

A Galaxy of Magic

Chapter 2

Before the blue alien woman could react, the potato creature snatched one of the white armored soldiers and bit down on him at the waist. Harry's stomach turned at the sound of his agonized screams and the crunch of his armor being split in half. The creature pulled the soldier's upper half from its mouth, and by then, the man was already dead. The creature dropped the half-eaten soldier onto the ground and roared as laser blasts hit it from every angle. That's when the blue woman stepped up.

Harry watched as a laser sword burst from the metal tube in her hand. An electric hum filled the small clearing, and he wasn't sure what to expect. The woman threw the sword, and it spun horizontally through the air and struck the creature right in the face. A disgusting, burned gash opened up on the creature's face, and it roared in pain and stepped back. The sword then flew right back into her hand. Harry was wide-eyed. 'Did this woman have magic?' he asked himself. It sure looked like it. The creature charged the woman, and Harry legitimately feared for her safety. The soldiers did the smart thing and retreated further from the rampaging creature. The woman, however, did not. She charged the creature instead. As she neared, the creature took a swipe with its massive hand, but the woman dropped down and slid across the ground, right between its legs. She slashed one of its legs, and the creature bellowed and stumbled forward. The woman was on her feet in less than a second as the creature dropped to the ground. She ran at the beast again and easily jumped on its back. She brought her glowing blue sword down and pierced the back of its head. Smoke erupted from the puncture, and Harry heard the sound of sizzling meat. The woman pulled the sword from the beast and backflipped off of it. The creature gave one last groan before it stopped moving. Walking over to it slowly, she shoved the beast with the sole of her boot to make sure it was dead. It didn't move. The beam of light was sucked back into the hilt, and she stowed it on her hip. By then, the remaining soldiers warily crept forward with their rifles pointed at the carcass.

The woman quietly gave orders that Harry couldn't understand. The soldiers scrambled, likely securing the perimeter. The blue-skinned woman looked in his direction again, so Harry slowly backed away. Once a decent distance away, he returned to his tent. He had seen enough for one night and knew they weren't going anywhere for the time being. Harry sat down and took it all in. 'What kind of a strange world am I in?' he asked in disbelief. That night, Harry had a hard time falling asleep. He kept going over everything he saw in his mind over and over again. Very early the next morning, Harry went back to the camp and watched. This time, he stayed further away, not to draw the woman's attention. Not long after he arrived, they broke camp and continued their journey. He watched from afar, not stopping to eat or rest. Thankfully, that day wasn't nearly as eventful. There were only a few close calls with smaller, less dangerous creatures. When they made camp again, Harry returned to his tent. The following day would be much more eventful.

It started off the same. Harry arrived early and watched as they tore down the camp. They were very efficient and were on the move by daybreak. Harry noticed that the blue woman seemed jumpy or perhaps paranoid all day. It was late afternoon when Harry noticed something. All the armored soldiers stopped moving at exactly the same time. Many put a hand up to the side of their helmets like they were receiving a communication. Harry moved in front of the group to get a better look at what they were doing. The blue woman continued forward a short distance but suddenly stopped as well. That's when the soldiers raised their rifles and pointed them squarely at her back.

Harry was shocked, to say the least, and all it took was that split second of inactivity for everything to go to hell. They began firing just as the woman pulled the metal tube from her waist. Unfortunately, she was too slow. Several shots hit her in the back before Harry reacted. He rushed forward and swiped his hand to the side. The blue woman's body was thrown to the left, and Harry thrust his other hand forward. The shockwave of magic was devastating to the troops. The ones directly in front of him caught the worst of it. Their limbs separated from their torsos, and their white armor was shredded to pieces. The ones off to the sides were launched hundreds of feet into the air and sent flying deep into the jungle. The tank-like machine was sent tumbling end over end dozens of feet before it slid to a stop. As it came to rest, a creaking metallic groan met his ears as the large machine settled into the soft mud. Sparks and smoke began billowing from a severe crack near the turret. The metal around the split turned red hot, then white. Flames erupted from the break, and Harry wasn't sure if he wanted to stick around any longer to see how it would end. He ran over to the woman who was lying on her side unconscious. She was still breathing, but her breaths came out short and ragged like she was struggling to breathe. Turning her body, he saw three circular burn holes in the back of her brown shirt. Without thinking, he scooped her into his arms and was about to apparate away when he spotted her sword hilt on the ground next to where she had been lying. It levitated off the ground and drifted over to him, where it safely stowed itself into his pocket. The lethal sound of crackling electricity was enough to get him moving. He disappeared right before the damaged machine went critical, exploded, and leveled everything within a one-hundred-foot radius.

