

Once the initial excitement of beating the pirates had passed, along with ample celebration that included the ship crews once they landed, we settled down and got to work. Since this bounty involved an entire group, a "local" agent had to inspect the bounty in person in order for us to receive our reward. To make that easier, we set the droids to clean up and carry the bodies to one of the empty plateaus.

According to Nal and Tatnia's research, anything that the pirates had "gathered" that didn't have an existing report as stolen property was up for grabs. We were hopeful that with how long they had been operating outside the system, any records of the starfighter and remaining freighter had been lost, meaning we could claim them under the current bounty laws. The problem was that these ships were clearly military ships, with specs far outside what the Empire allowed civilians to own, even with how outdated they were.

So, while the agent would have no legal right to claim anything not listed as stolen, he had every right to leave and report the military tech to the powers that be, who could then order him to return and seize anything illegal. As far as Nal and Tatnia could piece together, this overly complicated rigamarole was deliberately done at the behest of the bounty hunter guild and various mercenary groups to give their members an opportunity to gather more profit while still keeping the Empire happy. We were definitely skating around the edge as it seemed to be more about snagging a few extra blasters and any credits the bounty had on them rather than the eight starfighters and a modified YT freighter we were hoping to grab.

All of that boiled down to us having a short window, specifically after the agent arrived on site and before he or another official returned later, to get away with everything that we wanted, even the stuff that was considered illegal, and not be charged with anything. Fortunately, it would take about three and a half days for the agent to make it to the site, which gave us plenty of time to plan and prepare.

While we waited for our bounty agent, the *Chariot* ran a dozen or so salvage trips up into orbit to gather our damaged raindrops and most of the pirates' starfighters. It was a bit of work, but with the *Brick* capable of latching on to the wrecks with its landing clamps, we were able to gather two of the three raindrops, three of the headhunters, and two of the ARC's. The remaining starfighters and the smaller modified freighter were either lost to the planet's gravity or not worth salvaging.

The ships we did gather ranged from almost intact to barely worth the spare parts, but if our quickly cobbled-together plan worked, even the latter might still be worth the effort.

We also spent plenty of time reviewing the camp, looking through every nook and cranny for anything we wanted. Miru set aside a crate of rare and interesting tools, some of them older than me, but apparently worth a good chunk of credits. We also filled a crate, which we found, with some of the better quality blaster pistols and rifles, which were stored on the *Intervention* since they didn't have a spare weapons bin yet. The most significant find was two separate

safes containing fifteen thousand credits in total, which I immediately split between everyone as a pre-payout bonus.

When the agent finally arrived, he came on an old, maybe even pre-clone warship that I didn't recognize, escorted by several soldiers. He inspected the site and marked nearly two dozen crates of varying ages and origins, as well as one of the newest-looking structures, as stolen goods, meaning we couldn't claim them. He also reluctantly confirmed that none of the ships had any records of being stolen. In fact, the freighter was legally owned by one of the pirate leaders, though at this point, it was definitely breaking several civilian weapon laws.

Once he had paid us the bounty in full, a total of a hundred and five thousand credits between the bounty for the group and the bounties specifically on all three leaders, he attempted to convince us to leave. When it was clear that we knew the rules, he attempted to strong-arm us into leaving, claiming that whatever laws we were trying to use to our advantage, no one really followed them and that they would get us into a lot of trouble. When he assured us the ships would be used to help protect people from future pirate groups, Nal pointed out it was much more likely that he would sell the ships for his own profit. Whether Nal had guessed right or he had just given up, the agent stopped trying to convince us and quickly left, warning us he would be back in twenty-four hours.

While I was pretty sure that was bullshit since there were no planets twenty-four hours away, it did give us a solid timescale to shoot for.

The second the auditor made the jump out of the system, I sent a comms message to Nevue. His crew, as well as the freighter, spare pilots, and mechanics he had requisitioned when I called him, lifted off from the opposite side of the planet and landed on one of the cleared plateaus. They swarmed over the ship and starfighters, preparing them to leave as soon as possible.

