

“And Tatnia wins... again,” Julius said, throwing down his cards and shaking his head. “How in the hells have you come out on top three out of four games? It's a game of *luck*.”

I chuckled and took a sip of my drink, putting my own cards down and watching as Tatnia picked up her credits with a smirk. It was only a few dozen credits in total, but she was obviously enjoying the process of trouncing us.

“And that's your first mistake,” She responded with a smile. “Assuming it's just a game of luck.”

With our final agreed-upon game complete, we started cleaning up our mess. Tatnia made a show of putting our credits away before starting to clear the lounge table of a few bottles and bits of trash we accumulated while playing. When we were done, I glanced at the chronometer on the bar counter.

We were about seven hours into our fourth jump, having already marked down four angles for our “triangulation” attempt. I had spent the majority of my time so far working on my enchantment, with encouraging results.

After I had finished my strength-fortifying amulet, I spent a bit working out how much stronger it actually made me, as well as passing it around to the rest of the crew so they could try it out. The results were interesting, though I suppose I should have expected that. The enchantment seemed to suck in energy and infuse it into the wearer, similar to how my restoration magic could, if I ever got around to learning the three fortification spells my grimoire had.

Stranger still was the variable effect it had on people. Rather than have a flat increase, as I had assumed, it seemed to affect everyone differently. For Miru and Calima, it was a hardly detectable increase, making lifting a heavy metal bar just barely easier. For Nal and Julius, the effect seemed to be slightly more noticeable, while Tatnia and I could feel a minor, but not insignificant, difference. Vaz, on the other hand, gained the most from it, describing it as an obvious, if still small, increase in her strength. Nal was the first to catch on to what was happening.

“The stronger you are, the more it affects you,” He explained, gesturing to Vaz. “She is the strongest out of all of us. Therefore, it affects her the most.”

“That... makes a certain kind of sense...” I admitted with a frown, scratching my cheek.

“I would be interested to see what wearing multiple of this... Enchantment does,” Vaz admitted.

“I would consider this to be the bare minimal level of success,” I explained with a shrug. “I'll be able to make more powerful stuff, but even this takes a lot out of me.”

When we finished messing around with the amulet, I gave it to Vaz, seeing as she benefited from it the most, promising to replace it with something even better soon. Over the next two jumps, I practiced more, creating three more pieces of equipment in total. The first was a Destruction attunement amulet. It was supposed to help focus and ease the use of destruction magic, but at this level, the difference was negligible. I also created a ring of protection and a fortify magicka ring. I gave Miru the ring of protection, once again promising to replace it soon, while I replaced the lesser mana storage ring with the magicka fortification. Once again, the potency was nearly insignificant, but I wore it anyway.

By the fourth jump, I was too drained to work on anything, so I decided to take it off, sleeping in late, playing Sabbac, and casually reading my grimoire. I even asked Calima for reading suggestions, the book lover eagerly sending me list of books on my personal datapad.

“We still have a few hours until we drop out of hyperspace,” Calima said when I stepped into the cockpit, having finished cleaning up the lounge. “But in all honesty, this is just a formality at this point. We have four points of reference already, and according to Racer, they all point to the same general system.”

“Better safe than sorry,” I responded with a shrug. “One more point can only help.”

She shrugged and turned her attention back to one of her station's readouts before leaning back in her chair, her focus back on her datapad. After a minute or so of watching out the bridge window, I left the cockpit, heading down to the workshop to check on Miru.

As I stepped into her space, Miru was just snapping Leddy's chest plate back on to her frame, the repair droid stood in a way that told me it was depowered at the moment. Miru pulled up her datapad and connected a long link to the green droids neck. She looked over at me as I leaned against one of her work surfaces, smiling before looking back at her screen.

“I had a few ideas to help the repair droids be a bit more efficient, so I installed them on Leddy so she can test them,” She explained, tapping in her datapad.

