

We spent another hour coming up with the plan, working together to forge something that was serviceable and that we hoped wouldn't immediately fall apart.

The plan was to travel to the planet on the B-7, landing a far distance from the base before hoofing it the rest of the way to avoid setting off any sensors. Meanwhile, Nova would remain in orbit in her own ship, along with a few others. If everything went south, we could bring them in for some air support, which would really just amount to them flying over the base at high speeds, peppering the base, and zipping back out before the turrets could take down their shields. Understandably, Nova didn't want to risk any ships in a slugging match. She was also hoping she could claim the turrets and affix them to her station, bolstering her defenses quite a bit.

After the observation period, we would sneak into the central building if everything went well. We knew that the buildings had power and at least some sensors since it had picked up Carlion's ship, so once we got close, we would probably be on a short timer before interior defenses came up, probably in the form of droids. At some point, it would devolve into a fight, but the hope was to break through deep enough into the building that we would be able to get to the central computer *before* the total weight of the stronghold dropped on us.

To aid us in getting through security, Nova was lending us two droids, [R3-D4](#), who was green and yellow, and [R4-C3](#), who was red and black, both of which beeped and whistled as they joined us in the smallest hanger, the one the B-7 was in.

"Arthree and Racer both have upgraded slicer protocols installed, as well as extra processing upgrades and infiltration tools," The shipbroker explained. "Either one of them is going to be enough to break through an old CIS terminal, as well as any security doors you run into. Don't let them get destroyed because the only other option you have to stop from being overrun with droids and take down the defenses is to destroy the computer. That would shut down the base, but it would also probably destroy the data core.

"Gotcha. Head on board, you two," I said, the droids beeping, the more angular-headed Racer leading the way. "Everyone all set?"

My team, which consisted of both my core group, Nevue, and the two extra Rebel soldiers, all nodded in confirmation. Miru was the only one who didn't, the pink-skinned girl still pouting by the doorway. I flat-out refused to let her come with us, something she hadn't appreciated. She had tried to convince me that her technical expertise would come in handy on the ground, but with the modified astromechs coming with us, her skills were a lot less critical. Instead, she would be riding with Nova on her ship, waiting in orbit for the okay to land.

I had pulled Nova aside privately when she was offloading the payment for the C-ROC and asked if she could give Miru a job and a place to live if the mission went south. I also wanted her to eventually give her the money for the ship since our deal would be broken, and

she would be free to sell the ship to whoever she wanted. She agreed solemnly before slapping me on the shoulder.

"Nevue seems to think you're worth some hefty investment, that tells me you're no pushover. Don't focus on what could happen. You're only making it more likely that it will happen."

"Oh, I know. I'm confident we can make this happen," I said truthfully. "I trust my team, and I know what we are capable of. That doesn't mean I would leave this up to chance."

We finished unloading everything, both to clear things up and because all of our stuff would be going on the C-ROC eventually. When we were done, we floated in a simple cargo loader to haul the astromechs over any treacherous terrain we had to cross once we landed. Not long after that, we were ready to go, and everyone piled into the ship for another long series of hyperspace jumps, this time out of wild space, across half the galaxy to a basically unknown planet in the Outer Rim. We jumped seconds after Nova's ship did but before the other three she was leading could.

We had only been in hyperspace for about twenty minutes when Tatnia found me sitting on the cot in the cargo bay, reading the lightning bolt entry of the grimoire. She sat down next to me and, after a few minutes of silence, finally said something.

"So...did you realize the flaw in your plan yet?" She asked, prompting me to look over at her. "You plan on fighting the droids with us, right?"

"Of course..." I started trailing off for a moment before slapping my forehead. "The soldiers haven't seen me do my thing yet. And if they do, they will probably spill it right back to the rebels."

"Not just that, Boss," She said, pointing at the two astromechs, both of which were plugged into separate charging ports. "Nova's gonna have eyes on you too."

"Fuck... "

"Gonna make it work without doing anything weird?" She asked. "Hypothetically speaking, the droids could suffer an accident after finishing their task..."

