

Chapter 6

I was alone, leaning against a randomly chosen corner, for only a few minutes before Nal joined me, with Tatnia right behind him just a minute later. The sun was just starting to go down, meaning we had about two hours before it started getting unhealthy to be out in the streets. Part of me was tempted to troll the area for more muggers when it got darker out, but the phantom pain of being stabbed in the side shut that idea down.

Waiting for the criminals to come to us was probably a bad idea.

Once we were together, we started sharing what we had learned in hushed voices. Both of their asking around confirmed that the docking berth was frequented by slavers, dropping off somewhere between a dozen to two dozen slaves at a time. They also learned that five different ships would stop by to unload "cargo," all at separate times, seemingly at random, with days in between.

I revealed that the dock's owner was on the take and that that berth was specifically for slave drop-offs. When I added that he also kept them off the records, Nal looked shocked.

"That is ridiculous. Slave trade is legal on Nar Shaddaa," He said, shaking his head. "Avoiding tax is the only explanation, which is stupid enough on a planet where the government won't torture you for stealing from them. Excellent news for us."

"Why?" I asked. "I mean, I understand it's dumb to try and cheat the Hutts when the slavers aren't breaking local laws. But why is it good for us?"

"Because the ships won't exist in the system," The blue-skinned alien explained. "No records of them means that the authorities won't investigate. Ships that aren't supposed to be here can't be reported missing without Hutts catching on."

"So... they've left themselves open?" Tatnia asked. "We can just walk in and steal the ship?"

"Yes. Nothing would stop us from doing so in the first place, but now we need not fear the Enforcers looking for us."

The Enforcers were essentially the closest thing that Nar Shaddaa had to police, something none of us knew about before Nal and Tatnia went information gathering earlier. You could call them if someone screwed you over, stole from you, or tried to kill you. They kept everything working smoothly, so crazy people didn't disrupt business. Basically, they were why everyone agreed to pay taxes in the first place.

They were corrupt, brutal, rarely investigated anything that wasn't immediately obvious, and were one hundred percent on the Hutt's payroll, but they kept the entire moon from crumbling into anarchy. If a ship wasn't paying taxes, they wouldn't raise a finger to do anything about it, especially anyone who would have complained was dead.

"That's good. It means we can basically take everything. We will need a place to sell it, though," I pointed out as I scratched my beard. "Any ideas?"

"Find a junkyard somewhere on the planet that won't ask questions," Tatnia suggested with a shrug. "Selling it to someone would take too long, and the fact that it's probably going to be modified to carry slaves just means we would be selling it to a slaver, most likely."

"We would be selling at a steep loss," Nal pointed out. "Trading a functional ship for scrap."

"No, I think she is right. Better to get it out of our hands as quickly as possible. We may be losing money, but we wouldn't make any money at all if something goes wrong before we can pass it off."

We talked a while longer about how we would prepare and what we would do. Unfortunately, it looked like we were basically going to have to wait around for a ship to land because we had no way of predicting when they would show up. Despite that, we needed a plan. There would be a lot of waiting, but with a solid plan, we could essentially relax until our targets arrived.

The hangars themselves were large circular buildings with a circular space inside for the ships to land. They were all connected in a U shape, which was where the speeder we had been taken away on had pulled up to. Each of the hangars had personal doors, as well as a set of rather large sliding doors. We witnessed cargo being hauled in and out of those large doors from near constantly.

"If we entered after the transport speeder, we would be hidden from prying eyes." Nal pointed out. "Ship engine might even cover the sound of blaster fire."

"The doors are going to be coded," Tatnia countered. "We would have to enter with someone else. Unless you have something to get around that?"

Her last question was directed to me, and I shook my head, frowning slightly.

"Not really, unless you think shocking it will let it open freely," I admitted. "I don't have much in terms of subtlety yet, either."

"Well, crossing in while the cargo gate is open is probably our best bet," Tatnia responded.

"No chance at stealth," Nal pointed out, Tatnia shrugging in response. "I have no issue with that, simply stating."

"What about the slaves?" I asked. "I don't want them in the crossfire."