I frowned and looked at Leddy, trying to figure out what she had changed. The most obvious addition was a welded-on backpack of sorts , which I had missed at first because Miru had been in the way. It took me a second but I realized it was about half a dozen tools all organized and attached with latches and clamps.

“I had the supplies dropped off while we were still on Birgis. Leddy has the full upgrade, which was a bit on the expensive side, but we could do a lesser version for the other droids,” She explained, still tapping on the screen. “Here, watch.”

Leddy straightened and looked around for a moment before turning towards us.

“Greeting Leader Deacon, Engineer Miru,” She said, her robotic voice sounding slightly different than before as if it had been tweaked slightly. “Were the upgrades successful?”

“Installation went about as well as I could hope,” Miru responded. “Now, all we need to do is test them. Run through a full physical demonstration, please.”

“Very well, Engineer Miru,” The droid said before shifting again and reaching the new addition on her back.

Over the next five minutes, Leddy pulled out and tested nearly a dozen tools and pieces of equipment. Half of them were on her back, but she also had a few stored on her hips and chest, all of them at least partially hidden and protected by Leddy's protective coverings. The repair bot was now a walking tool chest.

“That is impressive,” I said when she finished, looking at Miru. “I assume those are some of the more important tools?”

“Yeah, she should be able to fix pretty much anything,” She explained with a smile.

“What about energy draw?” I asked.

“The tools with built-in power sources are charged when she climbs into her charging bay. Everything else draws from an additional battery that *also* charges from the charging bay.”

“Very impressive Miru,” I said with a smile. “How much was the upgrade?”

“The full upgrade was about two thousand credits,” She said with a wince. “Most of that went to buying the tools themselves. The lesser version would be just the pack and wouldn't have the same level of finesse on hand, but that's fine because they can still use other tools.”

“Let's leave these upgrades as they are, so both you and Leddy can see or feel them in action,” I said after a moment of thinking. “After a while we can discuss applying the upgrades to the rest of the repair droids.”

Miru and I chatted for a bit longer, the young engineer eager to talk about some of the plans she had and ideas she wanted to test. I'll be the first to admit that a lot of it went over my head, but she was happy to talk so I did my best to listen and make at least semi intelligent responses. After a while I said goodbye and continued to walk around the ship, checking in with everyone.

When it was finally time to drop out of hyperspace, I was back in the lounge, doing some reading, though not anything from the list Calima had given me. I had tried, but I was shocked to find that living through your own adventure put a damper on reading about the made-up

adventures of other people. Instead, I was going through various news sites, trying to keep up to date with what was happening in the galaxy.

Eventually, I could feel the ship shifting back into realspace, prompting me to close down my datapad. Racer wheeled out of the bridge and made a beeline for me, his grabbing arms coming out before he even got to me. About five minutes of finagling later, we had another point of reference, which Racer quickly worked into the already existing information. We quickly set up another meeting, the crew of the *Intervention* once again linking through the holofeed.

“According to Racer, all of the reference lines point in the general direction of a single system,” I said, the astromech bringing up the galactic map, showing the reference lines we had found. “It was a little crude, but I think that it’s a safe bet to say we should start here.”

The lines converged to a point outside the trade loop we had talked about, but only by about four or five hours by hyperspace jump, though it was more like twenty from our current position. There was a system there, which all five reference lines intercepted, even if it wasn’t close enough to guess a planet. The system itself was unremarkable, with a singular sun and several planets, none of which could support life according to what information Racer could dig up.

“I think the best bet is to close the distance and drop out of hyperspace far outside the outskirts of the system,” I said, Racer helping by zooming in on the system as I talked. “Then we can make a jump or two in order to confirm that the pirate base is here. With any luck, the close proximity will make pinpointing what planet they are on much easier. Any thoughts?”

“Can I assume you intend to sneak up on the pirates?” Vakim asked, continuing when I nodded in agreement. “Do you have a vessel capable of that level of stealth?”