Harry arrived back in his tent and immediately got to work. He placed the woman facedown on his bed and quickly grabbed his healing supplies. He used his magic to cut her shirt off and reveal her wounds. They were quite severe. Three grotesque holes dotted her otherwise smooth, blue back, one just right of her upper spine and two more on her lower left back. The holes were deep, and the flesh was completely ruined. The areas around the holes were totally scorched. Her breathing became dangerously shallow. Harry reached into his bag and pulled out a small bottle. He then flipped her over onto her back and did his best to ignore her nudity. He unscrewed the top and placed five drops into her mouth with the attached dropper. Her breathing suddenly stopped. Harry placed the side of his head on her chest and listened for a heartbeat. It was there but weak. The potion he gave her would stop her from dying, but only for a short time. Healers used it on patients in critical condition. It gave them just enough time to try and stabilize them.

Rolling her back onto her stomach, Harry moved her head tentacles out of the way and examined her wounds closer. Not being human, he couldn't assume her vital organs were in the same place as his. He also couldn't be sure if any of his magical medicines would work on her species. With no other choice, Harry pulled out one of his most prized possessions ... a small vial of phoenix tears, but first, he poured some cleanser into the wound, which smoked when it came into contact with her skin. Harry then used a dropper to drop two tears into each wound. They instantly began sizzling. Harry watched as the burnt, blackened skin lightened into a dark blue color. The wounds then began to grow smaller. Over the next minute, her skin knitted together until only three circular patches of scar tissue marred her smooth skin. He rolled her onto her back again and went back into his bag. He poured a potion into her mouth that would hopefully energize her body and help with its continued healing. He then gave her a nutrient potion to keep her body from depleting.

Last but not least, he gave her a potion to stop her body from going into shock. He was about to put his supplies away when he noticed a long cut down the thigh of her tight pants. Opening the two sides of the slit, he saw that there was a clean slice going down her thigh.

'It probably happened when I pushed her out of the way,' Harry thought. He waved his hand at her pants, and they disappeared from her body and appeared on the bed next to her. Seeing her fully nude for the first time, he couldn't help but appreciate her figure. Pushing that from his mind, he grabbed a tub of healing paste. First, he poured more cleanser over the cut to clean and disinfect it before he smeared a healthy dose of the paste down the length of the wound. Once it was properly coated, Harry repeatedly wrapped a bandage around her thigh to completely cover the injury. With that done, he looked over her body again to check for further injuries, but he only found a few small scratches and bruises, which he also treated. After doing as much as he could for her, Harry grabbed a clean sheet from his cupboard. He removed her boots and covered her up. All he could do was wait and hope for the best. Before leaving the room, Harry magically repaired and cleaned her clothing. He folded them up and placed them on the nightstand. After a moment of thought, Harry gave her a sleeping potion. It was probably best if she remained in bed for a while to give her body time to heal. He looked back at her one more time before exiting the room.

After finishing with her, Harry apparated back to the crime scene. He considered himself lucky that he appeared invisible because a ship was already there, and more white-armored troops were scouring the area. The ship was shaped like a wedge and lacked side walls. Harry watched as they went over the area, looking for any clues. After half an hour, all the troops boarded the ship. Wanting to know where they were going, Harry quickly went into his backpack and pulled out his broom.

His broom was a work in progress and was made out of a muggle composite. He chose this material because he had had many brooms break on him over the years. He didn't like flying it just yet because many of the normal enchantments had to be tweaked to account for the different material. He had slowly been working on it over the last few years, and it was getting close to completion. The broom was insanely fast, but the handling was quite poor. Getting

thrown from it at such a high speed wouldn't end well for the rider. As the ship rose into the air, Harry threw his leg over the broom and quickly gave chase.

