

Nova might have been desperate to get me off her station, but she knew better than to keep us from doing a small naming ceremony. Most of the workers turned up to watch Miru use a fancy painting droid to paint the C-ROC's new name along the upper side of the ship, above the new hangar.

"What does it mean?" One of the workers asked. "I don't recognize the name."

"It's a name from one of my home planet's legends," I explained. "About a mortal king with the soul of a dragon who rose to godhood."

The large red words "Talos Chariot" contrasted with the rest of the light tan hull. There were still some blue highlights in a few spots, leftovers from the CIS markings, but Miru promised that she would fix that once we landed at our next destination.

The naming ceremony was short, a simple speech in a language I didn't recognize, but that one of the craftsmen assured me was a blessing of some sort. When that was done, we poured a blue drink of some kind over one of the landing struts, passing the remaining liquid around for those who witnessed the event to take a single sip. It was a sweet syrupy liquor, one that seemed really out of place in a ritual like this.

As quickly as it started, the ceremony was over, the workers probably sensing how impatient Nova was. With minimal delay, we climbed up the access ramp and made our way up to the bridge, Nal was silent, sitting down in the pilot's chair, while Tatnia dropped into the copilot's seat beside him. I sat down in the comms seat, tabbing through a few things to check out the sensor readings, mostly to pass the time. Behind me, Miru sat down at a gunner's seat, though she didn't activate anything, instead spinning around to watch us. After about ten minutes, Nal looked over at me.

"We're all set, Boss."

"Take us out. I already checked the cargo bay. We have everything owed to us."

The blue-skinned Duros nodded and tapped a few more things before grabbing the primary control sticks, dialing something down, and lifting us off the hangar floor. Slowly but surely, we pulled out of the massive hangar bay, the people who had remained watching us go. When the blue film of the mag-field finally pulled away completely, Nal increased our speed and continued to pull away until there were several hundred meters between us and the station. Once we were at a generously safe distance, he shifted the ship's orientation and guided us into the darkness of space.

"Okay, can I ask what that was about now?" Miru asked, looking over at me with exasperation. "Why did Nova turn into a jerk all of a sudden?"

“She thought I was a Jedi,” I explained, still focused on the comms panel in front of me. “She was worried what kind of backlash that would bring.”

“But she was supporting the Rebellion!” The teenager responded. “She should be happy you were around doing stuff!”

“My abilities are a big unknown for most people,” I explained, shaking my head and turning my seat to face the confused girl. “And that scares a lot of them. To be fair to her, if I was a Jedi, she would be right, being there could lead dangerous people to her station. The Force... it *can* be like a signal flare to other people tapping into it.”

“But you don’t use it... right?”

“I don’t, but I couldn’t convince her of that,” I answered with a shrug. “Not much I can do about it. She paid us our share, gave us what we negotiated for, and finished our repairs and modifications. I’m sorry that I got us the boot, but next time-”

“It’s her fault for being paranoid,” Tatnia said, cutting my apology off. “We weren’t welcome anyway. Besides, we have places to be.”

“Was getting bored,” Nal added simply. “What was the final total?”

“Thirty-two thousand and some change deposited into our account,” I said with a smile. “Not bad considering what else we got out of the deal.”

One of the first things I did with our downtime was figure out how to store our money better. Hauling around so many credit ingots and chips had been a constant source of stress. Luckily most banking groups, including the independent group that we were now using, had systems in place for mercenary groups like ours. Tatnia, Nal, and I had access to the funds, and could pull and put money in whenever we wanted, though anything over a certain amount sent out a warning, and going even high required the permission of multiple account holders. I could also set up ancillary accounts for anyone working for us, shifting their cuts into these accounts for them to access and to do with as they please.

“That will last us a few months with the supplies we already have,” Tatnia said. “Fuel is what’s going to cut into that the most. That and docking fees.”