Originally, the crew and I debated for a while on just what we would do with all of these ships. The starfighters were all serious military tech, even if they were a bit dated, and the freighter, while a bit of a hack job, could have been a potent addition with some proper time under the hydrospanner. The problem was that not only did we have no way of transporting the starfighters, but we also didn't have a place to store them, resources to fuel them, or a crew to pilot and maintain them. In a lot of ways, it was a repeat of the situation we had with the Lambda-class shuttle we stole from the Inquisitor. It was all stuff we wanted, potent military hardware, but none of it fit with what we could handle at the moment.

The Rebels, on the other hand, had a deep need for any sort of starfighter or ship they could get their hands on. I would be cutting them a solid deal, but seventy-five percent of something we found and couldn't actually keep and had already been paid a considerable amount of money to clear out?

Hard to beat a deal like that.

While the rebels got to work, Nevue joined me in the *Chariot*, reaching out and shaking my hand as we sat down at the lounge. Tatnia and Nal sat on either side of me, while Nevue had brought his second in command, as well as another crewmember I didn't recognize.

"I've got to tell you, Deacon, you keep on calling me like this to bring in your finds, and I'm going to get another promotion, no matter how much I don't want it," He joked, shaking his head. "How is it that you manage to shake out so much resources and money out of any situation you're in?"

"It's all about selecting the right location," I said with a shrug. "That and a lot of luck. You get sent to missions on hostile worlds to steal from the Imperials. That means you don't control the battlefield when it's over, so you immediately have to run with whatever you managed to grab. If you pick your targets better, when the dust settles, you have all the time in the world to loot them down to the bedrock."

For a moment, the Zabrak was too surprised to speak, clearly having meant the comment as rhetorical and hadn't expected a legitimate answer. Before he could respond, I continued.

"Of course, the fact that we keep stumbling on missions and bounties like that has basically just been luck."

That got a chuckle from the rebel, who nodded in understanding. We talked a bit more about what he and his team had been up to before I brought up the rescue mission on Yavin IV.

"Last I heard, they were around the outskirts of the system in deep space, waiting for the go-ahead," He explained. "The only reason I know that is because we were on standby to join them if anything went wrong, and they needed a new ship capable of carrying passengers. Your call got us pulled from that list to come inspect what you found."

We talked a bit more about the rescue mission before, eventually, the conversation turned back to why Nevue was here, the ships and cargo.

"We've already gone through everything that we want," I explained. "You're welcome to literally everything here, save the cargo on the far northeastern pad. That's the stuff the bounty officer noted as being stolen and going to be picked up later."

"Right. Well, I do need to warn you, as a friend and someone who has worked with us before. We won't be able to match what you'd get selling to other people," Nevue admitted, looking sheepish as he leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms. "If you were looking to get the best price, I would recommend the Hutts, but we both know you'd rather trash it all than sell to them. You could probably find a mercenary company or maybe a nearby militia unit..."

"How much are you willing to spend?" I asked after he trailed off.

"Thirty for each starfighter and sixty for the freighter," He offered, and I couldn't help but frown. "Another fifty for the salvage and twenty-five for everything else."

"I was thinking more like fifty for each and eighty for the freighter," I countered, Nevue wincing in response.

"Deacon, these ships are old and heavily used," He pointed out. "They took good care of them, surprisingly good care if what my mechanic told me is true, but that age is going to show in maintenance costs real quick."

"It's still low. This is full military hardware, save the freighter, not stuff you need to upscale to make it effective," I pointed out.

"I understand that, but that only counts for so much."

I was silent for a long moment, considering my options. Nevue hadn't brought it up, at least not directly, but I knew he was aware of our restrictions and time limit here. There was very little chance I could get someone here to take away the ships before someone came around to seize everything we weren't supposed to have. He was really my only option, especially now, which meant that realistically, he could set his price. Before I could mention my dislike of the situation, he relented.

"Alright, how about this. We do thirty-two for each starfighter, sixty-two for the freighter, fifty for the salvage, and twenty-five for everything else. That's three hundred and ninety-three credits for a job you already got paid for."

"And around two hundred thousand below an already *low* price," I pointed out, starting to wonder if I had been wrong to assume that Nevue would do right by me.