Almost instantly, Harry had to fight the broom to stay on course. He followed the ship from a respectable distance, keeping it just in sight the whole time. When it began pulling away, Harry steeled his nerves and added more speed. The broom had a tendency to pull left, so he was forced to ride the whole way leaning slightly to the right. It wasn't comfortable by any stretch of the imagination. He was very thankful the journey was relatively short. After twenty minutes in the air, he saw the ship slow into a hover and gently lower to the ground. Harry slowed his speed and crept closer. Below him was a massive military camp with hundreds of troops scurrying about. Machines, supplies, and military equipment were being loaded onto ships. Whoever these people were, they were getting out of here in a hurry.

He spotted a good place to apparate in and landed a fair distance away. Putting up his broom, Harry popped in behind a group of tents that hadn't yet been torn down. After making sure he was still invisible, Harry snuck into the camp.

The first thing that caught his attention was a trooper exiting what looked to be a prefabricated warehouse. He was pushing a long, flat cart with no wheels. It was hovering over the ground as if by magic. Piled high on top of the pushcart were crates made of some type of plastic or possibly ceramic. He was pushing it toward a group of cargo ships parked nearby. Harry snuck into the warehouse to see what was inside. Several more troopers inside were loading their own carts, and Harry easily avoided them. He didn't know what was inside those crates, but whatever it was, Harry wanted it. As soon as they moved their carts outside, Harry quickly turned a dozen or so of the crates into portkeys and sent them to the area just outside his tent. Unfortunately, more troops came back into the warehouse, pushing empty carts. Deciding not to be greedy, Harry left the building in search of more loot to steal.

Harry had long overcome his childish ideals of always doing the right thing. Sure, he was still inflicted with his saving-people-thing, as his friends had called it so long ago. His saving the blue woman was proof enough, but beyond that, Harry wasn't above such petty things like robbing those who had done wrong. It was true that these people had done nothing to him personally, but they had just attempted to outright murder their commanding officer by shooting her in the back. As far as he was concerned, some justice was in order.

As he moved to the next building, a fully loaded ship closed its cargo door. The engines roared to life, and it slowly lifted off the ground. It rose into the air before it began flying higher and higher. Harry craned his neck and spotted an absolutely massive ship so high up that he could barely see it through the thick haze of the atmosphere. It was then he noticed several more ships hovering around the biggest one. One of them turned and angled upward before flying so high that he could no longer see it. 'Were they leaving the planet?' he asked himself. They wouldn't be shuttling machinery and supplies to some kind of mothership if they were just moving to a different part of the planet. A slight panic settled over him. He damn sure didn't want to be stuck on this planet if there was somewhere better to go. He needed to secure a way off

this planet, and he needed to be quick about it. Several of those walking tanks were already lined up and moving into the cargo bay of a particularly big ship. By all accounts, they would likely be packed up and ready to leave within a few hours. Harry immediately got to work.

He spent half an hour searching. Most of the ships were probably too big to be manned by a single person. Harry didn't know how to fly one of those things, but he was hoping the blue woman did. He continued looking until he reached the camp's outer edge, furthest from where he had entered. Lined up were four ships that looked about the right size he was looking for. They looked kind of like a flying insect if he was being honest. They had three wings on each side, one on top of the other, and were fanned out. At the base of each set of wings were massive engine intakes that sandwiched the cockpit. The middle wing, the longest of the three, had a wicked-looking gun at the end. The once-white paint was old and crusty. Various points of the ship were trimmed in brick red that was equally scratched and faded. Harry nodded his head. This was what he had been looking for.

Not knowing if any of them worked, he decided to take all four in case they needed to strip parts from some to fix one into working order. Again, he hoped the blue woman knew what to do because he had no idea. He had seen her fixing one of those walking tanks, so his hopes were high. Harry moved around back of them and held out his hand. He began incanting quietly. The air around the four ships shimmered and wavered like hot air in the desert. He then flicked his wrist, and all four disappeared. In reality, they were still there but hidden from view. Harry added some Repelling Charms just to be on the safe side. Once finished, he went back to looting.

