

# ***The Badland Touch***

**A Great Jedi War XII Story**  
**Written by and Starring: TuQ'uan Varick**

**Enjoy.**

“Shut up!” TuQ’uan croaked at the alarm incessantly beeping. “I’m up already!”

The Kel Dor groaned as he lifted his head, the smell of smoke filled the air. He didn't even remember falling asleep. As he looked around things were starting to come into focus, he was strapped into the seat of an escape pod, a small trickle of blood on the console in front of him where his head must have smashed into when the pod crashed. The Taskmasters head was pounding and that karking beeping wasn't helping.

TuQ’uan found the red light blinking to indicate an object in close proximity to the pod, that would be the ground. He felt for the blaster at his hip and fired one shot into the console, the beeping stopped immediately.

Now that he could concentrate a bit more it was time to get out of here.

“Ascendency, this is Varick, I need a pick up,” the Kel Dor spoke into the comm unit. “Ascendency, do you copy? Can anyone in the Plagueian fleet hear me?”

The speakers just responded with static.

TuQ’uan unhooked himself from the seat, made his way to the escape hatch and climbed out of the pod to survey the situation. It wasn't good. The pod was a smoking mess, scraped and battered it lay balanced on the edge of a dune in the Nancoran Badlands. Very little of the hull appeared to be unscathed, no wonder the comms weren't working.

Scanning the horizon the Kel Dor attempted to get his bearings, even through the haze of the planet, two options were apparent. Off in the distance to the east of his current location was a city, to his west and much closer was a makeshift facility with a spire jutting out of it, with signs of recent use. If he could get inside there he should be able to get a signal to someone and hitch a ride off of this rock.

He climbed back into the pod to see what could be salvaged as usable. Right by the hatch was a survival kit consisting of a few essentials; a canteen of water, a datapad, a pack of rations and a flare gun. Slipping the datapad into one of the many pockets in his jacket designed to hide his items and attaching the rest of the survival kit to his belt, TuQ’uan proceeded to search the rest of the pod from back to front in utter vain. A loud creak echoed through the pod as it began to tip forward, the mercenary took two large steps and leapt free of the pod as it slipped down the dune it was precariously perched upon.

This place may be the death of him yet.

Taking a deep breath, TuQ’uan set off to the west, glad that he had paid attention to Bear Qrylls on the holonet.

It was a long and exhausting trip for the Kel Dor through the dusty wasteland of the aptly named Badlands. Stumbling down dunes while trying to keep a quick pace, TuQ'uan couldn't help shake the feeling that he was being watched.

He was nearly to the makeshift facility when he heard the footsteps in the ground behind him, drawing his blaster he spun around. There stood the lithe figure of a female Kiffar with no weapons drawn, a slight smile lifted her yellow tattoos. His blaster wavered a moment.

Another crunch came from his right, he tensed his hold on the DL-44 and glanced over. TuQ'uan wasn't sure if he was seeing double or triple but two more Kiffar, identical to the first, had appeared as if from nowhere.

*This is getting out of hand, now there are three of them,* he thought to himself.

"Alright, that's more than enough Kiffar for me," TuQ'uan spoke loud and clear enough for the three to hear him. The smirk on the first widened into a menacing smile. "Now then, if you'd -"

A spike of pain went through the back of his head as the world around him went black for the second time today.

TuQ'uan came to staring at his lap. Whoever these Kiffar were, this wasn't the way he normally liked to be tied up.

The durasteel walls of the room had a layer of grime on them, clearly visible even in the dim lighting in the room. As his eyes began to focus TuQ'uan noticed two of the Kiffar from before, each standing on either side of a Chiss, her cybernetic eye seemed to bore a hole through him. TuQ'uan knew her from the reports he had read as Kendra Icasta, and the Kiffar would be her huntresses.

"What can I do for you ladies?" he asked with a hint of amusement.

"We know who you are Varick, we are just here to see what information we can get from you," Kendra held a stern tone. "We will destroy the Brotherhood and all Force users."

"How about I save you the trouble, you untie me now and I'll tell you everything you want to know. Then maybe I'll even help you out with that."