“The *Brick* has a dozen upgrades that reduce its sensor profile,” Miru explained. “As long as they are living on a planet, they can land without being spotted on sensors.”

“And if they are on a station?” Vakim asked. “None of these planets have a livable atmosphere for most species.”

“Ummm... It’s probably a lot less likely,” Miru admitted, her shoulders sagging a bit.

“Making a ship that could sneak up on a space station is a bit out of our budget, Miru,” I explained. “It’s got nothing to do with your abilities. If they are on a station of some kind, then we will have to rethink our plan. The likelihood that they not only have a station, but have been able to maintain it for the years they have been active is small, correct?”

“Yes, it is unlikely,” The new crew member admitted easily. “I was merely checking what our plans were for such a scenario.”

“So, we jump to the system's outskirts and listen for any communications,” I repeated, getting various nods and agreeing looks. “If it's one of the planets we shuttle down on the *Brick*, try and take them down as quietly as possible. Every starfighter, weapon, and piece of equipment we recover undamaged is another paycheck, even if we probably end up selling it back to the Rebellion at a discount.”

“And I... assume we are back up?” Calima asked

“Yes, I want the *Intervention* and the *Chariot* on standby for any trouble,” I agreed, looking to Vakim, who nodded. “In a worst-case scenario, we need you to pull us out.”

“How... exactly will we be able to help?” The tholothian asked. “We cannot bombard the target... without... putting the ground team in danger.”

“We are going to temporarily transfer the B2's over to the *Chariot*,” I explained with a smile. “If we are stuck, scramble the raindrops and land as close as possible so the B2's can offload and hopefully support us long enough to escape. That said, don't forget we will be landing with the BX commandos as well. I won't say anything to jinx it, but that's a lot of firepower.”

Julus perked up from beside Miru, clearly having forgotten we would be bringing the capable droid soldiers. Vakim and Allum both recognize the name as well, and the scarred sensor specialist muttered under his breath about “scary competent clankers.”

“If it's a station, then it probably comes down to what kind,” I continued. “We could probably perform a hostile landing on an old, beat-up civilian station, but if it's a [Golan](#) or something, we are just leaving. Maybe the authorities will pay us a smaller bounty for finding their base rather than bringing them in.”

We discussed the possibilities for a bit longer before finally ending the meeting, the *Intervention* crew signing off. Racer and Calima quickly plotted a route that would take us to the outskirts of the lifeless system, sending the data over to the *Intervention*. While that was happening, Nal took the *Brick* and flew over to the *Intervention*, picking up their detachment B2s and ferrying them over to the *Chariot*. Not long after that we made the jump to lightspeed, the familiar thrum echoing from the deck.

Now that we were approaching our target, the crew shifted into high gear, preparing for the mission. Miru started going over the BXs, making sure they were in perfect shape. Nal, Vaz and Julius went over our weapons, including the blasters used by the BXs, cleaning them out and just doing general maintenance. Vaz and Leddy did an in-depth checklist of the *Brick* to make sure there wouldn't be any surprises.

After making sure that everyone was good and that no one needed my help, I made my way to my room. This trip was going to be substantially longer than the short hops we had been

making to plot reference lines, which meant I finally had time to learn a new Adept spell, one I had been putting off for a while.

When I first unlocked the Adept level spells, I was surprised to see Conjure Quiver. Not because I didn't expect to see it, I knew it existed from the games, after all. No, what was surprising was just how different it was from the base game version. Where the original just conjured some really good arrows, this one allowed you to add them with a twist of either flame, shock, or frost. It wasn't a ton of energy, but according to what I was reading, it was enough to be worth it.

I eagerly sat down in my comfortable chair and pulled out my grimoire, slowly starting the process of learning the spell. By the time I was done many hours later, I was exhausted but content with what I had achieved, conjuring and dismissing a quiver of arrows on my back, shifting their charge each time.