He tried to open the door of one prefab warehouse but found the door securely locked. There was no handle, just a digital keypad of some sort. Not thinking it was a good idea to just start pressing random buttons, Harry snuck around back and transfigured a hole in the wall. A stack of crates blocked his entrance. He levitated them out of the way and slipped in. After closing the hole, he began looking around. Everything looked similar to the other warehouses in camp. Wanting to see what was in the crates, Harry opened one up. He was hit in the face with a blast of icy cold air. Frosty mist rose from the open crate, which took a few seconds to dissipate. When he looked inside, he saw at least two hundred small vials set in grid-like holders stacked on top of one another. He quickly concluded that it was probably medicine of some kind. Having a stockpile of medicine on this planet was probably a necessity. The amount of insects, molds, and fungus was insane. If his immune system wasn't supercharged by the Phoenix tears, he guessed that he probably would be bedridden right about now.

Harry shrugged and closed the container. He didn't know if it would be useful or not, but he was determined to steal it anyway. Like before, Harry began turning the crates into portkeys and sending them with the rest. Unlike before, Harry threw caution to the wind and stole much more. He chose dozens of crates from various areas of the warehouse, hoping they would contain different things. Once he had his fill, he moved on.

The next place he hit was the area of the camp that was primarily used for maintenance. Little robots were scooting around, beeping loudly as armored men packed tools away. Tools were

something he very well might end up needing. Harry tested out his magic and placed a quick Aversion Charm on the area. He wanted to see how these soldiers would react. As it turned out, they acted as any normal human would. They suddenly became paranoid and spooked and stopped what they were doing. They looked around as if trying to spot some hidden foe. Then, one after another, they left when the charm became too much for them. The beeping robots weren't bothered at all. When the area was clear, Harry slipped in and began hiding as much as he could. He didn't want to send this stuff back to the tent since the ships would remain here for the time being. He levitated everything just outside the boundary of the camp and placed magical protections around them. As he did, one curious robot rolled up to him and beeped loudly. Harry quickly silenced it and levitated it off the ground. Its domed head spun in circles wildly while Harry looked for an off switch. He pressed any button he could find until the thing finally powered down. He placed the motionless robot with the other stuff he had hidden.

By that time, a steady stream of crates were being loaded onto cargo ships. Other ships were taking off and joining their brethren high in the sky, and about two-thirds of the camp had been completely cleared out. Over the next few minutes, three empty warehouses were disassembled and loaded onto a ship. Harry stayed and watched, wanting to ensure they didn't find the ships he had hidden. Thankfully, that wasn't the case. An hour later, the last ship took off, leaving a barren grid of empty land in the middle of a thick flower forest. Soon after, every ship in the sky disappeared with a flash of light. He waited a while longer, but no one returned. There wasn't much left, he discovered as he walked through the empty camp. A few pieces of rubbish were tumbling across the ground, and one of those walking tanks had been left behind. Harry went over and examined it. It was missing so many parts that there was no chance it would ever work again. There were a few other odds and ends, all junk.

It was getting late, so he apparated just outside the door to his tent. Dozens of crates surrounded it, some lying on their sides and others resting in large, unorganized piles. He was too hot and sweaty to deal with that mess right then. He went into the tent and breathed a sigh of relief when cool, dry air washed over him. He dropped his backpack onto the couch and checked on his guest.

The woman was still unconscious, but it appeared that his initial potion had worn off. Her breathing was stronger and sounded healthy. Pleased by what he saw, he left the room and went straight to the bathroom. After showering, Harry fixed himself a meal while dreading what would come. He ate lightly since he didn't want to be full for the next part of his plan.

Both he and Hermione knew there was a very big chance that he wouldn't speak the language of any civilization he might come across. Hermione, of course, had an answer for that.

"It won't be pleasant," Hermione had warned him.

Reluctantly, Harry went into his bag and pulled out a small box. Inside was a large, flawless ruby cleanly cut in half. Hundreds of micro-etched runes covered the outsides of both halves. One

half was a transmitter, which he carried back into the room. He placed the flat side on the girl's forehead and pumped a bit of magic into it. The gem began lightly glowing red.

"The transmitter is relatively safe. In fact, the person you place it on likely won't even feel a thing. The receiver, however ... That's a whole nother story," Hermione told him. He went back into the living room and grabbed the second half. Before using it, Harry placed a pillow and blanket on the couch. He lay down and got as comfortable as possible. He then placed the gem on his forehead and pumped some magic into it. The gem immediately latched onto his forehead, and it wouldn't come off until it was done.

