

A Galaxy of Magic

Chapter 7

“See this screen here?” Aayla said, pointing to the screen she was talking about. “When traveling through hyperspace, you should check this regularly. It monitors the hyperspace engines. These bars should never cross over the red lines. If they do, you’ve got a problem with the engine. The first bar indicates the power flow to the engine. The second monitors the temperature. The third is for vibrations. The fourth monitors the engine’s efficiency. You can see that that particular bar is high. That tells me the engine isn’t working as well as it should. It needs maintenance. The last bar monitors the engine’s structural integrity. If that goes past the red, the engine is likely done for and will need a complete replacement,” she instructed him.

Aayla was in the captain’s seat, and Harry was sitting in the seat next to hers. She was teaching him how to properly monitor the ship’s various systems while traveling through hyperspace. They had taken over for Shaak Ti, who was somewhere on the ship doing maintenance with Maris. Harry pointed at another screen.

“What about this one?” he asked her, fascinated by all the blinking screens.

“This is the ship’s shields. You want to always keep them up when flying,” she told him. “The one next to it monitors the life support system. That one’s critical for obvious reasons.” Harry nodded in understanding.

Harry was trying not to stare at the swirling black and blue vortex of hyperspace in wonder as he had done for the last hour. It began giving him a headache, so he turned his attention to other things. “What about the offensive capabilities? Are they any good?” he asked her. Aayla snorted.

“They’re terrible. We definitely don’t want to get into any battles until they’re upgraded,” she bluntly told him.

“Will all these fixes and upgrades be expensive?” he asked. He was unaware of how much all this work would cost. He imagined it would be quite costly.

“I can do the repairs myself, but parts can be expensive. Thankfully, this pile of bolts is pretty old, and it used to be a popular ship design, so there’s a lot of them sitting around in scrapyards. I’m sure we can find the parts relatively cheaply,” she explained.

“Are there a lot of scrapyards on Tatooine?” Harry asked. He only knew a tiny bit about the planet from listening to the women’s conversations.

“A fair amount,” Aayla responded. She looked at her datapad again and winced.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, concerned.

“More anti-Jedi propaganda coming from the so-called Galactic Empire,” she sighed. They had been in space for just over eight hours, and during that time, several dozen articles and press releases had been published on the holonet deriding the former Jedi Order. It was difficult for the three Jedi to read it without reacting poorly. Harry reached over and placed his hand on her shoulder. Aayla looked at him with a sad smile, placing her hand on top of his. No words needed to be said. They were interrupted by Shaak Ti’s voice coming through the intercom.

“Aayla?” her voice crackled through the speaker. Aayla shook her head.

“Even the speakers need to be replaced,” she chuckled before answering the Jedi Master. “Yes, Shaak?” she called out.

“Bring us out of hyperspace and cut all engines if the coast is clear,” she instructed. “The astromech is going to recalibrate them.”

“Alright,” Aayla said and began pressing buttons on the console. “Okay, Harry, grab that lever and pull it back at an even pace,” she told him. Harry did as she said. He grabbed the lever and pulled it back toward him. The pitch of the engine lowered, and the vortex quickly turned back into starlines. The white lines shrank until they were only pinpricks of light. They had left hyperspace.

“When you exit hyperspace, you must always be aware of your surroundings. It’s the easiest time to get caught off-guard,” she said. She pointed at a screen. “Check your scanners for any ships that might be near. Out here in the middle of nowhere, we’re unlikely to find anything, but when we visit inhabited planets, there are always ships coming in and out of orbit. You don’t want to collide with any of them.”

Since there was nothing within a lightyear that could cause them any harm, Aayla taught him how to shut down the ship’s sublight engine. Once it was off, she spoke with Shaak Ti.

“Everything’s off,” she called through the intercom.

“Okay. We’re going to start the recalibrations. This will take a while,” she told them. Aayla spun her chair and stretched, lifting her arms over her head while groaning.

“How long does this usually take?” he asked, subtly checking out her body.

“It depends on the size and complexity of the engines. These will probably take an hour or so,” she guessed. “But it’s best to do this now when we’re alone and safe.”

