
Canto Bight Police Headquarters
Cell 3-B
39 ABY

A shiver ran through TuQ'uan Varick's entire body, he laid with his back pressed flat against a frigid duracrete surface that sent a chill straight through to his bones. He had awoken with a burning pain in his back from laying on the incredibly uncomfortable surface he found himself on, a dull pulsing headache sitting just behind his left eye and no memory at all of the night before. Using every bit of concentration and determination he could muster, the Kel Dor peeled open his sleep-sealed eyes and blinked a half dozen times to clear the grogginess from his vision and bring the dimly lit room into focus.

TuQ'uan let out a groan and sat up to survey his surroundings, every bone in his weary body creaking and cracking. The room around him looked as if it were all chiselled from the same massive slab of duracrete, including the bench built into the wall that he had been using as a bed. Directly across from the mercenary was an identical wall with a built-in bench set into a recessed wall, to his right was a solid wall with a small square window about two meters off the ground that appeared to be the only source of light, and to his left was the durasteel grate that formed the entrance to the prison cell he found himself inside, the door itself sat slightly ajar.

It must have been an interesting night because TuQ couldn't remember anything if his life depended on it, let alone being arrested. The last thing he seemed to recall was in Canto Bight and gambling away someone else's credits. He hadn't been imbibing in any substances that he could think of, plus even if he had, he was always very responsible when doing so. What the hell happened last night?

After a moment of fighting through the throbbing behind his eye, the Kel Dor finally noticed the lump sitting on the floor, directly in the centre of where the moonbeam hit the floor. It looked almost as if someone had planned it that way. Reaching down, he pulled the knot loose on the bundle which fell open to reveal an odd assortment of items including a blaster, a towel and an action figure of Grand Master Darth Nehalem among other things. TuQ'uan was immediately transfixed by a small silver rod sitting in the centre of the pile, he quickly snatched it up and thumbed the play icon.

A cold female voice crackled to life from the speaker of the audio recording rod.

"You will need two pounds of bantha meat, fresh chopped balka greens, and whichever spices you prefer. Preheat the oven to...." An incredibly confused TuQ hit the fast forward button on the recording device skipping past the recipe he was sure wasn't for him.

"...Good luck, Varick."

Too far, he thought as he rewound the recording, waiting for the high-pitched voice that was now speaking in reverse to get to a midpoint between her dinner recipe and her sign-off.

“TuQ’uan Varick, you have been chosen to play a game. From the prison cell, we have placed you in, you have exactly thirty minutes to get off-planet using only the items provided before you. These are your only stipulations. You must travel as if your life depends on it because if you fail to leave the planet before your time is up, you will be killed. Good luck, Varick.”

With a click, the recording ended. A myriad of thoughts ran through the Plagueians head. Who would do something like this? Why was he chosen? How would he get off-planet? Did the thirty-minute timer begin after the message ended, when he woke up or when he hit play the first time? Should he try making the recipe for himself when he got home?

He shook his head. None of those questions were of any consequence right now, no matter what the answers may be, he had little time to stop and think, he had to take inventory of his items and get moving. He slipped the recording rod into his pocket and got to work. First thing was first for the shivering Kel Dor, all of the items had been wrapped in a thermal cloak and he intended to use that. He hastily whipped it across his shoulders and buttoned the clasp that held it closed, he felt more comfortable immediately as his body temperature quickly rose. Next, he spread the remaining item out on the nerf wool towel, on it lay the action figure, a set of dice, insect repellent, a blaster pistol, a pair of goggles, a baggie of dust and a glow rod.

TuQ donned the goggles right away, he had always wanted a pair like this because he thought they would make him look cool, but people always told him he didn’t need to wear goggles over top of his Kel Dorian protective goggles. He figured this was his chance to try out a bold new style without the judgement of others. He grabbed the blaster next and examined it. A sporting blaster pistol, not very powerful and the batter showed dangerously low, but it would still come in handy. He slipped it into the empty holster on his thigh. Finally, he removed the glow rod from the pile before wrapping everything else back up in the towel and tying it around his waist for safekeeping. Activating the glow rod, TuQ’uan made his way out of his cell and into the dark underground hallways of the Canto Bight police headquarters.

The mercenary skidded to a halt as he rounded the corner to the exit of the detention levels, the admission and discharge checkpoint just ahead. TuQ’uan had spent some time in various detention facilities across the galaxy over the years, and if his memory was correct, facilities like this generally had a laser tripwire set up to alert guards when someone was leaving. Getting down on his hands and knees, he searched for any sign of the alarm system, any holes in the floor, ground or ceiling, but his search was fruitless. He only had so much time and didn’t want to waste it by alerting someone to his presence. Suddenly a thought occurred to him, a mist in the air would reflect the light off of any lasers and reveal to him the trap. He riffled through the bundle strapped to his waist to find the aerosol can of insect repellent and let loose, filling the air with a fine mist. TuQ emptied the entire can into the hallway before him, top to bottom, side to side, he refused to let a single millimetre go uncovered.

Once the can refused to spray anymore he let out a sigh of relief. It seemed that whoever let him out of his cell had also deactivated the alarm system. Maybe this wouldn't be as hard as he had anticipated. Tossing the insect repellent aside, TuQ'uan made his way through the checkpoint much less cautiously than he had been up to this point. He was less than a meter passed when an alarm started blaring, echoing through the hallway and aggravating the already annoying headache the Kel Dor had pushed through as it rang in his ears.

