

Once the empty soul gems were safely stored in the Arrow, ready for our hunting trips, I made my way to the workshop. As I entered the cargo bay, I spotted Leddy, the forest green leader of the repair droid. They were working on welding something to the back of a CPH with the help of one of her underlings. Covering my eyes as I walked past, I spotted Miru. She was working on a BX commando, peeking into the inner workings of its chest with a flashlight.

"Yeah, I see it. That's going to make converting these a bit more difficult," She said, talking to Racer, who was already hooked into a Naval B1.

The astromech warbled and chirped, shifting its angular dome to look at me, whistling what appeared to be a warning to Miru.

"Hmmm? Oh, hey. These BXs have a secondary processor in their chest. Not enough to work without a head, but enough to make them much smarter," She said, clicking off her light and leaning back, turning in her chair to face me. "It's also gonna make shifting their loyalties harder."

"How much harder?" I asked nervously. "Like don't be alone with them or..."

"What? Oh, no, the two systems are in constant communication, and Racer is going to have to slice them individually," She explained, shaking her head. "The whole system will crash if the two processors don't communicate properly. The problem wouldn't be them turning against us, it would be them bricking themselves the second they try and think too hard."

Racer whistled and tweeted at me, somehow sounding annoyed. I looked over Miru to see what he was doing, only to find him connected to the Naval B1 through three separate cables.

"He isn't saying you can't handle it, Racer," Miru responded, rolling her eyes while still facing me. "He just doesn't understand how it works. And honestly, seeing how much better these droids are than the B1 model... I don't blame him for being paranoid."

"That's good, huh?"

"Just about. I kinda assumed that they were some sort of middle ground between B1s and B2s, but no, they are more like B2s with their agility cranked on high!" She said, sounding genuinely impressed. "Slightly less armored, but with more than double the computing power, more flexible subroutines, a powerful stability gyro, and an incredibly pathing system. Their sensors are better, too. And that sword is karking *brutal*. Honestly, they're a bit scary. I'm just glad you guys never faced them."

"Trust me, I am too. I nearly had a heart attack when I found them," I admitted, shaking my head. "What's Leddy working on? Also, language."

"I had an idea while at the meeting. These BX guys have mag locks built into their feet, and can grip pretty hard," She explained, ignoring my rebuke about her swear. "With a bit of adjustment to the repulsor footprint and some bits of metal welded on, a BX can ride on the back of the CPH. It will slow the speeder down, but the BX is light enough that it won't be too bad. Here, take a look."

She stepped away from her workbench and picked up her datapad, turning it to show me. It was a quick, crude [sketch](#), marked with measurements and a few other notes, but it painted the picture pretty well. The BX would hang off the back of the CPH with its legs on either side of the chassis, straddling the back. It was partially folded up, with its feet connected to some panels that I assumed were what Leddy and her subordinate were working on. Its chest would be pressed against the back of the speeder, with its arms raised to grip onto handles and a small platform to rest its butt on. It would definitely look strange, but being able to carry our own backup around was well worth it.

"You think you can get a few working by the time we get there?" I asked, and Miru nodded. "I'm just going through to make sure there aren't any hidden surprises before handing them off to Racer to clear internally. We can start editing after that. Should have some ready by the time we land. Then I'll start working on the Naval B1s, but I don't see those taking very long."

"Good. Once the Naval B1s are ready, you are basically free to work on whatever you want, as long as Leddy and the rest of the repair droids can do the general maintenance by themselves."

"In general, they are, plus they will tell me if there is something they need me for," She assured me before perking up suddenly. "Oh! By the way, Racer discovered that the normal B1s have a gunner subroutine for capital ships, so every gun we have can be manned independently, as long as we have enough B1s."

"Seriously? Right after we threw so many away?" I asked, letting out a long sigh and rubbing my face. "I should have seen that coming..."

"Don't worry, we have plenty of spare parts, Boss," She assured me. "We have five intact-"

"I seem to remember saying to only keep two or three."

