

Eventually, I got bored looking at the streaking lights out of the cockpit window and left to explore the rest of the ship in more detail. It was far from what I was hoping to buy for us once we were done dropping Nevue off and selling our extra goods, but it was clearly in better shape than the slaver ship we had sold. I was hoping to find a ship that would allow us to expand our team and pick up some more members and equipment. This one was way too small for that.

I figured the best way to explore was from one end to the other, so I made my way to the stern on the main deck. The furthest feature of the ship was a small crawl space, about half my height, that, as far as I could tell, led down into the engine area. I couldn't imagine having to repair anything in a space that size, never mind in an emergency. Next to the crawlspace entry was a small storage area. It was almost filled with supplies, some of them looking freshly delivered. I could tell someone had already been through it, with boxes and other things strewn around the counter. Judging by the empty snack food box sitting in the corner, they seemed to have found what they were looking for.

There were two identical bedrooms, cramped both from the lack of floor space and the fact that the roof sloped downward. Each room had a double-stacked bed to one side, with storage built into the frame. It was tight but manageable, especially since I knew there was a lounge to sit in. Next to the bedrooms was the refresher, which was basic but passable.

I kept exploring, eventually discovering that there was a meal prep system built into one end of the lounge. I grabbed a bag from the storage room and used the system to make myself a meal. It was similar to what we had been eating so far, but in a different style, some sort of noodle dish with a strongly flavored sauce that reminded me of beef stroganoff. I took one of the seats in the lounge, letting out a long breath before starting to eat. There was something therapeutic about eating a simple meal, and I could feel some of the tension I had felt, some of it stretching back to before I was injured, slowly released. When I was done, I climbed back down into the cargo bay,

I spent about twenty minutes or so going through the cargo, just exploring what we had made off with. Tatnia, who had left the cargo bay not long after I came down, hadn't been lying, there were a few shipments of weapons, but most of it was supplies and other goods. Our staff, or rather the stuff they had grabbed before we left, was set aside in the far corner of the cargo bay, near where I had been laid down.

Eventually, going through boxes got boring as well, so I made my way back to the cot and sat down on the edge of the bed. On a whim, I pushed out my grimoire, flipping through the pages to check if anything new had appeared. To my surprise, just after all of my novice spells were the new apprentice-level spells.

"YES!" I shouted out, jumping up off the bed and cheering. "Fuck finally!"

I did a little victory dance, which was, of course, the moment that Tatnia climbed back down the ladder, catching me with my hands in the air like I just didn't care.

"Well, that's a good sign," She asked. "What's going on? Find something interesting?"

I stopped dancing and suddenly realized that I had no way to explain how or why the book was expanding. They had all bought the "internal energy source" idea pretty well, but a book just randomly gaining solid pages? I couldn't just explain that away. Eventually, I just shrugged and told the truth.

"I unlocked the next level of things I can do," I explained. "Got a bunch of new things to learn. I'm pretty sure I'll be able to heal you guys once I figure it out."

"I... I'm not going to pretend to understand how you're doing these things," She said after a moment. "But I won't complain if it means you can fix me up when I get injured."

I nodded and looked around, eventually deciding that the small lounge in the living area would be a better place to read. I climbed back up, leaving Tatnia to herself, sitting myself down where I had just previously eaten, and started reading through my grimoire.

Despite the fact that I wasn't nearly as crunched for time as I was when this all started, I still wanted to have a general idea of my options before I dedicated myself to a singular spell. In order to do that, I needed to read through what spells the book was offering to teach me. The first section was alteration, which had a paltry two spells to offer, and both of them were upgrades to spells I already knew.

Destruction had an array of new spells, including some desperately needed spells that would let me hit something further than fifty feet away. I made a mental note that lightning bolt was on the short list of spells I wanted to learn as soon as possible. Illusion was in a similar spot as alteration, as there were only three spells. Fear and courage could be useful, and I had a small niggling feeling that in the games, calm and courage had been flipped in terms of level, but muffle, the third illusion spell, was definitely going on the list with lightning bolt. Stealth archers were overpowered for a reason.

Conjuration was a bit different from what I expected, barring the fact that there was still no necromancy. Not that I was upset by that, I was more than happy to not have to deal with raising the dead. The apprentice list of spells included the ones I had expected, like conjuring a bound battle ax, soul trap, and summoning a flame atronach, which joined the list of must-learn spells. Additionally, there was conjure elemental familiar, which, as far as I could tell, was a spell that lets you summon your familiar with an extra twist of either fire, cold, or lightning. If someone managed to forcibly dispell them, and it's what you wanted, they would detonate in the element you imbued them with. They also did a bit of extra damage with that element through any normal attacks as well.

I could only assume that the summon elemental familiar had replaced flaming familiar, which I remember having been at this level or at adept. What I was sure about was that a

detonating summon could be very useful... or an extremely dangerous problem. I couldn't reset my choice for it to explode once I cast it, and I wasn't immune to its explosions, as far as I could tell. All that meant that a lucky shot could cause my familiar to blow up in my face.

What was extremely interesting was the inclusion of summon bound armor, which I knew for a fact was not a spell you could learn in Skyrim. It came in two varieties, upper and lower torso, and from the description, it would work the same way as a bound weapon. The description went out of the way to remind the reader that bound items were not indestructible, even beyond banishing.

Realizing that my list of spells to learn asap was growing, I skipped ahead and opened the restoration section, revealing the list to be what I expected, save one addition. I was excited to learn that healing hands, a spell that lets me heal others, was on the list, as well as fast healing, a potential game changer in dangerous scenarios. There was also the second iteration of ward, steadfast ward, something I was eager to learn after a lesser version failed to block sustained blaster rifle fire.

