

I spent the next few hours talking to, interviewing, and interrogating the remaining potential candidates. At the end, none of them impressed me as much as Nuk and Li had. That said, we did end up bringing two of the others in as managers. They would be working under the two siblings, but would get significant roles as they did. Both of the other Mon Calamari agreed, which was fantastic because the wider we could spread the understanding of this new project, the better.

After telling the small group of Mon Calamari that we would be happy to have them on board, they left to return to the surface of Dac to secure their belongings and ship them to us. We even loaned them a few transports and labor droids to help speed up the process. Luckily, all of them were relatively young, and, aside from a few crates of sentimental things, they did not have an awful lot to bring with them. Or, at least they didn't have much they weren't willing to pass off or sell quickly. Within a day, they were all on board, and we were on our way back to Nirn.

Of course, during that time, I continued to work with Mara, training her in swordsmanship and helping her learn another spell, Conjure Dagger. We selected that one because she finally settled on her main sword style, which was a sword and dagger style like mine, though not exactly the same. She had been enamored by the throwing dagger concept, so much so that her daggers were smaller and more suited for throwing than mine. She was happy to include that concept in her fighting style, while I tended to use my dagger more as a sharp shield than a throwable weapon.

Though the discovery that I could detonate a thrown dagger might actually change that.

I also spent a day after we left Dac teaching her the lower levels of the mana-rotating meditation technique. It had been a while since I did it, seeing as I was far past the point that it did me any good, but it was vital for growing your mana in the early stages.

I made a mental note to look into developing another meditation technique of my own, one that would actually help someone of my power level. I didn't have the foggiest idea of how that would work, but it was too useful a concept not to investigate. With any luck, I would stumble onto something I could teach others, so if anyone ever reached my level, they wouldn't suddenly stagnate. Not to mention that I didn't want to stagnate.

Mara managed to lock down the meditation technique while we were waiting at the security checkpoint, which was good because I would likely be busy for a while once we arrived on Nirn. Now that we had secured our experts and Miru had returned from the hidden CIS shipyard, it was time to get serious about planning the facility. Yes, this was just the first stage, but I wanted to be there for all major planning sessions. It's not that I didn't trust my people. After all, they were all skilled and eager to do the best they could for Nirn and for the Skyforged, but my out-of-context thinking had been useful before, and I wanted to be there to pitch in if I noticed anything.

When we arrived at Nirn, I immediately worked to get our new members settled. The four individuals were given a pair of airspeeders to share and homes at Port Green, which they

greatly appreciated. They were already making plans to modify their homes to include underwater basements. Unfortunately, that would have to wait, as everyone was eager to get started on the project.

When we finally had a meeting, a day after we arrived back on Nirn, it was a full house. Zax, the representative and leader of our building teams, Miru, the head and second in command of our engineering, Orbor, Miru's second in command and leader of the ship repair teams, the newly hired Li and Nuk, their underlings, Quartermaster Finder, Sheora, as well as everyone's assistants and second in command, all showed up to the meeting. Mara was there as well, as was Tatnia, though the former was just shadowing me, sort of just hovering behind me. She was taking her apprenticeship seriously, obviously drawing inspiration from what the Master-Padawan relationship was like.

"We've reviewed your general concept," Nuk said, his webbed hand touching a large drafting datapad.

"Your ideas are sound," Li continued. "Using an old quarry will save us building time."

"However, we question your scale. Perhaps there is something I do not know..." Nuk said, doing his best to be polite while still voicing his opinions. "Why settle for a smaller yard?"

"Resources mostly," I said with a frown. "Our operation is limited. We are already betting on a future operation being successful to get this done without delaying it."

"Understandable," Li responded with a nod. "However, you already own all the equipment for clearing the stone. Increasing the size is the easy part."

"Further, a four-hundred-meter shipyard is... restrictive," Nuk added. "You would likely only be able to work on vessels under three hundred and fifty meters."

"likely smaller," Li continued. "We would recommend going substantially bigger."

"How much would increasing the size cost overall?" Quartermaster Finder asked, sharing a glance with me.

"Around... twenty percent," Li answered, large eyes shifting as she concentrated. "I predict the final bill to be around forty-five million credits."

I frowned, doing the mental math in my head. We could likely afford that, as long as our big crimelord raid went well, but it was still a massive project, certainly the largest we had ever attempted on our own by a fair amount. It would likely hold that title for quite some time as well.

We continued discussing the design, specifically how large the yard should be, and what sort of things we should include. Eventually, we arrived at a final, vague, overall structure. We would be going with the larger design: an eight-hundred-meter-long, four-hundred-meter-wide shipyard. We would also install the groundwork for a starfighter production facility adjacent to the large structure, so that what we had on the *Boxi's Fury* could be moved down to the planet's surface. I wasn't ecstatic about moving more building stuff to Nirn, but I preferred it quite a bit to

having the same infrastructure on the massive warship. The quicker we cleared the *Fury* of the various production processes it held, the quicker we could start using it for military purposes again.

Once we were finished with the meeting, Li, Nuk, and Miru went off to discuss their plans for automation, while the rest of us broke up to go on to our own business for a while. At the moment, my biggest focus was the approaching city party, or more specifically, the hidden reason for said party. Once we had a group of people ready, I would start making more mages, start training them, and reveal the project to the citizens.