"No... no, that's more trouble than it's worth," I said, shaking my head. "We are just going to have to trust our new friends to keep it to themselves. It's not like I wasn't throwing around lighting and stuff on Nar Shaddaa."

"You might not have been spotted."

"Please, on a planet like that? Someone saw me."

"So what does that mean?"

"It means... I don't know what it means, give me a minute to think."

I stood up from the cot and started to walk around the cargo bay, rubbing my face and basically pacing around as I thought to myself. The issue with my powers was that in a galaxy where the Force was a known factor, everyone was going to assume I was using the Force, especially people who were dependent on it. Someone like Palpatine or Yoda would never even consider the existence of some sort of alternative power. Even face to face, when I used magic, and they sensed nothing in the Force, some would assume I was somehow hiding my presence in the Force or something.

All this boiled down to one thing. When old Grandpappy Sheev caught wind that someone was throwing around lightning and summoning stuff from nothing, I was going to be hunted down, just like any Jedi or any other force user trying to stir shit up. I knew about the Inquisitors, Jedi hunters that took down any of them who managed to escape order 66, even though I hadn't seen much of the content they were in. I knew they existed in the Disney canon, but I was murky about their existence when it came to the time period around the original trilogy. They certainly didn't come after Luke during the movies.

Even if the Inquisitors were gone, I would still be hunted. Hell, I was probably already being hunted. There was a chance that what I did on Nar Shaddaa might be brushed off as parlor tricks and aberrant technology, but if I kept it up, even that thin facade would crack, and I would be put on a list and hunted down. We were already, most likely, on some Hutt's shit list, I really didn't want to be on the Emperor's.

"Boss, I think you're thinking about this too hard," Tatnia said, breaking me out of my rapidly spinning spiral. "If you're worried about being put on a wanted list, the Empire taking an interest in you, the galaxy is a huge place. There are plenty of systems that a wanted record from the Empire wouldn't even give people pause, and that doesn't include a large amount that would actually see it as a positive. Hell, if all else fails, we could always turn to the Rebellion. I know you wanted to maintain our independence, but I'm sure we could work something out in exchange for a safety net of resources and a list of planets and stations to take refuge in when shit gets tough."

As she talked, I considered her words, nodding along as she assured me. As she did, I began to realize that she was right. I was thinking in terms of my old life, where options got really slim if the government wanted you. You could slip away if the local police wanted to ask you some questions, but the FBI? Here though, there were entire planets that hated the Empire. Sure, I would have to keep a lookout, but that's what a loyal crew was for.

"Yeah... thanks, Tatnia. I guess I was still thinking about how things were back home," I explained, who nodded in agreement. "Still have to get used to all of this."

"I get it, Boss. Gotta be a big shock to go from one tiny little world to an entire galaxy."

"You have no idea. Alright, could you do me a favor and go get Nevue? Maybe trade places with him so he can keep the soldiers from shooting at me or trying to burn me at the stake or something."

Tatnia gave me a weird look, but I just waved her off, leaning back and sitting on one of the few remaining crates in the cargo bay. It didn't take long for Nevue and his compatriots to climb down the access ladder, the Zabrak, in particular, coming down with a little pep in his step.

"Right. So, I'm sure you're both wondering why Nevue was so eager to agree to the backup deal I made with Nova, despite it costing the Alliance a pretty penny?" I asked, both Lario and Ayme nodding slowly in confirmation. "Well, the deal is that I'm... not exactly normal. Now I want you both to visibly confirm what I am about to say to you. You are not in danger, what I'm about to do is safe, and you don't need to worry. Understand?"

Both of the soldiers looked a bit nervous, but after sharing a glance, they nodded again. I paused for another few seconds before nodding, mostly to myself, before starting to run down through my location-appropriate spells. I started by summoning my bound armor, figuring that starting with something focused on myself would help them get used to it. When I was covered in a glowing protective shell, I summoned a sword and a dagger before dismissing all of it in a shower of magical sparks and translucent smoke. I cast candlelight and summoned my familiar, which was finally too much for Lario, who pulled his blaster out and held it steadily at the large feline.