"Then we don't wait until the transport is going in. We wait until it comes out," Tatnia suggested, chewing her lip. "We wait outside for the gate to open, then two of us go in, attack the slavers and take it down before they can escape. The third person would be in charge of stopping the speeder. If the one we were in was any sign, a few laser blasts through the window would be enough."

"Everyone will be able to hear that," I pointed out, quickly shaking my head. "But then, with any luck, that won't matter. This is a blitz. We go in, take them down and fly away. Sell the ship and move on."

"I get the concept. Speed is the goal," Nal said, and I nodded. "I will take care of the transport. Wait for it to come out, kill the slavers, then commandeer the speeder. Let the slaves out somewhere safe."

"That sounds like a solid plan. Could we sell the transport as well?"

"Probably, a stolen speeder isn't hard to pawn off, especially not to someone who already accepted a stolen ship," Tatnia answered, waving me off as I opened my mouth. "The scrap yard will know. They won't say anything, but they will know."

We talked a bit more, but the plan was pretty much decided at that point. We flagged down another speeder and were back at the hotel within the hour.

We spent most of the next two days staking out the hangar, waiting for more slavers to land. Tatnia lined up a junkyard, one that was a considerable distance away, that had enough room, and was interested in a cheap ship that they could sell for parts. I attempted to learn as much magic as possible during our downtime since I couldn't practice while we were out and about, waiting for our targets. Unfortunately, considering what we were about to do, I couldn't stay up super late because I needed to be at a hundred percent, not tired and groggy.

That isn't to say I didn't learn anything. Five hours spread between two nights was enough for me to learn my first two spells from the conjuration branch of magic, summon sword and summon familiar.

Conjuration magic was a fascinating subject and varied greatly from what I was expecting. My first read-through, back when I woke up, had been correct. There was no

necromancy or daedra summoning in this variant of conjuration. Whether that was because the entities intentionally cut it out or necromancy and daedra didn't exist in the world this variant of magic came from, I didn't know.

What I did know was that this version of conjuration, beyond those two restrictions, was also a much more flexible school of magic than was advertised in the game. It was much more about using magic to bring something into being, rather than tearing holes in reality to summon things from Oblivion or whatever daedric realm you were targeting. This meant a few things, the most obvious of which was that there was no time limit to your summons.

When you summoned something, you fed it some of your power to cast the spell. This was enough to bring whatever you summoned into being for a few seconds. On top of that, you could feed it more energy, anywhere from essentially none to all of your remaining mana. This would affect how long your construct stuck around without any additional input. Once it started running out, you could feed it more, but only if you made physical contact. Not much of a big deal for weapons, but for a more ambulatory summon, it became much harder to maintain in a fight.

This meant that I could summon a sword, feed it all my mana, then use that sword while my mana recharged. Eventually, I would need to provide it more magicka, but by then, I would have recharged completely, meaning the sword could stick around for quite a while.

On top of all that, when I completed the spell and summoned a sword, I was conjuring a construct into being, meaning I wasn't stuck with the frankly ridiculous-looking daedric weapons from the game. I had always been a fan of more straightforward, sturdy aesthetics regarding older weapons and armor, and my conjured sword reflected that. It was a simple longsword with a fuller that ran along two-thirds of the blade, a standard crossguard that curved up slightly, and a hilt and pommel that looked completely ordinary. No saw teeth or awkward curves, double blades, or fancy satanic filigree. Just a simple-looking weapon for killing stuff.

An aesthetic that was completely pointless because it was also translucent, a pale purple, and left a subtle purple glowing streak in the air when I swung it around.

I was also pretty good with it, practicing a handful of cuts and stabs while the other two were out of the room. The weapon knowledge that the entities had given me was rather impressive. It wasn't just how to swing a sword and not cut your leg off, but instead a full download of a dozen or so sword fighting styles, as well as pseudo experience with actual sword combat. I was beginning to understand why they had considered all the information a mercenary might know as "tipping the scales" too much if this was what I was getting for "how to use a sword."

Summoning a familiar had been an exciting experience as well. Like the sword, I wasn't stuck with Skyrim's strange mutton chop wolves. Instead, I summoned an honest to god tiger. It was partially see-through, a pale blue with slightly darker stripes, and had the same nebulous energy wafting off it as the normal Skyrim summon would have. It was hard to tell from memory, but I

think my tiger was slightly bigger than the wolf as well. Even more impressive, though, was that it definitely wasn't the half-brain-dead AI you got in the game, either. He seemed to react like an actual intelligent being, following my commands smoothly.

