

Tabletop Squadron Transcript, Karma Interstitial 1, Part 1:  
A Particular Persuasion

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## Intro

NICK: Hi everyone, and welcome to Tabletop Squadron, a Star Wars: Edge of the Empire actual play podcast. I'm Nick, your game master. Every other Thursday, our story follows a thief, a bounty hunter, and a slicer as they explore the galaxy helping a mysterious benefactor and each other.

This week we jump to a new adventure seeing what Karma is up to on the mean streets of Corellia. Continue to get hype for some amazing guests. For example, this episode features Rob Stith, the creator, show runner, and GM for the AP podcast The ORPHEUS Protocol. Rob was fantastic to record with and I know you're going to love his character.

No new patrons or iTunes reviews this week, so instead a friendly reminder. If you become a patron on Patreon or write a review for the show on iTunes, I'll thank you on the air. Thank you to everyone who keeps us in the skies.

Music this week is Chitarradistorta by Nickk Dropkick and Cool Piano by Manuel Senfft.

So now, let's get into the episode.

##

NICK: Hello! Welcome to Tabletop Squadron, Interstitial Episodes between Season 1 and 2. We haven't named these. I'll do that later. I'm your host and game master, Nick. We're gonna go around the virtual table and say who you are and who you're playing today, starting with Cameron!

CAMERON: Hello! My name is Cameron, and I play Karma Nailo, a Nautolan bounty hunter.

NICK: Great. Up next, our special guest for today, we've got Rob. Hi Rob.

ROB: Hey. How you doing?

NICK: Doing good!

ROB: That's good. I'm also doing pretty good. I'm Rob Stith, the host, game master, designer... of The ORPHEUS Protocol, the game and the podcast, and I am here to depict Stiro Kuwe, the Corellian gangster who has some no-good antics up his sleeve, to be perfectly honest.

[laughter]

NICK: Yeah, that's gonna be really good. I am looking forward to it. But before we get into that, let's start off with the Destiny Roll!

ROB: I'm gonna give you one of these...

CAMERON: I got one dark side.

NICK: Nice.

ROB: Now, between you, me, and the podcast gods, I don't know what these symbols mean. I have a circle!

NICK: Is it filled in or is it empty?

ROB: It is not. It is a circle that is hollow on the inside like a very thin donut or an emaciated Cheerio.

NICK: [laughs] Okay, that's a light side point then.

ROB: Excellent!

NICK: Yay. Let's go ahead and roll one more for me since there's only two players here.

CAMERON: Okie-dokie. Oh dear, you got another dark side.

NICK: Great. That worked out well for me. Cool.

CAMERON: So we have two dark side and one light side.

ROB: Every session of this game starts with a little bit of astrology.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

CAMERON: Mm-hmm!

NICK: It really does.

ROB: our dice are in the house of dark side, ascending, oh no.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

ROB: That probably means bad stuff.

CAMERON: Yeah... I'm sure it'll be fine.

NICK: Yeah, it'll be fine, and also we usually forget that we have those anyway, so. [laughs]

ROB: [putting on a voice] 'You don't need to use your dark side points.'

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: Alright, so with that we're gonna go ahead and jump right into it.

[gentle jazz horn music begins]

Corellia, a fiercely independent planet under the thumb of the Empire, home of shipyards, military contractors, and gang bosses, birthplace of ace pilots and genius generals. It smells like wet garbage. Karma, you've been in Coronet for a couple of days. You've heard rumors of something big stirring in the Outer Rim – not just the Rebellion which has blossomed into full-out civil war at this point but something dark and terrifying gaining followers and power.

You came to Coronet for multiple reasons. Firstly, you have contacts here. Secondly, you were contacted by someone that you normally wouldn't work with. They offered you information and they offered you something else, something you couldn't refuse. You're sitting in a small room lit by black light. There's a loud, throbbing music as close to you as the glowing dancers around you. you take a sip from a small glass of iridescent liquid and feel the bass of the music ruffle your head tails. Everyone in this room is dressed in scraps of loose cloth that flow with their movement and glow in the black light. You're dressed for work. What do you look like?

CAMERON: I am wearing my standard all-black body armor with my really tall black boots, got my red headband on, some gold bangles on my head tails. I do not glow in the black light. [laughs]

NICK: No, you're kind of like a hole in this otherwise very iridescent party atmosphere you've got going on.

CAMERON: Yup.

NICK: Cool. The bartender isn't paying attention to you. the bartender is rocking out in the corner to some dancers and giving free drinks, so you're just kinda hanging out. As that is happening, a thin man wearing a plain white shirt and black slacks leans against the bar next to you. he brushes back some blonde hair and leans in so you can hear him over the music.

NICK (as Man): Miss Karma, you may not remember me. I'm Seeley Mox. I drove getaway for you like a few months ago. Miss Kettle is ready to see you now, if you'll follow me.

CAMERON (as Karma): Oh, of course. Thank you. Seeley, how have you been?

NICK (as Seeley): I've been pretty good. Crashed a couple more speeders, but like on purpose, so—

CAMERON (as Karma): That is the best way to crash a speeder.

NICK (as Seeley): Yeah, and you know, once the speeder explodes CorSec tends to leave you alone, so it's a pretty good way to get out of a situation.

