

General Hera Syndulla slowly mixed her tap caf, having already put in a dash of sugar and a splash of nerf milk. As she waited, the newly promoted Commander Nevue Loc and his first subordinates, Lieutenant Lario Vark and Ensign Ayme Montera sat down across the table from her and her second-in-command, Commander Neshweh Gadic. They hadn't been working together long, but the Mon Calamari was dedicated, intelligent, and knew what they were doing, though they could be a bit heavy-handed when it came to sticking to the rules.

"Good to see you again, Commander Loc," General Syndulla said with a smile. "And congratulations on the promotion, you earned it."

"Thank you, general. If I might ask..."

"Who put you up for it?" The green-skinned Twi'lek asked, getting a nod in confirmation. "I did, contingent on your success with your latest mission. When it was confirmed your plan had worked, it was agreed that you had shown enough initiative and leadership qualities to lead your own team."

"Thank you, General," He responded, though she could tell he was ecstatic about the promotion.

"You're welcome," She responded. "I imagine your old team is looking forward to congratulating you."

"They are still here?" He asked, visibly perking up. "I would have thought they would be gone already."

"Normally, they would be, but I wanted to make absolutely sure they had *everything* they needed," She explained with a smirk. "I believe Ensign Gorn was bragging about managing to secure a bottle of brandy."

The horned humanoid was clearly smiling now, chuckling when she mentioned the brandy.

"Thank you, General. That... that will make transitioning to leading my own team much easier."

"Glad I could help. Now, why don't you start by describing how your mission went?" She asked. "I have to admit, something about your friends... They remind me of my own team."

"Well, General... I think we need to start with an admission of my own," Commander Loc said, sharing a look with Lieutenant Vark. "As you can imagine, after Deacon and his crew saved me from Nar Shaddaa, I was extremely grateful. When they asked me for a favor... I felt obliged to agree."

Commander Gadic leaned forward as if sensing an admittance of wrongdoing while General Syndulla simply raised an eyebrow.

"As he explained, they are sympathetic, but none of them are joiners. If I could describe them as anything, it would be free spirits, wanderers, maybe."

"I know the type," General Syndulla said, prompting Nevue to continue.

"Well... Deacon asked me to hold back information on... his abilities. I swear on my oath that the second he was a threat to the Alliance, or if anyone asked directly, I would come forward, but... I owed him."

For a moment, Commander Gadic opened his mouth, his fleshy whiskers bouncing, but General Syndulla put her hand on his shoulder. The wet-skinned humanoid didn't stop looking angry, but he did stay silent, closing his mouth.

"What sort of abilities?" The General asked with a raised brow.

"I... Think it would be easier to show you."

The rebel soldier produced a small holoprojector, tapping a few buttons before putting it down on the table. It began to play a montage of clips, all of which were obviously recorded in such a way that the subject wouldn't notice they were being recorded. It clearly showed Deacon focusing as he looked at a wall. After a few seconds, a glow started to circle around his hands before a streak of flames shot out from his palms, searing the distant wall and turning it black. It was followed by another spray, this one causing the way to frost over. He finished it by throwing sparks of electricity, prompting General Syndulla to gasp.

The clips continued, shifting to a different setting, the cargo bay of the B-7. Deacon clearly knew he was being recorded, though he also clearly didn't like it.

"If you want the General to believe me that you have powers, you need to demonstrate them," Commander Nevue's recorded voice said. "You don't have to throw fire around or anything, just do *something*."

"Alright, just... make sure they know I'm not a Jedi, alright? This isn't the Force," He said emphatically before focusing for a second. "It won't matter much to most people, I want to be able to tell them I told you so eventually."

His hands glowed for a few moments before some sort of purple construct appeared around him, looking like some sort of suit of armor from old fantasy stories. It covered his whole body, which he showed off by spreading his arms and turning around. He then summoned a much more solid construct, a humanoid figure... a very different-looking metal humanoid dripping with blue flame suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

"Anything else?"

"Do the healing one," The voice of Lieutenant Vark suggested, prompting Deacon to throw up his hands.

"Fine, but one of you is going to have to injure yourself first, I'm not doing it."