What was really intriguing was the respite spell, something I didn't recognize from Skyrim but did sound vaguely familiar. A quick check through its description revealed it to be a spell that wiped away fatigue and restored stamina. I was very interested to find out how that worked, and I could imagine that it would be extremely useful in a lot of bad situations, especially since it could be cast on yourself or onto someone else with very little change to the second matrix.

Despite desperately wanting to try and learn one of the spells I knew weren't from Skyrim, I knew that there was something much more important things that I really needed to focus on. I quickly flipped the pages back, re-opening the restoration section and finding the healing hands spell.

I started reading through the first page, which included a more in detail description, a brief overview of its limitations as well as several potentially missed uses. I made note that this spell did nothing for anything conjured with magic, nor any sort of automaton, which made sense. It wasn't unsurprising, but now that I knew it wouldn't work, I really wish it did.

As I flipped the page over to the matrix diagrams, it took me a long moment for me to realize what I was looking at.

"Huh... I guess that explains why they are broken up like that..." I mumbled to myself, doing my best to make heads or tails out of the diagrams.

Novice spells had been relatively easy to learn. Each spell had a matrix, which I would recreate and then slowly tune to my own body, aetherial presence, and soul. When I was done, I would memorize it through repeat casting, which helped my magic acclimatize to the spell, making it easier to cast with less thinking. It appeared that apprentice spells had two separate matrices,

both of them interacting with each other before recombining to be cast. How they interacted and the placement of the separate matrices depended greatly on the spell, but the examples they included were one after the other, woven together at the same time, or even created in separate hands and combined at the last minute.

On the one hand, this meant that learning new spells wasn't going to be some crazy process that required resources or anything. On the other hand, learning two matrices would most likely double how long it took for me to finish them, meaning somewhere between six and eight hours. Even worse, if the pattern continued, then learning adept spells would take between nine and sixteen hours, probably leaning toward the higher end.

I cursed and shook my head before doing my best to put that out of my mind, purposely not doing the math for the expert or master levels. Instead, I focused on forming the matrices for healing hands. This particular adept spell was simply two matrices in a row, the first one starting in my wrist and the second in my palm. It wasn't terribly complicated to put together, just a much longer process, as I worked out the second matrix immediately after the first. About forty-five minutes after I started, I finally had the matrix put together. I held it in place for a while before slowly but surely tuning it into something that would work for me.

I was about three hours in when I could feel the ship drop out of hyperspace. I groaned, realizing that I needed to plan ahead better now that learning a spell wasn't something I could crank out in a few hours. For a moment, I considered trying to rush it, but Tatnia came up from the cargo bay and nodded to the cockpit when she saw me. I nodded and closed my book, grumbling under my breath. I mentally debated for a moment before calling out to Tatnia.

"What's wrong?" She asked when she poked her head out from the cockpit.

"Take a vote amongst yourselves. I'm about five hours from learning how to heal you guys, so we can wait until I have it down, or-"

"We can wait!" Miru called out from behind the human woman.

Both Nal and Nevue also voiced their agreement quickly. Apparently, waiting wasn't nearly as big of an issue as I thought. Tatnia picked up on my surprise and snorted.

"Not exactly a difficult choice Deacon. Why would we rush when taking our time means we have a medic on the team?" She pointed out, shaking her head. "Do your thing, Boss. I'm going to take a nap."

"Ah... yeah, fair point," I admitted sheepishly, quickly focusing back on my work before I lost any progress.

Like the novice spell, the first fifth of the matrices worked smoothly the first time I tried, cutting a fifth off what the spell would have probably taken. I continued to work, trying my best to focus

while everyone was moving around. After about another four hours and some change, I finally managed to cast the spell, the coil of healing energy stretching out away from my hand for a foot or so instead of sinking into my body like my normal healing spell did.

I let out a groan and leaned back into my seat, casting the spell a second and third time, holding it for the third until I ran out of magicka. I almost lost it on the second cast but managed to recall the final form of the matrices, aided by whatever was causing the spells to get easier as I recast them repeatedly. Nal, who was sitting in a chair not far from me, looked up from his datapad, showing his sharp teeth off with a smile.

"Were you successful?" He asked, putting the datapad on the center table.

"Yeah, I got it working," I responded, waiting for my mana to replenish before casting it again and again. "Got any injuries that need healing?"

The blue-skinned Duro's stood up from his seat and moved to sit directly next to me. He lifted one of his fingers to his mouth, which as always, was filled with very sharp teeth, nicking his skin enough that some blood began welling on his finger pad. I rolled my eyes before recasting the spell, this time focusing it on his hand.

"Oh... that is a strange sensation. Not unpleasant," He commented before cleaning his thumb to reveal unbroken skin. "It appears that you have succeeded, Deacon. Congratulations."

I stood up and ground, leaning backward a bit in my seat, my spine settling with a series of cracking sounds. I was sore, having spent around six hours bent over the grimoire. I cast a normal healing spell on myself, my soreness fading after a few seconds.

"Nal, you wanna get Tatnia?" I asked, the older man nodding in agreement. "I'll go down and get Miru."

Nal went back to knock on the bedroom door while I leaned down and shouted for Miru, the young Twi'lek shouting back, making their way to the ladder. After just a few minutes, we made our way into the cockpit, only to find Nevue had moved into a passenger sleep and was now taking a nap.

"Nevue?" I called out, noting that the Zabrak jolted awake a bit aggressively, his hand sliding down to his holster before he remembered where he was. He took a second to blink and crack his neck before looking at me. While he was blinking the sleep from his eyes, Nal sat down in the copilot's chair.

"You all set?" The horned man asked as he tapped his controls and read his readouts.

"Yeah, ready when you are."

"Good," He said, simply standing from his seat and retaking a seat in the pilot chair. "Time to say hello."