

Unsurprisingly, when I brought up retiring and replacing the *Talos Chariot* and the *Forward Charge* at our next meeting, most of my people agreed with me. Those who didn't simply wanted to shift the order around so that the 5th Group was finished first, before addressing other issues. I explained that I usually would agree, but that the Marauder-class was the perfect fit for what I was looking for in a replacement for the *Talos Chariot*. That was enough to convince anyone who was not already on board, although no one was demanding or refusing anything in the first place. They were just concerned about how long it would take to finish 5th Group.

After we were finished discussing our ship placement, we shifted the conversation over to the recent prize brought home by 1st Group. In fact, while we discussed a few other topics, the meeting was primarily put together to discuss the black box and data core from our adventures in the slime-filled Providence-class ship. Sheora, head of our intelligence gathering team, was in charge of cracking both of them open for their secrets.

"We have several slicer droids, as well as a code-cracking computer, working to break through the data core's security," Sheora explained, idly toying with her datapad. "Progress is being made, but it's not going to be fast. These are designed to be secure and store a *significant amount* of information. The only reason it's possible at all is that our computer systems are more advanced, and people have been working on taking CIS systems down for a decade at this point."

"Any estimation when we will find anything useful?" I asked, sipping from my cup of caf.

"No, because we have no idea what we are uncovering," she responded, shaking her head. "In a week, we might crack through a layer, only to find it's talking about [Geonosis](#) or some other known stronghold."

"So no holding our breath," I said, trying not to let my disappointment show. Sheora's team was working their hardest, after all, and not everything could run at ur breaking pace.

"It's not all bad news," Sheora said, smirking when I perked up. "The data core might be locked up tight, but the black box is much less heavily protected. Our slicers managed to crack it a few hours ago."

"That's good news," Ahsoka said with a nod. "Though, I imagine it's not a complete gold mine."

"Unfortunately, you're correct," Sheora agreed with a wince. "Black boxes are cleared frequently, to stop this exact scenario, actually. That said, we were able to pull three locations worth investigating."

Sheora tapped on her datapad, which activated the holoprojector at the center of the room. It glowed bright for a minute before displaying three planets. A singular pale yellow gas giant and two terrestrial planets, one a grey-blue, lifeless moon, and the other a reddish brown planet, not too dissimilar from Mars. The holoprojector spun to focus primarily on the gas giant.

"None of these planets have real names, so we are calling them Yellow, Grey, and Red," She explained, controlling the projector from her datapad. "Yellow is a particularly large gas giant where we think some sort of fuel station is set up. The fact that it's on the black black of a Providence-class means it is likely of a significant size, but we have no way to confirm any of that. It could just be an empty system."

Sheora tapped her datapad, and the visuals shifted, the holoprojector focusing on the lifeless moon, the 3D image spinning slowly.

"Grey seems to be some sort of mining operation," She explained. "The ship escorted several freighters as they picked up ore and brought it somewhere. We don't know where, as their destination was wiped, which is nothing strange, before anyone asks."

Sheora again tapped her data pad, the projection now shifting to show the final, Mars-like planet. It even had a white icecap, though it was significantly smaller than the one on Mars.

"Red here is a bit of a question mark, but we *think* it was a common staging ground for large fleets of starships," Sheora explained. "It could be completely empty, but there is a non-zero chance that there is some infrastructure there. Again, it could be nothing, but it's worth looking into."

Sheora, clearly done with her presentation, returned to her seat, the holoprojector switching to an equal view of all three planets. After getting a nod from the intelligence expert, I stood to lead the meeting.

"Okay, three locations means we have plenty of groups to cover all of them," I said, looking around the room. "Any suggestions?"

"I would send 3rd Group to investigate the staging area," Tatnia pointed out. "We have no idea what's there, so sending a strong force to cover our bases makes sense."