“I’ll go set up the tent and start cleaning the ship. The smell is starting to get to me,” he said, making Aayla laugh.

“Get used to it. The beings on Tatooine probably won’t smell much better,” she smirked at him as he left the cabin. Harry wasn’t looking forward to finding out if she was just teasing or telling the truth.

He grabbed his bag and went to the cargo area. Using his magic, he levitated the expanded crate out of the way and pulled his tent from his bag. He placed it right in the middle of the room and waved his hand at it. The tent erected itself in only a few seconds. He was about to start cleaning when his stomach growled. Realizing they hadn’t eaten since breakfast, Harry entered the tent and began cooking food for everyone. Twenty minutes later, Harry levitated his and Aayla’s food to the cabin. Aayla looked at him when he entered. “Here you go,” he said, levitating her food and drink to her. She smiled kindly and thanked him while plucking the plate and cup from the air.

“Can you tell Shaak and Maris that their food is ready inside the tent? The tent’s in the cargo area,” he told her. Aayla nodded and informed the women over the intercom. They all had a pleasant meal, and by the time they were done, the ship was ready to go. When they entered hyperspace, Aayla showed him the screen again.

“See? The hyperspace engine is working better than before. It’s not perfect, but at least there’s an improvement.” Harry nodded before giving up his seat to Shaak. He left them alone to get some work done.

Harry spent over two hours walking every inch of the ship, casting hundreds of Cleaning and Air Freshening Charms. By the time he was done, you could have eaten off the floor ... not that he wanted to try it. The memory of the smell still made his stomach feel gross. When he came across areas that needed some work, he fixed them to the best of his abilities. Broken floor grates were fixed with a simple Repair Charm, chipped or peeling paint was removed with a wave of his hand, and dents, tears, and scuffs in the wall panels were likewise fixed. When Aayla finally found him, she was suitably impressed with his work.

“The ship looks way better!” she happily chirped. “Removing the horrible smell alone deserves an award,” she joked. Harry chuckled and stretched his aching muscles. “C’mon ... Let’s go to the tent,” she said, waving him on.

“Are we calling it a day?” he asked her as they made their way to the cargo area.

“Shaak and Maris are taking the first shift. We’re to relieve them in five hours. We should reach Tatooine toward the end of our five-hour shift,” she explained as they reached the tent.

They went inside, and Aayla immediately headed to the bedroom. When Harry entered, he watched as she unabashedly kicked off her boots and removed her top. Harry had barely gotten his shirt off by the time Aayla was peeling her tight pants down her legs. He couldn’t help but stare at her gorgeous body. Her teardrop-shaped bottom jiggled as she crawled onto the bed,

fully nude. Harry stripped down to his boxers and asked, "Do you want me to work on your back tonight?"

"Not tonight," she yawned and rolled onto her back. She slid her legs underneath the blanket and pulled it up past her breasts, blocking them from view. "We've only got five hours, and I'm tired," she said through another yawn. "We can do it tomorrow," she finished. Harry nodded and got into bed.

Aayla got into her normal position, draped halfway over him, and buried her face into his neck. Her knee kept rubbing against his groin, which got a reaction out of him. Aayla didn't react, but she could obviously feel it pressed against her leg. Instead of chastising him, she softly ran her hand up and down his chest, caressing his skin. Harry did the same on her side, caressing her skin from just below her armpit down to her hip. He heard her hum, and it sounded like she was trying to stifle a moan. She nuzzled her face against his neck a little harder, and he could feel her lips brushing against his skin. Harry gently tickled the soft skin of her hip, and he heard a sudden slight gasp. Her arm squeezed him tighter, but Harry didn't take it further. He waved his hand and turned out the lights. It wasn't long before Aayla had fallen asleep.