CAMERON (as Karma): That's true, and you have the opportunity to walk away from the explosion without looking back and look super cool.

NICK (as Seeley): Yeah. I tried that and some debris hit me. Um...

CAMERON (as Karma): Oh. That—Yeah, okay. Eh.

NICK (as Seeley): So normally I'm one of those duck and run into a next door alley kind of people.

CAMERON (as Karma): That is probably safer. Yeah.

NICK (as Seeley): Yeah.

CAMERON (as Karma): Okay, so Kettle's ready?

NICK (as Seeley): Oh yeah! Kettle, yeah.

NICK: He gestures very urgently and leads you out of this small kind of dance club. You follow him out of the room and into a small hallway. Leading off of these hallways there are lots of rooms lined up in succession that each are blasting loud music out into the hallway around them. It mixes in the middle where you're walking and is pretty disconcerting.

As you head to the back of the building and through a bead curtain hanging over a doorway, the music completely stops as you pass through—

[jazz music ends abruptly]

--as if the sound is stopped by some sort of force field. Kettle, the Queen, is sitting behind a plain durasteel desk. Her wings are draped over the back of her chair comfortably. She's a Geonosian which are those like flying bug creatures from Attack of the Clones and has long scars all over her body.

ROB: Oh, so she 'rules,' okay.

NICK: Yeah, she's a fucking badass. We love Kettle.

CAMERON: Yeah!

NICK: Yeah, so this room looks like it's normally dark but now reasonably well-lit, which you couldn't tell through the bead curtain. She glances up from some paperwork when you come in and smiles at you.

NICK (as Kettle): Karma! Lovely to see you still alive. How is your crew?

CAMERON (as Karma): You as well. I haven't seen them in a while, actually, but I'm sure they're doing fine.

NICK (as Kettle): Yes, I heard a report recently from a business venture of mine that some important things were stolen, and you know what's weird is that in its place was a note that I had given to you with an IOU on it. This is your chance to explain that to me.

CAMERON (as Karma): I would like to fully place this on Xianna, actually.

NICK (as Kettle): You mean a crew member of your crew? So you're just gonna sidestep all of that responsibility?

CAMERON (as Karma): Yep. Xianna had the IOU. Yep. Xianna's the thief in my party.

NICK (as Kettle): Then you won't mind if – when I find her – we have some very serious conversation about that.

CAMERON (as Karma): I think that may actually be beneficial for her.

NICK (as Kettle): I wouldn't say the results are gonna be very beneficial.

NICK: She smiles in a way that tugs at the scars on her face and it's extremely off-putting.

CAMERON (as Karma): I mean, you're a business woman, you understand how it works.

NICK (as Kettle): Oh, I understand alright. But anyway, that's not why I reached out to you.

NICK: She cracks her knuckles which sounds way more hollow than it would on a human because she has chitin fingers.

NICK (as Kettle): Ever since the death star was destroyed by the Rebels the Empire is cracking down. They've been moving huge assets through Corellian industry to recover and fuel the war effort. I've put my best person on a job related to that, and I got ahold of you because I want you to keep him safe. He's very, very good at what he does, but I know if you're getting paid you'll watch their back and I don't have to worry about them getting stabbed in an alley. Seeley, if you could go ahead and bring them in.

NICK: We get a long moment of awkward silence as Seeley leaves and comes back with someone new. Rob, what does Karma see as you step through this bead curtain into this gangster's office?

ROB: The first impression that Stiro makes is “well, this guy is definitely a gangster—”

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: --and likes for people to know that about him right when they first see him, or at least in the way that he is dressed today. Whatever the Corellian equivalent of a track suit and a gold chain is is what he is wearing tonight. It's not trying to be nondescript, not trying to fly under the radar, like, I am a member of the criminal class and I am here to party and spend money, because in an environment like this signaling that status is actually good, because people know that you know where the action is and that you have your finger on the pulse of the money that's moving around.

NICK: Mm-hmm.

ROB: Stiro doesn't always dress like this. He dresses like this when he's clubbing and is interested in making some side hustle.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: He's wearing ostentatious "I'm a gangster" clothing and accessories including some sort of ludicrous timepiece probably as well. Got a sloppy smile on his face, a bit of a relaxed swagger to his movements. He's about 6'1", a little on the skinny side but clearly some wiry strength beneath that, and his face is probably what's the most interesting... and I realize we're in Star Wars, so I should mention that he's Human.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: He's got sort of a buzz cut dark hair, and you can see right away that the reason that it's buzz cut is that it's not gonna grow in evenly because there's a lot of scarring on one side of his head. They're not too bad, whoever worked on them was very skilled, but you can't magically make hair follicles come back, so it's the buzz cut for him. Similarly, he has a bit of scarring on the bridge of his nose and under one eye, again, very well treated to minimize the long-term scarring, but just like the hair follicles you can't really stitch the nerves back together. So, one side of his face kind of slumps a little bit compared to the other side, but a lifetime of practice has made this idiosyncrasy of appearance disarming and endearing instead of threatening. He sort of swaggers into the room, gives an appreciative nod to Kettle, and does a practiced double-take towards Karma—

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: --as in, I am giving the impression that I was casual and now I'm a little less casual because something about you has impressed me, but then he looks like he's trying to cover that reaction despite what he's doing as a performance of looking like he wants to cover the reaction. Like, you can tell immediately probably that bullshit is just as natural as breathing to this guy.

