

The long line that our crew carved into the forest was hard to look at, like a long scar cut into the skin of the planet. Dozens of labor droids and several biological workers had cleared a path through a forest area of around three hundred feet, cutting down trees and using them to shore up a path wide enough for construction equipment, specifically a few haulers and lifting vehicles. It was ugly, it was unfortunate, but it was also necessary.

At the fat end of the long, brutal cut was a small grove of trees, maybe thirty in total, which had been exposed by more clearing. A few of the trees from the grove had already been cut down, and were in the process of being examined, while labor droids and haulers carefully shifted the dirt that was underneath them away, using the path that had just been completed.

As we approached, Ahsoka suddenly stumbled, nearly falling to her knees as she undoubtedly stepped inside the anti-Force bubble. I quickly caught her, gently lowering her to a stump, letting her sit down while I kneeled in front of her.

"I'm guessing we hit the bubble?" I asked, Ahsoka nodding in response, her eyes closed. "You okay?"

"I'm fine," She said, taking a long, deep breath, before slowly letting it out. "It's just... more than I expected. I... wasn't prepared. The total disconnect. I feel unbalanced, like someone took my [montral](#) away without warning..."

I knelt by her for another few minutes, before she finally stood and we continued on. I knew that, generally speaking, the longer someone had been trained in and aware of the Force, the harder it was to be around a ysalamiri. Luke could handle it with some disorientation, but someone who had been trained in the Force since they were youngling? I was honestly surprised Ahsoka could stand, never mind follow me closer. I made sure to stick close by, just in case she started to stumble again.

Together, we watched as more and more dirt was hauled away, delivered to the *Quiet Ark*, where the specially selected crew then brought it inside and filled their biome pod, carefully distributing the dirt. After the biome pod was filled, we began storing the dirt in large crates, each one capable of carrying more than a ton of soil. We needed quite a bit of it, even beyond enough to keep the trees buried and living in the ship.

Once the hold of the *Ark* was partially filled, and the specialists were certain the right conditions were met, it was time to finally attempt to move the first tree. We picked one along the edge, close to the path, and easily accessible. Then, I made my way to the base, standing under the tree's wide branches. Unlike the other empty trees, which were the same species that we cut down to reach the dirt below, this one was filled with ysalamiri. The strange lizards were physically anchored to the tree by their claws, many of them doing their best to hide or seem to camouflage themselves, though only a few of them actually moved.

As I stood under the tree, the workers, under the careful guidance of our specialists, slowly began to dig around and under it, cutting through the tree's root structure. They still left a good amount of the roots intact, essentially cutting around a ten-foot-wide, four-foot-deep disk

centered around the tree, free from the ground. Once the cut was made, the disk and tree were placed in a prefabricated vessel, a cap for the disk of dirt and roots. It was then carefully lifted off the ground and guided onto a hauler, which slowly transported the plant back to the *Quiet Ark*. There, it was offloaded, brought into the ship, and placed in the biome pod.

The entire time, I was riding with the tree, leaning and standing on the base, constantly maintaining several, slightly modified, Circles of Healing on the moving tree. The spell was adjusted to heal more indiscriminately, which drained the spell considerably faster, but kept the extremely sensitive tree and its occupants in completely perfect health. When the experts were sure that the tree was secure and as stable as they could get it, I stopped casting the spell, stepping away from the tree and hopping down from the plug of dirt and root at its base.

"Not bad," I said, dusting my hands off, despite barely having to get them dirty. "Now we just need a dozen or so more."

One by one, we continued to haul more of the lizard-laden trees to the ship. The first eight were carefully placed along the biome pod, but not planted inside the actual planting area. These were our transplants, and I had already selected a specific location for them, which was under construction. Meanwhile, the final eight, which came from the second grove we located, were carefully planted inside the biome pods planting area. We also included a plethora of other plants, as well as the underbrush that had been growing under the trees, with the goal of providing the little lizards a home as close as possible to the original.

You see, my plans for the ysalamiri were *not* small. These little lizards represented an *incredible* advantage against some of the galaxy's most formidable threats in the coming years. Not only that, but I had a sneaking suspicion that they would be a very potent tool in helping Jedi who slip into the dark side recover in a healthy, stable way. Under the effects of the anti-Force bubble, a troubled Jedi could fully and easily confront all of their emotions, without fear of slipping into a downward spiral of anger. Then, when their proper, medically sound psychological treatment was complete, they could gently be reconnected to the Force.

It was still technically only theory, but I had a good feeling that it would work at least partially. Besides, even if it didn't, having a way to disable fallen Force users was still worth every cent we spent.

The eight still separated trees would be planted at a facility back on Nirn, where they could be studied, while also providing the service of enforcing Nirn's first official prison, one designed to work against normals and Force sensitives alike. Meanwhile, the *Quiet Ark* would be upgraded, armored, and armed, while a portion of its storage would be modified to serve as holding cells. It would serve as the Jedi's prisoner transport, as well as a mobile, anti-Force user asset. With eight trees filled with ysalamiri in the Biome pod, the anti-Force bubble completely surrounded the ship, as well as nearly two hundred and fifty *meters* in all directions. With the right moves, just flying the starship above a target would cut out their connection to the Force.

While the day progressed, we were not the only ones working hard. A team of BX battledroids, a few members of Corvax's team, and Vaz, had spent the day hunting for the

usually nocturnal vornskr. While not nearly as successful as I was hoping for, they did manage to find a half dozen pups, taken from several stunned packs of the dangerous hunters. I wanted to study these creatures as well, and while I wasn't as eager to use them to our advantage like the ylasamiri, they were absolutely worth understanding and having on hand, especially if we could successfully domesticate them like Talon Karrde did.