“Which means we need to hurry up and recruit some more members so we can start taking jobs,” I asked, craning my neck to look over Nal’s shoulder. “How long will it take to plot a course?”

“I got the navigator working on it earlier, it’s already finished.”

“Alright, whenever you’re ready,” I responded, tapping my console into hibernation. “The quicker we get to Ter’skar, the better.”

“It’s pronounced Terr’skiar,” Nal corrected as I stood from my console and stretched, leaving the bridge and heading back.

We had talked a lot about where our first destination would be, and after a bit of a discussion, we decided that the best place to start looking for new recruits would be a world with plenty of traffic, specifically a trade world. Hyperspace lanes occasionally intersected on systems with habitable worlds, which then exploded with trade and other industries. Tatnia, who had experience traveling around to worlds like Terr’skiar, assured me we would find what we were looking for there.

“I guarantee there will be several cantinas nearby, no matter where we land, that is known as a place that pilots without ships go to hang out,” She said over a cup of caf. “If we land around a big city, I’m willing to bet there will be a bar filled with pilots who specifically fly Corellian ships!”

“What about fighters? People who will join us when we are doing actual mercenary work?”

“They’ll be around,” Tatnia assured me. “Might have to look a little harder, but they will be there. It’s a big planet, and it’s easy to get stuck at a place like this if your ride sells out or loses their ship.”

As Tatnia and Nal piloted the ship, Miru and I headed down to the cargo hold, exploring the recently finished hangar bays. They already had ships inside them, the two tri fighters on one side and two of the vulture droids on the other. The two remaining vulture droids were in pieces, stored in the cargo bay in a large cargo container.

“What do you think?” I asked the young, mechanically inclined Twi’lek. “Did they do a good job?”

“It’s a bit bare bones, but yeah, it’s well built,” She answered, heading over to port side bay, examining one of the tri fighters. “I’m going to have one of the droids work on connecting them to the intercom system and connecting systems to the bridge, but yeah.”

I watched her fiddle with the tri-fighter for a few minutes before she pulled back and frowned.

“What’s wrong?”

“I was hoping I would be able to crack one of these open with standard tools, but they used something proprietary,” She answered. “I’m going to have to cut it open.”

"Why do you need to cut it open?" I asked. "What did you want these for anyway? I have to warn you that if we manage to get our hands on a pilot-capable starfighter, the vulture droids are first on the chopping block of what gets the boot."

"I want to get them working again," She explained. "Racer has a copy of their command codes, and I think I can get them active."

"Be very, very, *very* careful with that Miru, droid ships might have a bad reputation nowadays, but they are very lethal. If you flip their switch and they go hostile inside of the ship...?"

"I know, I'm disabling a bunch of their systems first," She assured me. "I think the tri fighters will be the easiest, most of their intelligence is already part of the starfighter, so I should be able to just modify that programming a bit. The vulture droids, though? They relied on the central computer to do a lot of their thinking...."

She trailed off as she focused on what she was working on, leaving the hangar bay quiet. After a moment, I turned to go, and she stopped and turned to me.

"Deacon... Thanks for getting all this stuff. The tools, the droids, the ships. We would have gotten a much bigger cut if you hadn't gotten all of this for me."

"Hey, you're our head mechanic, I need to keep you stocked and ready to keep this ship in top shape," I said with a smile. "Besides, so far, you haven't given me any reason to regret indulging you."

"I promise you won't! I'll start paying for my own stuff and-" She responded, her eyes getting wide before I held up my hand.

"That wasn't a threat or a bottom line Miru, just stating a fact," I explained before gesturing around. "I mean, look, you took a small suggestion I made and *drastically* improved the *Chariot's* capabilities. These hangar bays are superior in every way to those cargo lanes and massively increased our effectiveness. As long as your tinkering occasionally leads to stuff like this, I am more than happy to cut engineering a bigger budget. Just do me a favor and keep me updated on your plans and how your tinkering goes, okay?"

