

A Galaxy of Magic

Chapter 15

Harry was sweating profusely as he crawled through the tight space below the floor grating while dragging an absurdly heavy harness of wiring and fiberoptic cables. He wasn't sure when this space had last been cleaned, but judging by the amount of dust, crud, and pest droppings, he guessed it had been left untouched since the ship's manufacturing date. He waved his hand every few feet, cleaning as he went. "Hurry it up! We're burning daylight!" he heard Maris call out. He could hear the amusement in her voice.

"Why don't you come down here and try lugging this heavy ass cable all the way to the engine room?!" he called back.

"No thanks!" he heard her chirp and then laugh at something Aayla said. Harry grumbled as he pushed on. It took another twenty minutes of hard, backbreaking work to get the harness to the feed shoot.

"I'm here!" Harry yelled up at the bottom of the grating.

"Alright! Push it through!" Aayla instructed him. Harry lifted the end of the cable harness and stuffed it through the rubbery, donut-shaped plug. When Aayla began to pull on it, Harry helped by guiding the thick bundle of cables upward. "That's good!" Aayla told him. "You can come up now!"

"Thank heavens," Harry breathed a sigh of relief. He wasn't particularly claustrophobic, but even he had his limits. The cramped space was extremely tight, and the stale air was unpleasant to breathe. Harry wiped the sweat from his brow and inched his way backward. The journey back was annoyingly long and painful.

Shaak Ti chuckled when the top of Harry's dusty head popped through the unattached grate. She held out her hand and gently levitated him out and onto his feet using the Force. "Thanks," Harry said, breathing heavily.

"No, thank you for doing this," she smiled amusedly. "As you can now understand why, none of us were eager to run the new harness through the length of the ship," she said as she looked him up and down. His clothes were filthy, and the knees of his trousers were ripped.

"All in a day's work," Harry chuckled and smacked his palms against his thighs, beating the dust from his clothes. Shaak Ti turned her head away, squealed, and began waving her hand back and forth in front of her.

"Not in here!" she coughed. "Go shower!"

“Yes, Ma’am,” Harry chuckled and went straight for the tent. A nice, cold shower was just what the doctor ordered.

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The Rancors, the speeder bike gang who ruled the streets of Mos Espa, hadn’t forgotten nor forgiven Harry for his crimes against them. He had violated their sanctity, severely injured their leader, and stolen his bike in the process. It was a crime they couldn’t let go unpunished. Their violent nature tended to elicit answers from the locals, and when asked if they had seen his bike flying around, one scared cantina patron pointed to a ship parked just outside the city wall. Apparently, the thief had been having a grand time flying the bike around and didn’t care at all if he was spotted. He had to have known that the Rancors would be looking for him, but he just didn’t seem to care. Now, the Rancors were back, and they were here to make him care.

The speeder bikes stopped in the distance, and the leader pulled out his binocs. He counted, one, two, three, four people ... three women and one human male. They were loading the ship, seemingly getting ready to leave. The leader snarled in anger and turned to his gang.

“We’ve got to get them before they take off,” he told them. They didn’t have the firepower to take down a ship of that size once it became airborne. “You two ...” he ordered, pointing to two of his men. “Come in from the North, guns blazing.”

He then turned to two others. “You two come in from the West. The rest of us will charge in from here. NOW, GO!” he snarled, and the rest of his gang jumped to it. They revved their engines and took off while the rest remained in place, waiting for them to get into position. The leader smiled wickedly, hiding the pain he felt. Good medics were rare on Tatooine, and all he could find was one dingy clinic that had an out-of-date tank filled with low-quality Bacta. When he was still in pain after the treatment, he put a blaster bolt right in the medic’s knee and torched his clinic. Any indiscretion against the Rancors, no matter how small, wouldn’t go unpunished, and now he was here to prove that to this thieving scum.

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“What else is left?” Harry asked after walking back down the ramp. The area was mostly cleared out. There were a few old or broken parts from the ship that they were leaving behind. Aayla said scavengers would be happy to take them for repair or to scrap them.

“This is the last crate,” Aayla said, tapping the top with her hand.

“I’ll get it,” Harry said and then used his magic to levitate it from the sand. He summoned it over to him and turned to take it into the ship when a blaster shot hit the crate, protecting him from taking the shot directly in the chest. The force of it sent Harry tumbling backward, and he landed flat on his bottom.

“Raiders!” Shaak Ti yelled out, and suddenly, three glowing lightsaber blades burst into view. Harry pushed the crate from his chest and shot to his feet, his blaster pistol in hand and ready to be used.

“From this side, too!” Aayla called out, swinging her lightsaber and deflecting blaster shots.

