

Tabletop Squadron Transcript, Prologue 3:

Don't Open the Box

Transcript by Harrison (Twitter: @unabletowhistle)

## Intro

[Cameron hums space music]

NICK: Hi everyone, and welcome to Tabletop Squadron, a Star Wars: Edge of the Empire actual play podcast. I'm Nick, your game master. For the past few years, my friends and I have been playing tabletop RPGs together and we decided to share our hijinks with you. For the first few podcasts, we're doing small individual arcs for our characters so you can get a feel for them before they start bouncing off of each other in Star Wars. Enjoy.

[Cameron laughs]

##

NICK: Hi everyone! Welcome to Prologue #3 of the Tabletop Squadron Podcast. I am your GM Nick. With me today is Laura.

LAURA: Hello.

NICK: Hi Laura, how are you?

LAURA: I'm good. How are you?

NICK: I'm great! We're going to kick this off. We're going to see how you solve your things compared to how everyone else solved their things so far.

LAURA: Oh boy.

NICK: And who are you playing today?

LAURA: I will be playing Xianna'fan. She is a Twi'lek and has a very traditional Twi'lek name so that is all one word with an apostrophe in there.

NICK: Just one apostrophe though?

LAURA: Just one apostrophe. I didn't want to get carried away.

NICK: Right. Everyone gets one apostrophe. I think that's the Star Wars rule.

LAURA: Well, you have as many apostrophes as your species name has.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And Twi'lek has one.

NICK: OK. Do Chiss have two apostrophes?

LAURA: No, but Chiss are special little snowflakes and they get as many apostrophes as they want.

NICK: Great! Yeah, that sounds about right. So we'll go ahead and jump right into it. And we'll go from there.

##

NICK: You find yourself in the dimly lit apartment where you holed up for the night. There's a vent wheezing warm air in the corner and a worn desk across the room. Otherwise, the room is bare. Outside a dusty window, you can see the edge of a neon sign. The incessant buzzing must have been what woke you up. In the center of the otherwise bare floor is a small box with a note scribbled on it in Arabesh.

So walk me through what Xianna does waking up in this empty apartment?

LAURA: Do I know that I was in this apartment?

NICK: Yeah, you holed up here.

LAURA: Yeah, OK. But the box is not familiar?

NICK: No.

LAURA: I think I would look at the box from a distance. Just kind of inspect it to make sure it's not a thermal detonator or anything of that sort. And if it doesn't appear to be blinking, I would cautiously approach it, prod it a little bit, then read the note. Or whatever the writing is.

NICK: Alright, from a distance, you see this is a gray, looks like plasteel box. Looks very cheap. Shoddily put together. Kind of like what we would think of as a Chinese takeout box but made out of gray plastic. That's what you can see from a distance.

As you get closer to the box, you see that that little note on it scribbled in Arabesh says, "Open me." The box is made of thin gray plasteel. It doesn't have a hinge, but one of the connected sections is lighter like it's been bent back and forth a lot.

LAURA: I just kind of stare at it. Poke it a little bit more. "Well, this is unusual." And then I open it.

NICK: Alright, inside, you find bundled on a little bundle of tissue paper is a comm unit. One that's designed to wrap around an ear-cone for instance. You think if you slipped it on, it would be pretty inconspicuous.

LAURA: I slip it on.

NICK: Great. It fits perfectly. A voice crackles to life and says, "Go outside."

LAURA: "Um, excuse me. Who is this?"

NICK: "Not important."

LAURA: "Um, you left me a weird little box in my room. I think it is important."

NICK: "I'm kind of trying to do the mysterious overwatch thing right now. So if you could go outside."

LAURA: "You telling me that you are doing that does not make you doing that."

NICK: "Well, maybe I'm also trying to put you at ease by being slightly comic in my approach."

LAURA: "You could have left a longer note."

NICK: "Well, yeah, I guess my agent could have done that. Basically, I just needed to get in touch with you."

LAURA: "There were many more ways you could have done that."

NICK: "But this one is mysterious."

LAURA: "Well, I guess you have that."

NICK: "Thank you. I'm glad you approve of my approach. Basically, I'm trying to hire you for a job but without exposing my identity or business interest because you have a bit of a reputation I'd rather not get involved with."

LAURA: "Which reputation?"

NICK: "I don't want to go into it right now. But I want to make sure you have the skills that I need before I become associated."

LAURA: "OK."

NICK: "Great. So go outside."

LAURA: "I'm not going to get shot, am I?"

NICK: "Not immediately."

LAURA: "OK."

NICK: [laughs]

LAURA: Then I walk outside.

NICK: OK. So you're on the fourth floor of this building. You've been holed up here for probably three or four days. As you go out of the apartment, the hallway has one glow light hanging from the ceiling and is otherwise completely dark. You know that there's a lift at the end. The hallway has shabbily peeling painting. Some trash. You can't see very well.

You want to make me a Perception check please.

LAURA: I have scanner goggles.

NICK: Oh, do you?

LAURA: I do.

NICK: What do those do?

LAURA: I can see in dark/obscured conditions.

NICK: [laughing] Well, that's going to make part of this way easier for you.

LAURA: And I definitely I would sleep in that.

NICK: Yeah, probably. OK. So you slip your scanner goggles on?

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: What do they look like?

LAURA: Oh, I haven't thought about this.

NICK: Do they have three glowing dots?

LAURA: I imagine they're slightly steampunky.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: With dark purple lenses. And they are two individual little lenses.

NICK: So are they like--

LAURA: Not one solid—So basically...

NICK: Like welder goggles that people use?

LAURA: Welder goggles similar to what Aphra wears.

NICK: OK. So they're kind of big then?

LAURA: Yeah, they're on the bigger side. Definitely full wrap around. They like suction to your face. Dark purple lenses. And there's probably a little toggle on the side, some little buttons, because you don't want to be looking in night vision with bright lights.

NICK: Yup, that makes sense. So as you slip these goggles down on your face, the camera zooms out and does a pan around Xianna. So what does she look like overall?

LAURA: She is a Twi'lek so she has two tentacle-like protrusions coming from her head. Don't call them tentacles. I think that is considered a racial slur. They are lekku. They go down onto a little bit past her

waist and has sort of a gray swirl pattern on the ends of them. She is about 1.7 meters tall, which is around 5'6". She's got purple eyes. She's generally mostly purple.

NICK: Purple.

LAURA: Purple.

NICK: What's she wearing?

LAURA: She wears—I'm assuming she put on before she left the house.

NICK: Yeah.

LAURA: She wears a black trench coat that goes down to her knees with a belt. There are pockets on the trench coat but there are more pockets than you can see. It just looks as if there's the two standard hand pockets, but there's a lot more.

NICK: So the coat's bigger on the inside than it is on the outside?

LAURA: Yes, I have discovered that looking at the rules. The coat does not make sense. I can hide way more things in this coat than I should be able to.

NICK: OK. So you have a smuggler's coat. Is that your only article of clothes? Do you have shoes?

LAURA: I do wear tall, black boots. A dark, very dark brown espresso leather headgear that Twi'leks typically wear. It just kind of goes around the ear cones, the lekku, and the top of the head. And also the scanner goggles. Anything else you cannot see.

NICK: OK. Great. So the camera does a slow circle around Xianna and kind of a like video game level 1 start motion and zooms into a first person view for a second as you click the goggles on for a second it makes the [powering on] noise, but just quietly enough that only you can hear it, not everyone can. And the otherwise dark hallway is illuminated in—I don't know. Do you want to say it's purple? Purple light?

LAURA: Maybe a little bit more blue. Let's mix it up.

NICK: Blueish light? OK. And standing about halfway down the hallway in the darkest part of the hallway you see a Neimoidian and he is leaning against the wall. He looks very unsteady. He does look conscious, but he's out of it. He's probably pretty drunk. And he's kind of lost in his own thoughts kind of fiddling with his own hands.