"What the hell is that!" He shouted, looking at Nevue, who was chuckling to himself, and then Ayme, who had taken a few steps back. "Nevue!"

"Basically?" Nevue asked, breaking through his chuckling. "Space wizard."

"Like a Jedi? Like the kid who blew up the Death Star?" Ayme asked, immediately catching my attention.

"Not according to him. According to Deacon, it's not the Force, but some sort of energy he has inside himself. All I know is that he can throw lightning and ice and fire from the palm of his hand and block blaster bolts with the other."

As he talked, I dismissed my familiar, Lario slowly calmed down after I did. He did look at me like I was a dangerous-looking animal, though, so it was probably safe to say he was still a bit nervous.

"Look, just treat him like a special asset and follow his lead," Nevue explained, patting the older soldier's shoulder. "He's in command for this op, by order of General Syndulla herself."

We spent the next ten minutes talking about my abilities, showing off a few more spells, including clearing up a stiff neck and a troublesome knee thing that Lario had been apparently ignoring for a few weeks. Any complaints he had about me wholly disappeared after that. Nevue also convinced me to let him record me, pointing out that if he was going to explain the situation, he would need proof so they would take him seriously.

Additionally, as I was showing off my flame atronach spell, I realized something I hadn't noticed before. Spells that weren't instant cast, most conjurations spells, or the calming spell, could be held for a long time before I was forced to cast. On top of that, it was easy to cancel them as well, the magic flowing back inside me with barely any loss. All I had to do was tug internally at the base of the first spell matrix, and the spell unraveled, the magic rushing back into my core.

With this new knowledge, I spent the rest of the trip learning two new spells, the first being lightning bolt because I needed a longer-range attack that would hopefully be effective against droids. I spent about seven hours learning the spell before starting to cast it, holding the electric energy in my hand. After a few seconds of holding it, I unraveled the spell, feeling the energy return to my body. It took me a few minutes to cast it again, but I could feel it getting easier every time I cast, held, and then unraveled the spell. It was much slower at working the spell matrix into my aetheric presence, or however the book had described the fact that spells got easier the more times you cast them, but it was working.

After spending an hour practicing the spell, I moved on to the second one, fast healing. I was tempted to learn another destruction spell, or maybe even elemental familiar, but I was already starting to lean heavily into the tank role for the team, so having a quicker heal option was a pretty safe bet. Learning the spell took me another seven hours, including the time to practice it a few dozen times to make sure it stuck. This left me with just enough time for six hours of sleep before we arrived at our destination.

We were all piled into the cockpit as we dropped out of hyperspace, the formation of five ships appearing one after the other, Nova's ship still in the lead, on the opposite side of the planet from the stronghold. As we agreed, we stayed comms silent and immediately started to pull ahead, soon entering the planet's atmosphere. Nova and her four other ships spread out, though the likelihood that they would be detected by a stronghold with such severely disabled sensors was tiny, spreading out made that even less likely.

We slowly made our descent toward the planet's surface, taking it slow to keep from throwing up too much heat as we cut through the planet's atmosphere. Again, most likely an unnecessary precaution, but there was no reason to risk it. Once we were a bit lower, Nevue and Tatnia guided us around the planet, getting closer and closer to our target. Below us was a dry, cracked, and desolate planet with very little in the way of flora or fauna. We did spot a few herds of strange-looking six-legged creatures, each the size of a speeder bike, as well as a few smaller forests growing around pools of greenish water, but beyond that, the planet was dead.

When we did finally land, Nevue powered down the ship to low power and turned his chair to look at me.

"It's probably a four-hour hike to the location from here, but there is very little chance they saw us," He explained. "The mission is yours, Deacon."

"Right. What did the weather scans say while we were coming in?"

"There's a big storm on the other side of the continent and a smaller one to the far south, but neither of them was pointed at us," Tatnia answered. "We are good for a while."

"Okay, let's get the astromechs on their cargo loader, have a look around, and head out."