"Yes, you're right. I won't deny it's a lowball price," Nevue responded apologetically. "But, it comes with an offer that I think you will like."

"... I'm listening."

"Right. So, during the Clone Wars, the Republic created a handful of forward operating stations, usually [FireStar II's](#). They were basically nearly self-sufficient deep space stations on the edge of their territory. If they pushed their territory forward, they would hook the stations up to hyperspace tugs and pull them to their new positions," He explained animatedly. "Unfortunately, when they *lost* territory, it became much harder to move them. That's what happened to *Station Omega-17-G*."

He pulled out a small datapad, tapping on it for a few moments before handing it to me. I looked at the image, which was a space station painted in the standard red and white of the old Republic Navy. I didn't recognize the name or station class, but it looked like a decently sized space station. When I was done, I handed the table to Tatnia so she could see it as well before gesturing for Nevue to continue.

"When it was stuck behind enemy lines, they tried to get it back, but the Separatists managed to find it and sent a small fleet to capture or destroy it," He explained, watching us as Tatnia passed the table to Nal. "According to the reports, Republic forces won, but the final act of the Separatists was to crash their largest ship into the station. They declared the station a lost cause and abandoned it."

"So you're suggesting we go out and find it?" I asked. "I mean, I guess that there is probably a lot to salvage..."

"We... have reliable info that says the station was far from totaled," Nevue admitted.

"So you're hoping to salvage the entire station?" I asked, surprised by the idea. "Even after being rammed. How did you guys even learn about this?"

"It came through our intelligence recently when the Empire went looking for it and failed to locate it," He explained. "According to the report, they believe the Separatist ship imparted enough thrust on the station while also knocking out its power that it drifted away from its position. It's lost in deep space, making it nearly impossible to find. Unless..."

"Unless you have someone capable of locating stuff with magic. Right," I finished, nodding along. "You have no idea how that ability works, though."

"... would it not work here?" He asked, suddenly much less confident of his offer.

"It would, as long as that image was of the actual station, but that's a recent development. I wouldn't have been able to do that when we first met," I explained, shaking my head with a smirk. "So what's the deal then? You get to cut around two hundred thousand credits off my bill, and in exchange, I get a wrecked station?"

"Basically, yes. We would like any of the supplies the station has, like food, plus any salvage you don't want," He explained, revealing what the Rebellion would get out of it. "In exchange, we will help with the salvage and help sell anything we don't use, with you getting most of the profits."

"And what if it's junk?"

"I think we both know there will be plenty of salvageable goods in a station like that, even if the structure as a whole is worthless," He pointed out. "Remember, the station was abandoned, not evacuated. Everything was left behind."

"Alright. We get first dibs on *all* salvage associated with this, save for shelf-stable food and similar things," I agreed with a nod. "I also want you guys to lend me some workers. People fix up the functional parts of the station, assuming there are any."

"We can't supply the resources, but manpower is something we can absolutely do," Nevue said before shrugging. "Especially considering the station would stay lost if not for you. I... think that is fair."

"Kinda like I'm getting paid twice for the same job?" I responded, reaching out to shake Nevue's hand, sealing the deal. "Seems like we both managed to make money out of nothing."

Nevue chuckled and gave my hand a squeeze before going through the process of paying us the promised credits. When he was done, he quickly left the ship, wanting to do his own inspections of what he had just purchased. Once he was gone, Nal stood from the table and returned a moment later, pouring a small glass of alcohol for all three of us, celebrating a massively lucrative deal.

"I think that went just about as well as it could have," I said after sipping the smooth drink. "Almost four-hundred thousand free credits and a new salvage opportunity. Hard to beat that."

"I still think you are too lenient with them," Tatnia responded.

"Worth the cost for allies, safe harbor, and information," Nal pointed out, shaking his head. "Plus, good to have moral high ground."

As we finished the toast, I pulled out my datapad and accessed our crew's account, quickly splitting a hundred thousand of our newly earned credits between everyone. We had all worked very hard on this mission, and the crew deserved a proper payout for a well-done job. Tatnia slapped my back as she stood, and I could hear Julius shouting in celebration down the hall. I couldn't help but chuckle. Not bad for a day's work.