LAURA: Xianna very cautiously approaches him.

NICK: OK. As you walk towards the Neimoidian, he kind of makes eye contact with you and you feel that skeezy elevator eye kind of feeling. He's mumbling to himself. You hear him saying things that are untoward, nothing that seems particularly relevant to you except for "Hey, she seems nice. Hey let's bring her inside. I've got ideas." That kind of stuff.

LAURA: I'm a Twi'lek. I hear that a lot.

NICK: Yeah, I would imagine so.

LAURA: I walk up to him and go, "Hello. Are you waiting for someone?"

NICK: "Uh... I think I've been waiting for you my whole life, darling."

LAURA: "Well, probably not. Um, I mean someone specific?"

NICK: "Well, not unless you're my drug dealer. I was waiting for him, but you don't look like him."

LAURA: "Well, what kind?"

NICK: "Ooh."

LAURA: "No, no, I'm sorry. Are you trying to buy or sell?"

NICK: "Buy."

LAURA: "Never mind then."

NICK: "Are you trying to buy? Because I may have some things back in my apartment if you're trying to get some."

LAURA: "Well, if you have it right here, maybe. I am not going into your apartment."

NICK: "Are you sure? Because I've got some glitter stim and some death sticks."

LAURA: "Pretty sure."

NICK: "You should really come into my apartment."

LAURA: "I do not think so."

NICK: "Um... fine." And he tries to grab you. He's going to make a roll. He'll get two greens against whatever—do you have Defense or anything? Or do you have Brawl?

LAURA: I have a Brawl of one so no.

NICK: Ooh.

LAURA: I have Skulduggery or Stealth. I mean, I could do a straight Agility roll?

NICK: Yeah, you could try and do Agility to get away from this guy. It looks like you maybe should not have gotten so close to him. So what's your Agility? Three?

LAURA: Three.

NICK: So he'll roll two greens against three purple. Let's throw that down and see what happens. Oooh! He succeeded! With one threat.

LAURA: Oh no.

NICK: So he grabs you by the arm and you try to slip away, but he gets kind of a headlock on you and starts pulling you back to the apartment. The threat is your hands are still free.

LAURA: Oh, I'm going to reach into my coat, pull out my blaster, and shoot him.

NICK: OK. How much damage does your blaster do?

LAURA: Six.

NICK: Roll me an easy shot because he's right next to you. Are you not trained in shooting at all?

LAURA: No, I put all my points into characteristics since you can't really buy them in-game and I just figured I'd add stats as we go.

NICK: Great. Well, this is going to work out really well for you.

LAURA: I'm sure it will.

NICK: [chuckles] You missed the dice tray.

LAURA: It bounced out of the dice tray.



NICK: You didn't hit him, did you?

LAURA: No, but I did get an advantage.

NICK: Great, he manages to slap the gun away from you. With the advantage, you don't drop the gun, but you don't hit him either. Did you have the blaster set to stun or not stun?

LAURA: No.

NICK: No, you were trying to murder this guy. So that kind of scares him a little bit. He manages to palm the door panel open. You see that his apartment is very similar to the one that you were crashed in except it's got some piles of blankets in the corner. A couple of Neimoidians are unconscious on the ground. Looks like maybe an overdose, at least very high at the moment, not really into stuff. And he's going to try and punch you in the face. So that would be two greens against the three purple again. Because he's pretty mad that you just tried to kill him.

LAURA: Well, he shouldn't have touched me.

NICK: I mean, I'm on your side with this. Oh, two success and three threats.

LAURA: [sighs]

NICK: So what happens is his Brawn a two so you take two damage. What's your Soak?

LAURA: Two.

NICK: Great. So he doesn't... Oh wait, two success so—

LAURA: Oh, I forgot. I have Defense. Both for range and melee.

NICK: OK. Well roll a black die then. But if he's got two Brawn—another threat. Well that'll still do what he's going to do. So it's actually you take two damage because it's two Brawn plus the two successes. So that's going to hurt. Then all of those threats are going to put it so he is drunk enough and out of it enough that he falls prone. Because that's my favorite part of this system is that three threats equals falls prone.

LAURA: It is so easy to fall over in this system.

NICK: It is and fall damage is super dangerous. So he falls just flat on his face. And you are now standing over him with a gun. He does have some friends in the room, but they don't appear to be paying attention. What are you going to do?

LAURA: I'm going to shoot him.

NICK: OK. Shoot him. It's an easy shot. He's on the ground, face down. And you can have a blue die because he is face down.

LAURA: How generous.

NICK: Yeah. I don't like this guy, either, Laura. Hey! You hit him.

LAURA: One success, two advantages.

NICK: What's your Crit rating on that pistol?

LAURA: Three.

NICK: Aw, bummer. OK, so you shoot him and it punches a hole through his back. Maybe hit him in the spine. You're not paying that much attention. He goes limp. You took him out. He is done. So you are in a room with three unconscious Neimoidians and the voice on the comm crackles to life and says, "All I'm hearing is gunfire right now and you haven't even gone outside yet."

LAURA: "Don't worry about it. I have this under control."

NICK: "I'm not—"

LAURA: "Be there in a moment!"

NICK: "I'm not worried about you." And it clicks off.

LAURA: I do a quick look around the room. What drugs are actually in here?

NICK: Make me a—you can do Streetwise or Skulduggery for finding someone's drug stash. Up to you.

LAURA: I'm going to go with Skulduggery. What is that? Easy? Average?

NICK: Average.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: They're pretty good at hiding drugs. They've been doing them for a long time.

LAURA: Well, that is five successes and an advantage.

NICK: [laughs] OK.

LAURA: I have lots of points in Cunning.

NICK: Yeah, so you find everything that they possibly have and it takes you under 30 seconds. So you pull a vial of glitterstim out of one of the unconscious guys' hands. You go to the other guy, roll him over. You find six death sticks. You find some cans of Booster Blue under a ratty mattress. And on the guy that you shot, you rifle through his pockets and find one dose of impact.

LAURA: That's what I'm talking about.

NICK: Space cocaine!

LAURA: I will take the impact and I'll take the glitterstim.

NICK: Yeah, I mean, it's worth money.

LAURA: It's worth money.

NICK: OK. Write that down. And then you leave?

LAURA: And then I leave. Close the door very quietly behind me and then walk outside.

NICK: Alright. So you go to the lift. No one else tries to accost you. You go down four floors. The lobby of the apartment building that you're in is basically just a small stairwell that leads to the lift. There's no doorman or anything, which knowing your surroundings is not that surprising. And you go outside.

The cold air makes your breath come out in a cloud. You look behind you and see that the neon sign covering the windows of the apartment says, "Tatya's Tatyas," in painfully bright blue. You are in Coronet, the capital of Corellia. The sidewalk has a smattering of brown leaves from the sporadic small trees that line the road. Speeders pass 100 meters above your head. There's a handful of human Corellian pedestrians, but no one pays you more than a passing glance. You're on the rougher side of town and non-humans are more common here.

The voice comes through your comms again. “Good. Now I’m sure you have some questions—more questions, but there’s little time for that now. I have a job for you, like I said. It’s a difficult one but the pay is extremely good. The first step is to go to Zebwak’s Goods. Do you know the place?”

LAURA: Do I?

NICK: Make a Knowledge Underworld check.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: Do you have Knowledge Underworld?

LAURA: No, I don’t.

NICK: Bummer.

LAURA: Not yet. Again, characteristics, filling in skills later.

NICK: So this one’s going to be an average check.

LAURA: Average?

NICK: Yeah. Oh hey, you got it.

LAURA: Hey! Two successes.

