

Despite our effort to land in a hangar that was less populated than the others, we still immediately ran into resistance. Not enough to stop us, of course, we were too well armed and armored for that, but enough to slow us down, which was exactly the opposite of what we wanted. The whole reason for blitzing in was to get to the slave holding before the slavers got any stupid ideas. That meant being slowed down was unacceptable.

Thankfully, I did have a solution to that.

Once we had cleared the hangar, Vaz and Nal held the entrance, while I grabbed one of the surviving slavers and interrogated them. They did not resist my truth spell in the slightest, so I was able to threaten and cajole them into revealing where the slaves were being kept, which was on the opposite side of the base. They didn't want them to escape and immediately have access to their ships, after all.

Rather than carve our way through the slavers, giving them plenty of time to fuck around, Tatnia led the team, minus Ahsoka, Mara, and myself across the base, stirring up trouble and keeping them busy. Meanwhile, I cast Mass Invisibility, which allowed me to snag Ahsoka and Mara inside the spell's effects. In an instant, all three of us vanished from sight.

For this many people, I would be able to hold the spell pretty much indefinitely, which was why we were splitting up. Any larger of a group would start to really drain my mana, making the whole concept moot.

Once the spell was cast, the rest of the team pushed out of the hangar, grabbing as much attention as they could. That left us free to sneak out after them, heading in the opposite direction, making a beeline for the prison section.

As we moved, we carefully passed a few running slavers, some heading to the fight, others running away. Thankfully, we were able to navigate the old mining base stealthily, which was much harder than one might assume. It was pretty easy to get overconfident in your stealth while invisible, but the truth was that with so many alien species around, you never knew when someone might be able to locate you through sound or smell where you are.

Plus, personal stealth fields were a known variable, though extremely rare, expensive, and restricted. A random door opening on its own was not usually blamed on the wind.

When we finally stepped inside the first floor of the prison, we immediately locked ourselves. After that, we quickly swept through the multiple floors of cells, taking down the patrolling slavers. Seeing so many slaves, treated so poorly and suffering so obviously, might have gotten to me a bit. When we ran into the last slaver on patrol, I ended up using their forehead to make a three-inch-wide dent in the nearest wall panel.

They were [Weequay](#), so they would be fine.

After we successfully claimed the prison block, we did our best to calm down the panicking victims, who were bouncing between being hopeful that they were being rescued and defaulting to assuming the worst. It took a good few minutes, during which Corvak and his team,

along with Tatnia and the rest of the crew, took down the remaining slavers and cleared the rest of the base.

In total, it took six minutes after we arrived in orbit around the reclaimed mining outpost for all present slaver forces to be neutralized and captured. I later learned, once the kidnapped prisoners had been slowly released, checked over, and fed, that we had captured all but three of the ships in orbit, with two of the smaller ships turned into scrap. Unfortunately, because we were still in gravity when our starfighters clashed with the slaver's mixed squadron, any of them that were disabled fell down and impacted the moon's surface. Three of them surrendered, but the rest were scrap, not even worth digging out of their craters. The corvette we destroyed, which was now slowly de-orbiting, was the off-brand corvette, an acceptable loss, all things considered.

We also captured a variety of freighters and transports that were sitting in the base's hangars. Most of them had been retooled to carry captured slaves, but we could undo that pretty easily.

Of course, despite our success, we were far from done. Not only did we need to get the now-freed slaves off the planet and somewhere safe, but we also needed to wait in ambush for any returning slave deliveries. We ended up stuffing the slavers into the very cells they had put innocent people in, while the freed victims were taken care of, living in the now-cleared living space of the base.

The slaves weren't particularly happy that it was taking so long to get them off the planet, but with just over two hundred people to move around, and with four slaver ships out collecting slaves according to the base's records, they understood that it would take time, which they were okay with waiting out.

They were grateful, of course, but unsurprisingly eager to get back to their homes and lives. Many had loved ones who would obviously be distraught by their absence, so we let them use our comms systems to contact them.

We were thankfully able to commandeer a few large transport starships from our merchant sales teams, allowing us to start ferrying people to safer systems. It was happening in stages, but it was happening, and that was enough.

We were two days into the sending off process when the first slaver ship, flying a modified transport from some brand I didn't recognize, all bulky and boxy, returned to the base. It was almost immediately captured inside the *Lockdown's* gravity field, making it impossible for them to jump out and escape. They thankfully surrendered quickly, and we rescued the kidnapped people on board.

We ended up spending just short of two weeks at the base, capturing all ships that made deliveries to this slaver base, as well as sending all of the free victims home and claiming bounties on all possible slavers.

In terms of pure credits, the amount of money we gained from the mission was relatively small, no more than a hundred thousand credits. But in terms of assets, it was a considerable bounty. We would be selling almost all of the ships, as the only ones worth keeping was the CR90. Not only was it in a pretty well-maintained state, but its weapons were already upscaled. Their systems just needed some upgrading, and the ship would be ready to slot into one of the fleets, most likely 2nd Fleet.

Part of me wanted to keep the hammerhead as well, but ultimately we decided not to. The ship looked cool and was certainly iconic, but it was also on the smaller side, its engines, while powerful, were expensive to maintain, and it was also relatively underarmed.

Given how flush we were for choice when it came to starships, using subpar ones just didn't make sense.

Still a cool looking ship, though.

Once the situation had been resolved and the base was cleared, the salvage fleet moved in and began stripping it for parts. Not all of it would be useful, but considering how the production facilities on Nirn's moon were growing, having materials for expansion was a good idea, especially since these were free.

