

Galactic Wizardry

Chapter 29

Jabba exploded in rage and slapped his majordomo with his big, slug-like hand. Once again, a whisper in his ear told him of another shipment of slaves that had been taken from his gooey grasp.

Bib Fortuna cried out as his back hit the sandstone floor. His ruined buttocks had just begun to stop hurting after taking so long to heal over. Thankfully, no one laughed at him this time. The reason was clear. Jabba was in a very bad mood.

It seemed for the last several months, nothing had gone right for the mobster. Shipments of Spice went missing. Slaves suddenly disappeared along with the slavers and their ships. Even Jabba's own ships had mysteriously begun taking a beating. Over a dozen had been destroyed or had suddenly disappeared in the last couple of weeks. They had Jabba scrambling to replace them. Without those ships, the logistics of his criminal empire were in disarray. Sadly for him, he was the one forced to give his boss the bad news.

"Find who's doing this and bring them to me ... NOW!" Jabba's booming voice exploded in Huttese, making his underlings jump and get to work. Jabba was worried. His guards, henchmen, slavers, spice dealers, informants, and anyone else who worked for him had begun being purged. This put him in a very bad spot. Already other Hutts were trying to muscle in on his territory, and he barely had the manpower necessary to keep things running smoothly there in Mos Espa. Every day he was losing ground. The whore Gardulla had recently taken control of the Sunfire Outpost from him. Once he got things back on track, he swore to make her pay for her disrespect. Someone even had the audacity to attack his palace outright! The previous day, someone had loaded a landspeeder with explosives and sent it rocketing toward his home. It blew up against the wall and only did minor damage, but that wasn't the point. Someone was after him. Thankfully, all that was destroyed were a few power cables and control boxes that regulated power in the lower parts of the palace. Those would easily be replaced in a few days once the new parts came in. His life wouldn't be so easily replaced.

Jabba began to suspect that it might be the other Hutts all working together to force him out of the business ... though he couldn't be sure. Who else would have big enough scrotes to take the fight to him?

"Your Excellence! I have acquired two new slaves in your name!" one of his trusted slavers suddenly said as he strolled into the room confidently. If Jabba did not see the two slaves behind him, he too would have been slapped for the disrespect. As such, he did indeed have two slaves ... two female slaves ... two young and attractive female slaves. Those two would surely fetch a high price in one of his upscale brothels ... at least for a time. Once they were used up, he would have them bred to produce more attractive females. Once they were no longer useful for that, he would put them to work doing manual labor or sell them off to someone

else. This was the first good news that he had gotten all day. It had been several days since he even received a single new slave. Maybe things were beginning to look up for him.

Jabba studied the two women. One was a pretty blonde human while the other was a buxom, green-skinned Twi'lek. "Take them to be processed!" he ordered. His slaver nodded his head, not expecting a thank you from him. He had never received one before, and Jabba wasn't in the mood to change that. The large slug watched as he took his two new moneymakers down into the bowels of his palace.

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The Zygerrian poked the collared women in the back with his blaster rifle, forcing them past a couple of pig-like guards and into the elevator. Mashing a button with the tip of his rifle, the slaver waited patiently. When the door slid open, he marched them into the large, dark room filled with metal jail cells. Inside them were dozens of slaves. Men, women, children ... all were present and crammed inside the stinking cages. The entire room smelled of sewage and body odor. In the back, a few babies were crying while their mothers no doubt tried to keep them quiet. All around were several Gamorrean guards, walking up and down the walkways and looking on threateningly. Each was armed and would no doubt use them if given half a chance. The cavernous room was thick with despair.

One Gamorrean squealed happily when he hit the hand of a slave that was holding onto one of his cell bars. The slave cried out in pain, quickly retracting his hand. As this was a normal activity in the Slave Quarters, no one paid him any mind. That's why when the pigman fell silently unconscious, no one noticed. One after another, half a dozen Gamorreans fell unconscious as the slaver passed by. Once they reached the last one, the slaver raised his hand, sending the pigman flying high into the air. The loud, surprised squeal drew everyone's attention as he shot straight up and hit the ceiling with his head. A disturbingly loud crack told everyone that he had broken his neck. When the body hit the ground with a wet, meaty crunch, they were absolutely sure he was dead. His short, thick limbs were twisted and bent in painfully wrong directions. Immediately, quiet chatter began amongst the slaves. It got even louder when Jabba's trusted slaver suddenly changed. His humanoid feline appearance melted away leaving behind the form of a handsome human male. The two women immediately pulled the fake collars from their necks.

"Told you it would work," Siri Tachi told him. "Jabba's so desperate for slaves that he didn't ask a single question."