NICK: Nice! Two successes. You actually know for a fact that Zebwak’s Goods, having worked with them before, is a front for a smuggling group. It’s about 5 blocks from you.

LAURA: I start walking that way.

NICK: As you start walking, the earpiece keeps talking. I guess you might consider him your handler at this point. Says, “Inside that shop is a particular box. It looks identical to the one that contained your comm unit. I need you to get that box from Zebwak’s Goods. Do not open the box.”

LAURA: “How do you want me to get the box?”

NICK: “That’s the part where this is an audition.”

LAURA: “Alright.”

NICK: "Procure the box. Try not to get arrested."

LAURA: "And why do I not look in the box?"

NICK: "Just don't open the box. Trust me on this one."

LAURA: "Is there a head in the box?"

NICK: "There's not—well... you know that's not really important."

LAURA: "So there is a head."

NICK: "If you want to consider it a head, you just go right ahead and do that."

LAURA: "How is that open for interpretation?"

NICK: "So there's this alien named Schrodinger and his hypothesis was whatever you put in a box, so long as the box stayed closed, it didn't matter what it was because it could be anything. B. Schrodinger."

LAURA: "So if for some reason, I get arrested with the box, how much trouble am I in?"

NICK: "The box will put you in less trouble than the things I know are in your pockets."

LAURA: "Well, they would have to find them in my pockets."

NICK: "So I'm sensing a lot of resistance here. This is a test to do a job that is presumably not completely legal."

LAURA: "You realize that I have done many jobs and most people just come up to me in a bar. Or slip a letter under my door. Or just straight up knock on my door and tell me."

NICK: "So you should interpret this as if I'm taking this much precaution, how big a score is this going to be?"

LAURA: "Well, that is a good question to ask. How much credits am I looking at?"

NICK: "A lot. A whole bunch."

LAURA: "Well, I can imagine quite a lot."

NICK: [laughter] "Right, well, keep imagining and then multiply that by more than that. So go get the box."

LAURA: "That is what I'm doing. It is five blocks away. I cannot get there immediately."

NICK: "Great. Well, I've got things to do. Let me know how it goes." Click.

So you continue down the street. As you walk, you think about the interaction you just had. You don't feel any eyes on you. You don't feel watched. But the voice on the comm is obviously aware of your progress. How does that make you feel?

LAURA: Uncomfortable.

NICK: Yeah.

LAURA: The whole thing is odd. Probably not the oddest job Xianna has ever done, but probably up there.

NICK: Ooh, what is one of the oddest jobs Xianna has ever done?

LAURA: I imagine it involves a Herglic in some way.

NICK: [laughter]

LAURA: Haven't figured out exactly how but I know a Herglic is involved.

NICK: Giant whale aliens. The best Star Wars race.

LAURA: That are very self-conscious about their size.

NICK: Yeah, there won't be any Herglics in this campaign. That's not going to come up.

Anyway, so you're there. You get to the storefront. Zebwak's Goods is a small storefront on the ground floor of a high-rise tenement. It looks like the building used to be luxurious but hasn't been maintained in years. The carvings on the spire-like high-rise are covered in grime and have pieces missing. The display window of Zebwak's Goods is obscured by durasteel bars.

Can you make me a Skulduggery check please?

LAURA: Can do. Average? Easy?

NICK: Average. Do it.

LAURA: Three successes and one advantage.

NICK: You can still get in through the bars. They're fairly wide. You're thin enough that you can sneak through so the burglary bars look a little pointless, but looking closer, you notice some electronics lining the inside of the window and it looks like a ray shield generator. For you listeners, that's those scary red laser walls that Star Wars uses to hold space ships in. Anyone who tampered with that window would get a painful and maybe deadly surprise.

As you go in, a small bell rings and the inside of the shop is small and crowded with merchandise. You see a lot of used tools and ship parts. The occasional off-world artifact but nothing looks valuable. Behind the display counter, you see the proprietor of the shop, a Corellian man with a dark tan and red hair. He has a scar under one eye that tugs on the corner of his mouth. He's wearing a white leather jacket with a black vest under it.

LAURA: I walk up to him and go, "Hello, I would like to talk about doing something business."

NICK: "So you're trying to do some business?"

LAURA: I kind of smile and wink at him a little bit.

NICK: "Ah yes, the secret signal: a wink."

LAURA: "Everyone knows that the secret signal is a wink. I feel like it is pretty universal."

NICK: "Yes, but this one gets you into the back room." And he opens the door. The glass counter actually slides open to the side to let you through. There's one of those bead curtains that leads to a really rundown-looking backroom that you can see from the outside and he walks next to that through a wall and you see that it is a hologram projector.

Do you follow him in?

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: The backroom is completely different. Whereas the front had dusty glass cases and chipped tile floors, this room is all brushed durasteel and onyx pedestals holding individual items. There are about

ten things, most obscured by weirdly selective shadows. There are cones of lights coming down from the ceiling.

I was going to ask you to do a Perception check, but if you just turn your goggles on, you can see everything.

LAURA: I'll do a Perception check. I think it might be too conspicuous to just put goggles on in the middle of an interaction.

NICK: OK, great. So this one is an average Perception check. Ooh, you failed.

LAURA: Oh no. I did.

NICK: A failure and one advantage, is that what that is?

LAURA: That would be three advantages.

NICK: Three advantages, great. So you don't see the box that you're looking for but you see some other great items. You can even pick what they are if you want.

While you're thinking about that, the shopkeeper turns around. He stands in the middle of the room. There's a little raised pedestal that kind of looks like an auction block. He says, "So were you looking for something specific?"

LAURA: "Well I am actually hoping to sell." And I take out the vial of glitter stim and hand it to him and go, "This is just a sample of the goods I am having. I'm just new to the area. Looking for a buyer."

NICK: "So obviously you're new here because we specialize in more interesting artifacts. That being said, how much of this do you have?"

LAURA: "How much do you need?"

NICK: "Well we buy in mass quantities, here at Zebwak." [laughs]

Ooh, make a Knowledge check again on Zebwak.

LAURA: Underworld? I mean not that it really matters. They're all the same for me.

NICK: Underworld, yeah. Zebwak's Good.



LAURA: Average?

NICK: Yeah.

LAURA: Two successes and one threat.

NICK: OK. You know that this guy is not Zebwak. Zebwak is not a real person. He is basically the illegal version of a corporate mascot. And part of the reason you were familiar with this and knew where it was is there's Zebwak's Goods on a whole bunch of planets so they kind of specialize on nicer worlds, more mid and core worlds that have seedier parts of town so not really Coruscant, because Coruscant either has super nice government or scary third world slum. But this is like red light district in a medium sized city and that's their comfort zone. So you've dealt with them before. But yeah, this is not Zebwak.

That's what you learn from that. Don't worry about the threats. I'm sure it'll be fine.

LAURA: It's always fine.

NICK: Yeah, it'll be fine. This guy says, "I guess I should introduce myself if you're looking for a more permanent business arrangement. My name is Cecil Zonfarmer. I'm from... local. Yes, I'm from around here. For sure."

LAURA: I hold my hand out in a very dainty manner.

NICK: Oh, he grabs it. Immediately. And he doesn't kiss the hand, but he bows over it. He's very chivalrous. It's hard to say that after doing a Sean Connery accent.

LAURA: And I smile at him, go, "I'm Bila."

NICK: "Bila, yes, I have not heard of you but you seem familiar."

LAURA: "I'm very new."

NICK: "Yes, if you have a crate or more of this glitter stim, it's something we could deal with. If it's just a few vials, you should probably go find a street pusher somewhere."

LAURA: "No, I can do crates."

NICK: "Wonderful. We pay below market rates, but you're guaranteed under the Zebwak name of no problems."

LAURA: "And you mention that you mostly deal with more interesting items. Like what? My stock sometimes changes seasonal."