She turned away from me, looking intently at the robotic starfighter in front of her. I could hear her sniff slightly and watched as she wiped her face before turning back.

"Yeah, I can definitely do that, Boss."

"Good. Now I'm going to go-"

I stopped talking as the ship shifted slightly around us, the telltale sign that we had jumped to lightspeed.

“I’m gonna take a more accurate stock of what our food looks like and start working on a shopping list. If you think of anything, just tell me, let me know.”

She nodded and got back to work before quickly looking back at me.

“Oh! By the way, Racer is in his charging bay, running a defrag and corruption scan. I might have been a bit rough removing some of the loyalty parameters concerning Nova after she started being rude to you....”

I chuckled and nodded before exiting the hangar bay, a smaller section of the huge access door opening to let me through, sealing shut behind me. In truth, the list I was hoping to put together was less of a shopping list and more of a shopping, salvage and stealing list. Some of the stuff we would inevitably end up having to buy, but the more we could salvage and steal while on the job, at least from criminals, the better.

“Definitely need to pick up a replacement for the A5...” I mumbled to myself, pulling out my datapad and starting the list with “armed speeder support.”

Taking stock of the food didn’t take long, nor did coming up with a long list of things I wanted us to have access to. I was hoping we could gather some of the stuff on the list over time, like speeder bikes. Everyone and their uncle had a speeder bike, and there was no doubt in my mind that we would end up salvaging more than a few.

On the other hand, one thing I was sure we would end up having to buy was some good quality armor. I knew for a fact that there were metals out there that you could make blaster-proof armor from, phrik being one that came to mind, but I knew that was prohibitively expensive. Still, I refused to believe that there wasn’t someone out there producing actually effective armor that was also vaguely affordable, I just needed to find them. I remember there being a massive variety of armor in Knights of the Old Republic games, so where was the modern equivalent?

I added an addendum to the armor entry on my list, the word “custom?” followed by a few credit signs dollar. I wondered what kind of state Mandalore was in and if there was some Mandalorian armor we could buy. It would be massively expensive, for sure, but potentially worth the investment.

With a dozen and one idea bouncing around in my skull, I slid my datapad back into my jacket before heading back up to the second deck, heading to the captain's room, which I had reluctantly accepted as my own. I had attempted to convince Nova that she should split the larger room in half and turn them both, as well as the private bathroom, into more bedrooms, but she wasn’t having it, insisting that the captain’s room was an important part of the ship. I had to

admit that her point of not having one decrease the resale value of the ship made sense, but I never planned on selling this ship, so it didn't really matter.

I sat down at the corner of my bed, slowly pulling off my boots, my jacket, and my armor, which I had taken to wearing around near constantly. As I finished and looked around, I had to admit having my own space would be nice. Having a bigger bed wasn't bad either, even if I knew that Tatnia had a bigger one in her room. She had somehow actually convinced Nova to take one of the luxury beds from the CIS hidey hole and put it in her room. It filled up most of the room, but I had a feeling she thought it was completely worth it.

As I got undressed from my heavier gear, I could feel the tension falling off of me. Not having a place to call my own, a place to work from, to return to, to really call home, it had been grating on me, especially after a week of feeling the unwelcome vibes that Nova had been throwing off. The fact that I was sharing that home with my crew, a team of people who I could trust, that only made it better.

I stood up from the bed and made my way to the computer terminal in the corner of the room, sitting down in the comfortable chair and spinning to face the computer. I locked the system off with a flick before summoning my grimoire and laying it across the now blank pad. I had been kicking myself for not learning the respite spell during the assault on the CIS base, and while I had focused on other things during our week on Nova's station, there was no way I would pass up on the opportunity now.

I leaned back in the chair, sinking into the surprisingly comfortable cushion as I started to read through the description of the spell again, before eventually moving onto the general structure of the two leveled matrices. We had almost a full day in hyperspace before we would arrive at Terr'skiar, which meant I had plenty of time to learn this spell and master it.