Next to her, Aayla turned on a light so that they could see a bit easier. Harry had done a very good job taking out the power to the lower levels the previous day. It would make their jobs a lot quicker now that they didn't have to worry about silly things like security cameras and automated booby traps. "Yeah ... Good plan," Harry said, reaching into his bag and pulling out a handful of three-foot-long pieces of plasteel cords. "Ready for the next part?" he asked. Siri nodded with a serious look on her pretty face.

They had a former slave ship that they had pilfered from Jabba's ranks packed and ready to go. The secret hyperspace route to Eden was set into the ship's navigation system and a signal jammer was already running onboard. Once the slaves were in, their chips couldn't be set off while the jammer was running.

"Alright everyone, listen up!" Aayla called out in Huttese. "We're here to free you and take you to someplace safe," she told them. "When we get to you, grab hold of one of the cords and you'll be transported to a ship through the power of the Force. Wait there for Jedi Knight Siri Tachi to join you." She pointed at Siri. All of the slaves whispered amongst themselves quietly but seemed hesitant. It wasn't until Harry began opening their cages with magic while the two Jedi sliced them open with their lightsabers that the slaves finally realized that they were telling the truth. They gasped and whispered the word Jedi quite a bit. Harry went to each cage, making every slave within grab hold of a cord before they were whisked away by Portkey. Once the last group held onto a cord, Harry set it off and watched as they disappeared. Now there was only Siri left.

"Remember ... Take off as soon as you get on board," Harry reminded her. Siri smiled and kissed his cheek.

"Thank you for your help, Harry Potter. I'm sure we'll see each other again soon," she said as she grabbed the cord from him. Harry set it off and she too disappeared. Any slaves left over would be their responsibility now.

"I noticed that she didn't thank me," Aayla snorted while Harry chuckled.

"Doing the will of the Force is thanks enough ... or so I've been told," he told her as she rolled her eyes. "Let's go."

Harry reached into his bag and pulled out two explosive charges. Tossing one to Aayla, Harry walked over to the opposite wall and stuck it on. Pressing a few buttons on the digital interface, Harry set the timer and walked back over to his partner. "Done," she said. "We've got exactly one hour before it goes boom."

"Should be more than enough time. Even so, let's not dawdle... shall we?"

"Definitely not," Aayla agreed and led them back to the door. Going through, they began making their way further down into the lowest part of the palace. The good news was that no guard that they came across could set off an alarm since there was no power to this part of the complex. Aayla furiously cut down several guards while Harry's Piercing Hexes punched holes through their green hides. They definitely didn't have to worry about any slaves down this deep. This was where Jabba kept his private vaults.

The last remaining guard squealed as his pistol was cut in half by Aayla's lightsaber before his skull was caved in by Harry's spell. Harry focused for a second, trying to feel the magic in the area. "Right here," Harry pointed to one specific vault door.

"You sure?" she asked.

"As sure as I can be," he shrugged. Harry had been buying drugs from Jabba's dealers and paying with coins that were laced with Tracking Charms. Most were still out in circulation, but there were over a dozen behind that thick, metal door.

"Keypad isn't working," Aayla said, tapping on the pad that was connected to the wall right beside the door.

"I thought he might have a separate power source for his doors at least. Guess I was wrong. He probably thinks the doors alone are enough security until he can get the power going again." Harry tapped the door with his knuckle and whistled appreciatively. "Probably a foot thick," he said before moving onto the hinges and frame. "Everything is reinforced with thermal-grade durasteel. It would take several hours to cut through with your lightsaber." Harry sighed and waved his hand. The door suddenly turned to sand and cascaded down into a large pile at their feet. Aayla was about to go in when Harry suddenly stopped her. He Transfigured the pile of sand into a large stone ball and rolled it into the room. Immediately, the entire room was filled with toxic, green gas. Both of them quickly took several steps back. Harry quickly placed Bubblehead Charms on their heads. Aayla pulled out a small device from her belt and pressed a few buttons. After a few seconds, it beeped.

"Dioxis gas ... very dangerous," she told him after putting her air tester away.

"Pressure plates set off the gas dispenser ... no power required," he explained, pointing to the dispensers on the ceiling. "Is it skin-safe?"

"Yeah. Just make sure to take a shower once this is over. It has a half-life of fifteen minutes once ejected, but it will degrade into an oily substance that can make you ill if you accidentally ingest it," she explained while remembering what she had read from her tester.

"Noted," he said. "Follow me."

They both entered Jabba's Treasury and found mountains of wealth. Coins of all types, thick trade bars, and credits were stacked high into the air. There were also statues, sculptures, and many other types of artwork that were likely worth just as much as the valuable metal that the coins and bars were made of. "This could fund the Jedi for several years," Aayla said in awe of the large amount of wealth.