NICK: It's all very theatrical. This is something that has been practiced in front of a mirror to get the right impression across.

ROB (as Stiro): Well, hello there.

CAMERON (as Karma): Hello?

ROB (as Stiro): I'm sorry. I don't think that we've been introduced. My name is Stiro, Stiro Kuwe. It's really good to meet you.

ROB: I extend my hand for a very firm, business-like handshake if she'll have it.

CAMERON: Karma returns the handshake in equal firmness.

[chuckling]

CAMERON (as Karma): It's nice to meet you. I'm Karma Nailo.

CAMERON: And then looks to Kettle.

NICK: Kettle watches this handshake—

CAMERON: It goes on slightly too long.

NICK: Yeah, it definitely goes on slightly too long. Stiro, you notice that Karma being a Nautolan is an amphibious species and normally they have very smooth skin, but Karma's hands are rough and callused from handling various weapons. You also notice that Karma is basically packing for bear. She has a large carbine rifle with a very expensive scope that you would probably recognize as being thermo-imaging and a vibro-sword strapped to her back on a semi-concealed sheath. She is a walking arsenal. There's also potential, because Karma has a moderate reputation among the bounty hunting community, that you might have heard of her before. Do you think Stiro keeps tabs on bounty hunters or not?

ROB: I think it's pretty likely, actually, giving the quite high ranks of Streetwise and my decent Cunning score that I'm walking around with.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: So, I think it's possible that I've heard the name. I probably didn't put it together with a face... and here's the thing, there's plenty of 'names,' right?

NICK: Yeah. [chuckles]

ROB: But half of them are just stories. When I shake this person's hand and I'm feeling calluses on a Nautolan's hand and I'm seeing this walking weapons locker I put it all together. this person's real.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: And that all amounts to an appreciative crook of the eyebrow and a slight idiosyncratic grin from the slumped corner of my mouth.

NICK: And as you exchange a look, and I think as you entered the room, you probably noticed that Karma's demeanor with Kettle was, uh, friendly and respectful, and as you walked in it became a lot more business-like and professional as you make eye contact. Kettle looks back and forth between the two of you.

NICK (as Kettle): Well, I'm glad that we're off to a good start.

NICK: Her tone portrays that she is aware of how this is going to go.

NICK (as Kettle): So, Karma, I need you to keep him alive while he does his thing. You'll very quickly see what his modus operandi is and you will understand why I asked you to come armed.

CAMERON (as Karma): Okay.

NICK (as Kettle): Stiro, it's time for me to give you the rest of the information on this job I was talking about.

ROB (as Stiro): I couldn't be more excited.

NICK (as Kettle): That's good. That's why we keep you around. It's definitely not for your fashion sense.

NICK: She looks at your—

CAMERON: Aww. [laughs]

NICK: It's straight up a track suit. I think Corellian gangsters wear track suits.

ROB: I get a little pinch of the material on my chest between my fingers and sort of demonstrably pull it out at her.

ROB (as Stiro): This was carefully picked for this evening. Come on.

NICK (as Kettle): I can tell. It's so interesting to me that you can be so subtle and yet so obvious at the same time, Stiro. I know that it's your thing, but... Anyway.

ROB (as Stiro): It's about being able to tell when subtlety counts for anything.

NICK (as Kettle): And that's why you're one of my main operators here. I've never really understood Humans. You shoot the ones that need shooting, you take the money from the ones that don't.

CAMERON (as Karma): Mm-hmm.

CAMERON: Karma's just nodding along.

[laughter]

ROB: Hey, I'm not gonna get up on the stands for this one, we don't make any sense. That's fine.

[laughter]

NICK (as Kettle): So, as I said, this is Stiro, and you're going to be helping him to steal a ludicrous amount of money. There's a mega-contractor in town called Serres Super Structure. They work on molecularly enhanced durasteel. It's stuff that has a lot higher tensile strength than should otherwise be possible or some kriff. They make the metal that lets the Empire build really, really big structures, like that death star for instance. A little birdy told me they've been receiving a new Imperial contract, and Imperial contract that's bigger than most planets' economies. Stiro is going to make that go away. Karma, besides assuring you that your help with this will keep me from having you killed, I have something that might interest you.

NICK: Kettle reaches under the desk, which in the lighting and everything looks like there's nothing under it, it looks like a desk that you should be able to see under it, but from somewhere Kettle pulls out



a large camtono of something. It basically looks like an ice cream maker. Rob, you watched The Mandalorian, right?

ROB: Mm-hmm.

NICK: The camtono is the thing that the beskar metal came in.

ROB: Ohh!

NICK: [laughs] So, Kettle pulls from somewhere this camtono and sets it on the desk, and it has a heavy clang. She presses a button on the top and the sides retract revealing a pile of scales. They are pretty much pure black but with an oil sheen green on it like ravens' feathers. Karma, you would recognize these as an abyss sea dragon from Glee Anselm, your home planet. There has not been an abyss sea dragon seen in like 2,000 years. They have to be extinct. They don't exist. These scales are nigh indestructible. Kettle closes it again and nods to herself and puts it under the desk.

