

It took a moment for the Rebel leaders to recover from my offer, though it was likely the mention of thirty-five million credits that really stunned them. When they did manage to restart their brains, Mon Mothma was the first to speak up.

"While we certainly trust the Skyforged Vanguard to deliver on their promised goods and services, we would need to see the facility to even consider such a deal," She said. "We need our own inspectors to take a look, especially when a price tag that significant is attached."

"I don't blame you, it is a lot of money. That is why I brought a full manifest, scans of the power core, shipyard facilities, and all of the major systems," I said, as the members of my crew who were sitting at the table placed said datapads onto the table. "This should contain everything you need to reach an educated decision. Think of this as a more informal deal, which we can discuss later after you have confirmed the scans we have here with your own eyes."

The data we were presenting had been sent to us by Miru and her team, who, by the time we were on our way to Alpha Base, had scanned and catalogued everything from the corpses to the closets filled with cleaning supplies. When I told them to record and scan anything that might be even remotely useful, they had really taken my words to heart. At this point, we could likely rebuild the facility from the ground up if we wanted.

"And if we discover an issue?" Mon Mothma asked, before adding on. "That might have been hidden from your people, of course. I don't believe you would attempt to scam us at this point."

"Then we can adjust the price accordingly," I assured her, confident in the facility's quality and the estimates I had been given of its value. Of course, I bumped it up by around ten million credits, but they didn't need to know that. "We have an imminent project that we are looking to start. This sale will be our starting funds."

"What sort of project?" Princess Leia asked, sounding simply curious, though Mon Mothma and Admiral Ackbar looked interested for more faction-based reasons.

"As you can imagine, finding a full shipyard capable of making starships like the Diamond-class assault cruiser was exciting," I explained, getting understanding nods in return. "An asset like that could become the spine of an organization like mine. Unfortunately, we strongly disliked the idea of dividing our attention and resources between Nirn and a new location. So we decided to sell the shipyard to you, a group that has the resources to staff, defend, and even expand it properly. You even have a talent and appreciation for setting up bases that spread out your resources. The idea is to use the money we make from the sale to plan and construct our own shipyard on Nirn."

"Ah... an expensive but effective project," Admiral Ackbar nodded in understanding. "If you are undertaking such a project, perhaps some individuals with relevant expertise would be of use?"

"I... that is a generous offer, Admiral Ackbar," I responded, caught off guard for a moment. "I wouldn't say no necessarily, but we are looking for people to join our group permanently, both to design and eventually run the shipyard. If your experts meet those requirements, I would be happy to accept."

"I will enquire with my contacts in the shipyards," he agreed with a nod. "There are often those looking to leave the school and venture into the depths on their own. Knowing they will be working with an ally who values their people would no doubt be comforting."

"No doubt such an offer would greatly help your venture, but perhaps that conversation could be continued another time?" Mon Mothma asked in a gentle voice, clearly stuck between not wanting to be rude and keeping the conversation on target. "Admiral Deacon, we must take the time to review the data before we can even acknowledge our interest. Would you give us the time to do so?"

"Of course," I answered with a nod, standing from my seat, Ahsoka, Tatnia, and Corvak doing the same right after. "We will leave you to your analysis."

"Please, in the meantime, allow us to treat you to a meal," Princess Leia said with a smile, standing and walking around the table towards us. "I'm sure you are hungry after your trip here."

I had intended to go back to the *Hope*, but instead I let Princess Leia lead us out of the meeting room, across the hall to a dining room. The table was set, but there was no food yet.

"When you mentioned that you had an offer for us, we made sure to have food prepared," she explained with a smile. "We would either enjoy it after the deal was made, or use it as a way to entertain you as we deliberate. Mon Mothma will have messaged our people, so the food will be here shortly."

"I appreciate the consideration," I said with a nod. "The last meal we had here was delicious."

The young woman nodded and, after a few more words, left to return to the meeting hall. Meanwhile, everyone sat down around the table, even Julius Vaz, and Corvak's second in command. They had to remove a few pieces of armor, but that was fine. Not long after everyone was seated, the first course arrived, a salad with some sort of shocking red dressing in it.

We continued to eat for some time, taking it slow to give the Rebels plenty of time. Eventually, we finished the entire meal and settled in to wait for our hosts to be finished. About an hour after we had finished, just over two hours since we had left to let them deliberate, Princess Leia returned and invited us back.

As we finally sat back at the meeting table, I could see that there had clearly been some debating. The datapads I had given them were now along their side, and several more were now spread around them. They also looked just a bit strained. Not much, I doubt they had been arguing loudly, but it was enough to notice.

Once we were done trading pleasantries about the meal, Mon Mothma smiled and tapped one of the datapads with her finger.

"We have reviewed all of the data you provided, and we can confirm we are very much interested in purchasing this site from you," She admitted. "Before we discuss our price, what would you have done if we were not interested or could not reach an agreement?"

"Well, we would have added the current ship to our fleets," I started, my brow furrowed as I considered her question. "We would have likely hunted for someone else to purchase it, though it would have needed some vetting, and maybe a few check-ins to make sure they weren't selling ships to pirates or slavers."

I paused for a moment to think, taking a sip of a provided drink to fill the silence. The Rebel leaders were nodding in agreement at the statement that we would take measures to prevent the site from falling into the wrong hands.

"If that didn't work... we would have likely disassembled it and attempted to integrate it into our own systems, at least partially," I finished with a frown. "It would have likely wasted a lot of resources and money, but at least we would have gotten something out of it."