NICK: "A seasonal smuggler? That's not something I've heard for sometime."

LAURA: "Well, sometimes I like to get away for the winters."

NICK: "You just go to a planet that's in a different part of it's rotation?"

LAURA: "Well, yes."

NICK: "I suppose that makes sense. Well, some things that we've got—take a look around." And he flips a switch and all the lights come on. It's uncomfortably bright. You can see as he goes to flip the switch, he actually closes his eyes because your eyes have gotten adjusted to kind of half-light.

You see some very interesting things. You see a brace of thermal detonators that seem to be attached together somehow so that--

LAURA: Nice.

NICK: Something very bad would happen if you set those off. You see some—Actually you would recognize some Twi'lek like family totems that are all in a pile.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: If you look closer, you see a couple of them have blood on them.

LAURA: Not cool.

NICK: Not cool. You know, illegal. You see a weird red pyramid that's off in the corner. That one's not even on a pedestal. It's like in an inset in the wall with a glass case in front of it.

LAURA: I'm sure it's fine.

NICK: Oh, I'm sure that's nothing important.

LAURA: That's nothing important.

NICK: You see a—it looks like it's durasteel, but it reflects the light weird. It's like a hemispherical mask with two eye slits and some red line patterns on it and little stylized horns coming off the front. And you see... well, are there any illegal things in the room that you think would be interesting?

LAURA: Oh, I don't know. I'd say weapons probably. I'm assuming some very illegal, modded weapons.

NICK: Yeah, there is definitely a disruptor rifle with a flechette launcher like duct-taped to the bottom of it.

LAURA: Sounds about right.

NICK: Nothing is labeled but this one has tape over the pedestal that says, "The Atomizer" on it. Cecil looks at that one pretty proudly as your eyes glance over. Says, "Yes, that one's one of mine. I fancy myself a bit of a weaponsmith."

LAURA: "It is very nice."

NICK: "Yes, it lobotomizes all sorts of things. That's why I call it The Atomizer."

LAURA: "That makes sense."

NICK: "Yes. Makes a lot of sense." And so, in one of the less prestigious positions of this display room, you do see a little plasteel box. This one, while obviously being of the same design, is a little different in a couple of ways. It has a little latch on the lid that appears to be closed. It also has little bulges on it like it's been hit from the inside. It looks more battered than the one you saw before.

So as your eyes look over that one, Cecil watches you looking through the room. He's kind of doing a tour guide thing at this point. He's gotten the impression that you're going to come back to sell some things and you're not going to buy right now so he's just kind of showing off. He says, "Ah yes, that box. It seems unassuming and to be fair, it's one of our cheaper items, but for 10,000 credits you could take it home right now."

LAURA: "Well, what is it?"

NICK: "We like to think of it as a mystery package. But it's an interesting thing. But we promise that there's air holes in it."

LAURA: "The thing inside of it is alive?"

NICK: "Yes, it's an animal of some kind. I don't know what it looks like because when it was sold to me, my superior told me, 'Do not open this box.'"

LAURA: "So is it to be sent to an enemy for them to open and it to kill them? Or are you just not supposed to look at the goods?"

NICK: "So generally, I don't look at stuff. I'm just the salesman and everyone knows a salesman doesn't need to know what he's selling."

LAURA: "I'm just trying to figure out how I might use it best."

NICK: "Well, from the manifest it came with, it would be useful for biological testing or... you know, I'm not really sure. It's more of a collector's item. But I doubt it would kill anybody. At least, it wouldn't kill a single person."

LAURA: "Well, maybe not that then."

NICK: "Hmm, too bad. Eventually we're going to have to figure out how to feed the little booger."

LAURA: "You said there were air holes? You just push little bits of food through the holes."

NICK: "That's a great idea." And he turns around and starts scribbling on a little notepad. "Thanks for that. For that, I'll take 100 credits off the price. 9,900 credits."

LAURA: "Well, I was not thinking to buy it right at the moment. And I'm not quite sure I have a use for it whatever it might be. The Atomizer, though, that seems much nicer."

NICK: "Ah yes, you have an eye for quality." And he preens up a little bit. You can see when he smiles that the scar under his eye like tugs his cheek a lot further and he winds up with a very asymmetrical smile.

LAURA: While I'm in here, I want to be looking to see are there air vents? Is there another door?

NICK: That would probably be a Skulduggery check to case the joint.

LAURA: I can do that.

NICK: You mean that's the thing you're good at?

LAURA: Yeah! Average? Hard?

NICK: This one's going to be hard.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: But if you pass it, you're pretty much going to get everything. Well, you got it.

LAURA: That would be two successes and one threat.

NICK: With two successes, you see that there is an air vent. It seems to lead down from somewhere on a higher floor. Knowing the way this building is arranged, you could probably find a way to get in there. You also see that there is a security camera, but it sweeps the room and it sweeps the room pretty slowly. It's like one of the gears that helps it go back and forth is kind of worn down so there would be blind spots. What else were you looking for?

LAURA: Is the only door from the front of the shop?

NICK: No, there's a backdoor. So looking at it, the backdoor is at a weird angle. You think it probably leads somewhere else in the building, not just straight to an alley. And even if it did lead straight to a backdoor, you also see another one of those ray shield contraptions. So it's doable but...

LAURA: Is the air vent in the middle of the room? Side of the room?

NICK: So it's coming in from an interior wall. It's at the joint between the wall and the ceiling.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: It looks to be about—well, it's Star Wars so it looks to be about small person size.

LAURA: OK. So like eight feet off the ground.

NICK: Hmm... six? They're kind of low ceilings.

LAURA: OK. That works.

NICK: It's a rundown shop.

LAURA: I want to know if I'm going to have to roll for fall damage.

NICK: I mean, probably not. Even from eight, so long as you lowered yourself, you'd be okay.

LAURA: I think for the most part it usually starts at 10.

NICK: So everything will be 11 feet tall and we'll see how long it takes someone to die.

LAURA: Yes. Not that long. Fall damage is super deadly here.

NICK: Yeah, it's really bad. So that's what you see in the room. The threat is that while you're casing the room, Cecil Zonnfarmer sees that you're doing that, but he doesn't think you're casing the room; he thinks you got bored. So he's kind of deflated. Says, "Well, so we are open until 6 o'clock. Any time after that would be by appointment. I can, of course, meet you here at any time but you would have to let me know when you would want to meet here."

LAURA: "And what time in the morning do you open?"

NICK: "We open at 10 am. I like to get my beauty rest."

LAURA: "Yes, well, how late do you typically stay up?"

NICK: "Like I said, we close at 6 and after that, I go home. I don't live in this part of town. As you know, Zebwak takes good care of us and I can stay wherever I want, so I stay in the middle class suburbs."

LAURA: "Alright. So I'm guessing a meeting in the morning when you open might be the best option."

NICK: "Sure, if you want to sell us glitter stim in broad daylight, who am I to complain?"

LAURA: "Well, you seem opposed to a late night meeting. I'm used to meeting in bars and getting drinks and going onto the business. But if that's not going to work for you..."

NICK: "I mean, if you're trying to buy me a drink, I won't say no."

LAURA: "Well, I have to go back and do some of my own business. Coordinate some things. 3 am? Is that too late for you?"

NICK: "Nothing's too late for me. I am legally required to be available 26 hours a day. Corellia has a 26-hour day maybe. I don't know."

LAURA: I don't know either.

NICK: I don't want to look it up. It's probably 24 but that doesn't sound spacey enough.

LAURA: They're almost always 24.

NICK: Yeah, it's kind of lame really. [laughs]

LAURA: Yeah... "So I will meet you... Is there a good bar nearby that you know of?"

NICK: "Well, we could just do the deal here."

LAURA: "Well, that is OK."

