

When our two starships first returned from Man Cal, we put on a parade of sorts for the citizens of Vercopa. We had all our major ships, including the *Forge*, *Hope*, *Wonder*, *Anvil*, the new Imperial Arquitens, and our Mauraders flying over the city at low altitude, nice and slow. They also rotated around their central line, letting the normal, non-combatants get a complete look at our ships that they ordinarily never would.

Around the larger ships, several squadrons of MA-wings and Heavy ARCs flew in formation, along with several LAATi gunships. It was an impressive sight, especially seeing all of this from the ground, the massive starships flying over us.

We would have brought the *Fury* down lower, maybe as a background piece, but it wasn't worth disturbing our trade schedule. Not to mention, most of our citizens had seen it up close, considering most of them lived on it for at least a few days as they waited for me to clear them.

The parade also included special deals from restaurants, which we subsidized, a few tours of our smaller ships, including the Whale Shark, Starcaller, and Quiet Ark, and a speech by your truly and a few others. It was a fun day, and marked, more or less, the end of the impromptu holiday that had erupted.

Once the parade was over and everyone had more or less returned to their homes, the Skyforged Vanguard had one of its largest meetings to date. It was so large that we ended up having it in one of the lecture halls, where we spoke in one hall and broadcast it to the other two, so that everyone who wanted to see it could.

"Alright," I said, starting the meeting, standing at the hall's podium, looking out at my people. "So our ships have returned, everyone is home, it's time to reorganize our forces. First, let's clear up why this is necessary. I know everyone has gotten comfortable with their fellows, gotten to know their bunks and spaces, but the Skyforged has slowly been transitioning to larger and larger targets, and our combat groups need to reflect that."

"Does that mean we won't be going after small-time pirates anymore?" someone, a squadron leader, I think, asked from the seated audience.

"Absolutely not. Pirates, raiders, and slavers are always worthy targets, no matter how small," I said confidently. "But we also need to be ready to take on larger Imperial fleets. Not to mention some of the larger crime groups our people in intelligence have been looking into."

Someone in the audience let out a loud shushing sound, and a chuckle passed through the crowd. I smiled and nodded, pretending to seal my lips and throw away a key. When the laughter passed, I continued.

"This new organization will also hopefully help us distribute ships better in the future, as well as build new teams and organize ground forces," I explained, resisting the urge to pace around the stage. "Now I kept this meeting open so that people could come and listen to the results, and point out any grievous issues they spot, but for now, I ask that people let their

captains and leaders run the show. If we pause for every question and point, we will be here all day. If you think something is wrong, send a comms or whisper to whoever is in charge of you, be it your ground leader, squadron leader, or your captain."

And with that, the long process of re-dividing our forces began. We quickly realized that it was rather impossible to make everything perfect. There would likely be one or two teams with slight weaknesses, but given the normal pace of our growth, I was certain we would fill those soon.

Rather than coming up with complicated names for each new combination of forces, we followed our previous pattern, this time going with "Fleets," as we intended these to become considerably larger than our previous "Groups." The first fleet to be assembled was labeled, funnily enough, 1st Fleet. After some debate, we agreed it should contain the *Hope*, the *Liberty Rush*, the *Loyal Hound*, one of our new Marauders, and the *Storm's Edge*. My team and I would be stationed on the *Hope*, while the *Loyal Hound* would remain the primary transport for Corvak and his men. Meanwhile, Commander Frosts and one of his three clone teams would be stationed on the Marauder, now named the *Triumph of Fives*.

The *Liberty Rush*, while also being a potent assault ship not too far off from an Arquiten, would also be the 1st Fleet's primary deployer of normal droid forces.

The second grouping, otherwise known as the 2nd Fleet, would consist of the *Forge*, the *Tool Trio*, as well as the *Cuttlefish* and *Squid*, the *Whale Shark*, the *Nautilus*, and the *Intervention*. The *Shark* would serve as the primary starfighter carrier, though the *Forge* could also carry a single squadron of both MA-wings and Heavy ARCs.