*Crap, he swore. The alarm is on the **outside** of the checkpoint.*

His pace quickened as he burst out of the ground floor doors of the police headquarters and onto the unusually dark and quiet streets of Canto Bight, the only sound was the blaring alarm of the police station bouncing off the walls of the other buildings. Taking a moment to catch his breath, the Kel Dor glanced around attempting to orient himself. He thought he knew the correct way to his ship, he prayed he knew the right way. Because if that message was correct, his life was on the line.

A hand clamped down on TuQ's shoulder startling the Kel Dor and yanking him backwards. Caught off guard, the mercenary tripped over his attacker's leg, tumbling backwards and landing on his already sore butt. Standing over him was a burly, well-dressed Pantoran crimson blood streaked across his face in stark contrast to his cobalt skin, his intense golden eyes seemingly bore holes straight through the Kel Dor. The mysterious stranger levelled a blaster at his quarry; it was the same model currently seated in TuQ'uan's holster. While not the most powerful blaster on the market, at this range it could still do some serious damage.

Thinking on his feet, the di Plagia subtly wiggles his hand into the bundled towel. In a flash he whipped his hand out, throwing the blinding powder into the air between the two of them to mixed results. While the powder certainly distracted the Pantoran, TuQ'uan failed to take into account both gravity and wind and now found himself coated in a layer of powder. Lucky for his new fashion choice, most of TuQ's face was spared from his embarrassing misstep.

Using the Pantoran's confusion at his questionable tactics, Varick swung his legs to the side, swiping the Pantoran's legs out from under him. He landed with a thud, buying TuQ'uan enough time to scramble to his feet and make his escape. The smell of ozone filled the Kel Dor's nostrils as red streaks of plasma streaked through the air too close to his head for comfort. Ripping the sporting blaster from his holster he returned fire, the sounds of blaster fire ringing through the streets. TuQ took a sharp right into an alleyway as his blaster clicked empty.

He wove his way through the back alleys of Canto Bight, moving as quickly as possible towards his ship and supposed safety, the echo of his pursuer's footsteps following behind, but quite how closely, he couldn't tell for sure. Rounding another corner and tucking in against the wall, the mercenary faded into the shadows. Careful not to make any noise and keeping his ears alert for any sounds of movement, TuQ reached once more into the bundle tied to his waist, his fingers groping around to figure out what items remained in his possession. First, his fingers danced across the face of the Grand Master Darth Nehalem, he wanted to keep this as a

memento of the sick game he was being forced to play tonight. He quickly found that the only other item that remained in his possession was a collection of oddly-shaped dice.

Damn! he cursed his luck, these weren't going to help and his attacker could round the corner at any moment. Out of sheer frustration, TuQ tossed the dice aside. He had to think, and quick. In his desperation to escape, he was pretty sure he had made a wrong turn a few alleys back which would put the Pantoran between him and his ship. With time running out he was going to have to double back.

"Ow! What the hell is this?!" an angry voice erupted to his left. While TuQ'uan was busy worrying about his situation, his pursuer had stepped on the four-sided die and nearly rolled his ankle. The Pantoran bent down to get a closer look at the object that had stopped him in his tracks. Unbeknownst to him, his prey was silently inching his way closer, blaster in hand.

Thwack!

The sporting blaster collided heavily with the base of the Pantoran's neck, sending him sprawling to the ground unconscious. Letting out a breath he hadn't known he was holding, TuQ'uan backtracked the way he had come and righted his course back to his docking bay.

As TuQ'uan approached the docking bay, he noticed that it seemed to be the only place in the whole city with working lights, which boded well for him because it meant he should be able to just walk right on through. But if the rest of the night were any indication, he wouldn't be quite so lucky. Not a soul seemed to stir in the brightly lit corridors, not a single guard, customer nor docking official looking for a bribe.

The Kel Dor was dismayed once he finally found his ship, unlike the rest of the entries he had passed by, the one blocking his way to freedom was drawn closed and locked. His eyes darted around wildly for a way to open the door but the only control appeared to be on the other side of the gate and try as he might, it was mere centimetres out of his reach. In a moment that TuQ'uan Varick di Plagia would later describe as sheer brilliance unrivalled by any other he or anyone else would have in their lives, he ripped the towel from its place at his waist and with the action figure gripped tightly in one hand and the towel in the other he thrust his arm through the gap in the gate closest to the switch that controlled the maglock halting his progress.

TuQ'uan's crimson face went flush as it was pressed tightly against the durasteel gate, every muscle in his arm cried out as he hyperextended it to get as close to the switch as possible, the tiny muscular arm of Darth Nehalem stretched out in front of him just barely able to reach the control switch. The Kel Dor's long finger twitched, activating the action figure's Kung Fu grip which grabbed the lever in its tight plastic fist. TuQ yanked down with such force that he pulled Darth Nehalem's arm from its articulated socket leaving it dangling from the durasteel lever. With a click, the maglock released and TuQ was able to muster his remaining strength to lift the gate. He tucked the damaged toy into his pocket and ran full speed towards the cockpit of *The Krayt Dragon's Breath*.

Out of breath, he dropped down into the pilot's seat and furiously began flipping switches to initiate take-off. As soon as the lights went green he punched it, the inertia throwing him back and pressing him into the seat. He was finally free and with who only knows how much time to spare. The U-wing's comm buzzed as he entered orbit around Cantonica.

"Congratulations, Varick," the same female voice from earlier came over the speakers. "You've survived this round. I look forward to seeing what you come up with next time."

END