All in all, by the time the sun was setting, most of the people on the ground were exhausted. Myrkr was very much a jungle world, meaning that just about everything you did on its surface was difficult, from hiking through its depths hunting for a dangerous predator, to moving fourteen trees across the landscape and into a ship. Hell, even breathing was a pain, with the heavy humidity making it feel like you were half gasping, half gulping down water.

When we finally took off, we all sighed a happy, environmentally controlled sigh. As we rose into the air, our ships leaving the cobbled-together criminal base behind, we fired a salvo of turbolasers to knock what little was left of the structure to the ground. The "base" was barely worth being called that, and if I needed a place to settle on the planet, I could build a better one in only a few days.

With our newly acquired trump card, we made a quick jump into deep space, just about half a day, before dropping out and waiting. I was on board the *Quiet Ark*, keeping the still-unplanted trees stable as we transported them, which essentially meant healing them occasionally as the experts took care of them. The good news was that the actually planted trees, as well as their passengers, were doing well, showing no signs of failure. Granted, they hadn't been planted for more than twenty-four hours at that point, but it was still reassuring.

Only a few hours after we dropped out of hyperspace, the *Starcaller* appeared in the distance, linking up comms and greeting us. From there, the *Starcaller* landed inside the *Hope*. Mara Jade was transferred into a small shuttle, which they connected to the *Quiet Ark* through an emergency docking port on both starships. The Imperial spy was still in her medically induced coma, accompanied by Tatnia and Vaz, as well as the medical droid that had been keeping an eye on her.

"And you're sure these trees will keep the Emperor from using his freak Force powers to track us down?" Tatnia asked, as we passed through the biome pod to get to the crew quarters, where we would be keeping Mara until we arrived home.

"They should do, they create a bubble where the Force cannot penetrate," I explained. "It's like being blind to anyone who is too reliant on it, hence why Ahsoka is back on the *Hope*. To the Emperor, it should seem she suddenly winked out of his senses. With any luck, he will assume she is dead."

Honestly, I had no idea if news of us being on Myrkr would reach back to Imperial Intelligence. The *Hope* had kept a good bit of distance between us and the planet, and we hadn't spent all that long planetside to begin with. I was hoping the little detail fell through the cracks, because if it did, Palpy might actually assume that Mara was just dead, making both our lives and her life much less complicated.

Once Mara was settled into her new room, we made the final jump back to Nirn. In total, the trip took us just over a week, which was thankfully just enough time for the last stage of my plan to be completed. Well, to reach a point of completion that it could hold Mara.

When I first formulated this plan, I spent some time debating where exactly I would place the final facility. The *Ark* could land wherever I wanted, which was basically anywhere away from the Jedi on Nirn.

I contemplated placing it in an underground facility on the moon, but that would compromise the facility's secondary purpose, which was to serve as a place of recovery for Jedi who had skirted the edge of darkness and needed help getting back on track. I wanted this place to be one part prison, one part mental health facility, and one part recovery clinic.

If I wanted two of those parts to work, building a bleak, duracrete, and durachrome bunker deep inside a desolate moon was not what I needed.

So, instead, I picked a random, decently sized tropical island in the middle of one of Nirn's oceans and buried a prison bunker *under* it. The island itself was surrounded by deep oceans, far from the ancient Jedi temple, and sat atop tall cliffs. Altogether, the eight ysalamiri infested trees we had for transplant were more than enough to engulf the entire island, so after tearing down the already existing ecosystem on the surface, we started transplanting the new one in.

The facility was still partially under construction, but the environmental shields that enveloped the entire island were in place, allowing the experts in charge of the transplanted biome to control exactly what the interior was like. The underground construction was also complete, sped up considerably by utilizing salvaged parts from the same venators that were used to piece together the *Hope*. Mara, and any other prisoners we happened to pick up, would be staying in prison cells very similar to a venator's brig.

Once everything was finished, the island would have its own capital ship strength shields, defensive anti-starfighter turrets as well as, when we could find some, a pair of heavier turbolasers, as well as a landing berth and maintenance space for the *Ark*. We considered stationing a quarter of starfighters there, riddled with tracking equipment and lacking hyperdrive systems, but it we eventually decided against it. We were already going overboard with staffing and building the entire facility, it was better not to tempt fate by including a built-in method of escape.

In total, when the project was complete, its final price tag would probably be around one and a half million credits. A steep cost, but one I was more than happy to pay. While, at the moment, it was a facility built to hold exactly one person, the investment was in future scenarios. Not only could the ylasamiri someday trivialize fights that might have otherwise been dangerous and causality-heavy, but they could also help those who slip into the dark recover.

Once the *Quiet Ark* had landed, a small army of labor droids, construction equipment, and specialists began moving the eight transplant trees out of the biome pod, along with the

extra soil we brought. Once that was done, the rest of the plant life would be transferred, turning the island into a little slice of Myrkr.

The vornskr would be moved to a different facility, somewhere far away from Jedi, and far from their preferred prey. I couldn't risk them going after either one, so the facility that studied them would likely be on the moon, or something similar.

While the planting crew was hard at work, we escorted the still unconscious Mara Jade down to her holding cell. We spent a considerable amount of time double-checking the security, and once everything was set, the medical droid administered the countermeasure to the induced coma. She stirred, slowly coming to full consciousness. The second she realized something was wrong, she tensed up, going utterly still on the cell's cot.

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Mara Jade," I said with my arms crossed, standing in the corner of her cell.

"What... How did you know... Where am I?" She asked, bringing her hand up to her face, roughly rubbing her eye.

"I suppose a bit of congratulations are in order," I admitted with a smirk. "You did at least partially succeed in part of your mission. You are currently on Nirn, the home planet of the Skyforged Vanguard."