforged were all about before they made their final decision.

Ordinarily, such a suggestion would make me worry about an ambush. However, when I recommended we meet inside the no-man's-land that surrounded the [Hapes Consortium](#), they readily agreed. The Empire couldn't really go into that area without provoking the local government, and Hapes forces didn't frequent it because it wasn't technically theirs.

I also had the first half of the 3rd Group as backup, just in case.

We left not long after Cal reached out to us, with Amescoll coming along for the ride, which was thankfully uneventful. Even better, when we arrived, there was no ambush waiting for us. It did, however, seem that Cal and his people were going all in, as when the 1st group landed, we spotted a grouping of around a dozen ships already on the ground. It was a variety of freighters and transports, all in functional but not fantastic condition, with obvious temporary repairs visible on their hulls. I spotted the ship we gave Cal among them, parked beside [a ship I didn't](#) recognize.

As we came down for a landing, a handful of people emerged from both ships, stopping just ahead of them.

"Okay, let's not throw them off by all coming out at once," I said, stepping out of the bridge once we touched down. "Ahsoka, Tatnia, Amescoll, you're with me. Everyone else, just sit tight and relax."

I got several nods, everyone spreading out to wait. Those I called out were already ready to go, dressed in our [uniforms](#) rather than our armor, while Amescoll was dressed in the new standard Nirm [Jedi attire](#), though his undershirt was maroon, a color that he confessed was his wife's favorite.

We descended the *Chariot's* boarding ramp at the same time that Corvak and his second and command stepped out of the *Loyal Hound*. Together, we approached the waiting quartet calmly. Well, we were calm until people started recognizing each other.

Two of the people with Cal rushed forward as we approached, mirroring Amescoll, the older Jedi, raising his hands and shouting happily. Ahsoka followed Amescoll, shaking hands and trading hugs with smiles and laughs. Meanwhile, I stepped forward to shake hands with Cal.

"This makes all the effort worth it," I said, watching as old friends and acquaintances met for the first time in twenty years. "Bringing your people back together like this is worth every credit and moment we spend to make it happen."

"Cordova and Cere were ecstatic to hear that Amescoll was alive," Cal admitted. "He was a popular member of the Order, though he was still a knight at the end."

"Wouldn't surprise me if that was on purpose," I said with a smirk. "He was happy to foist leadership onto me and others the second he could."

Cal and I shared a chuckle, before I turned to his female companion. Her skin was white with black tattoos marking her face, with short silver hair and brown eyes. Her skin was clear, as was the whites of her eyes.

"Oh, right, sorry," Cal said, gesturing to the woman. "This is [Merrin](#). She is my fiancé and-

"Capable of introducing herself," She finished, though her words didn't hold an edge, rather a lilt of affection. "It's good to meet you."

She spoke in what to me sounded like a Russian accent, reaching out to shake my hand. I happily accepted with a nod and a smile.

"And good to meet you as well," I responded. "I'm glad you all decided to at least hear us out."

"We have been running for a very long time," Merrin said, Cal nodding in agreement. "An offer for safe haven is hard to ignore. I am concerned, however, if the offer will extend to all of us."

"I would welcome anyone who is not a danger to my people," I assured her. "Why? Are there people here with bad reputations?"

"I am a Dathomiri Witch, a Nightsister. One of three surviving witches of the Separatist purge of Dathomir. At least, that we have managed to find so far."

I stared at the pale-skinned woman for a long moment, several puzzle pieces clicking into place. I nodded, now understanding why her tattoos and skin color had been tugging at my mind.

Dathomir and its people, specifically the Nightsisters, were an interesting topic, especially in this amalgam universe. The Legends and Canon versions of the planet and its people were *very* different, meaning that I had no way of knowing what version, or what combination of the two, was real. Thankfully, after realizing that the "modern" Mandalorians leaned hard into the Disney TV show, I had done a bit of research on other possible conflicts.

Information on Nightsisters was unsurprisingly scarce, but I was able to learn a few things and infer a few others from my existing knowledge. Plus, Ahsoka knew a bit about them, though I took her words with a grain of salt, since most of what she learned would have been through the lens of the Order.

For one, in Legends, Nightsisters were a specific tribe of Dathomiri witches who used the dark side, while normal witches did not. Here, Nightsisters were the blanket term for all Dathomiri who could tap into the ritualistic, magic-esque Force system. Most large Dathomiri tribes had a few, and while they were loyal to their tribespeople, they also had an overarching loyalty to the Nightsister Coven and Dathomir.

In this amalgam universe, most Nightsisters could be considered grey Force users, and the dark side users were accepted as long as they followed the laws, though many didn't.

"As long as you and your people resist the temptation of the dark side and remain grey, I have no issue with you joining us on Nirn," I assured her. "And, judging by your eyes, it seems that you have at least been resisting the dark recently."

Her eyes went wide, surprised by my agreement to allow her on the planet and by the knowledge of her people.

"What does he mean?" Cal asked, looking at his fiancé with a raised eyebrow. "What about your eyes?"

"A... A clear sign that a witch has fallen to the dark is the darkness and blood that spreads through their eyes and marks their face," Merrin explained, reaching up to touch her cheek, just under her orbital socket. "I... You remember when we first met, the blood that

colored my eyes? Resurrecting my sisters... it was darkness that I should not have indulged in, and it marked me."

She turned to focus on me.

"My living sisters have not indulged as I have, I will leave so they may be safe," She said without hesitation, while Cal's eyes went wide and he opened his mouth to refute her words.