"Well, now it will fund us," Harry chuckled and began waving his hand, magically sending all of it to their ship where his remaining girls were waiting to do their part. After the vault was magically

emptied of all valuables, they placed more explosives on the walls. "Let's make our way up to the meeting point. Send the signal," Harry commanded. Aayla quickly complied.

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Shaak Ti nodded as she received the notification that the next part of the plan was to begin. Harry and Aayla needed a distraction, and Shaak was going to give them one. She immediately lifted off in a small shuttle that they had bought and fixed for this purpose. There was no way the little shuttle would survive in space, but it would suit their plans perfectly. Looking behind her, she smiled at the pile of explosives sitting on the back seat. Punching the throttle forward, the little shuttle began to speed up.

The thought of flying low through the canyon was absurd. Jabba's men were already on high alert. There were no doubts in her mind that the canyon walls were laced with turbo cannons. That left only one way ... straight down. Once she was over Jabba's Palace, she pushed the sticks forward and lowered the nose. The shuttle instantly began to pick up speed. Shaak found it difficult to control properly since the aircraft was several hundred years old and had been sitting in a junkyard for at least half as long. Making sure to not aim at the palace directly, she instead pointed the nose at the landing pad which was crowded with parked ships. Even though she had been a Jedi for years, her heart began to beat faster and faster the closer she came to the ground. When she was close enough that her heart jumped up her throat, she held the Portkey that Harry had provided and activated it. It was instantly hooked behind the naval and disappeared into a whirling maelstrom.

Far away, two Nabooans were parked in a hidden crevice on one of the many plateaus that made up the Great Mesra. Both girls were watching a camera feed outside of Jabba's Palace. They waited impatiently, both sweating and wringing their hands. Finally, after what felt like forever, they saw a blur streak down and slam into the compound. A massive explosion actually shook the camera. A mushroom cloud of fire erupted. Following orders, they waited nervously until they saw dozens of beings quickly scurrying from within the palace. They looked at each other and nodded. It was time. Padme grabbed the pad and took control of the camera that was mounted on a very powerful cannon. She took aim and fired. The shot went high and zipped past their heads.

"Be careful!" Sabe gasped as she looked on.

"Sorry! I'm nervous," Padme replied and fired again. This time, the shot hit the ground next to their feet, and their bodies were sent flying in every direction. Immediately, they could see pandemonium erupt. Armed guards poured out of the palace, trying to find who was attacking them. Another shot from Padme had them running for cover. One shot even flew through the door where the guards were coming from.

"Good shot!" Sabe cheered. Padme smiled at her.

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The ground shook beneath their feet as they waited in a storage area that was close to the motor pool. Harry had done his best to scout the area during his multiple trips inside the palace to sell Jabba water and other necessities. Sneaking around wasn't easy, but he got it done in the end.

"Sounds like everything's going to plan," he said as multiple smaller explosions rocked the palace. Only a moment later, Shaak popped into existence right next to them. Harry reached out and steadied her. "Good to go?" he asked.

"Yes. Let's make it quick," Shaak said. "Aayla and I will handle any guards remaining. You go for the slaves," she told him. Harry nodded. They quickly ran out of the small room with the girls igniting their blades.

Harry didn't bother keeping an eye on them. Instead, he used a scanner to detect slave chips. If someone had a chip or a collar, they were stunned and Transfigured into a marble before being placed in his bag. There was no time for continuous explanations. Time was ticking. All around him, he could hear the squeals and screams of henchmen being cut down. At one point, he saw a group of Jabba's men jump on the back of a landspeeder to try and escape the fate of their brethren. The two female Jedi could be demons in battle after all. Before they could drive off, Harry threw out his hand and hit the back of it with a powerful Banishing Charm. Dust, sand, tools, and anything else in its way were blasted away from him. As the banisher hit the back of the landspeeder, it lifted up and flipped over violently. Sparks flew everywhere as bodies tumbled out. A few were even crushed by the flipping speeder. It wasn't long before they too were cut down. When the last slave was secured, Harry checked the time and set up a few more explosives.

After that, they moved on to the sorry excuse for a kitchen. There weren't any guards there. They had either been scared off or ran off to defend the palace. The handful of slaves was quickly rescued. Level after level was visited. Most were unimportant and held nothing of interest. Any slave that they came across was added to the others. That pretty much left one last place to visit.

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The few Twi'leks in the throne room hid in the Dancer's Pit, too scared to step out. Jabba was yelling violently, barking orders, and threatening anyone in his vicinity. The palace was trembling from the explosions going off outside. They huddled together, not knowing what was going on. Suddenly, the door blew open, making them scream in fright.

Before the smoke cleared, Harry tossed up a magical shield as blaster bolts suddenly screamed at them. He felt the shield strain as they ricocheted off. All around him, Jabba's cronies ran for cover as the blaster bolts bounced off of his shield and even struck a few unlucky onlookers.