It was also important to note that, unlike the now-retired *Talos Chariot*, the five C-ROCs in the 2nd Fleet were specifically designed and modified to punch above their weight class. With vastly improved shields and power systems, they could weather heavy firepower, and with their nose-mounted heavy cannons, they could dish it back.

More recently, their hangars, which were themselves modifications of the base design, had been sealed shut and outfitted with additional power upgrades and better shield projectors. We were unlikely to create more of these ships, at least for this role, as getting them to this state had been expensive, but they were no doubt effective starships, especially when working together.

Lieutenant Rider and his men would be stationed on the *Intervention*, while sixteen of Clan Galti's warriors would be on the *Nautilus*. The *Whale Shark* would also have a pair of LAATi gunships, each with fifteen beskar commando droids, ready for deployment.

Our 3rd Fleet would be led by the recently upgraded Gladiator, which we named *Light of Kanan* at Ezra's request. The *Kanan* carried on MA-wing squadrons and two Heavy ARCs, as well as a sizable ground force of droids. It would be joined by the *Anvil*, the second Marauder, *Tarre's Pride*, the *Wonder*, and our newly captured IPV. The Marauder, now called the *Kenobi's Vigil*, now carried an additional squadron of Heavy ARCs, as well as a ready-to-deploy group of BX commandos.

The IPV, now named the *Harmony of Jinn*, would be the primary transport for Frost's second group of clones, while the *Tarre's Pride* would remain Ezra and Sabine's.

Our final fleet, for now at least, was led by the newly acquired Vindicator, which we named the *Gimer Staff*, after Yoda's rather famous walking stick. We had been tempted to name it after him directly, but when it was first suggested, several of us had the rather distinct sensations of our knuckles being rapped by something rather hard. It was quickly decided, as we waved off our suddenly stinging knuckles, to pick something less direct. It would be the anchor for the fleet, as well as the carrier, as it had plenty of room for three squadrons, two MA-wings, and a single Heavy ARC.

The *Staff* was accompanied by our two newly refurbished Imperial Arquitens, one called *Andor's Resolve*, and the other the *Erso's Call*. The *Resolve* was going to be home to Frost's third and final group of clones, while the *Call* was where the Vi would lead her remaining ten warriors from, as well as a group of eight Jedi.

On top of them, the *Petrichor* would be joining the 4th Fleet as well. The Imperial Escort Carrier would function primarily as a landing craft, as that was its original design for, and as such, we decided to remove one of its squadrons, leaving it with just the Heavy ARC. It would retain its significant droid army, including heavy assets and plenty of spider droids.

The final ship for the 4th Fleet would be the CR90 we recently recovered, now called the *Revan's Return*. It was a powerful corvette, converted into a warship by stripping a good chunk of its extra passenger space and replacing it with additional power generation and shields.

For the most part, we tried to keep the previous groups intact, though I don't think any of them ended up being entirely untouched. The third group was disassembled to give each fleet an anchor ship, something powerful enough to do some serious damage, and shield smaller ships from larger starships, if need be. We tried to keep the power levels the same, but with what we had to work with, that was difficult. When we finally, hopefully, started picking up CIS ships, those discrepancies would be patched up pretty quickly.

Speaking of adding automated CIS assets, just a few days before our ships returned from Mon Cal, our slicers finally managed to crack the outer layers of protection for the core. It took a surprisingly long time, but our people were already combing through the information, looking for anything useful, while the slicers were already working on deeper security locks.

That was all very good news, because I had officially put a complete stop and ban on adding any new, non-automated ships to any of the fleets for at least a few months. Our most recent additions to our group would no doubt be extremely useful, but they were also putting our civil infrastructure to the test. We luckily still had plenty of room to grow, but our population had skyrocketed by around five hundred people over the last two months, an insane level of growth that was *not* sustainable, even with our sudden infusion of seafood into our diet.