“And from here!” Maris shouted over the sound of her lightsaber swatting away the incoming shots. Harry saw the speeder bikes racing toward them in the distance, and he immediately recognized the brown vests.

“That’s the speeder bike gang that I ...”

“Stole the bike from?” Aayla finished his sentence while raising an eyebrow.

“I’ll neither confirm nor deny this,” Harry replied and took aim. He began firing his blaster, sending glowing shots of superheated plasma back at the attackers. The speeder riders were obviously talented flyers and were able to dodge most of his shots. However, one shot hit the front hover strut and ripped away a repulsor. The nose of the speeder dipped and dug into the sand. It catastrophically flipped over, sending the rider soaring through the air.

“Excellent shot, Harry!” Maris called out, clearly enjoying the adventure.

“There are too many on this side!” Shaak Ti cried out, and when he turned, he saw that she was struggling to deflect so many blaster bolts. Harry quickly joined her and held out his hand. He magically produced hurricane-level winds and blew a massive cloud of sand at the oncoming riders. It took a few seconds to reach them, but when it did, he heard them cry out in pain and discomfort as the sharp grains of sand peppered their skin and blinded their vision. Though he couldn’t see it, he heard at least two speeders crash into one another, quickly followed by pained screams. He then turned to make sure Maris was handling her business.

She angled her lightsaber and sent a blaster shot back at the group. The rider swerved violently and rammed into the side of his partner, slowing them down. “Cover me!” Maris called out and flung her lightsaber toward the riders. It spun through the air, and it was clear that it would fall short. Maris then used the Force to push the lightsaber further away. The riders pulled away from each other, trying to avoid getting hit. Unfortunately for them, Maris had excellent control of her powers. She used the Force to make slight adjustments to the lightsaber’s trajectory, and when it got close, she pushed it hard at an angle. The blade sliced clean through the handlebars and removed the rider’s arm. He screamed in agony as the bike tilted at an angle. The bike lowered, and since it was still moving at top speed, the side clipped the sand, sending the bike tumbling like a rolling barrel. The rider was crushed underneath it, though he couldn’t see anything else since he had to throw up a magical shield to block several blaster shots from hitting Maris. The other rider passed by his downed comrade, not caring about his well-being.

Maris Force pulled the lit lightsaber back toward her while Harry reached around the shield and fired his weapon.

The rider swerved from side to side, dodging Harry's shots while firing back. Eventually, one of Harry's shots hit his speeder, and black smoke immediately began pouring out of the red-hot hole. The bike slowed significantly, giving Maris' lightsaber enough time to catch up. The tip of the lightsaber hit his ribs, burning away a large chunk of flesh. He clutched his side and fell from his disabled bike.

"Step back toward the ship!" Aayla cried out, and they all instantly did as she commanded. Just as Harry jumped away and turned to see what was going on, one of the speeders was only thirty or so feet away from ramming into Aayla. With just over a second to act, she spun around and let the speeder fly past her. The rider, however, wasn't allowed such a privilege. Her swinging lightsaber cleaved him clean in half at the waist. Both halves of his body tumbled from his bike and slid across the hot, yellow sand, painting it red.

With two groups dealt with, Harry, Aayla, and Maris turned their attention to the largest group. By then, it had been whittled down to just two riders. The two of them were no match for three Jedi, and soon after, they found each of their shots being sent straight back toward them. From what he witnessed, Shaak Ti was the most talented at deflecting the shots, which wasn't surprising since she was the oldest and had the most experience. It wasn't long before one of the riders fell from his bike with a blaster burn in his chest. The last remaining rider stopped firing and slowed.

"That's the leader!" Harry called out, pointing. He would recognize his ugly face from a mile away.

"He's running," Maris commented as the leader turned around and began riding off into the desert.

"I think it's time we leave. We've clearly worn out our welcome," Shaak Ti stated as she stowed her lightsaber hilt on her hip.

"Then let's go," Harry said with a smile.

They quickly got into the ship with Shaak and Aayla taking the pilots' seats. After flipping a few switches, the engines roared to life. Aayla smiled and nodded. "The engines sound much better than before."

"Let's see how she handles," Shaak smiled back, and the ship slowly lifted off. Harry still had an axe to grind.

"Do me a favor and follow that scumbag," Harry told them and went straight for one of the cannon turrets. "How do you use this thing?" he asked, sitting in the chair.

“Like this ...” Maris began instructing him.

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Onka slammed his fist on the handlebars in rage. Not only had he lost his entire crew, but he was forced to tuck tail and run like a coward. He swore that he would find a new crew and wage war against the human and his whores. He was headed straight for the nearest plateau. His crew knew of a hidden cave where they stashed supplies and loot in case of an emergency. This was definitely an emergency.