NICK: "Unless you're trying to buy me a drink. I mean, I would just carry it here anyway."

LAURA: "You seemed opposed to that so I guess I will just meet you here. At 3 am?"

NICK: "Yes. 3 am. I will make sure the goods are here. And I will give you 80% of the going rate on glitter stim, which is... I don't know what it is."

LAURA: An amount.

NICK: "An amount. It's unimportant."

LAURA: "That works for me."

NICK: "Great, then I guess I'll see you tomorrow morning."

LAURA: "Yes."

NICK: "Dark and early. Sounds lovely."

LAURA: "I think it will be great doing business with you."

NICK: "Yes, it will be great doing business with me."

LAURA: "Yes." And then I walk to leave and assuming he's going to somewhat escort me back out.

NICK: Oh yes, he walks with you. It's a weird feeling walking out of a wall. It's just light but still coming through masonry and stuff. And the way this holoprojector is set up, there's some depth to it so for just a second, you get just a face full of brick and mortar. But besides that, you're back in the shabby storefront of Zebwak's Goods and you are free to do whatever you want.

LAURA: I'm going to walk out.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: Walk down the block and then circle back into the building and try to find where the vent came from.

NICK: Alright. Zebwak's like the ground floor.

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: And then has like the kind of like the Brownstone walk-up to the residential side.

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: So you're going up to the residential area?

LAURA: so I want to be seen leaving and walking away. And then kind of circle back a little bit and go up the stairs that anyone on the inside of the building or the storefront couldn't see me doing that.

NICK: OK. So it's tucked behind the staircase and Cecil didn't follow to the door so he can't really see through the right side.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: So you're able to make it up and back into the building pretty easily. That's not a problem.

LAURA: Good.

NICK: So when you go into the apartment building, it looks very similar to yours just bigger. This one was like a 30-story kind of spire tenement. There is a small staircase that leads to a lift and there's also a little maintenance hallway that wraps around to the right of the lift and seems to disappear into like the mechanics of the building.

LAURA: I would assume it'd probably be more in the maintenance hallway.

NICK: You can probably make a Skulduggery check.

LAURA: I can do that.

NICK: Having done some vent climbing in your day.

LAURA: Average?

NICK: Yeah.



LAURA: That would be three successes.

NICK: Alright. So yeah, you know that on the residential level, there's air vents but it leads into a pretty confusing maze. You could go that way, but you also know that in the maintenance area, there's usually like a main junction and sometimes if you're really lucky, there's a map of where the air vents all go for maintenance purposes. So if you go down the maintenance hallway, you can probably find your way through.

LAURA: That's probably going to be where I go.

NICK: Alright. You know walk around the side of the elevator. You find yourself in... It's probably 30 meters long this hallway. There's a couple of closets on either side. When you look inside you see mops and tools. Nothing all that interesting.

And then walking further down the hall, you see one room that's slightly ajar which, in Star Wars, means it's broken because they have swooshy doors. So it's about halfway open and you see some periodic sparks coming out of it. You also see some light coming out of the room. Want to make me a Perception check?

LAURA: Can do.

NICK: This one's just easy.

LAURA: Four successes and one advantage.

NICK: So looking in through the room, even without your goggles turned on, you see there's actually a maintenance employee in there. It looks like he jammed the edge of a hydrospanner in the door to get it stuck like that and he appears to be doing some sort of drug off of a shelf in there. But he is in there.

Behind him, through the crack in the door, you see the ventilation junction. It's basically—it looks like a door but instead of a door, it's got grating in front of it and you can hear the air *whooshing* by. It's pretty standard. And you even see on the wall, a big blueprint that's just vents and it has little notes on it like "Closed," "Fan down," "Running," things like that.

LAURA: I walk up to the door.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: Knock a little bit and go, “Hello, um... what are you doing?”

NICK: “Wha? Ah, ooh, uh!” And he jumps a little and goes [sniff]. And turns around and he’s got a little... What color is Impact? Is it blue? I always pictured it as blue.

LAURA: I’m assuming it’s white because I’ve just been assuming it’s cocaine. It’s just space coke.

NICK: Oh, I thought it was spacier, but that’s fine. It can be white.

LAURA: Well, I mean, maybe! I’ll look it up. I’m sure someone else has talked about this.

NICK: Maybe.

LAURA: It would not be the weirdest Star Wars thing I’ve ever googled.

NICK: I mean, that’s true. I’ve never actually read anything about Impact in the EU.

LAURA: I assume not blue, but I think that might just be because I don’t want to associate it with Booster Blue.

NICK: You mean the best drug?

LAURA: You mean sniffing paint?

NICK: Yeah, the best drug.

LAURA: No, Impact is the best drug.

NICK: OK, it’s one hell of a drug.

LAURA: It is one hell of a drug.

NICK: OK, he goes [confused sounds] and he sniffs his nose. He turns around and you see a little white stubble of white powder in his mustache. He’s a medium height Corellian man with like really greasy, lanky, shoulder-length hair and a glorious mustache that has little bits of white powder in it now. And he has a tool belt on and a dark green jumpsuit on that’s open to show a lot of chest hair and a gold chain and no shirt under the jumpsuit.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: And he says, “Oh, I was just—uh... what are you doing here?”

LAURA: "No, it's okay. I was looking for one of my friend's apartments and I think you might like to join us." And I kind of reach into one of my hidden pockets and pull out a bag of Impact and kind of wave it while winking at him. And then put it back.

NICK: Make me a Charm--

LAURA: Charm? I do have Charm.

NICK: Yeah, make me a Charm check. It's going to be easy and you'll have a blue die to it because this guy's not very smart and also you just waved drugs at him and he loves drugs so much.

LAURA: That would be three successes and one advantage.

NICK: Alright, so he doesn't question you at all. He walks to the door and pulls the hydrospanner out and it goes *shoomp* into the wall, working perfectly fine now. He goes, "Well, sometimes I break the door so that it looks like I'm fixing the door but what I'm actually doing is Impact. Yeah, let's go party!"

LAURA: "So I can give you the address of where my friends are and I will meet you there in a moment. I have to go get someone else first."

NICK: "That sounds suspicious. OK!" And he runs out of the room, realizes he didn't get an address from you and turns around and come back.

LAURA: I kind of like run after him like putting my hand up, like "Excuse me! I need to give you where to go."

NICK: "Oh right! Yeah, I-I-I was just excited. Yeah, where am I going?"

LAURA: I give him a very random address that's probably six blocks away."

NICK: 432 Corellia Street.

LAURA: Yeah, 432 Corellia Street. And I just tell him to knock on Apartment #435. And he's got to knock four times.

NICK: He nods to himself, turns to go, stops a few feet past, and goes, "I forgot all that. Let me write it down. What was it?"

LAURA: I write it down. I give him the fake address, the fake apartment number, tell him he has to knock four times, and when they ask, tell them Taureen sent you.”

NICK: “Taureen.”

LAURA: “That is my name.”

NICK: “Oh, well, it’s nice meeting you Taureen.”

LAURA: “Nice meeting you, too.”

NICK: And he goes to shake your hand and instead just snuffles at his mustache again. And he says, “Great, I’ll see you there.”

LAURA: “Yes, bye!”

NICK: And he turns and runs off. And you find yourself alone in the maintenance room.

LAURA: Yes, is there any way to lock the door from the inside?

NICK: Well, you did see that jamming a hydrospanner in a certain place does a pretty good job.

LAURA: So I do that.

NICK: There happens to be some lying around.

LAURA: Just in case he comes back.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And then I want to study the map of the vents. And what time of day is it?

NICK: It’s probably 4 in the afternoon.

LAURA: Probably should’ve asked that before I started this, but OK. So I want to study the map and then go into the vents, see how loud they are, see how long it takes me to get there, and then basically I want to wait until 6:30-6:45.