Any ships we found would be either sold to the Rebellion or mothballed for future use, just like the Immobilizer.

Either way, until we started hunting CIS assets, we would continue our normal effort to clean the Outer Rim of slavers, raiders, and pirates, while also harassing the Empire as often as we could. We had drastically increased our power levels over the last few months, it was now finally time to start putting that to good use.

Within a few days of our people being reorganized, we started sending out our fleets on missions. 2nd Fleet was sent to clear an asteroid mining operation attacked by raiders looking for a cheap buck, while 3rd Fleet was sent out a few days later. There were some new reports concerning the remnants of Jabba the Hutt's defense fleet, specifically that they had resorted to capturing and selling slaves. The group of ships was large enough that most groups couldn't handle it, but with our new organization, we most certainly could.

A few corvettes wouldn't stand a chance against the newly created fleet, so they were perfectly capable of handling it on their own.

Not long after that, the 4th Fleet was sent to stop a group of raiders who were harassing a settlement on the Mid Rim. Meanwhile, I was hoping that the Intel team would find a lead on CIS ships for 1st Fleet to chase down.

While waiting, I noticed something off about my Grimoire. It had been a while since I learned any magic, mostly because I had learned everything I had found impressive, and I wasn't interested in spending half a day learning a spell I didn't think would be useful.

However, as I pulled the large book out from wherever it disappeared to when I wasn't using it, I noticed that it had grown noticeably. I quickly read through it, paging through familiar sections until finally reaching something new.

"Aha!" I shouted, catching Ahsoka's attention. "I unlocked my next level of magic!"

"Oh... I feel like that hasn't happened in a while," she commented with a frown. "Like a long while."

"Well... this is the highest level the book will teach me, I think," I explained, scanning through one of the pages. "There should be some pretty potent magic here..."

I trailed off as I kept reading, making note of what I would want to look into learning first. Each of these spells would likely take nearly a *day* to absorb, which was a significant commitment. Not to mention that I would have to plan well, or I would end up having to stop before I was done. That would mean starting all over again later, potentially a colossal waste of time.

The further along the pages and spells I got, the more I noticed that there seemed to be a few more pages at the end than I expected. As I finished the last section of spells and realized there were at least another ten pages, I leaned forward on the couch.

I turned the page, and as I began to read, I nearly dropped the book.

There, written in fancy lettering and ink, was a rather bold declaration. According to the Grimoire, with a few spells, a few special enchantments, and a ritual involving my own Grimoire, I could awaken magic inside someone else, and even give them access to their own Grimoire.

They wouldn't have the same growth or power level I had, but they would be able to learn and grow at their own pace, slowly getting stronger as they did. They would be able to learn, eventually to use the same spells I did, and would even be able to enchant, though they would have to learn how first.

"Deacon... what is it?" Ahsoka asked, coming around the corner when I was silent for too long.

"I... I can make more people with magic," I explained, looking up from my Grimoire. "I can turn people into mages like me."

"...What?" Ahsoka asked, staring back at me with wide eyes, looking between my Grimoire and me.

"I can awaken people's magic!" I said, tapping the page and laughing, with just a hint of hysteria leaking into my voice. "It's a bit of a complicated process, sounds like it would take the better part of a day if I'm reading this right, but yeah!"

"How?!" she asked, just as shocked as I was

"I haven't read that far, but the opening said it was a combination of spells, enchantment, and a sort of ritual," I responded, standing up off the couch without really even meaning to. "Ahsoka... we could have healers on every ground team! We could have people helping me with enchanting! Holy shit, Ahsoka, this is incredible!"

"Deacon, keep reading, figure out how it works," Ahsoka pushed, pointing down at my Grimoire. "Don't celebrate until you know it's worth it."

I nodded in understanding and sat back down on the couch, quickly flipping back to the first page. I started carefully reading the information, making a few notes as I went. After a few minutes, Ahsoka sat beside me, waiting for me to finish understanding what could absolutely be the next significant step for the Skyforged Vanguard.