NICK (as Kettle): If you're able to help our friend here, Stiro, complete this mission, you can have those.

CAMERON: Karma tilts her head appreciatively.

NICK (as Kettle): I don't have a use for them, they're basically a cultural artifact at this point, but I know what they might mean to someone of your profession and background.

CAMERON (as Karma): I appreciate the gesture.

NICK (as Kettle): So, basically the information I've given you is what I have. I found the beginning of a string to pull on, but the rest of it is up to you. I have somewhere to be. You're looking for Serres Super Structure and you're going to take their money. Stiro, this is a thing for you. Try not to die. If you do, I never met you.

NICK: Kettle snaps her fingers and Seeley grabs the camtono, and it is way heavier than it looks, he can barely lift it, and you see him start sweating almost immediately, and they leave a room by a side door that you didn't notice existed until just now. You're left alone in Kettle's office.

ROB (as Stiro): So, lizard scales, huh?

CAMERON (as Karma): Yeah. They're... I don't think anyone's seen an abyss sea dragon alive in like 2000 years, but if you can swim down and find them on the ocean floor of Glee Anselm they're fantastic for armor.

ROB (as Stiro): Well, my boss always has been full of surprises.

CAMERON (as Karma): Yeah, definitely. I will agree with that, just from previous interactions with her, yes. Alright, so um, if I'm keeping you alive what exactly is your skillset and how we are approaching this?

ROB (as Stiro): Hmph. How best for an artist to describe his art?

CAMERON (as Karma): Take as much time as you need to describe it. I completely understand.

[laughter]

ROB: He sort of chews the cud for a moment.

ROB (as Stiro): Now I don't want to speak too indecorously, but the operation that Kettle runs – of which I am a meager part – is not exactly thoroughly on the up-and-up.

CAMERON (as Karma): Oh, yes, obviously. Yes.

ROB (as Stiro): An enterprise of that size and complexity, and frankly that character, has a lot of moving parts. Any operation of that size is gonna run into rough patches. It's gonna have trouble spots, points of failure, that sort of thing. So, nobody bats an eye when you hire an engineer or slicer, right?

CAMERON (as Karma): Mm-hmm.

ROB (as Stiro): To fix the technical aspects of an enterprise. Well, I fix the interpersonal aspects, the rough spots having to do with relationships, and conversations, and rumors, and things like that.

CAMERON (as Karma): Okay. I'm supposing, based on my being hired to watch your back, that this will be primarily through communication and manipulation as opposed to violence to remove these issues. Would that be accurate?

ROB (as Stiro): Violence is a last resort.

ROB: With that, a vibro-knife of a very curious design appears in my hand briefly. It has a round-topped handle with an eye in it, a hollowed out part that a finger could be passed through to rotate the handle quickly to alternate grips. The blade itself is like an eagle talon, curved and single edged, called a karambit, but this is of course a vibro-karambit that dances between various grips and configurations in my hand before vanishing again.

CAMERON: Karma nods appreciatively towards the knife.

CAMERON (as Karma): That's a fine blade.

ROB (as Stiro): Yeah. Thank you very much. When the stakes are high you need to be good at your last resort, don't get me wrong, but I try to talk to people first. When I'm lucky, that's enough.

CAMERON (as Karma): I appreciate that approach.

ROB (as Stiro): [huffs] I know a little bit about you, but not enough to know exactly how this meeting of the minds is going to go. How do you feel about the Empire?

CAMERON (as Karma): Negative.

CAMERON: [laughs]

CAMERON (as Karma): Not a fan. I am totally willing to assist in any efforts to take down the Empire, and getting a lot of money away from them sounds fantastic.

ROB (as Stiro): What it all comes down to for me is that there is a difference between the Empire and an operation such as the one in which I am involved, and that is that the Empire is both bad for business and bad for the neighborhood. We're criminals. People might call us gangsters, and that's okay, it's fair, but we're part of the communities that we operate out of. It matters to us that the corner store that one guy's family has been running for three generations stays that way if that's what they want. We make a healthy profit, it's true, but we also revitalize local economies. We take care of our own.

[deep inhale] The Empire, they come in, people are afraid to leave their homes, businesses shut down, everything gets worse, and people have to turn to a life of crime – and not a profitable one – just to live. And then what crime is, you might notice, that definition getting changed time and time again to allow for the mass incarceration of people who were just gonna be buying bread at that corner store not that long ago. We have no love of the Empire, and right now is the perfect time to give them a black eye. They lost their whatever the hell that death star thing was.

CAMERON (as Karma): Well, it was no moon.

ROB: God damn it.

[laughter]

ROB (as Stiro): I can't even imagine how much that cost, and they're gonna have to make big moves right now to consolidate power, because that was an embarrassment on top of a huge loss. They gotta spend money, right now, make another show of force, consolidate their power. Whatever they decide is the most important is gonna cost them billions, and that's a modest estimate, so it's time to hit them where it hurts, their pocket book. I'm gonna steal this contract money and I'm gonna put it somewhere where they can't get it back, and maybe they'll think twice about whether it's monetarily feasible to go ruin a neighborhood or two, shut down those corner stores, when they gotta be spending their scarce resources on whatever their big project that just lost all its money was, you see.

CAMERON (as Karma): Alright, let's do this.