I raised my hand to hold off Cal, and by some miracle, he stopped, seeming just as surprised by that as I internally was.

"Why did you fall?" I asked seriously. I had no idea what her history was, and while I was forgiving of people who were tempted by the dark side, there were lines that, once crossed, I could not allow on Nirn.

"My people were slaughtered by the Separatists during the Clone Wars," She explained, not backing down for a moment. "Some of our tribes people managed to hide or escape, but many did not. All but a few of my sisters were slaughtered. It broke me."

"There was a Jedi, [Malicos](#)," Cal added. "He fell to the dark side and whispered into her ear as well."

"Did you kill the innocent?" I asked, watching her face carefully.

"No."

"Then, as long as you stay clean, I have no issue with you joining us," I assured her, confident that I could confirm she was being honest with my magic later. "Everyone who does will have to go through the same process that all of our guests and new members must, of course, but I don't think that will be an issue."

For a moment, Merrin was silent, before she gave me a shallow bow.

"Thank you. I promise to remain strong against the temptation of the dark side," She said. "I have gained a new appreciation for its dangers."

"Nobody is perfect, and being Force sensitive makes an already difficult balance even harder," I responded with what I hoped was a reassuring smile. "All we can do is lend each other our strength and support."

Both Cal and Merrin nodded thoughtfully. After a moment, I could see curiosity flicker behind Merrin's eyes.

"Cal mentioned the process of gaining entry to your Nirn, and your use of magic," Merrin said when she could hold back anymore. "I would be very interested in seeing that magic for myself."

"And I would love to see some of your Nightsister magic," I admitted. "I highly doubt they are in any way related, considering mine has no connection to the Force, but I've always thought the Jedi were criminally limited in their use of the Force."

That caught them both off guard, and I could hear the group behind me starting to pay attention to what we were talking about. I turned to see Ahsoka rolling her eyes and Amescoll faintly nod, both of them knowing exactly what my opinions were by now. Behind me, to the other side, was Tatnia, Corvak, and his second in command, likely waiting to be introduced.

"I'm not advocating anything dark, like Sith Alchemy," I assured them. "But the teachings of the Fallanassi, as well as techniques like Ionize, Force Judgment, and Tutaminis, were rarely taught. These are abilities openly available to those who follow the light side of the Force. Not using them is like... refusing a gift from someone you clearly trust."

My point seemed to get through to the other two Jedi, at least enough to keep them from arguing. Cal stepped forward and gestured to the two who had embraced Amescoll.

"Deacon, this is [Master Cordova](#) and [Cere Junda](#), fellow Jedi and mentors." He explained. "This is Deacon, the leader of the Skyforged Vanguard. He is the one who kept me from getting ambushed by the Empire."

"It's good to meet both of you," I said, stepping forward to shake their hands. "We were happy to help, especially since it seems like they were trying to trap us. Besides, Amescoll is just as responsible for your rescue as I was. It was his vision that chimed us into the issue."

"Thank you for keeping Cal out of trouble. He has a tendency to find it no matter where he goes," Cere Junda said with an affectionate smile. "I should also thank you for your offer. Our last home on Jehda was lost to the Empire. We barely escaped with our lives."

As she spoke, she shifted her side slightly, and I realized that her left arm was missing just beyond the shoulder. The wound was obviously old, as she didn't seem to be in any pain, but it was still startling.

"Darth Vader himself attacked us, destroying it and the archives we were attempting to restore," she explained, shaking her head. "It seems like ever since then, we have been on our back foot."

"We have managed to gather a few dozen holocrons back home," Ahsoka revealed. "They might be able to help restore some of that data."

"Where did you get those?" Cordova asked, suddenly very curious. "One or two is understandable, but so many?"

"We robbed Grakkus the Hutt," I explained with a smirk. "And then later, while gathering another group of Jedi, we found a stash of treasure dating back to the Light Lords. There were a few holocrons and Jedi texts there as well."

"Fascinating. Grakkus was always a terrible pain for the Order, I can only imagine he grew more troublesome after it fell," Cordova responded, shaking his head. "As for the Light Lords... I would very much like to see those texts."

"We can make that happen," I said with a smile. "But before we get too distracted, perhaps we could sit down and talk. I understand that you are considering joining, but you have yet to reach a final conclusion."

"We are very interested," Cal said. "There are just some things we need to clear up."

"Well, then let's talk," I said. "We have the stuff to set up some tables on board the Chariot. We have a plethora of fresh food, drinks, and produce from Nirn. We can talk over a proper meal. It's sort of a... growing tradition of the Nirn and the Skyforged. Sharing food and drink with friends creates close bonds, after all."

The idea seemed to surprise them, but between my enthusiasm and the promise of food that wasn't cheap rations, I was easy to convince them. With some help from a few labor droids and our crews, we quickly set up nearly a dozen large tables and several portable cook tops. Within an hour, the area around us smelled like barbecue, and I could see people from Cal's side of the area starting to poke their heads out, their curiosity getting the better of them.

Eventually, they couldn't be held back anymore, and both Cere and Cal called them out. More than three dozen people made their way out of the ships, ages ranging from late seventies to a handful of early teens. Some wore Jedi robes, but most wore casual civilian clothes.

A few of the older people made their way to the same table that we were sitting at, clearly interested in talking to us. Meanwhile, my people, including the crews of the starships, all spread out, meeting and talking to people.

While it was clear people were very curious to ask us questions about Nirn, the Jedi, and the Skyforged, the sight of freshly cooked real food was clearly distracting them. However, I wasn't overly concerned, we had plenty of time to talk business when everyone was full.