

At this point, revealing my abilities was something I had gotten good at. Start with a subtle but undeniable bit of magic, a glowing light, a sparkle of something harmless, just to breach the idea. Then, as they debate and refute, I calmly answer their questions. Eventually, as they start to question everything they know, you explain that "magic" is just a word and that the galaxy is filled with crazy and strange things. Was the ability to control a nebulous, self-contained energy really that strange? That gives them something to latch onto, rather than flounder around, trying to grasp something so mind-bending. Finally, you finish by performing some more incredible feats of magic, like conjuring something, healing a wound, or, if possible, flinging around some fire or ice.

That said, all three of our newest crew members were special cases for separate reasons. Vakim and Dazem were Mikkians, who apparently frequently worshiped or at least deified the Force for many of their planet's religions. This meant that they immediately, and rather stubbornly, assumed that my abilities were all due to the Force. Oddly enough, it was my healing spells that finally convinced them I wasn't using the Force. Since they both had so much connection and understanding about the Force, they both knew how a Force-sensitive could use the Force to heal, which meant they also knew that my spells were something very, very different.

Allum, on the other hand, took a very utilitarian soldier's perspective. Since it was obviously real, the only thing that mattered to him was that it was dependable and worked as I described. He also had some experience with Force-sensitives, so he knew what I was doing was strange and very different from what he had seen during the Clone Wars. When he realized my Clairvoyance spell actually worked, he accepted it with a shrug.

"I fought alongside Jedi during the war. What's one more strange yet very real cosmic mystery?" He said, running his hand along the scar that ran along his entire head, all the way from the back of his skull to his eye. "Don't really care where it comes from, so long as it works."

By the time I was done showing off, we had moved to the cargo space of the *Chariot* so I had a bit more room to show off. Most of the crew was sitting on or leaning against the various crates, boxes, and equipment we had stored there. The siblings, Vakim and Dazem, looked dazed, but their nonsensical denial was gone, while Allum had maintained his mostly unphased look.

"So, you can use the same tracking... spell, at long range?" He asked, still scratching at his scar. "How does it interact with hyperspace?"

"It doesn't, as far as I know. It still works, but it's not like I can use it to find jump coordinates," I explained. "We will have to triangulate by jumping around a bit and then calculating their base location from that info."

"Easy if they are stationed on a planet or moon," Nal pointed out. "Not so if they are in deep space."

"Why?"

"Your method is too crude. Plotting an arrow that only you can see is going to lead to deviations," Nal answered, Allum shifting to look at the Duros. "Just a few degrees off and a short hyperspace jump later, and we missed by a whole system."

"So, um... let's first read through the information people have on the group," Julius suggested. "We could probably cut a lot of the nearby systems out of the running just because they are too far away."

"That is true... from how they are described, they seem to be consistent," Vakim agreed, seemingly pulled from her magic-induced funk to listen and offer advice. "Most likely, we would be able to cut down the list significantly."

"I take it that means my magic hasn't scared you away?" I asked, looking at all three of the new members. "You're all very welcome to leave. No need to worry about that."

"It's gonna take some time to get used to," Vakim admitted, only to follow it up with a confident nod. "But I see no reason to call our agreement over."

"Good, I'm glad to hear that."

We hung around for another hour or so, the entire crew getting to know each other properly, all while occasionally showing off more magic or answering questions about it. When we finally went our separate ways, Pola and our new three companions returned to the *Intervention*, while everyone else eventually made their way to their quarters.

Among discussing old stories and our most recent activities, Vakim also expressed a desire to get a feel for the *Intervention* before we went out on any bounty hunt, even if we were hoping to avoid space combat by hopefully attacking the pirates at their base. So, rather than leaving as soon as we could, we decided to stay on Birgis for about another night. In the morning, Julius, Nal, Vaz, and I, along with four BXs, would go on one final hunting trip, this time with the *Brick* as support, while the *Chariot* and the *Intervention* left for most of the day. They would do some combat drills, set up a few more low-powered live-fire combat simulations, and even practice a few basic fleet movements. After about eight hours they would return, pick us up and take us off planet.