Originally, I only planned to work on my sword summoning, but when I realized that almost half of the basic spell matrix worked immediately, with no tuning, I had to test another conjuration spell. It worked the same way, with a large chunk of the spell matrix just instantly slotting into place. I was now almost sure that this meant I had some sort of talent for conjuration, along with a minor skill or natural predisposition to healing magic, as it had also been a bit easier. Unfortunately, that meant I would likely have a very hard time with illusion magic, as learning clairvoyance had been a pain in the ass.

I crossed my fingers that alteration wasn't worse.

The first day we were staking out the hangar, nothing really happened. We watched throughout the day, but there was no activity. The other hangars were bustling, with shipments going out and coming in constantly. The freighters that landed there were hardly there for more than a few hours, unloading their goods and immediately loading new ones on before leaving up into space. People would also get on or off the freighters, but that only happened a few times. We also observed a small guards unit that patrolled the interior and area around the entrance. They never went near the still-empty hangar but frequently walked around and into the other hangars.

I spent most of the time practicing my healing spell, casting and recasting it repeatedly with my hand under a heavy jacket. It was interesting, despite the fact that the spell usually swirled and glowed around my hand, not just from my palm, covering it completely hid all of that, like covering a holoprojector lens.

Late on the second day, only a few hours after noon, we noticed the first clue that something was up. The other hangars, which previously hadn't been empty for more than thirty minutes at any point we had observed, were completely cleared out. The last freighter left, and no new ones came to replace them. We next noticed that the armed guards had also left, walking away from the building in pairs of two, disappearing into the crowd.

About twenty-five minutes after the last freighter left, a familiar transport speeder slowly pulled up to the usually empty hangar. An armed [Gran](#) stepped out of the passenger side, walked to the hangar gate, and opened it, waving the speeder through before stepping in and closing the gate behind it. I turned to Nal and Tatnia, the former looking confident, hand resting casually on his still-holstered pistol, while the latter looked ready but a little more anxious.

"You guys ready?" I asked, both of them nodded in confirmation. "Alright, let's do this."

I stepped away from our hiding spot and crossed the alley, heading towards the Hangar entrance, trying to look as calm and collected as possible. The transport speeder was already inside the docking berth, the large sliding gate closed behind it. As we got closer to the hangar,

Nal stopped about halfway into the u-shaped inner area, leaning inside one of the door frames, ready to pop out and ambush the speeder as it came out.

While he was getting into position, Tatnia and I kept walking, not stopping until we were much closer to our target hangar. I hid behind some sort of repulsorlift hauler, and Tatnia leaned back into another door well. Both of us wouldn't be visible until the front end of the speeder passed us, at which point it wouldn't matter.

Five minutes passed, then ten, before a ship, a different one than we had arrived on, flew over the hangar and landed inside. It was one of the earlier YT - series light freighters, the series that the Millennium Falcon was a part of, though I couldn't quite remember all of them. It might have been a [YT-1000](#), but my extra memory wasn't helping.

I waited a few more minutes before starting to cast my conjure familiar, dumping half of my mana into it on top of the start-up. With that much mana, it would last for a good two minutes. With a sizzle of magick, I cast the spell, which activated behind the same hauler I was. A roiling spinning ball of magic expanded on the spot, revealing my familiar. The dangerous feline immediately crouched low, silently baring its massive teeth.

I motioned for it to be quiet, even though it wasn't really necessary. The tiger obeyed the instructions I fed it through my spell, which was coincidentally why you couldn't just conjure up a hundred creatures and let them fight for you. The spell latched onto you after you cast it, but it still took up a certain amount of aetheric space. Trying to summon a second familiar would cause the first spell would fail. Even worse, without that connection, the summon would run rampant until the magic you fed into them ran out. I directed the conjured tiger to walk around the side of the hauler, putting it out of view of the street and giving it an easy path to the gate. I gave one last look around, getting a nod from Tatnia, before focusing on the moment.

We were ready.