NICK: OK. Going into the vents... Make me another Skulduggery check for that shopping list of things. This one’s going to be average.

LAURA: Two successes but two threats.

NICK: [laughs] So the vents are pretty quiet so long as you step lightly. If you try to move quickly through them, crawling, you're going to have some rattle noises. You find some weak points in the paneling that could drop you into who knows where but they're pretty easy to avoid. You get to the grating at the vent and the display room is dark. You can't see through the holoprojector at all so it's pretty much just a black space.

Were you going to wait in the vent or were you going to go back to the maintenance room to wait? It takes you about 10 minutes to get from where you started to there moving slowly and quietly.

LAURA: I'll wait in the vent and watch how long it takes the camera to cross the room. And just kind of jotting down all the other items there. Definitely going to be taking the Twi'lek artifacts with me. And just kind of figuring out what I can carry back and what I will risk carrying back as well as a bonus.

NICK: Right, so there were three Twi'lek totems. You could fit those in your jacket. Like they'd rattle around. You wouldn't be able to close a pocket on it.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: Unless you used like your giant pocket for it. Obviously you could get the box pretty easily. You could take the gun if you wanted, but it'd be pretty hard to get it up the vent.

LAURA: I figured.

NICK: Same with the thermal detonator cluster. That's pretty heavy. You could take the Twi'lek stuff, the box. I guess you could technically take that mask if you wanted to but you'd have to wear it to keep your hands free. I'm sure it'll be fine.

LAURA: I mean, Xianna's first concern is whether or not it would fit on her seeing as she has two protrusions coming out of her head.

NICK: Oh, right. Lekku are a thing.

LAURA: Lekku are a thing.

NICK: Yeah, that wouldn't fit well. It's like a hemispherical thing. It looks like it's designed to wrap around someone's head. It would pinch pretty bad.

LAURA: I have a utility belt that things can be attached to. Would there be any way to hook it on the back while I'm crawling through the vents and then get a box out of the maintenance room and make it look like I'm carrying stuff out?

NICK: Hmm, the only thing you could probably tie that to, because it's pretty much smooth, is you could tie a string through one of the eye holes or you could try to tie it to one of the horns, but it wouldn't stick to the horns pretty well. So you could. It would be a little rattly. It'd be really hard to climb out silently with it on there, but you could do it.

So one of the things that you need to be thinking about, I'm talking about the weight and stuff, to get down to that level, because it is a floor down, there's about a seven foot drop that you have to kind of like spider climb down so you can fit your hands and your feet and shimmy back down it. And you know you can get back down that way but it's going to be really hard to do if your hands are full.

LAURA: What supplies and equipment were in the maintenance room?

NICK: So there were some standard hand tools. There were some lights. You think you saw a blow torch like a cutter. There's a ladder.

LAURA: A ladder wouldn't be super useful for a vent.

NICK: Probably not. You just asked what was in there, not what was useful.

LAURA: Yeah. Any rope, sheets, anything like that?

NICK: There's probably some drop cloths. Yeah, there are. There's some white sheets that you would lay down for painting.

LAURA: Alright, then I want to shimmy back up to the maintenance room and see if I can tie them together to make a long rope. You know the exact kind you make when you're busting out of the window in some sort of sitcom or movie?

NICK: Yeah, I know that one pretty well.

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: It won't be long enough unless you tear it into strips. It looks a little flimsy but it would probably be fine.

LAURA: So if it was about 4 when I started...

NICK: You'd have the time to do it.

LAURA: I'd have the time to do that. So I'm going to do that.

NICK: What are you going to tie it to?

LAURA: Is there another grate in the vent nearby the drop?

NICK: Not close enough that you could drop it down. The drop is close enough to where you start that that big door-like grate that if you set it sideways and tied it to that, it would probably hold and it'd reach most of the way down to where you'd just have to hop a little to grab it again.

LAURA: I can work with that.

NICK: Yeah, it's also going to be a little hard to climb a rope if you want stuff in your hands.

LAURA: Yeah, so being a maintenance room, are there any toolboxes or boxes or any extra little pieces of fabric or tarp that could be tied into a sack?

NICK: Oh yeah, you could make a sack out of some of the drop cloth. That's fine.

LAURA: Then I would probably make a sack to tie it to the back of my utility belt for anything that can't fit into my coat.

NICK: Can you make me another Perception check please?

LAURA: Easy? Average? Hard?

NICK: Average. Actually this one's probably hard.

LAURA: So hard?

NICK: Yeah?

LAURA: OK.

NICK: Wow, so many threats.

LAURA: Oh no.

NICK: Did you not roll a single success?

LAURA: No, I just did. Sorry, this one was this one. But those cancel out.

NICK: Oh OK. From here, I thought they were all advantages and it was like, wow, three greens and a yellow and you roll only advantages.

LAURA: Everything is canceled out.

NICK: OK, so you don't see anything.

LAURA: I don't see anything.

NICK: The room seems fine. The lights appear to be working. The door is nice and jammed up. Should be fine. Everything's great.

LAURA: Gonna be great.

NICK: Everything's—look at this team! It's gonna be great.

LAURA: I mean the best thing you can ever hear in a game is your GM saying, "It'll be fine." Oh boy.

NICK: Oh yeah, yeah. It'll be fine. I'm actually realizing I say that to you more often than any of the other players.

LAURA: Yeah. Well, I mean, I say that to you a lot when I'm GMing.

NICK: Yeah, that makes sense. So you've done your preparations. You have a little sack. You've got a... [giggles] Little sack. You've got a rope that hangs down most of the drop so it should be easier to climb out. It gets to be around 6:30 – 6:45 as you finish up these preparations.

You spend a little time in the room, just looking around, seeing if there's anything else useful. It's not a terribly well-stocked maintenance room. They wouldn't even have had those cloths except it looks like that your friend, the Impact head, probably would have been supposed to be painting but he hasn't been, so the cloths are all spotless. He has not used them.

And it's about the time when you were going to go do this little mini-heist so you're down back in the vent near the grating. By the way, from observing the cameras, it looks like at the farthest point away,



you probably have a minute to be in the room then back in the vent. Unless you want to mess with the camera.

LAURA: No, I think for knowing exactly what I'm grabbing and having a place to throw it all, I think a minute should be enough.

NICK: Mhmm. OK.

LAURA: Yes, assuming I'm going to throw the helmet and the box in the sack and stuff the totems in my pockets.

NICK: OK. Make me a Stealth check to do this quietly.

LAURA: Can do.

NICK: It's just average. The camera does not appear to have a microphone on it so you don't have to be that quiet.

LAURA: Oh boy!

NICK: Well, you passed. No, you didn't.

LAURA: No, I didn't!

NICK: Oh no.

LAURA: I have one advantage.

NICK: Alright. The advantage is that nobody hears. The disadvantage is when you push the grate out, you thought that it was on a hinge and it wasn't so the screws pull out of the wall and it falls and hits the ground. Makes a pretty clattery noise.

And then when you drop, you land on the grate and twist your ankle just a little. And you lose probably 10 to 15 seconds trying not to fall over, getting your feet back under you again. So you have less time to get this done than you did before.

LAURA: You said all the items are all on plinths.

NICK: Mhmm.

LAURA: Could I feasibly hide the grate behind one of those so the camera would not see it?

NICK: So not behind a plinth. They're only about—the bases are only about two and a half feet wide and they narrow to about eight inches and then go back out again. So the grate would be visible. But you could put it like under where the camera is and it would never be in the arc.

LAURA: Yeah, I just kind of want to like quickly get it over there and do I think with the lost time that I could still grab all the items?

NICK: You wanted the totems—

LAURA: Totems, the helmet, box.

NICK: The box, and the mask? You could probably get two out of the three?

