

When we first landed on Nirn, our new Jedi guests were quietly escorted to a few places they could call home. We tried to keep them relatively together, for now, but if they stayed permanently, they would have to spread out like the other Jedi.

When they learned that over thirty new Jedi had been found, many people wanted to throw a celebration, since finding that many survivors was huge. Unfortunately, putting the survivors through a party wouldn't do them any good, so our arrival was kept pretty quiet. Once the recovering underground villagers were led off to settle down and recover, I contemplated how long we had been away.

In total, we had been gone for over a month and a half. The other fleets had returned from and gone back out on a few missions each, and our people had continued their hard work.

With just how much time having gone by, it wasn't exactly surprising to find that quite a bit had happened while we were gone. Vercopa had grown noticeably, with a new park, several apartment complexes, and more being started and completed during our journey and quarantine. Some of that had been in a rush to make room for the new Jedi, but most of it had been in preparation for normal growth. Other projects, which the build teams had already been working on, were finally completed during our time away.

About a month into our mission, the farms finally harvested their first mass-planted staple crops. It felt like that had taken forever, but in reality, Nirn's vitality and environment had significantly shortened that process. While we had been growing and harvesting on a smaller scale, especially from a few existing groves in the jungle that we had found and been tending to, this was the first large-scale, multi-farm harvest. The crops were stable grains, tubers, and vegetables conducive to long-term storage,

Our food budget was at rock bottom, and we didn't anticipate it going up for some time.

Speaking of food, Port Green was now a fully settled town, the first on Nirn. All of the non-permanent homes and buildings had been packed up and replaced by permanent structures, as well as several dozen additional apartments for Mon Calamari, as the number of members of that species in the Skyforged Vanguard continued to climb. I was happy to have them, though I was a bit worried that they would start to dominate the shipyard. I had no problem with them as a species, but having that sort of grouping, a species that works the shipyard almost exclusively, felt a bit off. Thankfully, we weren't quite at that point yet, mostly because plenty of the Mon Cal were also fishermen, diving off the coast to gather some of our harder-to-find seafood.

There were quite a few [Quarrens](#) as well, but thankfully, we hadn't had any problems with the two species. Despite coming from the same planet, the two species often did not get along.

Beyond food and population growth, once I could finally start vetting people again, our production had also improved. Once again, our CIS investigations had paid off, this time in the form of an abandoned factory half-buried in the sands of an old Separatist base. It was

damaged, but by the time we landed on Nirn, Miru and her team had already salvaged and repaired enough to start producing Naval droids, something I was absolutely ecstatic about.

With the ability to produce our own Naval droids, upgraded slightly with better programming and some hardware, we would be able to cut the cost of staffing our new ships considerably. Obviously, we still refused to fill every position with droids, but with the right systems, they could fill up to seventy-five or eighty percent.

The factory was *slow*, with just a dozen droids a week, but it was automatic and expandable as more of the factory was uncovered and salvaged. As most of our production was, the recovered factory lines were settled on the moon to keep Nirn clean. The new factory would be expanded past Naval droids as well, and Miru was hopeful that we could tune it to start producing parts for our starships, reducing their cost.

Recovery beyond the first discovery was slow, and they weren't sure what lay deeper in the sands, but we were all excited to find out.

All of that, of course, brought us to our starship production.

The shipyard was done.

They had finished it just under two weeks before we returned home, the heavily automated production yard running through a week of tests to confirm it was in working order, before a few issues were cleared up. Then, after a large meeting, with me tuning in through a holoprojector, it was decided that we should produce our first, still nameless, custom ship. It had been under construction for five days when we landed, and beyond stopping by home to change and have some real food, it was the first stop Ahsoka and I made on my usual "I just returned home, what's everyone been up to?" tour.

We landed on the outskirts of the area, as airspeeders were not allowed within a certain area of the yard, an understandable precaution. As we approached, I could see our cranes lifting durasteel beams into place, the frame of our ship just starting to come together. A swarm of robots was moving with the durasteel beams, shifting the large pieces of metal and welding them in place.

Even if it was just the unfinished, bare frame, it was still impressive. After all, it was still just over six hundred meters long. Both Nuk and Li greeted us as we approached the facility itself, guiding us to one of the several observation points so we could get a better look. The one we went to was built up along one of the larger stationary cranes, giving us the perfect view of the shipyard.

"Congratulations, both of you," I said, looking out of a viewport over the busy shipyard. "Getting this done so quickly, and so well? A job well done!"

"Thank you," Li said with a nod. "This opportunity has been worth the extra work."

"We have enjoyed being part of the Skyforged," Nuk added. "We look forward to being part of it for quite some time longer."

The shipyard was a flurry of activity, though most of the faster movements were parts of the automated processes, like the flying welding droids. There were still plenty of people walking around, but they were working on smaller tasks, mostly preparing pieces for further assembly.

"Any setbacks?" I asked, still watching the organized chaos. "Any issues coming up?"

"Nothing major," Li assured me. "A few growing pains."

"Most of which have already been solved," Nuk added. "Things mislabeled, a few droids with poor settings."

"Nothing you wouldn't expect to see," Li finished.

"Good, that's good," I said with a nod, eventually tearing my eyes away from the viewport. "Any way we could get a closer tour? I don't want to get in the way, but..."

"There are some places you can visit," Li agreed with a nod.

"I will guide you," Nuk finished, gesturing back the way we came. "Just follow me."

Nuk led us out of the observation area and down into the inner workings of the shipyard. A lot of the process seemed to be prep work, preparing ship parts and sections to lay out on the frame. Already, I could see power cores being assembled in half-chunks, and Nuk explained they would be hoisted into the frame and fused together there. At this point, while they were still working on the frame, only larger parts of the interior were being assembled, as they needed to be in place before the frame was finished, since the frame didn't leave enough gaps to put them in afterward.