ROB (as Stiro): Glad to have your support.

[laughter]

NICK: So, basically the information you have is there is a company called Serres Super Structure. They are one of the major ship-building contracting companies out of Corellia besides some of the major ship builders like YT and some of the ones that make actual ships. These are people who do support things. You know that they would have to have a huge economic point, because if they're the ones that make the metal to build a super ship out of that's a lot of metal.

ROB: Oh yeah.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

ROB: And it's not just any metal, it's expensive metal.

NICK: Yeah.

CAMERON: Yeah!

ROB: And the processes are expensive, and you need experts, and quality control and all that. You don't want to build a hundred billion credit ship and then have one structural flaw cause it to fall apart when you launch it.

CAMERON: And the shipping is just ridiculous.

ROB: Yes.

NICK: Ha. Boo.

CAMERON: Ha-ha-ha.

ROB: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

NICK: Yeah. So, I think Stiro you have heard of Serres Super Structure. They sponsor sporting events and they probably do some charity work that's a tenth of a percent of their earnings for any quarter just to get tax breaks and things.

ROB: Sure, and media buzz.

NICK: Oh yeah, for sure, they're definitely one of those.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

ROB: It costs so little money when you've got all the money in the world to be seen as the good guys.

NICK: Yup, and they do that, and you are very aware of what they're doing because with the amount of organizational moves and adjustments that you do you know what they're doing. It's pretty obvious.

ROB: Right. Yeah.

NICK: But you don't necessarily know a lot about their structure. You haven't had a reason before to dig into that. So, where would you go to do the footwork to start to get a picture of where their weak points would be?

ROB: I think the first thing Stiro does, it's just like information security, in many ways it is information security, it's trade security. The weakest point in a system is the weakest or stupidest person in the system.

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK: Uh-huh.

ROB: And so the first thing you do is you literally follow people from their central office at closing time and you see where they go to drink, you see where they go to blow off steam and relax, you see where they go to go be off their guard and you start there, you ingratiate yourself to the staff, you find out where their bosses hang out. You find out which bosses they're complaining about and you get what information you can and you follow it on up the chain until you sort of know the lay of the land when it comes to the people working in this operation, and then you kind of stake some things out, bribe some people for information, and you figure out the highest ranked set of loose lips in the organization, and then you get to work.

NICK: Cool. What I'm gonna need from you is a Streetwise check. I think that this process probably takes a while. We'll do some of this as a montage.

ROB: Sure.

NICK: And we're gonna get to, based on this roll, how high up in the chain you can find some loose lips, and then we'll see how that turns out.

ROB: Makes perfect sense. Alright, since I've got 3 on Streetwise, 3 on Cunning, that is three yellow dice, right?

NICK: Yep, that is, and this is going to be hard, so that'll be three purple, but I'll give you a blue die because the bars and stuff you're hitting out, you've already laid the ground work there, you already know all the serving staff and everything, so they definitely helped.

ROB: Sure. So does that make it three yellow, three purple, and a blue?

NICK: Yep.

ROB: Okay. I can do that. Okay, I have two Batman pow sound effect backgrounds—

[laughter]

NICK: Those are successes. I realize I didn't tell you what the symbols meant. That's on me.

ROB: And one angel wings in front of a distant solar eclipse.

NICK: [smiling] Okay.

ROB: Big moves. Yeah, no, that's two successes and an advantage on this one.

NICK: Nice. Rob picked that up fast. It's like he's a game designer or something.

CAMERON: Weird.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs] Okay, so two successes and an advantage. Something that you know actually that became relevant very quickly is that the janitorial and sanitation service of the building that Serres Super

Structure is based in works for Kettle. They are part of Kettle's organization. She uses them to do minor money laundering and things like that, so you have an in there.

ROB: Ha, ha, ha!

NICK: So you started at their level at some of the bars that are in the worst parts of town, and you worked your way up, and you're actually at a mid-town bar called the Corrier which is one of those ones with the white durasteel and chrome, and there's a lot of glass, and the drinks are all 30 Credits a pop, and you don't necessarily see three-letter acronym business people here but you see the people who work for them, their admins, their gophers, those kind of people, and they go here because they have the money to spend and this is somewhere where sometimes important people go and it makes them feel important.

ROB: Of course. So, this time Stiro is wearing a suit, a very nice suit, but off the rack, not quite perfectly tailored.

NICK: Yes. That is perfect. As you walk in, the person that you're looking for, her name is Diana, and you know that she is an admin for the scheduling office for the front office of this company. She works for the people who tell all the three-letter acronym people for Serres Super Structure where to go, the CFO, the CEO, the President, all of them. Diana is dating somebody who is further down in the company and that's why she's at this bar. I would say with the advantage and everything we'll say you already know that's not going well, she's probably having a rough night. As you walk in, one, Karma, what are you wearing? Are you still wearing your terrifying body armor? Because that might be a little weird in this situation, but...

CAMERON: So, Karma is still wearing the armor and is still armed, because you never know what's gonna happen, you don't wanna take the armor off because you're on a job, but has added extra accessories to make it to where it's not obvious, like, has added a larger nice trench coat. Still wearing the armor, so black pants, black boots, but then has jacket over it that's like a nice bright blue color. It has to have shoulder pads in it so that it's extra, because it's Star Wars, but also that helps disguise the body armor underneath it.