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Though Maris was tired, she wasn't looking forward to the few hours of sleep she would hopefully get. She shivered as she made her way to the cargo area. It was always cold when traveling through space, but this old ship certainly didn't help matters. The life support system was ancient and didn't heat the circulated air properly. She rubbed her arms, trying to rid herself of the goosebumps that covered her pale skin. She looked down at her chest and blushed deeply. The cold air had her nipples hard the entire trip. The whole time, she had subtly been trying to hide her chest from Harry so he wouldn't notice. Shaak Ti's nipples had been hard the entire time as well, but she didn't seem too concerned with hiding them from his view. It was probably because she was older and more mature. Maris hoped that she would one day reach that level of self-confidence. The door slid open with a hiss, and Maris went straight to the tent.

When she entered, she sighed in relief. The air was warmer and more pleasant. The tent even smelled better. She didn't know why, but the tent had a nice, homey feel to it. Maris yawned and rubbed her eyes. They were beginning to sting with tiredness. She walked up to Harry's bedroom door and reached out for the knob before stopping herself. 'Should I go in or knock?' she asked herself. 'Knock first,' she quickly answered her own question.

She softly knocked on the door and waited. No one answered. Maris knocked a little harder. Still, no one answered. She turned the door knob and cracked the door open enough to stick her head in. The room was dark, though she could make out their shadowy figures. Pushing the door open, she stepped in. Light from the hall swept across the room, illuminating the top of the bed. Maris's cheeks grew hot at what she saw. Aayla was practically on top of Harry. Harry was on his back, and Aayla was sprawled across his front. Maris could immediately tell that Aayla was completely nude. Her entire back was bare, and the blanket had fallen low enough that she

could see the blue skin of Aayla's hip. Harry's hand was resting on it, holding her possessively. Aayla's face was lightly pressed against Harry's cheek, and Maris could see a small smile on her pretty face. Maris couldn't help but blush after walking in on such an intimate scene. Not wanting to wake them up when they were in such a state, Maris stepped back through the door and closed it a bit. She cleared her throat.

"Aayla? Harry?" she called out much louder than before. Aayla squirmed and sat up, rubbing her eyes.

"Yes?" she called back tiredly.

"It's time to switch," Maris said.

"Alright, we'll be out in a minute," Aayla responded, and Maris closed the door. She heard movement inside the room, and a few minutes later, the door opened, revealing a tired-looking Aayla and Harry. She wanted to giggle at the state of Harry's hair but refrained.

"If you want, you and Shaak can use the bed in there," Harry told her, pointing to the bedroom. Maris nodded.

"Thank you," she told him. He smiled at her and went into the bathroom, leaving her and Aayla alone.

"Is Master Ti still up front?" she asked her.

"Yes, she's waiting for you to relieve her. Everything's gone fine so far. No problems," Maris filled her in.

"Good. Go on and get some sleep. Harry put your shirt on the bed," Aayla told her. "I'll go get Shaak. Oh, and the light switch is right here," she said, showing her.

Maris thanked her and went into Harry's bedroom, closing the door behind her. She stripped out of her clothes and pulled the big shirt over her head, making sure not to catch the material on her pointy horns. She then crawled into bed on Harry's side and found it still warm with his body heat. Maris lay her head on the pillow and turned on her side, pulling the blanket up to her chin. The pillow smelled good, she discovered. It smelled like Harry. Maris blushed hard and hid her face under the blanket just in case someone decided to walk into the room.

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"I never thought traveling through space could get boring," Harry said as he looked up from the datapad. Aayla had taught him how to use the holonet. He had spent the last hour using it to research the various alien beings he was likely to come across during their travels.

Aayla laughed at his comment. "I'm glad you learned that fact early on. There isn't much to do when moving through hyperspace. The action will pick up soon, though. We've got roughly twenty minutes before we reach Tatooine."

"Is there anything I should know before we land?" he asked, putting the datapad down and turning toward her.

"The planet is controlled by the Hutts. They run a dangerous criminal empire, and they have their slimy hands in everything, so watch what you say. Assume everyone you meet is out to scam you. By the way, don't use your powers out in the open. They'll assume you're a Jedi, and right now, all living Jedi have bounties on their heads. Always be aware of your surroundings and watch your back," she warned him.

"Have you ever been to Tatooine?" he wondered. She nodded at his question.

"Unfortunately, I have. There's not much good that could be said about the planet, other than it might be the safest place for us at the moment," she told him.