"We have five intact, and I can put together five more without even making much of a dent," She repeated, catching my look and shrugging. "What? It all worked out in the end!"

"Yeah, Yeah. Good work, Miru. Do me a favor, and don't push yourself too much," I said, patting her shoulder before turning to leave the workshop. "Give me a shout if you need some help!"

"Will do Boss!"

I made my way through the ship, debating what I should be doing with the rest of the hyperspace jump. It was early afternoon, so I didn't have nearly enough time to learn an Adept level spell. Instead, I went to the lounge and summoned my grimoire. The information the book had revealed about Arcane Enchanting had been short but information-dense. Twice now I read and re-read the same seven pages, and each time I picked up new information that hadn't entirely broken into my head.

This time, as I read through the same section for the third time, I noticed something that made me very happy.

In Skyrim, there were several ways that the game controlled how powerful the enchanted gear you made was. Limiting what you could wear, locking some enchantments to certain types of items, even making some enchantments impossible to make, forcing you to find them in the wild and consequently scaled to your level. It also had different levels of soul gems: petty, lesser, common, greater, and grand. Essentially, having a smaller, less powerful soul gem meant less powerful enchantments.

As far as I could tell, the system I was using did not mention different power levels regarding soul gems. The gems worked by gathering life energy and would continue gathering it until it was full, rather than only accepting energy from one source before being locked as "full." The book did explain that there was plenty of variation in how much energy two different gems could hold but never mentioned anything about it being important. In fact, it went as far as confirming that having multiple smaller-capacity gems was sometimes more convenient than having one large one.

Frustratingly, there was still so much information about enchanting that was still hidden behind the completion of the Arcane Enchanter. It made me anxious and antsy, like when I was still locked to Novice-level spells on Nar Shaddaa, but I had already learned them all. I desperately wanted to know how my enchanting system worked, and being forced to fill some soul gems before I could start was torture.

Eventually, giving myself a minor headache trying to puzzle *anything* extra from the information I had, I decided to kill time and learn an Apprentice-level spell to distract myself. I went through my list of spells that I hadn't learned yet and was shocked to realize I never learned the second level of Oakflesh, Stoneflesh. I remember putting it off since it was nearly useless while I was even moderately armored, but it would be very handy if I was ever stuck without armor.

Like when I was stuck in a prison mine with a bomb around my neck.

I settled down almost immediately to learn the spell, which, because of my issues with Alteration, ended up taking about seven hours, pushing me a bit later than I was happy about. Still, having a way to subtly toughen my body considerably without glowing purple was worth the lost hour or so of sleep.

The following day, I made the conscious choice to take it easy. Julius and I would likely be spending more than a week hunting and filling up soul gems. Despite my magic and our access to tech, hunting would still involve a lot of physical activity, so I didn't feel bad for relaxing when I could. After breakfast, Julius and I spent about an hour cleaning our weapons and preparing our gear for our trip. Julius cleaned his pistols while I cleaned a pistol and a rifle, though Julius would be the one the latter weapon. As powerful as his Westar pistols were, they were no match for a rifle, which could provide a lot more power per bolt, something necessary to penetrate the thick hide and thicker muscles of larger beasts and creatures we were likely to find. We also inspected some survival gear, which we would bring just in case.

When we were done preparing our gear, we sat back in the lounge and connected to the holonet. Together, we began going through the bounties and culling jobs posted from the planet, looking for ones we could collect on. We were both surprised with how many they were offering, including several posted by the local government that were essentially always open.

As far as we could tell, three main animals seemed to be the focus of bounties. One was a sizeable six-legged lizard about the same scale as a horse. The second was a scaled ape creature with large tusks jutting from its mouth, which was slightly smaller than a gorilla. The third and perhaps the scariest animal was a lizard about the size of a large dog. It looked startlingly similar to a velociraptor with a durable-looking, spiny exoskeleton helmet.