When the tour was over, Ahsoka and I headed out to the temporary training space we set up for all of the mages I had created before we headed off into wild space. Since some of the mages might be throwing around dangerous Destruction magic, I designated the gravel pit as the magic training area until we could get something more permanent set up. When we arrived, some of the clone mages were there, as were a few others.

The clone mages were doing surprisingly well, already having learned to heal themselves, several Destruction spells, conjuration, and more. They were clearly going for a more combat-focused loadout, but they were still racking up an impressive list of spells. Mara, who had been training with me on board the *Hope* during quarantine, had fewer spells as we were a bit restricted, but I was still exceedingly happy with her progress, as she was also training with a sword and dagger, and doing quite well in that aspect.

However, despite spending some time giving advice to the clone troopers, I was primarily there for something else, to practice my new shouts. Apparently, holding off and potentially killing a monster worm the size of a few eighteen-wheelers was enough of an achievement to unlock my next set of shouts.

As before, when I first unlocked the Thu'um, I received two new shouts, neither of which I had any control over. The first was Battle Fury, or Mid Vur Shaan. According to my text, it

allowed me to essentially buff my allies, allowing them to move and attack faster. If I remembered correctly, it was an external version of another shout, which would do the same to me when used. The fact that it affected allies, not the user, was why I brought Ahsoka along.

The second shout was Dismay, or Faas Ru Maar. I wasn't exactly ecstatic about getting a spell designed to scare the living hell out of my enemies, not because it wasn't useful, but because, in reality, fear was unpredictable. Even if it somehow magicked away the fact that some people reacted to fear by squeezing triggers, which admittedly was very possible, causing people to run away was still a nebulous concept. Would they run and hide? Would they run and find help? Would they run until they found something big enough to kill me? So many questions made the spell more difficult to use consistently.

That didn't mean I wouldn't learn it. Dragon shouts were far too potent not to be useful, even if the circumstances might be very specific for me to consider using them. It just meant I would be learning Battle Fury first.

Ahsoka settled in to do some meditation, and I essentially did the same. Decoding the meaning behind the words of Battle Fury, or Loyal, Valor, Inspire, was unlikely to require quite as much running as Whirlwind Sprint did.

As I repeated the words in my head, it felt pretty obvious to me that the deeper meaning of the shout had more to do with my connection to my ally, Ahsoka, in this instance, than anything else. Loyal made me think of my faith in her, in how I trusted her to have my back. Valor, in the context of the first word, brought to mind the concept of fighting side by side, while Inspire made me think of how my magic could inspire my allies to fight on a new level.

"Mid Vur Shaan!"

I frowned as the shout failed, my voice falling flat. The first attempt had felt wrong on several levels, but I struggled to see why. Its essence was about using the Thu'um to enhance my allies, specifically tied to how I could help them... right?

The truth washed over me suddenly, like a spark of understanding, and I immediately felt foolish. I had been focusing on myself, but Battle Fury wasn't about me inspiring my allies, it was about *our* Loyalty, *our* Valor, *our* Inspiration. How Ahsoka and I had each other's backs, how we kept each other brave and true, and how we inspired each other.

I spent a moment focusing on Ahsoka, about fighting alongside her, about how we could fight like one unit. About how I knew I could trust her to keep me in check, just like I would do the same for her. About how we inspired each other to reach new heights.

"MID VUR SHAAN!"

Now I could feel the Thu'um, hear the echoing power in my voice. Beside me, Ahsoka gasped, and when I turned to look, she was already on her feet.

"Whoa... that is a rush," She said, watching as wisps of power circled and danced around her body, already reaching for her sabers. "I can feel it..."

"Show me," I said with a smile, only for my jaw to drop as she whipped through several stances with her lightsabers, her body moving with a grace and speed that was considerably enhanced. "Damn..."

"It feels like my body is light, but tight like a drum," She said. "My whole body is ready, like a coiled shock. How much faster was I moving?"

"Noticeably faster," I said, still a little surprised. "Fast enough that you might slightly outclass someone wearing nothing but dexterity-enhancing enchantments."

"How long does it-"

Before she could finish, the motes of power circling her faded, and she let out a long breath.

"Damn... that's tough," She admitted, standing up straight, her lightsabers held to the side. "Everything feels different, slower."

"How bad is it?" I asked, now concerned, "Are you sore? Any feelings of being cold or muscle damage?"

"No, nothing like that," She responded, rolling her shoulder with a frown. "It's just a feeling of being slowed. It's not a death sentence, but if you weren't expecting it, and it happened at the wrong time... It would certainly be something someone could exploit."

"Fair, just means we will have to use it with caution," I said. "You would dominate a few Inquisitors like that, not even a problem."

"What's next?" Ahsoka asked, turning off her two lightsabers.

"Now we keep on training," I said with a shrug. "I need to get better at using it, and the people I will be using it on need to get used to being under its effects."

"And when the effects end," She added, and I nodded in agreement. "Also... It's not the same, but it might not be a bad idea to have some of the Jedi fight against people who you use it on."

"Why?" I asked with a frown. "Unless it's like three on one, they will get creamed."

"Exactly," She responded. "Being able to counter someone who is physically more capable than you is a valuable lesson. How to pull back without getting hurt, how to use the terrain to your advantage to escape, and how to focus on defense to buy time. It's grim, but..."

"Not a bad idea," I said with a nod. "Reach out to Amescoll and see if anyone is interested. I'm going to get the crew so I can practice with them."