"That is a solid plan," I agreed, looking over to the captains of the *Hope* and *Forge*. "Does that sound reasonable to the 3rd Group?"

Both of the capital ship captains quickly expressed their agreement, so I nodded, about to move on. Before I could continue, Ezra raised his hand from the other end of the long, meeting table.

"4th group volunteers to investigate the mining facility," the young Jedi said, Sabine, who was sitting beside him, nodding in agreement. "Our droid army aboard the *Petrichor* will allow us to cover plenty of ground."

"Good, fantastic," I said with a nod, before continuing to add. "Consider changing out some of your heavier vehicles with more speeders, to expand your reach. Just don't get rid of all of them, and remember to get them traded back out."

"Yes, Boss."

"Right, so, while we are out investigating, 2nd group will just keep looking for jobs and finish training our new clone teams," I said, tapping the table as I thought to myself. "Anyone see any holes in this plan?"

I looked around for a moment, waiting for someone to speak up. When no one does after a long minute, I nod and move on.

"Fantastic, I look forward to seeing what everyone finds at these locations," I said, glancing at the still slowly rotating images on the holoprojector.

The meeting continued for a bit longer while we discussed the missions and possible threats, before moving on. As the meeting was winding down, I once again got everyone's attention.

"Alright, just so everyone is aware, I might be mixing up our ground team assignments, specifically reworking the BX units. Even with beskar armor, they were never meant to replace a sentient ground team, and yet they have in both 2nd and 4th Group," I pointed out with a frown and a slight shake of my head. "We have more Jedi looking to join ground teams, as well as Commander Frost's boys, even beyond 5th Group. This will likely happen as new ships arrive and we begin adjusting groups and fleets, just as we are currently trading ships out in the 1st Group. Any questions?"

When nobody spoke up, I dismissed the meeting, and people stood and split up to have their own conversations. After a quick word with Tatnia, where I asked her to retrieve the data from Sheora and get our Group moving, I headed to the *Talos Chariot*, looking for Calima, our antisocial pilot.

As usual, she was inside the ship, though for once, she wasn't on the bridge. Instead, she was in her quarters, though I called her to the lounge with the ship's intercom system. The [Tholothian](#) arrived

just a few minutes later.

Calima had always been a quiet member of the team. At first, I had been nervous about her willingness to be part of the growing faction, but I quickly learned it was just not in her nature to socialize. Which was fine, she wasn't the first person I had met who preferred being alone, and I wasn't about to force her to socialize.

"Admiral Deacon, what can... I do for you?" she asked, sitting down opposite me on the conference table. "Are we going on a mission?"

"No. Well, actually, yes, we are, but that's not what I'm here for," I explained. "So I recently realized that the size and power of the *Chariot* is not up to par with what I want for 1st Group. We've put some good work into her and turned her into a potent little ship, but it's still limited."

I paused for a moment, gauging her reaction before I continued. Unfortunately, she remained rather stoic, so I continued after a long pause.

"As of right now, my plan is to retire the ship to the *Fury*, for Miru to use as a sort of experimental platform," I explained, tapping the table. "Now, you are welcome to do whatever you want, including following us into this new ship, but know you absolutely have the pick of positions here at the Skyforged. This isn't me giving you the boot, or demanding you move with us, it's just time for 1st Group to expand its foundations."

"I understand, Deacon, and... thank you for letting me know," She said with a smile, her skull tendrils shifting as she spoke. "If I am honest, while... I enjoyed my time with the team, combat was never... something I enjoyed. I don't think... I would like to pilot a combat ship again for some time."

"That's absolutely fine," I said with a smile. "What would you like to do once the transition happens?"

"Perhaps... I think that, for now, I will live off the savings I have accumulated working with you," She said, smiling as she considered the idea. "After some time... I could see myself working with the freighter fleet?"

"That sounds like a fantastic plan," I said with a nod. "I'm glad to have had you with us for this long. You kept us alive and flew us through some dangerous spots. We have a few more missions before the transition will happen, but I wanted to make sure you knew and to say thank you for your hard work."