LAURA: Is the vent visible on the camera?

NICK: No. Well, if someone was looking very closely at it, they might notice the grating was missing but it only catches the side of the vent.

LAURA: So I want to grab the totem and the box.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And then get back up into the vent.

NICK: OK. So you grab the totem and the box. It takes you about 30 seconds. Gives you about 15 seconds left. And you get back to the wall and you realize that the grate is about six feet above you. Make me an Athletics check to climb back into the vent.

LAURA: Oh boy.

NICK: Yeah.

LAURA: Are the plinths movable?

NICK: Maybe. They look heavy. You could try that.

LAURA: How close is the vent to the wall?

NICK: The vent to the wall? Or the grating?

LAURA: So how easy would it be to parkour up versus straight jump? Like would that help at all.

NICK: Hmm, it's in the middle of the wall so you could maybe parkour from the nearest plinth. It'd be a harder check, but you could use Agility instead to climb a plinth and jump across instead of just like Strength jump. But you would have to move the big heavy cluster of thermal detonators carefully to make space for you.

LAURA: Do I think I could stand underneath the camera and not be seen?

NICK: You think if you held your breath and sucked in real hard, it may only be seen a little bit of you. You may get away with it. You could try and do a Stealth check to do that instead. Buy yourself some time.

LAURA: I think I'm going to do that with the hope that no one is actively watching the camera. That this is more of a review thing. And maybe they just don't notice that there's a tiny little sliver of purple.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And I'm going to hold my lekku down.

NICK: [laughs]

LAURA: Like flat to my head while I stand there.

NICK: OK. It's going to be an average stealth. Oh no.

LAURA: Oh wow, I am not rolling well tonight. I did get an advantage.

NICK: Great. That advantage plus some of the other ones that we didn't use right away will go into your review. It is a review thing. But as you're trying to get to the wall and get yourself set so the camera can't see you, you look up and see the camera's already pointed at you. So it gets a good view of your face.

LAURA: I just stop and give a little wave to it. And smile.

NICK: Yeah.

LAURA: And I go get the mask because they already see me. So that's what I'm going to do.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: Then I'm going to attempt to move a plinth and get into the vent.

NICK: So you're able to move the plinth to stand on to get out. It just takes a while and it makes that really horrible like desk on a tile floor at work noise that [desk screeching sound effect] and this whole time--

LAURA: I'm already too far in.

NICK: And this whole time you're pushing it, the camera's just following you. So there's this zoomed out shot from the camera's perspective and it says record and it's just Xianna pushing it [desk screeching sound effect] toward the wall. And she stops and rubs her brow for a second then goes back to [desk screeching sound effect]. The camera just slowly pans with you. And you scramble up onto the plinth and back into the vent.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: Yeah, mischief managed!

LAURA: In a way.

NICK: In a way. So you're able to get back out of the vent system no problem. You've got that set up to where it's not a big deal. You've got everything stashed away. You get into the maintenance room and you go to leave...

LAURA: And what happens?

NICK: And the door's actually broken. You go to pull the hydrospanner out and it does not open. You go to press the button and it still doesn't open.

LAURA: Oh no.

NICK: So good job. You broke the door.

LAURA: So looking back at the vent graph, is there a vent opening from the one I just came from that goes to a different floor or a different room?

NICK: Yeah, there is. You could do that pretty easily. You have to take a pretty roundabout way. It takes you about an hour to get through because there's a lot of big drops and ups that you can't really do with your loot. But you manage to get up three or four floors higher than you are by stair stepping through

the system. There is one scary point where you come to a big open chasm because Star Wars is full of those. And you stop on the edge and little bits of dirt fall down because this is Star Wars and you have to have that camera shot.

LAURA: Well yeah.

NICK: And you turn around and go back. And you manage to come out on the fourth floor and you see, looking through the vent, there's groups of people kind of going in and out. There's a lot of tenement dwellers and people sleeping in the hallways. You could just walk right past them with your stuff or you could try to be sneaky. You think you could probably make it through without being seen, but it won't be easy.

LAURA: I mean, how easy would it be to get out of the vent without being noticed?

NICK: To get out of the vent, if you timed it right, it would be pretty easy.

LAURA: Yeah, so I think I want to time it right to get out of the vent without being noticed and then just want to quickly take the sack off of my belt then just kind of nonchalantly hold it in my arms as if I'm just walking somewhere.

NICK: Walking somewhere with a sack of stuff.

LAURA: Yeah!

NICK: So that's an easy Stealth check.

LAURA: And I have four successes and an advantage because that is when I roll well.

NICK: Yeah, of course. So you're able to get out, close the vent, and arrange yourself before anybody comes back in the hallway. There's one guy curled up in a pile of trash next to the vent, but you're so quiet, he doesn't even move. You're silent. A ghost in the night.

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: For this easy Stealth check. Then I'm going to say it's a hard Streetwise check to nonchalant your way out of this building in one piece because most of these people know each other pretty well, but you can have a blue die because your stealth was so good, you were able to artfully arrange yourself so that you look like the kind of person who would be here.

LAURA: Alright. And what did you say the difficulty was?

NICK: Hard.

LAURA: Hard. Let's see how this goes. Four successes.

NICK: Great. You walk your way right out. No problem.

About the time you make it to the lobby, you see the mustached maintenance guy on the way back in. He looks really bummed out, but you're able to step into some shadows and he just walks right past you. He's holding a hydrospanner. Says, "Well, I think maybe I had the wrong apartment. I'm not sure but man, this is a bummer," and he [sniffs] again and heads back into his little room. And as you're waiting there, you hear him press the panel and walk head first straight into the door with a clang. "What? The door's broken!" And you duck outside before he can do anything.

LAURA: Not my problem.

NICK: Yeah. As you go outside, you have a chance to examine this box. Like I said, it's got a latch, it's got a little eye hole on the bottom part with a hook that goes through that holds the lid on.

LAURA: I want to get back to my apartment before doing any of that.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And I would like to take a slightly more roundabout way, just in case anyone was watching or if there are CC cameras.

NICK: Mhm.

LAURA: Just so that it might be harder to follow my pattern.

NICK: So in this part of Coronet, the government doesn't care so much.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: They don't have the cameras here. CorSec does—well, it's not the worst part of town. CorSec only comes through only once in a while. That's Corellian Security for anyone who hasn't listened to the first couple of episodes.

So you are able to get back. You're pretty used to this area. You've scanned it before. You've only been here for a few days, but the first thing you do is look for escape routes and ways to move about unseen and you're able to get back to your apartment pretty easily.

Yeah, so you're back in your apartment. You have your stuff. The box has little latch on it. It has little bumps where it got pushed out. And if you listen really carefully, you can hear some scratching and a light mewling noise, like something on the inside is trying to get out.

LAURA: So there were mentions of little tiny air holes.

NICK: Mhmm.

LAURA: Can I look into them?

NICK: They're like pinpricks.

LAURA: OK.

NICK: They're very small. So you can get your eye up to it, but you can't see much. If you use your goggles and press your goggles up, all you can see is like little splotches of white fur.

LAURA: Well, I set that aside and I look at the mask.

NICK: So the mask. You can't really tell what its deal is. It's completely smooth. It's got the horns on it. It's designed to wrap most of the way around the head and it's got a red kind of vein pattern on the front. It looks creepy and when you touch it, your skin crawls a little bit. But besides that, it just looks like some expensive tribal artifact that they must have been selling.

LAURA: So does it look it has any sort of scanners built in or...

NICK: Nope! Looks like a piece of solid steel. Durasteel.

LAURA: Durasteel. What happens if I hold it up to my face?

NICK: So when you hold it up to your face, do you touch it to your face or just kind of look through the eye holes?

LAURA: Would it fit for someone who has lekku and ear cones?