The four of us headed out on the *Brick* bright and early, receiving a final farewell from our compatriots about twenty minutes after we left through the comms. It was a bit nerve-wracking, knowing that they would be so far away for the first time in a while. Thankfully, with the *Brick* as upgraded as it was and with three of my trusted crewmates with me, I quickly squashed the anxiety and focused on the task at hand.

If hunting had been easy before with just Julius and I, it was now a leisurely walk in the park with our additional help. We easily took down another torgena nest, as well as another unruly herd of dorum, this one twice the size as our first bounty. By the end of our eight hours, we ended up filling almost all of the soul gems I had prepared, which at this point was nearly all of the Kyber crystals we had harvested from the Dantooine Crystal Caves. I felt confident I now had the resources to equip every crew member, with resources left over to experiment with.

When we were done cashing in the bounty for clearing the torgena nest, we headed out to the city outskirts and landed the *Brick*. Once we landed, we waited for about an hour before the *Chariot* returned and messaged down from orbit. A quick ride out of the atmosphere later, and we were back on board.

"How did it go?" I asked Tatnia, who was waiting for us at the port hangar entrance.

"Good, Calima was impressed by Vakim," She responded as we walked. "And Vakim was impressed by the *Intervention*. It plowed through the tri-fighters too."

"Well, they aren't really designed to take down capital ships, even small cruisers," I pointed out.

"Vakim did point that out," Tatnia explained with a nod. "She was pleased with the point defense capabilities of the quad turrets."

"Great, did they mention how working with the droids was?"

"No, but you can ask them yourself."

I nodded as we stepped into the lounge, Miru already waiting for us at the table. Calima called back from the cockpit, warning us that we would be making a short, five-minute jump to give us some privacy as we sat down. True to her words, the ship shifted through hyperspace and about five minutes later dropped back to realspace. When she was done with the jump, she joined us as well, everyone sitting around the lounge table. The holo-projector in the middle of the table blinked on, showing Pola, Dazem, Vakim, and Allum with a backdrop of the *Intervention's* bridge.

We spent about thirty minutes discussing how the training exercise went and how they felt about the ship and the droids. All three of the new crew members were satisfied with the arrangement and even expressed surprise at how well the naval droids worked. Eventually, I brought up a new potential mission, looking to Vaz.

"Alright, Vaz, you had time to do some research. What did you uncover?" I asked, turning to look at the Shistavanen woman.

"Judging by the location of their reported attacks, we are almost certain they are somewhere near the trade loop that the Birgis system sits on," She explained. "Their attacks are too consistent and well-timed to be too far from it. Plus, as Allum pointed out, it's clearly weighted to one side of the loop."

"So, they attack more frequently on one side?" Julius asked. "Wouldn't that mean they are probably closer to that side?"

"Unless they are intentionally distancing themselves from their location," Allum pointed out. "The only thing that their attacks being weighted to one side reliably proves is that they are close by in general."

"...How?" I ask after a moment of trying to puzzle out the answer for myself. "I get the part that there is no way to know if the grouping is due to incompetence or planning, but how does it prove they aren't too far away?"

"Because if a group is willing to travel for days through hyperspace to keep themselves hidden, they wouldn't be stupid enough to attack one place more aggressively than others. They would keep it genuinely random to avoid any patterns leaking through," He explained with a shrug. "Combined with the fact that these raids are only being reported around this loop tells us they are most likely nearby."

"Yeah, alright, fair enough," I said with a nod. "Let's go with that for now. If Clairvoyance starts to lead us in a different direction, we can deal with it then. For now, let's focus on the loop. Racer, if you would."

The astromech beeped and whistled before sliding forward and connecting to the holo table. He took control of the projection, and after a moment, the image of the *Intervention* crew disappeared, replaced by an image of the loop we were just discussing, systems and planets labeled accordingly. A line of hyperspace jumps traced themselves along the map, showing where we would be jumping.