"You said it's a desert planet. How hot is it?" he asked. He had just come from Felucia and wasn't eager to visit another miserable planet.

"It's quite hot. The planet orbits twin stars and gets almost no rain. Thankfully, it's a very dry heat, so it's not as bad as Felucia," she assured him. Something about her explanation confused him.

"If there's no rain, where does everyone get their water?" he asked her.

"Some of it is imported from other planets, but they get most of their water from the local moisture farmers. They use vaporators to condense water from the small amount of moisture in the air," she explained.

"So water is valuable?" he asked.

"It is," she confirmed. "Water dealers buy it from the farmers, though most dealers are employed by the Hutts."

"I'm guessing the Hutts wouldn't like us muscling in on their territory?" Harry asked. Aayla laughed as she plucked away at her datapad.

"I daresay they wouldn't," she said, looking up and smiling at him.

"What about small amounts of water? I can make as much water as we want ... for free," he told her. She thought about it for a second.

"It is a possibility. While it's not a good idea to sell it out on the street and get caught up in a turf war, we might be able to trade some for parts and whatnot. The local junk dealers will keep their mouths shut if they get a good deal. We'll keep it in mind," she said. "We're about ten minutes out. Can you go wake them up?" she asked. Harry nodded and got up from his seat.

When Harry reached the door to his bedroom, he knocked loudly and cracked the door enough to speak through it. "Hey, girls!" he called out. He heard Maris groan in protest and chuckled. It felt nice to get revenge on the girl. He had been quite comfortable sleeping with a gorgeous, curvy woman on top of him, after all.

"Yes, Harry?" Shaak Ti asked tiredly.

"We're less than ten minutes from Tatooine. Aayla asked me to wake you up," he said through the crack.

"Alright, thanks. Can you turn the light on?" she asked. Harry opened the door further, leaned in, and flipped the switch. The lights came on, and he saw the two women getting out of bed. He had to admit, they looked pretty sexy after just waking up. Shaak was on her feet quicker than Maris, and she raised her arms over her head and stretched while yawning. He noticed that her nipples were hard underneath the thin fabric of her shirt. Maris swung her legs over the side of the bed, and her shirt was hiked up so far that he got a good look at most of her bare thighs. Not wanting to get caught staring at them like a weirdo, he slipped out of the room.

"Thanks," Shaak said through another yawn. He closed the door to give them some privacy and returned to Aayla's side. The two women joined them a few minutes later, and Harry gave up his seat to the Jedi Master.

"Just in time," Aayla smiled at her red-skinned friend. The console began beeping, and Harry stood next to Maris as Shaak pulled back on the lever. As they exited hyperspace, the two pilots began checking their instruments while Harry got his first look at Tatooine. There wasn't a lot to it. It was a big, yellow ball of sand and brown mountains. He noticed that there was almost no cloud cover.

They began flying around to the darker side of the planet, where it was obviously nighttime. They flew closer and closer to the planet, and Harry spotted a city taking shape. It wasn't sprawling like some of the cities on Earth, but it was large enough for them to blend in and hide in plain sight. "Welcome to Mos Espa. It's not the most civilized place, but it'll do for now," Aayla said as they inched closer. Shaak pointed in the distance.

"Land over on the eastside, just outside the city," Shaak told her. "Most of the scrapyards and junk dealers are on that side of the city," she explained to him. They flew close to the ground and slowly lowered until they finally touched down. The ship groaned as it came to a stop.

"What's the local time?" Maris asked.

“About three hours until sunrise,” Shaak Ti told her.

“How safe is it to leave our ship here alone?” Harry asked. From how Aayla had been talking about the people of Tatooine, he wasn’t sure it was wise to leave the ship unattended.

“Not very safe,” Shaak bluntly told him.

“I can put some protections up around the ship. It’ll repel anyone who gets too close. They’ll suddenly remember something else they have to do and leave. I can also add some alarms, so if the ship is entered or damaged, I’ll get a mental ping. The ping will even work while I’m asleep and wake me up,” he offered. The girls turned to him.

“Is it reliable?” Shaak Ti asked him.