ROB: Perfect.

CAMERON: And so is tweaking it slightly to where if you were to look at her and study her you'd be like there are some weird lumps under the jacket, like that looks like it may be a blaster, but there are other security people here, so is not trying to be just a normal bar person who just happened to come here after work but is coming in with the expectation that if anyone questions me I am here as a security detail, and so they'll let me pass.

NICK: Yeah, you're definitely corporate security.

ROB: Well, and this is a Human majority planet. Is it rude to ask a Nautolan about lumps under their clothes? How good is your xenology really? You don't want that kind of press.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

CAMERON: That's a very good point as well.

NICK: This one's far enough up in the chain that there are people who are worried about a news story getting out about them just asking inconsiderate questions in a bar.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

ROB: Well, they're very focused on identity politics because that distracts from the central economic injustices that the Empire and its ally states are built on, so you know.

NICK: For sure.

[sophisticated event music begins]

So, you enter and we get that cool sweeping shot of Stiro walking into the bar, Karma slightly behind him and on his shoulder. Karma has adjusted her posture and approach a little to look a lot more corporate security and less lithe, capable killing machine.

CAMERON: As we're walking around the bar she does occasionally hold up her hand to where an ear would be on a Human, like she's listening to something in a headpiece, because that's what security does.

NICK: [laughs] Yeah.

ROB: Mm-hmm. Sure. Stiro's entire bearing is way more upright and reserved now. He's gone from bad guy having a good night to nervous professional. He's wearing the same watch as we last saw but now it just fits with the outfit instead of being this glaring mismatch.

[laughter]

NICK: Yeah, and you see this very high ranking admin sitting at a booth away from the bar – there's only a couple of booths in this whole place – and she's sitting alone and distractedly stirring a drink and looking at a data pad. So, what's the play?

[sophisticated music fades out]

ROB: The two things that immediately come to mind is like a schmoozy approach, like taking advantage of her distraught emotional state, or sit at the next thing over and allow her to selectively overhear delicious-sounding business things approach.

NICK: Ooh.

ROB: And I don't know for sure which one is going to work. In fact, you know what, Stiro doesn't know for sure which one's going to work better so he decides to split the difference and do both.

NICK: Okay!

CAMERON: [chuckles]

ROB: He's gonna sit and invite Karma to sit at an adjoining booth, and I'm gonna have a fake conversation on whatever the common communication device is.

NICK: It's just a com in Star Wars. [laughs]

ROB: Sure.

NICK: Yeah.

ROB: About something pretty interesting and enticing, and it's gonna go not badly but not as well as I am performing that I want it to go, like somebody is having, for some reason, cold feet about a really good opportunity, and I'll be a little bit frustrated when I hang up the call so that when I then approach and be like "ugh, man, sometimes business can be so hard," she heard me just have a negative business experience that was also interesting to her.

NICK: Mm-hmm. Hmm, this sure feels like a Deception check, Rob. What do you think?

ROB: It does, doesn't it?!

NICK: Yeah!

[laughter]

ROB: So that is a Cunning based thing, so I think that's a green and two yellow.

NICK: Yeah, that sounds right.

ROB: Because I've got two points in Deception. Now, do I have any things from my class here...? Well, if there's difficulty I can remove some of that, apparently.

NICK: There probably would have been, because you would have had to get her attention from her own problems, but yeah, you have – what's the name of your ability that takes those off?

ROB: Convincing Demeanor. I can remove one difficulty per rank from Deception and Skulduggery checks.

NICK: Yeah, that's gone. You're going to get her attention very quickly with how well you sell this.

ROB: Okay.

NICK: I'm gonna say, because it's kind of a setup action to the real deception coming after, it's only average difficulty, so that's two purples.

ROB: Okay. Hmm! It appears that I have a failure and two advantages.

NICK: Huh.



ROB: How does that play out?

NICK: I know! This is the best part of this system, Rob.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: It means that your goal, which was to have her overhear juicy business details and setup the conversation fails, like she does not notice, but you have two advantages, so something tangentially or unrelated, good, happens, and two advantages is reasonably good. Is there anything you would like to do? Mechanically with this you can spend advantages to add blue dice and stuff to checks, but you can also do things plot-wise and kind of outside the mechanics if you would like. So, the easy answer is hey, she didn't notice, but I'm gonna use these to add blue dice to when I start talking to her to get her attention or something else has happened in the room, or you drew someone else's attention, or something bad happens to her, something like that. Advantages generally are up to the player, so if you have any thoughts.

ROB: Okay, well I'm gonna go for something easy then. I think it just so happens that in this relationship that she's having that's not going so well, Stiro is fortunate to look pretty much exactly like the guy she told you not to worry about in this situation.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: This dude just happens to have a lot of slightly unfavorable comparisons in appearance and manner to Stiro.

NICK: Okay, so you look like an upgrade to the boyfriend she's upset with.

ROB: Yes. Exactly.

NICK: Oh, I love that, a lot.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: You have that whole conversation. Karma's sitting in the booth across from you, probably looking pretty appreciative, because this is not a skillset any of her former coworkers have.

CAMERON: [giggles] Talking? What?