I stood and held up my hand, the woman standing as well to shake it. After that, she excused herself back to her room. She seemed to be handling the news well, and by the sounds of it, she was looking forward to some time off, as well as a future that didn't include nearly as many life-or-death scenarios. Still, I made a note to have Ahsoka check her overall vibe, just in case she was secretly wallowing in despair.

Within a few hours, the crew was on board the *Chariot*, and as pre-flight checks were being made, I explained the fate of our one-time home. It was bittersweet, but the blow was thankfully softened by the fact that by now almost all of us were living full-time on Nirn, so the *Chariot* was no longer our primary home. Only Miru, who thrived surrounded by her tech and her own engineering team, and Calima, who found solace on her ship, didn't live planetside.

After explaining the *Chariot's* fate and the group's incoming upgrades, I explained the mission. It was significantly more open-ended than we were used to, which was honestly starting to make me nervous. Usually, we approached every mission with at least a general idea of what we were about to engage, but this time, we only had vague potential possibilities. There might be CIS activity around the gas giant, it *might* have been a fuel station, and if there was, it *might* be a sizable find.

In all honesty, my biggest concern was not a lack of fuel station or processing plant. While that would be unfortunate, it would also not be the end of the world. My primary fear was that someone had already found the station first, and we were about to jump into a pirate, smuggler, or some other secret base with who knows how many enemy starships. To that effect, when calculating our hyperspace journey, I had Racer and Calima determine an end location a

considerable distance from the gas giant. That way we could approach at our own pace and retreat at our own leisure.

The journey from Nirn to our nameless destination was actually pretty long. It would take almost four days to circumvent a few hazards and eventually arrive at our target system in the middle of nowhere. Around the halfway point, after continuing my effort to stay on top of my enchanting duties, I made my way down to the cargo bay. At the moment, it was relatively empty, since most of our ground units and vehicles were being kept on the *Liberty Rush*, which now housed our group's disposable droid army.

One hangar bay still contained updated [Saber-class](#) tanks, as those were meant to reinforce the ground teams specifically. The other held the *Brick*, as always.

As I crossed the hangar, I spotted most of the crew standing around where Miru's room had been, now just a normal onboard workshop. They were looking at a sheet of metal, while Julius slowly drew on it with what appeared to be a thick marker.

"What's going on, guys?" I asked, peaking over Ashoka's shoulder, the Togruta reacting by weaving her arm through mine and leaning against me.

"After your announcement that we would be retiring the ship and moving to something bigger, Julius was feeling a bit nostalgic," Tatnia said, gesturing to the metal sheet. "Ahsoka suggested we leave our mark. Figured they could take this and turn it into a proper plaque later."

I examined the metal sheet, which was a simple thin plate of stock material. As I watched, Julius slowly and neatly wrote down some words, taking his time to get every one straight. I could see he had even taken some time to lightly trace guide lines, so his writing was straight and level. We watched him work for another five minutes before he stepped back to examine his handiwork, which was actually well done.

"Talos Chariot. Our home among the stars. May the memories created within this hull remind us that family is chosen and together, anything is possible," Julius read, before leaning down, signing his name below the previous words. When he was done, he silently passed the marker to Tatnia.

One by one, we signed our names, leaving space for Calima and for Miru to sign it as well. Even Racer made his way down to the cargo hold to add his name to the list. When we were done, we stayed for a few minutes, admiring Julius' handy work, before we headed back up to the lounge. It would likely be a few missions before we actually moved out of the Chariot and into the Marauder, but this felt like a solid move towards moving on, acknowledging the history we had with the ship.

We spent the rest of the day in the lounge together, reminiscing about our previous adventures on board the ship, enjoying each other's company. Calima even stepped out to talk for a while, before we all enjoyed a simple meal and called it a night.