One of his personal guards was having the time of his life, holding tightly to his rifle while firing on the automatic setting. Blaster shots flew out of the tip of his rifle so fast that the barrel was beginning to glow cherry red. He alone was responsible for many of the dead as his shots flew out in every direction. Poking his hand out from around the shield, Harry used his magic to spin him around. He cried out in panic as his blaster shots began spraying in a circle as he was unable to control his body. When one of his shots hit Jabba in the hand, the Hutt had had enough. Slamming his injured hand down on the console button, the trap door opened up and his crazy guard fell down into the hole, still firing all the way down. A few others accidentally fell in as well. Everyone looked on in horrified wonder as the growl of a Krayt Dragon was followed by the terrified scream of the men. Less than a second later, they screamed again, only this time it was because they were being eaten alive. This pause was all Shaak and Aayla needed. They flipped over Harry's shield, lightsabers ignited, and began cutting everyone down.

Harry pulled out his pistol and started firing as well. As shots continued to hit his shield, he would fire back, hitting them with better accuracy. He made his way over to the dancers as fast as he could. When a beeping thermal detonator bounced at his feet, Harry banished it back from where it came. The explosion made everything even more hectic. Stunning the Twi'leks, he packed them up as fast as possible.

When it was clear that he was in big trouble, Jabba hit another button on his console and the turbolift that his throne was on began to rise. "WAIT!" Bib Fortuna cried out, jumping onto the platform as it rose. Jabba's booming laugh was soon cut off as the platform disappeared from sight. The three looked at each other and activated their Portkeys.

Bib wiped the sweat from his pasty forehead as the platform continued to rise. There were few options for them. The motor pool was on a lower floor, besides, with the chaos going on outside, there was no way he would risk going out on a speeder. Word had already reached them that the landing pad was destroyed, so escape by ship was out of the question, at least for now. Their only hope was to leave the palace and travel a short distance into the canyon to the secret passage that would bring them to an emergency hangar that was carved into one of the nearby mountains. There a ship was waiting for them. It would be dangerous, but there was no other choice. Backup wouldn't be here in time to save them. When Jabba's platform reached the highest level, the repulsorlifts kicked on and it began to hover. Jabba pressed a few buttons on his throne's console as they flew toward the front gate. Bib trembled as the large, durasteel door began to crack open with an ominous creaking sound. When it finally opened enough to fully see outside, he sighed in relief. There was no one to be seen. Unfortunately, he never saw the blaster cannon shot that hit him square in the chest from the surrounding plateau. With half of his body vaporized, Jabba hit the throttle and tore out into the canyon. What was left of Bib's body tumbled off the side of the platform.

Weaving from side to side, Jabba was able to avoid several powerful shots coming his way. His bloated tongue escaped his wide maw, licking his crusty lips as the hot, dry air sapped the moisture from his foul-smelling skin. He boomed out laughing again as he dodged another shot. He was nearly home free! When a shadow fell over him, he leaned back and looked up.

“UUUhhh!” he grunted in shock as his eyes bugged out. A ship was right above him. He cried out as a tractor beam enveloped him and his platform. Try as he might, he could not escape its grasp.

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“I told you Jabba and the platform wasn’t too heavy for the crappy tractor beam on this ship!” Harry cheered. Let’s see how long he can live in the vacuum of space,” Harry said as he piloted the ship higher and higher.

“It’s only made to lock on to small shuttles to help guide them into the cargo bay, not for heavy lifting,” Shaak reminded him. All of the girls rolled their eyes at him as they sailed over Mos Espa. Hopefully, it would be the last they would see of the horrid place. Suddenly, Harry said, “Uh-oh!”

“What happened?” Sabe said, worried.

“The tractor beam emitter just malfunctioned and gave out,” Harry replied, studying the readout on the computer. Harry slowed and tilted the ship downward. They watched as Jabba silently screamed and flapped his stubby, little arms as the platform flipped repeatedly and threw him off. They watched as he got smaller and smaller until they saw the tiniest splats in the far distance. “He couldn’t have survived that ... right?” Harry asked. All of the girls looked at him like he was nuts and slowly shook their heads. “Good ... Well ... Adios Jabba!” he said and punched the throttle, eager to get back to Eden for a well-deserved break.

Down Below

A loud crash of colliding metal in a junkyard rang out drawing the attention of a purple Dug. He flew out to see what had happened. It seemed that some part had fallen off of a ship that was passing by. The Dug shrugged and laughed. “Maybe they will come to retrieve it. I will certainly accommodate them ... for a price,” he chuckled merrily at his luck. He was just about to fly back into his office when the area around him began growing dark. “What the ...” he asked as he looked up. The greasy backside of a Hutt was the last thing he saw as both he and the illustrious Jabba the Hutt were turned into bug squash.