NICK: Yeah, they're not good at this. You hang up the com and you wait for any sort of indication that she's paying attention or cares and you get freaking nothing.

ROB: Drat.

NICK: What do you do now?

ROB: I lean in a little to Karma.

ROB (as Stiro): Okay. I'm not sure that worked, but now it's time for Plan B. Just keep an eye out in case anything funny happens, okay?

CAMERON (as Karma): Okay.

ROB: I call a waiter over and I order another one of whatever Diana's drinking and have it sent to her.

NICK: Okay. She's drinking... When you clean a toilet you get that glowy, light blue color?

ROB: Uh-huh?

CAMERON: [snickers]

ROB: Seems like a standard Star Wars liquor color.

NICK: Yeah. That, out of a martini glass, with a really weird, instead of an olive they're about grape size, they're bright orange and they have little spikes all over them, impaled through the toothpick in it, so it's a very garish color.

ROB: Sure. Now real quick, based on the rumors I was able to pick up about this middle management type that she's dating, what's her problem with him? Is he too nervous? Is he too uptight? Does he not take things seriously enough? Like, what's his issue?

NICK: He's slimy, so he's very much corporate lackey type yes man, and she got fed up with the fact that he always said what she wanted to hear.

ROB: Oh, so I just need to be real, alright.

NICK: Yeah, you just need to be like a genuine person and she will probably go for that. I think you definitely found a hairdresser, and there's probably a flashback scene to you doing straight beauty salon gossip with somebody to get this information. [laughs]

ROB: Nice.

CAMERON: Karma is sitting under one of the cone things that they put you under when you're getting a perm.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs] For sure. But yeah, she's just tired of all that double talk and obsequiousness.

ROB: Okay. What's the most working class beverage in Star Wars then?

NICK: A Corellian ale. It's just beer.

ROB: That is what's in my hand when I toast her when her drink arrives.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs] Okay.

ROB: We're in this high class establishment. Stiro doesn't care. He likes Corellian ale, and he doesn't care who knows it.

[laughter]

NICK: We get a flash of the Corellian ale advertisement logo on the corner. It's like a commercial. It's so good. It appeals to the inherent Corellian-ness of everyone.

ROB: Hell yeah. [laughs]

NICK: So do you cheers her from your booth or did you walk over as she got her new drink?

[sophisticated music returns]

ROB: Oh, I do just a master class in body language here. I cheers her and in the motion of my arm I start to shift my balance like I'm gonna stand up and go over toward her, and I'm very open and very hesitant in the way of I'm wanting an invitation to come over, I'm not gonna presume, would you like me to come over?

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: [smiling] Aw man. So, part of your advantages is obviously that's going to work, but what you see on her face is, her initial reaction is, oh no, thanks but no, and then you see her stop, think about it for a second, and you can see all on her face well why wouldn't I, this guy's handsome, look at that ale, obviously cool, this other guy's an asshole, and then she nods you over.

ROB: [laughs] And so, I don't strut, I just walk over and have a seat, adjust my drink on whatever passes for a coaster in Star Wars, a space coaster.

CAMERON: You arrange it so that the label is facing the camera.

NICK: [laughs]

ROB: Yeah, exactly, because this is now a beer commercial.

NICK: Yep, it happened.

NICK (as Diana): I'm assuming that this drink was from you. thank you very much. That's very nice of you.

NICK: She downs the one she was drinking.

ROB (as Stiro): You're most welcome. In some ways I'm a simple guy. I see a pretty lady having a rough night, figure I can do my part.

NICK (as Diana): Is my Sabacc face that bad that you can tell I'm having a rough night?

ROB (as Stiro): Ah, you know, you spend enough time in this town, you get to know people, you get to know what a bad night looks like, because everybody's doing the same playbook here in terms of what is appropriate for business, what emotions are okay to have at work. Don't get me wrong, I like this place and all, but we're at work here. We're not relaxing, we're not at home, it's still part of the whole corporate environment, isn't it?

NICK: She looks down at the data pad she was scrolling through angrily and you can see there's two screens on it. One of them is Star Wars Facebook.

ROB: Nice.

NICK: It's like a combination of sympathetic statements and people bragging about their achievements. The other one looks like an invoice, but it can't be an invoice because the numbers on that are insanely large.

ROB: [laughs]

NICK: There's no way that she would be looking at something like that. she frowns at her data pad, flips it over hard enough that almost the screen would crack.

NICK (as Diana): You know, you're right. That is what we're doing. Why am I even here?

NICK: And looks like she might get up to leave.

ROB (as Stiro): [sighs] Because it's what's expected. We're all so used to it. I try to say that I'm bearing witness or that I'm claiming it for myself, but [sighs] we're all at work most of the time.

NICK (as Diana): I think I hate it.

ROB (as Stiro): [laughs] Sometimes I do too, but uh, sometimes you meet a kindred spirit too. It makes it a little better.

NICK: She reaches out and shakes your hand in a business-like fashion, grabs your hand strongly and shakes it.

NICK (as Diana): I'm Diana.

ROB: And I need to figure out—Is this a thing where I would have an assumed name? I really might.

NICK: You could if you want to.

ROB: God! No! I need so many Star Wars names. Oh shit! Oh god!

[laughter]

NICK: Unless you pull a James West thing, or a James Bond thing and it's just you're always Stiro to everybody.