Almost instantly, a massive migraine hit him like a ton of bricks. Harry groaned pitifully and closed his eyes. The light in the room was making the pain feel a thousand times worse. His lips suddenly felt wet, and Harry knew blood was pouring from both nostrils. Hermione had explained this to him.

"There's nothing you can do about it. The bleeding won't stop until the initial phase has completed," Hermione explained.

"And how long will that take?" Harry worriedly asked her. Hermione shrugged.

"It depends on several factors ... how many languages the person knows ... the complexity of the writing system ... the breadth of the ...

"Yeah, yeah. Got it," Harry groaned. "A while."

Fortunately, Harry wouldn't stay conscious long enough to time it. His brain was fuzzy, and he was overcome with a dizzy spell. Harry coughed, and he whimpered when that small action made his head feel like someone had jabbed a red-hot screwdriver into his temple. He simply surrendered to the pain and blissfully passed out.

When his eyes finally opened, he was pleasantly surprised that his head didn't feel like it was about to split open. It still hurt, but it was more of a dull throbbing rather than a piercing pain. He couldn't breathe out of his nose, and when he looked down, he was shocked to see how much blood he had lost. The blanket covering his torso was soaked with drying blood. Harry flipped the blanket down and discovered that the blood had soaked all the way through. His bare chest was likewise smeared with blood. Feeling queasy at the sight, Harry got to his feet and stumbled slightly. He was still lightheaded. He ignored everything else and went straight to the bathroom. He showered off and attempted to get the dried blood out of his nostrils. He felt much better once he was nice and clean. Harry went back to the living room and vanished the blanket and pillow. The sight of them gave him the creeps. He then magically cleaned the couch and dropped down on it.

Had it worked? He concentrated and found that it had. He now knew an additional three languages. Galactic Basic was the one he heard the troops speaking. Twi'leki was another, and

the third was something called Huttese. It was a strange sensation, to be sure. He knew words and names but had no reference to what they were. He was glad to discover that his brain could translate a lot of what he now knew into English, but unfortunately, not everything. He sat there for a while, trying to wrap his head around it.

A Galaxy of Magic

Aayla Secura was not having a particularly restful sleep. She didn't know why, but her mind was full of dread. When she opened her eyes, she was momentarily confused. She was in a strange, dimly lit room but had no idea how she had gotten there. She was very groggy but still level-headed enough to follow her teachings. She quieted her breathing and listened. There was noise outside of the room. Someone else was there. Closing her eyes, she began meditating in an effort to become one with the Force. That was a big mistake.

Her eyes snapped open, and she shrieked an ungodly scream. The Force was a maelstrom of horror and betrayal. She could feel the echoes of her friends and fellow Jedi. Feelings of their last moments flashed through her mind. The pain ... The despair ... The Force felt tainted, and it was crying out for help. It was so loud and too much for her to bear. Her hands covered her conical ears, and she shook her head, silently begging for it to stop. It didn't stop, though. The painful pulse reverberated through the Force over and over. At the center of it all was something terrible. It was something greasy and black, infecting everything wonderful about the Force. Her body trembled as the dark evil sensed and then closed in on her. There was nothing she could do, nowhere she could run. She shrank into herself, feeling minuscule and alone, just as she had all those years ago when she was sold to the Hutts. She whimpered as it grew closer, threatening to devour her.

Suddenly, she was surrounded by a warming light, and the Dark Side yowled in fear. It reared back and retreated just as quickly as it came. Aayla took that moment to snap out of her trance. Her breathing was loud and hoarse, and her cheeks were wet from tears she didn't know had fallen. "Are you alright?" she heard a male voice.

Aayla's head snapped in his direction, and she saw a handsome human kneeling before her. Concern for her was written across his face. For the first time in a long time, she couldn't stop the emotions from getting the better of her. He stood up, and she shot forward, wrapping her arms around his waist. Before she knew it, she was crying into his chest. He just stood there, letting her cry. It wasn't long before he started rubbing her back in a comforting and reassuring manner. Aayla sniffled and then cried again. He radiated the same warming light she had felt when meditating. She clutched him tighter and basked in his warmth. She stayed in his arms until there were no tears left.