Admiral Ackbar nodded, as if I had confirmed something for him. Judging by the faint whisper of a frown that graced Mon Mothma's face for a split second, it was a reasonable assumption that I had just put to rest what they were discussing so heavily. It could have been a variety of things, but I had a feeling they had been discussing what we would do if they tried to knock the process down too low. Ackbar, good guy that he was, had probably pointed out, rightfully so, that if they low-balled us, we would walk, if for no other reason than spite.

"Well, we are eager to add such a hidden facility to our network," the leader of the Rebellion continued. "Unfortunately, our analysis of the scans and inventory, combined with the price of the yet to be completed ship, leads us to conclude that thirty-five million credits is too high a price."

"I'm willing to hear a reasonable counteroffer," I said, meeting and holding the woman's eyes.

"Perhaps, twenty-seven million credits?"

I carefully kept my face neutral, trying not to let my mental celebration show in my body language. According to everyone working on the project, including our crack merchant team, all of whom had done a considerable amount of research, the CIS facility and starship were likely worth only twenty-five million credits, and that was being optimistic. The Rebellion was still clearly hungry for ships and hidden bases if they were willing to overspend by such a degree. I would have felt guilty, but compared to how much money they were saving due to our discount, this was a drop in the bucket.

"I'm not sure that will work," I responded, frowning as I leaned back against the chair. "What about a flat thirty?"

"I believe that is still too high, Admiral Deacon," Mon Mothma confirmed, now wearing her own frown, though hers was considerably lighter than mine. "We are willing to go to twenty-eight million, that is as high as we can offer. If that is not enough, I'm afraid we will have to decline."

I paused for a long moment, as if I was attempting to create dramatic tension. In reality, I was giving them pause to stew for a moment before I nodded in agreement.

"Very well, twenty-eight million credits it is," I said, now smiling as I stood. "You have a deal."

Mon Mothma stood as well, and after approaching each other, we shook hands, the other woman having a surprisingly tight grip. I suppose as much as she might be delusional in her political views, she was not a meek or weak-willed person.

Despite coming to an agreement, we weren't exactly finished, as we had to discuss the inspection, the changing of hands, and how they would pay us. In the end, we agreed to ferry a group of inspectors to our security checkpoint, where they would transfer over to the 3rd Fleet, which would then make its way to the CIS facility, where they would relieve the 2nd Fleet. If the inspection went well, and I had no reason to say that it wouldn't, the inspectors would stay at the base, and more Rebels would join them, while the 3rd Fleet would bring our people home.

The Rebels also insisted that rather than pay all at once, we would get fourteen million credits now. The second half would be sent when the inspection was complete, so that if they uncovered anything, not that they expected to, they could hold the money until they negotiated a different deal. This would allow us to finally start purchasing parts and getting equipment for our shipyard construction, while also giving them protection against being scammed, which would make their many investors happy. All things considered, it wasn't a bad process, and I couldn't exactly blame them. I would have been hard-pressed to trust a report I hadn't confirmed for myself yet, especially with so much money on the line.

Twenty-eight million credits was a *huge* amount even for the deep pockets that funded the Rebellion, especially in such large chunks. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I started to wonder how exactly they could afford it, even if it would be split up over a few weeks. As we were being guided back to the landing pad where the *Brick* and our starfighter escorts were waiting, I leaned over to General Syndulla, who had volunteered to "guide" us.

"This is a big chunk of money the Rebellion is spending," I asked, the green Twi'lek turning to look at me. "Off the record, friend to friend, how much of a strain is this going to put on the Rebellion?"

"It's not small," She admitted, a small smirk growing on her face. "But the Rebellion isn't the only one chipping in. The King of Mon Cal agreed to assist in exchange for the complete plans for the facility, including those for the cruiser. A point seventy-five grade hyperdrive for a ship that large is something the ship makers of Mon Cal are very interested in, as is the automation that the CIS pioneered, specifically what the Trade Federation brought to the table.

Even the modern shipyards of Sorosuub, which were part of the CIS, cannot quite reach that level, especially not as cheaply as they did."

"Huh... smart," I said with a nod. "A solid investment for their shipyards and business, and you get your shipyard facility. It's a win-win. Though Sorosuub might not be happy you sold them the plans to a ship they still make."

"There are a few companies that make them at this point," the general assured me. "They won't lose any sleep. Or profits, which is likely what they care about more."

When we eventually reached the landing pad, the crew climbed off the two shuttles that we had ridden out on. I shook hands with the general one last time, but as I went to pull away, she gripped my hand a bit tighter. I looked up and raised my eyebrow.

"Something wrong?"

"Since we are already speaking off the record... If I knew someone who needed training in the Force, but couldn't join the Skyforged, what would you recommend they do?" she asked, meeting my look.

"A holocron would do in a pinch, as long as you trust the Jedi who recorded it," I said with a frown. "Though learning without a real person to get a feel for their state of mind, it can be risky. But they wouldn't need to join the Skyforged to learn from the Jedi. If they truly don't wish to join or can't, I'm sure we could reach some sort of middle ground. The Jedi are eager to help after all."

She nodded and released my hand. Without another word, she turned and climbed back onto the shuttle, giving me a nod as both vehicles drove away. As she did, I could feel Ahsoka approach from behind.

"She has a son, whose father was Kanan Jarrus, Ezra's Master," she explained softly. "It's likely he has begun showing signs of being Force sensitive."

"We should bring it up with Amescoll and the others, put her in contact with someone," I said, Ahsoka nodding in agreement. "I'm sure we could figure something out."

I let out a sigh, shaking my head as I turned back to the *Brick*. Ahsoka took my hand as we approached, both of us climbing inside the shuttle. Ten minutes later, we lifted off, our escort following us into the clouds.