All three of the creatures were dangerous and aggressive. While I had opinions about walking through an animal's front lawn, getting attacked, and then calling the animal dangerous, their description certainly painted killing any of them that got close to civilization as a necessary precaution.

On top of bounties on the more dangerous animals of the planet, there were also a lot of requests for deliveries of meat, as well as bounties put up by farmers for lowering the sizes of herds to keep them from eating crops.

"Is this kind of thing common?" I asked, copying a contact code into my datapad for later. "This seems like a lot."

"Kind of?" He said, gesturing so-so with his hand. "It's, uh... Some planets just have aggressive ecosystems. There are plenty of planets with normal ecosystems, and even some where it's kinda the opposite, but some planets are just filled with things that want to kill you."

"Like what?"

"Uhh... oh! [Kashyyyk](#), the Wookiee homeworld?" He asked, pausing until I nodded. "Right, well, its ecosystem is horrifying, below the canopy that the Wookies live on at least. But [Alderaan](#) has-... had an ecosystem that was apparently super peaceful."

"Alright, I'll take your word for it."

"How much are you looking to make off these bounties anyway, Boss?"

"I'm hoping to at least cover whatever Pola and Vaz end up spending on their new equipment," I admitted. "Beyond that, it's just about filling up as many soul gems as possible."

"Well, will it be one kill per stone?" Julius asked. "Because I saw your bag and the crate..."

"No, from what I was reading, it seemed like the bigger the beast, the more life energy it has, and energy will fill multiple gems as long as one person is carrying them," I answered, shrugging when he looked at me. "I know, it's magic. Sometimes things work weird."

"Fair enough, Boss."

With our research done, I headed to the first deck to check on Miru. I found her sitting on a crate, watching the repair droids as they painted three BX droids and two B2s. There were three other BXs who looked like they were up next, as well as the rest of the *Chariots* B2s.

As I watched, I realized that the B2s color scheme was slightly different, with their armor the same dark purple it had been before, but with white highlights now replaced with a dark yellow. The BXs were also primarily purple, with their joints painted a slightly more burnt orange than their original paint job.

I stopped to watch for a moment, nodding in appreciation of the new look, before making my way to Miru. She apparently hadn't noticed I was there and was starting to slowly nod off.

"Miru, please tell me you didn't pull an all-nighter?" I asked. "I thought I told you not to overwork yourself?"

The young mechanical genius jumped when I spoke, forcing me to reach out and keep her from falling off the crate. She cursed under her breath and rubbed her face.

"I know, I know, but I wanted these to be ready for when you guys left," She said with a shrug. "Now everyone has a pair of BXs for backup when they leave."

I let out a sigh, unable to deny that having such a strong backup was a good idea. I already felt better about splitting everyone up.

"I appreciate that, Miru. It was a good idea," I admitted. "Thank you."

She nodded and leaned against my shoulder as we watched the repair droids do their work. After a long moment, I mentioned the B2s new colors.

"Why the repaint?"

"The B2s? I didn't like how the first design came out," She admitted with a shrug. "I was trying to stick with the theme of purple and white, but it just didn't work on the droids, so I went with purple being the common color, with everything else just going with what looks good."

"I like it," I commented. "Makes me think we should have a logo or something."

"Probably, but we should have a name before that," She pointed out. "Kinda surprised you haven't given us one, to be honest. Seems like something you would think is important."

"...Yeah, you're not wrong," I admitted. "Try and come up with something. I'll tell the rest of the crew to think about it, too. But later. Right now, you have a date with your bed."

"I wanna stay up and help everyone get sorted when we land," She explained. "And I want to help Racer with the Naval B1s."

"We have like three hours until then," I responded, shaking my head. "Go get some sleep. The droids will be here when you wake up. We will probably be here for at least a week, so take it easy, okay?"

She groaned, letting out a sound that can only be described as teenage frustration and annoyance, but nodded and slid off the crate, heading back for her workshop bed. I managed to keep from chuckling until I had left the cargo bay.