He was sweating, and his mouth was dry. He turned his body and reached down into his saddlebag, pulling out a canteen of fresh water. He was about to take a much-needed drink when the sand in front of him exploded. “EIAFKAK!” he shouted in his native language while his bike shuddered. A ship roared overhead, nearly sending him flying off the bike when the blowback from the engines slammed into him. Sand kicked up all around, nearly blinding him. On instinct, he swerved, and it was a good thing he did. The spot where he was just at was now a glassed crater.

The ship passed, and when he looked up, he saw it was the human’s ship, chasing him down. He cursed the ship, hoping it would continue on and forget about him. His hopes were dashed when the ship banked hard and turned around, its nose pointed directly at him. Flashes of red sent a shiver up his spine. It would take all his skills to get himself out of this one. He dodged to the right ... He dodged to the left ... His eardrums screamed in protest as the concussive booms of the cannon shots impacted the ground around him. Another streak of red was heading straight for him. He hit the booster button and accelerated, and the shot whizzed right over his head and impacted behind him, causing his bike to fishtail. The plateau was growing ever closer. He might just make it.

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“Quit fooling around and hit him,” Maris said as Harry’s chair jerked his body from side to side.

“I’m trying,” Harry called out. “It’s a lot easier than it looks,” he truthfully told her. The aiming mechanism seemed out of date for even Earth standards.

“He’s heading for the canyon,” Maris said, pointing to the thin split in the rock in the upcoming plateau.

Harry saw the biker alien actually pump his fist in triumph as he neared the canyon. Harry took careful aim and fired three successive blasts. The first exploded at the mouth of the canyon. The second exploded a hundred feet in front of the bike. Harry wasn’t sure exactly where the third impacted, but he saw the bike roll across the sand while the biker corkscrewed through the

sky, his arms and legs comically splayed. Harry couldn't help but snort in amusement at the silly sight.

"Are you done playing?" Aayla amusedly asked him. Harry turned off the turret and got up.

"Yeah, I'm done," he told her with a satisfied smile.

"Good. Now let's get off this miserable sand heap," Shaak Ti said and aimed the nose toward the sky. It wasn't long before they reached the blackness of space, and Harry couldn't help but stare out the window in wonder. His hands were on Aayla's shoulders as they calculated the hyperspace route. When the navigation computer beeped, Aayla said, "Let's go!" Shaak pushed the lever forward, and the black sky was suddenly filled with streaks of starlight. The starlines stretched out on both sides of the cockpit before disappearing into the swirling vortex of hyperspace.

Down on Tatooine, poor Onka groaned and rolled himself onto his back. He spat out as much sand as he could. He looked to his left and found the twisted wreckage of his spare speeder bike. He looked down and saw the twisted wreckage of his legs. He cried out in pain as he rolled onto his stomach and used his arms to crawl over to his bike. He only hoped the communicator in his saddlebag had survived. Otherwise, he would roast in the desert heat. As he painfully crawled across the scorching hot sand, he swore a blood feud against the human and his whores. He would get them if it were the last thing he would do.

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Harry moved a heavy box from on top of a trunk and set it aside. He opened up the trunk and sighed. "What are you looking for?" Aayla asked him. Shaak and Maris were taking their shift at the controls while Harry and Aayla relaxed in the tent. Harry was searching through the storage room, trying to find a specific trunk.

"I'm looking for a box of gems. I remember it being in a trunk," he told her before moving on to another. Aayla joined the search, and ten minutes later, she called out to him.

"Is this it?" she asked, looking down into the open trunk. Harry joined her and nodded.

"Yep! Good work," he said, kissing the side of her neck while caressing her hips. Aayla smiled and leaned back into him, rubbing her jutting ass into his groin.

"Save it for tonight. I've got work to do," Harry chuckled and swatted her on the bottom.

"So, what are you going to do with these things?" she asked, reaching into the trunk. She picked up a handful of old jewelry. She could see that some of it was damaged or broken. She dropped it back in, and Harry closed the trunk. He then levitated it with his magic and began walking it back to the kitchen.

"Disguises," he simply answered. Aayla was confused.

"For you?" she asked, and Harry shook his head.

"For you, Maris, and Shaak Ti," he told her. Aayla raised an eyebrow, and he smiled at her. "You said it was going to be dangerous for you out there. With the bad guys looking for you, it'll be wise to have a first layer of defense."

"I'll take your word for it," she replied, following him.

Aayla spent her downtime working on spare parts while Harry got to work on the disguises. He searched through the trunk until he found what he needed. He then pulled out his datapad and spent several hours arranging the proper rune sequence. Once he was done with that, it was nearly time for them to take over for Shaak and Maris. He took his stuff out of the tent and set it up. After a bit more fiddling with the datapad, he pressed the start button and watched as his engraver got to work. He left the engraver to do its work and followed Aayla into the cockpit.