They would likely be used to expand the moon's landing and hangar systems, as well as their storage and living space.

It would take some time to fully strip the base down, but once the salvage fleet was done, they would bombard the site from orbit. They weren't massively well armed, mostly just enough to do a well-defended retreat, but they had more than enough firepower to ruin an already broken-down base, especially since it was in a vacuum.

Meanwhile, 1st Fleet returned to Nirn after passing through the usual security check. Around forty victims of the slave ring had been happy to come join us, eager for a new opportunity at a place that took something like slavery seriously, unlike the Rebellion and Republic that seemed to be happy to pretend the problem didn't exist, then take the credit when things magically worked out.

Once we arrived home, our newest members were taken in and shown the ropes, before being given a leg up to settle in. A mix of Jedi and other members handled that, thankfully, leaving me to hear about how the other raids on slaver bases had gone.

Unsurprisingly, a full fleet of large capital ships and several squadrons of starfighters were far more than any small group of slavers could handle... all of the other missions were completed without fail, but hadn't needed to stick around like we did, as they managed to catch their slave transports while they were grounded.

In total, we rescued over three hundred people in this first round of slave stomping, and we were looking forward to helping more when Karrde handed over more information.

I'll admit, part of me had forgotten how quickly our size grew as we rescued people. Our construction teams, now thankfully freed from the massive job of building our shipyard, got back to work on the city and its infrastructure. As always, they did impressive work, and with a few weeks of warning, they were able to put together two large apartment blocks. They weren't overly luxurious, but they filled the gap while they started building larger and more long-term lodgings.

At this point, the city was making a tidy sum on rent, which we then invested back into improving the city and its infrastructure. The economy of Vercopa, as well as that of Port Green, was developing nicely, aided by our heavy investment in adding services. In the background, as we worked and expanded, the city had been scouting and accepting new people who worked in trades, made art, and provided other services. A few painters were making good money painting murals on walls, while sculptors and artists were filling our parks and buildings, respectively.

The economy and the city as a whole were still young, comparatively speaking, but the growth was encouraging and steady. I was proud of what we were achieving.

Within a week of our returning to Nirn, Talon passed us the coordinates for another group of slaver bases. This time, they were all relatively small fry, small enough that 1st Fleet ran two of them successively, rather than sending each fleet out to handle one. Neither of those bases proved to be any sort of challenge, and while the profit margin was small, especially after giving a cut to the affected victims, it was more than worth it for us.

When we returned home, it was to some rather important news.

Our new ship was finished.

I had, of course, known this was coming. I had been closely following the shipyard's progress and visiting Nuk and Li often as they worked, to see our ship getting built in various stages. I had been a bit disappointed that I wouldn't be around for the day it was completed, but I was happy to at least be around for its launch, when it first left its cradle and ascended out of the atmosphere.

The day after we returned, the city threw a party, something that I was beginning to realize was a pattern. When it was smaller, we had done it several times to foster morale and help people settle in, but now the city was determined to keep up the tradition.

The celebration started in the morning and continued into the afternoon, when people gathered at the second layer of the plateau, near the memorial stone, one of the largest open areas in the city. I hadn't exactly planned to give a speech, but about five minutes before the ship was due to launch, I was convinced to get up in front of the crowd.

Thankfully, leading the Skyforged had more or less stamped out any sort of social anxiety I had about getting up in front of crowds.

"Hello everyone!" I called out, raising my hands wide and pausing to let the cheer wash over me. "Most of you already know what we are here to celebrate, but for those of you who just

wanted some cheap food and a short work day, the largest project we have taken to date has finally been completed. Several months ago, we started making plans to design and build our own shipyard, followed by designing and producing our very own capital ship."

Again, I had to pause for the cheers, as people were happy to laugh at my weak joke and whoop and cheer for our progress.

"Now, as a culmination of our hard work, the first starship is complete," I declared with a completely natural grin. "In just a few minutes, Nirn's first starship will lift from its berth and rise into space."

I made a swooping gesture with my off hand as I scanned the crowd, spotting a few familiar faces.

"Before that happens, however, I want every single one of you to know that this is only possible because of your hard work. Not just the Skyforged Vanguard, not just the shipyard workers, and not just the construction teams, though they all played a major role in making this possible. The truth is, all of us are connected in a web of support that is constantly growing. Vercopa, Port Green, the Skyforged Vanguard, the newly created Skyforged Consortium, the shipyard, our assets in orbit, the production facilities on the moon and beyond, all of them work together. None of them would be nearly as successful without all the others. And I have to say, I am very much looking forward to how we all continue to grow together!"

I let the crowd cheer and shout, surreptitiously checking a small datapad placed on the podium I was standing behind. After a few seconds, the message I was looking for popped up, and I smiled, looking back up at the crowd.

"And now, we get to see the fruits of our work! People of Nirn! I am proud to present to you, our first completely home-designed and built ship, the *Dovah*, first of the Dovah-class Heavy Cruisers!"

I gestured upwards and to the side, in the vague direction of the shipyard. For just a few seconds, just long enough for me to start to worry, nothing happened. Then, a distant rumble reached the city. The shipyard was far enough away that the initial launch was not visible, but with a little planning, a flyby was more than possible.

The [*Dovah*](#) flew across the sky, high enough that the rumble of its thrusters wasn't dangerous, but close enough that you could see most of its details. Its blocky, angular hull was painted a greyish white, with the usual purple highlights that marked all of our capital ships. It soared across the sky, then turned up and rose higher through the atmosphere before fading away into space.