"Right. In a moment, I will cast Clairvoyance looking for the three wanted pirates, and Racer will record the data," I explained, patting the astromech's head. "Depending on where it points, we will make another jump, this one around ten hours. Then, we will rinse and repeat four or five times to weed out any outliers. Anyone see any issues with that?"

When no one said anything, I nodded, and Racer disengaged from the table, the map changing to show the rest of the crew.

"In that case, stand by *Intervention*. Calima will send you to our first destination shortly."

Vakim nodded and the projection snapped off, the projector going dark a moment later. After she was sure the meeting was mostly over, Miru leaned forward with an excited smile.

"Racer and I whipped something up to help while we were away," Miru said with a smile. "It's not perfect, but it should make pinpointing things a bit easier. Go ahead and project the compass Racer."

The little droid whistled, and a simple line appeared in front of his own holo projection unit, parallel to the deck below our feet. The line was tipped with an arrow, which pointed back at the droid, who whistled excitedly.

"So you just need to tell Racer when this arrow lines up with your arrow from your *Clairvoyance* spell line up," Miru explained. "It's nowhere near perfect, but it should help."

"This is extremely helpful," I said genuinely. "I honestly hadn't figured out how I was gonna describe the direction precisely when none of you guys can see it. Alright, you ready, Racer?"

Over the next ten minutes, we painstakingly adjusted the projected arrow over my conjured arrow. It took a minute to realize that Racer could use his pincers to grab my hand and keep it steady, allowing me to pause and let my magicka regenerate, as well as cast the spell twice more for each of the pirate leaders. When we had finally taken all three measurements, one for each pirate leader we were hunting, Calima worked out a destination for us. When everything was done, she quickly sent the new coordinates to the *Intervention*. Together we jumped to lightspeed, our destination set to the middle of nowhere, eleven hours away.

The crew spread out to do their own thing, primarily focused on general maintenance. I knew Tatnia and Julius planned on cleaning the guns we had used while hunting while Nal headed off to work on the Arrow. Miru was, as usual, tucked away in her workshop, happily working on a personal project, which she said wasn't ready to reveal yet. While they all worked, I made my way back to the enchanting room, determined to work on the process.

At this point, I essentially had two paths I could take, though I knew I would eventually need to work on both of them. First, I needed to improve my enchanting endurance. Focusing for such a long time on the process was a skill I needed to improve because I was pretty sure it was one-half of the process of creating truly impressive enchantments. The second half was also the second step or path I could take, which was learning how to string multiple soul gems together so I could switch once I drained one completely. While that ability would immediately let me create slightly more powerful enchantments by letting me quickly burn through a lot more life energy, once I could focus my way through a full soul stone at a slow pace, adding a second and maybe even a third would push my enchanting to even higher levels.

Unfortunately, seeing as I couldn't even make it through a single soul gem at a slow pace, looking forward to doing three in a row was probably overzealous.

After a bit of debating, I decided to spend the next few hyperspace jumps when I wasn't sleeping or taking a break, trying my best to improve my mental stamina. I picked out a decent-looking amulet, settling on creating a fortify strength enchantment. As I set to work, rather than just repeating the process exactly as I had done before, I experimented with focusing my mind in different ways, hoping to find some sort of trick or mental method to make staying focused easier. Unfortunately, I soon discovered that it really just came down to mental discipline, so I gave up and simply focused.

Nearly four hours later, I finally drained the soul gem completely, the stone crumbling as it was drained of the last bit of life energy. I stumbled back and nearly collapsed in the room's only chair, the mental fatigue catching up with me all at once, just as it had before. I don't know how long I sat there, my mind empty of thought, slowly recovering, but when I could finally string my thoughts together, I cast Respite and Fast healing on myself, letting out a groan as the energy suffused me. As I sat in the chair, feeling my magic ease my pain, I slowly lifted the newly enchanted amulet up, the small metal plate, shaped in a symbol I didn't recognize, slowly spinning as it hung from the metal chain.

"If this is how it's going to be every time, making stuff for everyone is going to suck," I mumbled to myself before shaking my head and standing.

I made my way out of the enchanting room, trying to think of the best way to test my new amulet, both because I was curious about its effectiveness and because I desperately needed a break.