The following eight hours were quite boring. Sitting in a chair and reading sensor data wasn't exactly the most exciting thing. The only thing that spiced it up was when Aayla would periodically sit in his lap and kiss him like the world was about to end. When their eight-hour shift was up, Harry stood with a groan and stretched his back. "I'll wait here while you go get them," Aayla told him. Harry nodded while yawning and went back to the tent.

Harry entered the dark room and smiled when he saw the two women cuddling while asleep. He shook Shaak's sheet-covered thigh to wake her up. "Up you get!" he chuckled when she groaned and swatted his hand away. "Come on, now!"

Shaak Ti sleepily sat up and rubbed her eyes. Maris did the same, and Harry eagerly stared at their bare chests. "Couldn't you have given me five more minutes?" Maris complained and stretched, her movement doing wonderful things to her breasts.

"I could have ... but I didn't want to," Harry teased and ducked when she chucked a pillow at him. Both women got out of bed, displaying their fully nude forms. Shaak gently caressed his muscled stomach on her way to the bathroom. Maris stepped up to him and wrapped her arms around his waist. The side of her head rested against his chest, and she shuddered when he lightly dragged his fingers down her spine.

"That feels good," she hummed and snuggled closer.

"I'm sure it does, but we've got other things to do right now," Shaak told her as she came back into the room. Maris groaned and pulled away from him. She scampered to the bathroom, leaving them alone. Shaak took her place and wrapped her arms around the back of his neck. She kissed him deeply and moaned when he began playing with her tight bottom. Harry broke

the kiss and started laying more kisses on her chest and cleavage. Shaak tilted her head back and shuddered when his lips touched her stiff nipple. "I can't wait to get to Alderaan so we can have some time together," she moaned.

"I know how you feel," Harry said, lightly tugging on the hard tip with his teeth. He squeezed her ass hard and spread her cheeks apart. His fingers were just about to find their way between her legs when Maris joined them.

"Hey! You said we have other things to do!" she said accusingly while crossing her arms over her chest.

"Do as I say, not as I do," was all Shaak could say to justify her actions. Having Harry's mouth around her nipple felt too good to pass up. Maris snorted and grabbed a fresh set of clothes. Harry finally let go of Shaak to let her get dressed.

"I suppose I should let you get dressed. Aayla is waiting on you after all," Harry told her. Shaak sighed and nodded. When they were both dressed, they all went to the cockpit and relieved Aayla of her duty.

"Finally," Aayla happily said and stood up. She stretched out and turned to Shaak.

"There were no problems. Come get me if you need me," she said and grabbed Harry by the wrist. The two women watched him go and looked at each other.

"How much do you want to bet that they're about to do it?" Maris asked Shaak Ti. Shaak chuckled and shook her head. It was almost a sure bet that Aayla would drag him straight to bed.

Little did they know that the first thing Harry did was check the engraver. He held one of the rubies up to his eye and examined the micro runes. "Did it work?" Aayla asked, looking over his shoulder.

"I don't know. I can't see the runes. They're too small," he honestly said. Each ruby pendant was attached to a differently designed gold chain, so he knew which one belonged to which girl. He grabbed all three and went into the kitchen. He then grabbed Aayla's and activated the rune set by pumping magic into it. Once done, he slipped the necklace around Aayla's thin, graceful neck and clasped it.

"What's supposed to happen?" she asked, examining her arm.

"Give it a second," Harry replied, hoping it would work. Slowly, her blue skin began lightening into a lighter shade of lime green. Aayla gasped when she saw the color of her arm change. She now looked like a Twi'lek of a more common color variety. "It works!" Harry happily exclaimed.

"That's incredible," Aayla said, excited about the sudden turn of events. "Rutian Twi'leks have always been rare. With this coloring, I can blend in much better," she happily stated. She immediately went to look at herself in a mirror. "How does it work?" she asked from the bathroom.

"It's just an illusion. Each necklace is set to change a specific color into another color. I used the datapad to look up the colors of each of your species. Your necklace will change your shade of blue into that shade of green. So, if I wore it, nothing would change. The same thing would happen if Shaak or Maris tried to wear yours and the other way around. It activates when the gem touches your skin, and it stops when it loses contact with it ... so make sure to keep the gem pressed against your skin at all times when using it," Harry warned.

Aayla exited the bathroom holding the necklace in her hand. Her skin was back to its normal color. She placed it on the table, wrapped her arms around his waist, and kissed him. Harry eagerly returned the kiss. "Thank you," she said with a smile after breaking the kiss.

"You can thank me in the bedroom," Harry said, his eyes twinkling. Aayla giggled and pecked his cheek.

"Happily," she replied and squealed when he scooped her up and carried her to bed.