After a bit of bickering, the soldier sliced his arm with a vibroblade, the cut immediately bleeding. While mumbling something about them cleaning up the mess as well, Deacon aimed his hand at the now wounded soldier, his hand glowing a bright golden light. After a few seconds, he stopped.

"How's it look?" He asked, prompting Lieutenant Vark to wipe at the wound.

"Uh... looks like it's a week old."

"Alright, let me finish it," Deacon responded, waiting a few seconds before focusing on the soldier again, whose arm finished healing before the onlookers' eyes. "There, that good enough?"

"I think that will do great, Deacon, thanks."

The recording ended, leaving the room in utter silence, one side from shock, the other from nervousness.

"You kept that from us?" Commander Gadic. "This is outrageous! Another Jedi could be invaluable to the Rebellion, what gives-"

"He wasn't interested in joining," Commander Loc shot back. "And last time I checked, we do not conscript! Unless that changed while I was stuck as a slave?"

The room was silent for a long moment, tension thick in the air. After a long moment, General Syndulla spoke.

"While we would have preferred being kept in the loop, we can hardly demand the secrets of people who don't fall under our command," She said, sending the Mon Calamari a look. "Why tell us now?"

"Because he realized that he needed to choose between revealing his powers to Lario, Ayme, and Nova to ensure the mission went well, or basically handicap himself, put the mission at risk but retain his secret. He chose the mission."

"We need to contact him, offer him incentives to join. If we get Intelligence to investigate him, maybe we could find-"

"If you are suggesting we find a way to blackmail the people who rescued me from slavery, we are going to have very strong words, Commander Gadic," Commander Loc said, both of the soldiers sitting next to him looking angry as well.

The aquatic humanoid looked to his superior, who was also clearly unhappy with the avenue he was walking.

"No, no, of course not," He responded, backpedaling. "But think of the edge he would give us! Commander Skywalker has only the smallest amount of training and is one of the Rebellion's best pilots! He blew up the Death Star! This Deacon Roy is clearly better trained, as there are no reports of Skywalker ever doing anything of that scale."

"Deacon has repeatedly assured me that he is not a Jedi and not a Force user because, apparently, those aren't mutually exclusive," Nevue explained, General Syndulla nodding in confirmation. "While it's true he might be delusional, he never gave me a reason to think he would have a problem admitting it."

While Commander Gadic made a snapping noise with his large mouth, a Mon Calamari tell of disbelief and annoyance, General Syndulla leaned forward.

"What else can you tell us?" She asked. "Did he ever meditate? Did he have a lightsaber? Did he ever move things with an invisible force, mess with anyone's mind?"

"His... *magic*," Nevue started, clearly not liking the word. "Was never invisible, his hands always glowed in some way when he was using it. The closest thing he ever did to meditation was when he was learning a new technique. He would read from a rather large book, which... actually, now that I think about it, he could summon that book from nowhere, and *that* didn't cause a glow or anything. But he would spend a few hours studying and puzzling it out before practicing it for a while. No meditating and no lightsaber."

"But messing with people's minds?" The Twi'lek asked, getting a wince from the Zabrak.

"He did claim to have two abilities that affect the mind, one of which I experienced shortly after they saved me from slavery," He explained. "I originally refused to cooperate, so he used what he called "Calm," which essentially just made me pliable and gullible. It lasted a few seconds before fading. He also had one called "Fury," which would apparently make someone hostile to everyone around them, including allies, but again only lasted for a short period of time."

"What about his temperament?" General Syndulla asked. "Any bouts of anger? You may not be aware, but I have had some exposure to Force users. Mind manipulation, the ability to conjure lightning, and an unstable mind are prime signs of a dark Force user."

"He never showed any signs of being unstable. The closest thing to an obsession I saw from him was his targeting of slavers on Nar Shaddaa, and he was quick to abandon that when it became dangerous to the team," Commander Loc answered cleanly, with a preciseness that spoke to a growing frustration that he was working hard to contain.

Commander Gadic once again started to say something, and once again, General Syndulla silenced him with a look.

"For now, Deacon's abilities will stay between us. I will share the information on a need-to-know basis with my peers, but since he has been nothing but helpful to the movement, I see no reason to not respect his desire for privacy," General Syndulla said. "And that is an order, Commander Gadic. The last thing we want is to alienate him by being the source of his secret getting out. As much as we might wish that the Alliance has no leaks, we know that's not true."