Eventually, later that day, we took a trip to visit the quarry. Li, Nuk, and Miru wanted to go because they wanted to get a better feel for the location before they started to make real, final designs. Tatnia, Ahsoka, and myself, on the other hand, just wanted to check in and see more of Nirn. I had done an unfortunately small amount of exploring on the planet, something I was determined to change. I still wanted to set up an official, systematic, and comprehensive exploration of the ancient Jedi city that Amescoll and his kids had been stuck on, not to mention a serious survey of available resources on the planet. I had no intention of setting up a large-scale mining operation for mundane materials, but if there happened to be something valuable, like electrum or platinum, or god help us, an aurodium deposit, I wanted to know.

Not to mention that I still had a nagging thought that this planet *had* to have some sort of Kyber crystal deposit somewhere. Maybe that was my narrative instincts telling me that, but the ingredients were all there. A planet, steeped in the Force, with rich history, varied biomes, and active geology. Nirn was a lot like Earth in that regard, with its highly varied biomes. It had everything from volcanic islands, snow-covered polar caps, deserts, the whole gamut, really.

Even if this imagined Kyber crystal deposit didn't exist, exploring the planet more was high on my to-do list, so heading off to see what was once a black stone quarry sounded at least interesting.

The site was big, the pit looking considerably deeper than I would have imagined, with dozens of excavation machines working to spread and open it further. The stone was being hauled away by the literal ton, and while I could see it was slowing down the excavation process to take it away in such large, useful chunks, the black stone was a popular construction material, so it was likely worth it.

According to Zax, we already had people looking for a new quarry site, since this one was being converted and the stone we were extracting would eventually run out.

Our visit ended after a brief tour, though Nuk, Li, and Miru stayed behind to discuss designs again. Meanwhile, we headed back to Vercopa to continue preparing for the city-wide event, as we only had a single day before it was scheduled.

When it finally rolled around, a good amount of the city closed down for the day, though restaurants and other shops stayed open. We dropped a good chunk of credits to subsidize food all across the city for the day, letting people experience the many amazing options and flavors of

the city, without breaking the bank. The people seemed to love it when we did it last time, so we did it at a much larger scale this time.

While the celebration was happening, Mara, Ahsoka, Amescoll, I, and quite a few other people were much more focused on the ship tours. We had dozens of people watching the crowd, scanning for people who would make good candidates and who showed no signs of being affected by the anti-Force field. Well, most of us were doing that. Amescoll, on the other hand, had a different task.

So far, no one had quite connected the dots that if the ysalamiri could be used to see people who didn't have a connection with the Force, they could likely be used in reverse. Amescoll, who knew the concept because we had already discussed it, was watching out in the crowd for anyone who was extremely affected by the field. They would go on a modest list of people to meet and potentially recruit to the Jedi, but not within at least a few weeks, to put as much distance as possible between the event and the recruitment pitch.

Despite more or less working for most of the day, the event was pretty fun. We swapped in frequently to let people explore and enjoy the event, which was not just food and ship tours, but also included other shows and even a homegrown band.

While I was stationed by the ships, keeping an eye on the crowds, it was a bit interesting to watch how people reacted to the field. The most common reaction was pretty simple. People would step into the field and look around in confusion, before shrugging and continuing on, as if a breeze had brushed past their neck and spooked them slightly. That was a good thirty, maybe even forty percent of the population. A good twenty to twenty-five percent of the population had even less of a reaction, and absentmindedly brushed the back of their neck, or otherwise shook it off easily, as if something small and barely noticeable had landed on them.

Another ten percent reacted more strongly, looking around nervously, sometimes reaching out to people nearby. Those, and the less than two percent who stumbled, looked lost and uncertain, like something had gone terribly wrong, are the people the unarmed clone troopers helped guide away. They explained that the pollen from the trees inside the *Quiet Ark* affected some people in strange ways, but assured them there was nothing to worry about.

I considered blaming something like the sun or heat, but our species base was far too wide, and I didn't want to run into a species that wasn't affected by those things as humans were.

The remaining twenty percent of the visitors had no reaction at all, stepping into the field with absolutely no change in demeanor. They were the ones we were going to be choosing from.

At the end of the day, we had a list of around two hundred potential candidates. These people ranged from nurses and farmers to Mandalorian civilians and members of the Skyforged. On top of that, all of the clones, both soldiers, ship crew, and those who had taken civilian roles were also on the list. Technically, the clone pilots were also on the list, but given their jobs, it

would likely be a while before I selected any of them. There just wasn't a lot of good that actively cast magic could do in a cockpit, especially compared to other roles.

Ultimately, that was plenty of people for us to start off with, and it would likely be months, maybe a year, before we would even need to think about updating the selection. At that point we could be more active and honest with the process.

All that was left was to select the best candidates for the first and second rounds, as the candidates for the second would serve as backup options for the first, in case some of them declined the gift. Though, honestly, before I asked my crew if they wanted to be magic users, I wouldn't have even considered the possibility of people saying no. To me, who in their right mind wouldn't want to learn magic? Clearly, it wasn't as clean-cut as I thought, but I respected my crew's choices.

Before we could start reaching out to people and making offers, Sheora reached out to me with information. Our tentative target for the next crime lord heist, the bastard who had killed Vaz's father and had her sent to the hellhole prison we broke out of, was apparently a perfect target. She had a bunch of information to share, which meant it was time to start planning our next heist.

The crew and I, along with Corvak and a few of the 1st Fleet's captains, headed to the *Fury* for a meeting. Hopefully, Sheora would be able to shed a little light on who Vaz's mysterious crime lord was, what he was doing, and just how hard he would be to kill.

Making a crap load of money off of him in the process would just be a bonus.