A flash of surprise was quickly suppressed by the Chiss.

"And why should we trust you?"

"Well for one, I'm not a damn Force user."

She raised an eyebrow and revealed the Taskmaster's lightsaber in hand.

"Well, there's a perfectly reasonable explanation for that." Silence filled the air as his captors awaited his excuse. "Well you see none of those fraking Jedi and Sith seem to have any respect for anyone who doesn't carry one of those. I figure I can use it to take some of them down a peg."

"Mmhmm? And how did you find yourself in such *interesting* company?"

"Well I was honestly hired to do a job, I didn't know who it was for, if I had I wouldn't be in this position. But TuQ'uan Varick always finishes a job. Now, are you going to untie me? Or would like to get to know me a little...better?"

Kendra let out a chuckle. Turning, she left the room with her huntresses in tow, leaving TuQ'uan to sit in the silence.

After a while they returned.

"Someone wants to meet you." Kendra nodded to one of her Huntresses, who walked over and untied him. "If you make any moves we don't like, she'll kill you. If you say anything we don't like, she'll kill you. If you **do** anything we don't like -"

"Let me guess, the beauty over here will kill me? I think I got it. Can I at least go to the refresher?"

Kendra snapped her fingers and TuQ'uan was yanked up from the chair and pushed towards the open door. The Chiss and one of her huntresses came to a stop outside of a door, TuQ'uan was escorted into the refresher by the other.

"I wouldn't normally ask this of such a beautiful woman, but could I get some privacy?"

She didn't move.

"You have one minute, any longer and I will drag you out."

She stepped out the door, pulling it closed.

Quickly feeling through the pockets of his jacket, TuQ'uan let out a sigh of relief.

He had to move fast, looking around the room TuQ'uan searched for something to help him. There was a panel on the wall that might work. Quickly he began trying to pry at the cover of the panel, after some wiggling he was able to work his fingers under the cover and pull.

Once he had the panel open he was able to rewire the panel to access the network. He was running out of time. Plugging his datapad into the panel he was able to tap into the network, the mercenary spliced his way through to a communications relay. A pounding came at the door.

“One second, I'm just finishing up!” He was. A short beep came from the panel confirming his extremely brief signal had been sent. Just one last touch and he'd be done. Quickly he replaced the panel and washed his hands. Opening the door revealed the three women standing just on the other side, all looking unimpressed. Kendra turned to leave, the rest of the party coming close behind.

She led them outside where Ghafa Ordam awaited them, looking out at the Badlands surrounding their location. Ghafa waved the women away.

“So I hear you may be interested in joining our cause. Why would you want to do that and why should we trust you?” she asked.

“I don't have a pod in this race, I just go where the credits are. And like I told your friends, if I had known who I'd be working for, I wouldn't have taken the job, those damn Force Users think they rule the galaxy.”

Ghafa began walking along the perimeter of the facility, expecting TuQ'uan to follow.

“In time, I'm sure we could learn to trust you, but trust needs to be earned. In the meantime, you will provide us any and all information or assets we require. You belong to us now, whether willing or not.”

TuQ'uan nervously played with the datapad in his pocket, waiting for the right time. Off in the distance a shuttle could be heard zooming through the atmosphere, it was now or never. Without gazing away from the Nautolan tapped quickly at the datapad in his pocket setting off an explosion in the facility. Ghafa spun around eyes blazing as series of explosions rocked the facility.

“You!” she screamed as she leveled her blaster at the Plagueian. Ghafa advanced on TuQ'uan, after taking two steps another explosion went off, this time it blew out the wall just beside them, throwing Ghafa to the ground.

Taking his chance, TuQ'uan took off running back into the Badlands. With the explosions working as a beacon for that shuttle, the mercenary just had to hope they were friendly.

As the shuttle got close TuQ'uan began waving his arms back and forth to flag it down. The T-3c shuttle came to a landing just a little ways from him. The shuttle's ramp descended to reveal a Lieutenant wearing a uniform of the Iron Navy.

The Kel Dor would be all too happy to never see this rock again.