With a wet rattle, the Mon Calamari equivalent to a groan, Commander Gadic nodded, leaning back in his seat. He was clearly not thrilled, but then again, he was rarely anything other than serious and stoic anyway.

"With that out of the way, Commander, why don't you tell us about the mission?" General Syndulla suggested.

"We arrived on location about four hours away from the stronghold...."

Commander Loc spent the next hour or so describing how the mission went, from the initial challenge of the base being on full alert to the surprise reveal of the internal turret system and the fight against the superior B2 battle droids. Commander Gadic was clearly very interested in the descriptions of Deacon's abilities but remained silent during the debriefing.

"We discover the reason for the stronghold's existence in the largest luxury suite," He finished. "And looking back, it makes sense. There weren't enough droids to defend from a full invasion, so they most likely hoped that secrecy would be enough. The LPY 3000 was on sit as an escape craft should the base be discovered, and the droids on hand were there to hold off whoever came looking long enough for them to escape... again."

"I agree with your judgment, and so far, the data we have sliced off the top of the data core does as well," Commander Gadic responded. "At least we have that to entice Deacon Roy to return. If they work with us more, perhaps we can convince them to join us on a more permanent basis."

"In any case," General Syndulla said, cutting off Nevue's response. "You managed to secure quite a lot of supplies that we desperately needed, and not just the weapons. The foodstuffs and daily necessities that you brought back are an unexpected and sorely needed addition. We also have the ships Nova will be repairing already picked out, all reasonable projects. We aren't looking to pull any over on someone who has worked with us like Nova has."

They continued to discuss the goods, materials, and resources they obtained from the stronghold, including the credits that would eventually be coming in from the sales of everything they hadn't taken. Eventually, Commander Gadic asked a question that had been on his mind since he had reviewed the shipment logs.

"Why did you take the droids?" He asked, scrolling through his datapad to find the corresponding entry. "I understand that Deacon Roy and his crew claimed ten super battle droids, two droideka, and thirty-five normal battle droids. Why did you take the rest, a total of three hundred droids, mostly B1s with fifty B2s and sixteen droideka?"

"Well... as you can imagine, I had never had the pleasure of fighting separatist droids before," Commander Loc explained. "It was an interesting experience, to say the least. But after, I had an interesting thought. Well, two, actually. The first was that having a group of combatants that you could essentially throw away, both on a large and small scale, could be extremely useful. I know from experience that having a single disposable asset in the field can be incredibly useful. I can imagine that on a larger scale, that continues to be true."

Commander Gadic nodded appreciatively, as did the General, both of them having experience with just such moments.

"I was also struck with how effective a droid could be... if they just weren't so stupid," He continued, General Syndulla scoffing out a laugh. "The B2's were walking heavy weapons platforms, with solid armor. Some of them even had artillery on one arm! But all they did was walk at us slowly. If we paired a B2 to a soldier, let it develop a bit, and trained the soldier to utilize them properly, it could be a potent combination. Even the B1s could be useful with some plating welded to them."

"Are you suggesting we deploy them on a large scale?" The General asked, the Commander gesturing vaguely.

"I'm suggesting we play around with them, see where we can find a use for them," He explained with a shrug. "Worse comes to worst, we drop them in an Imperial compound and tell them to go to work, use them as a distraction. But something tells me that they will be more useful than that. Call it a gut feeling."

"Very well, Commander Loc, I will make a suggestion and see if anyone wants to mess around with them. I'm guessing we will get a few takers, for novelty's sake, if nothing else."

"Thank you, General."

"No, Commander, thank you," She responded, standing up and offering her subordinate her hand, which he gladly shook. "You managed to turn an escort mission into a significant boon with nothing but an extra few days spent. Keep up the good work."

The Zabrak saluted, as did the two soldiers next to him, General Syndulla and Commander Gadic returning the gesture.

"You're dismissed, Commander, go find your old team and introduce them to the start of your new one. You have a day of leave tomorrow, after which we have your next assignment ready."

The newly minted Commander nodded and left the room, the two soldiers following behind him.