NICK: Nope. So your ear cones wouldn't get hit because it stops about mid-cheek bone, but the top part doesn't really wrap around the lekku very well. You can kind of smush your face into it.

LAURA: I would just try to kind of hold it up and smush my face to see if anything turns on when I put it on. You know a lot of scanner goggles don't activate until you put them on. Or seeing if it's easy to look out of or is this mask decorative or ceremonial? How much can I sell it for?

NICK: Right. So you smush it a little bit into your face. It touches like your nose and some of your cheekbones. And the top part kind of pinches your lekku and you feel a sharp pain and a little warm spot where it cuts a little and you realize the top part was really, really sharp. And it gives you very extreme heebie-jeebies. But besides that, nothing happens. You don't really want to keep this on your face.

LAURA: I put that down.

NICK: Yeah, it's not a pleasant feeling.

LAURA: Looking at the Twi'lek totems? Because a lot of those are very specific to family tribes.

NICK: Hmm... do you recognize any of them? I would say, you recognize one of them. The other two, you have a good guess like within two or three tribes of what they are. Because they have more than one totem per tribe, right?

LAURA: Well, yeah.

NICK: Because it's like the smaller family units have them, too.

LAURA: It's usually per your family unit. So your immediate family has one but they're often easy to link to the specific clan.

NICK: OK. So one is from Clan Luroon because why not? One is from Clan Syndulla and then one you recognize the family unit from. What one would that be?

LAURA: Do I get to pick or are you--

NICK: Yeah, you can pick.

LAURA: OK. What's his?

NICK: It would be one that you would have a tie with.



LAURA: Yeah, what's his?

NICK: Is this your boyfriend?

LAURA: No, I don't have a boyfriend. Xiann does not like to use labels.

NICK: [laughs]

LAURA: But she does have a vaguely father-figure.

NICK: A-ha.

LAURA: Whose clan name is Olgkru.

NICK: Olgkru.

LAURA: O-L-G-K-R-U

NICK: Olg-kru.

LAURA: Olgkru.

NICK: OK, so yeah, that one is... I'm not going to say it's his specific totem but it's within the smallest circle of that and it's the one with bloodstains on it so that's a thing.

LAURA: Yeah, that'd concern me.

NICK: Yeah, you can be concerned about that. So that's the totem and the mask. And you got this box.

LAURA: I kind of tap into my comm and go, "Hello, um, mysterious person?"

NICK: "Yes?"

LAURA: "I have your box."

NICK: "Yes, I see that. I was perplexed as to why you decided to bring it back to your apartment instead of..."

LAURA: "Well, I do not plan on staying here after tonight. I think I have burned that bridge."

NICK: "Yes, your stealth capabilities were surprisingly ineffective in this situation."

LAURA: "I am having a bad day, you might say. Usually it is not quite this bad."

NICK: "Well, the good news is if you take the job that you're going to be doing, you won't be here much longer. So it's just more motivation to work with me."

LAURA: "So how do you want to get your box?"

NICK: "Take your box to the coordinates that I will beam to your comm and we'll handle it from there. It'll be very straightforward."

LAURA: "And maybe next time, you'll give me the coordinates before."

NICK: "Again..."

LAURA: "That might've been a better thing to do."

NICK: "Trying to do that mysterious thing. I gave the coordinates to some other people and it didn't work out so well. I wanted to see if you'd get the box first."

LAURA: "So you just let me walk around for like 20 minutes with the box just going back to my own apartment?"

NICK: "Well, based on your profile, I assumed you'd call me and brag about it as soon as you were successful."

LAURA: "You seem like the type who wants to contact me, not me contact you. And I may have taken some bonus items for myself."

NICK: "Ah yes."

LAURA: "Because again that bridge is already burned. Might as well."

NICK: "Well, go to the coordinates and discuss this further." [boop] The connection is cut but you hear a little Microsoft Sam voice give you an address and you know where it is.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: It's kind of far. It's like 5 to 6 miles away so you could walk but it'll take you a while and it'll take you through some of the bad parts of town or you could hire a taxi and just drive there. Or you could steal a car, I guess, a speeder.

LAURA: I don't know how well it's going to go for me based on how I've been rolling so I'm going to hire a taxi, but before I leave, while I'm in my apartment, I want to see if I have any bags or boxes to put the mask and totems in that might look a little bit less like a sack that I made out of a tarp.

NICK: So there's—they're flimsy, but there are like cardboard boxes that are open. There's little bits of paper and trash in them. You could dump one of those out and it would just look like you cleared out your desk at a particularly interesting job. Put one of them in there. Or there's some shopping bags, like plastic shopping bags, but with those, stuff would be kind of poking out.

LAURA: Yeah, well, I mean how much encumbrance would you say these totems or masks are? Because my hiding capabilities for this coat are based on encumbrance, not size.

NICK: So I'd say... What's a blaster pistol's encumbrance? Like two?

LAURA: My quick trigger blaster pistol is one.

NICK: Yeah, so I'll say these things are two then.

LAURA: Each two or total two?

NICK: The totems together are two and the mask is two.

LAURA: OK, I can then completely hide the totems in my coat.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: And I will put the mask in the box and any little like scrap papers I have will put on top.

NICK: OK.

LAURA: Well, it wouldn't be paper but...

NICK: Flimsy.

LAURA: Flimsy. All the scrap flimsy on top.

NICK: The problem is just a really good adjective and now I can't use it. It's a bummer.

So great, you have your box of trash with a mask in it.

LAURA: Yes.

NICK: And your totems are hidden around your person. As you're walking, the first time toward the door, they rattle a little bit like wooden wind chimes that clank together and you have to kind of stop and rearrange things and then they're silent after that. So you go downstairs. You flag down a taxi. No problems there.

On your way towards the nicer side of town in this taxi, you pass by a burned down apartment building and you see a group of CorSec officers standing in a group outside the apartment and they appear to be arguing. One particularly large officer gripping a flechette launcher is hanging his head as if he's being berated by a commanding officer who's holding a megaphone.

And you see that scene and have just enough time to wonder about it before you go zipping by.

LAURA: I'm sure it's nothing.

NICK: I'm sure it's nothing. And the coordinates lead you to a squat and unassuming building in downtown Coronet. It is bordered by two large spire towers. There's a door that's a little more than an outline on the wall, but as you approach, a mechanical eye on a pole extends from the wall. It examines you for a moment then declares, "E chuta!" then retreats. There's an awkward beat, then the door slides open.

Inside, you find yourself in a long hallway. There are more seamless doors on either side. As you head down the hallway, you hear someone knocking weakly on one of the panels. A protocol droid waddles down the hallway toward you just as you get even with that panel that's getting knocked on. And he says, "Ah! Everyone is arriving in a timely fashion, I see. If I could just get your cargo from you please." And he holds out his hands for the box.

LAURA: I reach into my coat and hand him the box.

NICK: It rattles a little bit and the protocol droid wraps his thumb around it and the box crushes slightly and he keeps it. And he says, "Please come with me." And the droid leads you all way down the hallway to a door at the end.

The door slides back to reveal a warm, wood paneled room with a large conference desk in the center. Seated at the desk is a Nautolan woman who is idly fidgeting with a trinket in her head-tendrils and a Togruta man who has poured himself a drink. You seem to have come in in the middle of an awkward

lull in conversation. The Togrutan shrugs and points to a comfortable-looking chair around the table. You notice there's one other empty chair in the room.

LAURA: "Where did you get the alcohol? I would like that as well please."

NICK: There's a decanter and some crystal glasses on the middle of the table. You can reach it very easily.

LAURA: Yeah.

NICK: So you can pour yourself a drink.

LAURA: Well, yes because today did not go that well.

NICK: [laughs]

LAURA: A drink is needed.

NICK: *Ba-naaaa~!* The end.

## Outro

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