“Very. It’s never failed me,” he lightly bragged about his skills.

“That would be very useful. That way, we can all leave the ship together, and we won’t have to sleep in shifts,” Shaak said while Aayla smiled prettily at him. His cheeks began to grow warm at the sight of her lovely expression.

“Is it safe for me to go outside at night?” he asked. He didn’t know what kind of dangerous creatures might be living under the sand.

“We’ll all go out with you,” Aayla said, standing up. They followed him outside, and he shivered as he took his first step onto the desert planet.

“It’s cold!” Harry gasped, and his breath misted in the frigid air. He probably shouldn’t have been surprised. Deserts on Earth turned very cold at night.

“It often gets below freezing during the night,” Shaak told him as the ramp lifted up, leaving them in the dark.

“I guess that’s better than it being boiling hot,” Harry said, placing a Warming Charm on himself. He then placed Warming Charms on the three women as well. Maris shivered and rubbed her arms.

“Thanks, Harry,” she said gratefully.

“No problem,” he responded and got to work. He slowly walked around the ship, waving his hand as he did. When he reached the starting point, he locked in the Repelling Charm. The girls immediately blinked in confusion and began walking away. Harry chuckled and went after them, keying each of them into the temporary ward. They stopped and turned around in confusion. “I told you it’s reliable.”

"It certainly is," Shaak Ti said, suitably impressed with his work. "Even more so now that we know it works on Force-sensitives. That gives us a much better layer of protection. Good work, Harry," she happily said. Harry then lowered the ramp and added an alarm ward to the entrance of the ship. He then walked around the ship, adding a second alarm ward around the outside.

"Okay ... done," he said, locking it into place. "I've got alarm wards at the entrance and around the ship. I'll know if anything larger than an insect nears the ship," he assured them.

"You're certainly handy to have around," Aayla joked and pecked his cheek. "I may end up keeping you," she teased. Harry chuckled in slight embarrassment at the praise.

"Come along, lovebirds. It's too cold to be staying out here for long," Shaak chuckled with Harry.

"I take it we won't be visiting the city until morning?" Harry asked as they entered the ship and lifted the ramp.

"The shops won't even open for another four or five hours," Aayla told him.

"Good. If there's nothing else that needs to be done, I'm going to get a bit more sleep. I don't have Jedi powers after all," he said, which made the girls laugh. There was truth to his words. The three women didn't tire as fast as he did and could go on longer without rest.

Harry went to the tent and stripped down before climbing into bed. He drifted off almost as soon as his head hit the pillow. He wasn't sure how long he had been out, but he was awakened by Aayla climbing into bed. By then, it was almost instinct to pull her close. He pulled her warm body to him and didn't notice the surprised squeak that left her lips. "My, my ..." he heard Aayla speak.

"I told you, Master Ti. All she needed was a good roll in the sheets for her to get a good night's sleep." Harry's tired eyes cracked open, and he saw Aayla smirking at him while pulling her trousers down. Harry blinked in confusion and turned his head. Maris was red-faced as he was holding her body against his. He then noticed Shaak Ti giggling as her shirt was lowered over her body, covering her hairless mound from his view. He then realized what had happened.

"Oh my gosh! Sorry, Maris!" he quickly apologized, pulling his arm from under her body. Maris was still red-faced and embarrassed. Aayla laughed and crawled into bed, taking her regular spot by his side. She got into her usual position with her body draped over his.

"Sorry for waking you, Harry," Shaak Ti apologized as she took the spot on Maris's other side. "We decided to sleep in here to try and have a peaceful sleep for once. The city is dangerous, and we need to be rested and refreshed if we want to keep ourselves safe. I hope you don't mind," she added.

“No, I don’t mind,” he said, still embarrassed by his actions.

“Less talking, more sleeping,” Aayla said tiredly while yawning. “Cut the lights, Harry,” she said, brushing her lips against his neck. ‘I’m in for a rough night,’ he told himself as he used all of his willpower to keep his body from reacting to her sensual behavior. He waved his hand and turned off the lights as Maris squirmed and rubbed against him. ‘Very rough,’ he corrected himself.