ROB: I think... yeah, okay. I just need a last name, actually, because if you do an assumed name there's no faking the difference in speed of reaction to your actual name that you grew up with.

NICK: That's true.

ROB: So to appear genuine I am often Stiro whoever, and she didn't give a last name, so.

NICK: No she didn't.

ROB: I will simply return the handshake firmly and say:

ROB (as Stiro): Stiro. It's good to make your acquaintance.

NICK (as Diana): It's good to meet you too, Stiro. There's something about you. I'm really glad that you came over. Um, so now what do we do? I was going to leave but we're still here.

ROB (as Stiro): Well, I think the traditional thing is that we drown our sorrows, we bitch about work back and forth a bit and tells some jokes, and see where it takes us.

NICK: I'm gonna need a Charm check from you at this point.

ROB: Oh, good news, Charm is my fucking deal.

[laughter]

NICK: It's gonna be an average difficulty, but you can have two blue dice for how well that conversation went slash the fact that you look like a leveled up version of her current shitty boyfriend.

ROB: Uh-huh.

NICK: Yeah.

ROB: And I've got Smooth Talker, at least two ranks. I also remove a rank of difficulty for Kill With Kindness.

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK: Oh wow. Okay. [laughs]

ROB: So, and yeah, I've got two ranks of Smooth Talker so if I happen to get triumphs I also get additional successes.

NICK: Alright. If it removes ranks of difficulty it's only one purple instead of two.

ROB: Oh my god.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: Yeah.

ROB: So I have seven successes and an advantage.

NICK: [laughs] Okay! You have narrative control. I think she's very taken with you. she's a strong, independent woman. You saw earlier, she was like why am I beholden to that piece of cark? How do you want this to go, Rob?

ROB: I feel like I get every bit of advantage from that performed conversation that she didn't hear now, because that's my sob story from working in corporate Corellia for the day. It's me talking about how there's this awesome reinvestment opportunity that I've become aware of that's basically foolproof and people are afraid to take it because they're worried about negative press from it when I know that that's not how it has to go. It can be a good opportunity that is beneficial to local businesses and blah-blah-blah, but you know, people just are too set in their ways.

There's a corporate culture. Everybody is speaking to each other in greeting cards and pre-planned sound bites and nobody has any fucking creativity or willingness to take even the smallest risk about anything, so people are just leaving money on the table in this situation, and that's the sort of barrier that I'm trying to break through and having trouble with right now.

I just need to find somebody who has money to move that isn't a drone, that can see the way the wind is blowing and make a good deal instead of just doing what everyone who had their job before them who got fired so that they could be promoted did. That's my story, and I'm hoping to hear her story of her frustrations with work and this delicious, giant invoice.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: This whole back and forth of talking about the problems we have at work and critiquing the corporate culture is of course laced with heavy flirting.

NICK: Yeah.

ROB: To like, make the medicine go down.

NICK: The conversation happens and we get it kind of from a distance as Stiro's listening and gesturing and she's leaning in more and more, and you see more empty martini glasses appear.

ROB: Yeah, and good thing Stiro started drinking when he was like 12, and he's drinking just something pretty light.

NICK: We see that she is also holding a Corellian ale glass by the end of the conversation.

ROB: Haha! Yes!

NICK: And she's doing the thing where she's running her finger along the rim of the glass and she's a little flushed, and you can see on her face a mixture of, one, she's completely taken with you, you seem like exactly the kind of person she would be interested in, but as you talk about this reinvestment opportunity and everything her eyes kind of light up.

NICK (as Diana): You know, I manage the calendar of somebody who is pretty important where I work and has access to quite a bit of funding. If you were able to help him and maybe just drop the hint that I had been involved, that could be good for both of us, don't you think?

ROB (as Stiro): You know, I think it really could. Why don't we make that call... tomorrow?

NICK: She gets a big old grin on her face and finishes the beer, slams the glass down, and says:

NICK (as Diana): Tomorrow, I like that.

NICK: We get a pan over to Karma who's been sitting in the other booth this whole time. Has Karma been drinking or just sitting there?

CAMERON: Karma's just been sitting there. She's had like a Sprite or something.

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: Or I guess she's been having a Diet Coke, because that is now canon in Star Wars. She's been drinking Diet Coke.

ROB: Oh god, it is!

NICK: Oh yeah, Diet Coke's canon. Yeah.

CAMERON: Yeah.

[laughter]

NICK: Sprite is too.

CAMERON: Yeah, but the Diet Coke bottles are cooler.

NICK: yeah, that's true.

ROB: There you go.

CAMERON: So when Stiro left her booth she did move to one of the tall cocktail tables with some stools at it to where she had a better view of the table and didn't have as many big, tall things around her so that she could more accurately see the whole room and just watch and make sure that nothing concerning was going on, but has just been watching and is close enough to where she can hear most of the conversation whenever they get really excited and start gesticulating wildly about the problems that are happening at work, and just kind of is impressed with how that whole level of bullshitting just went so smoothly. [laughs]

NICK: Yeah. It's like having three yellows on a roll.

CAMERON: Yeah, it's ridiculous, like wow!

ROB: [laughs]

NICK: And there is definitely a point where two men in suits that are expensive but don't fit quite right, like they didn't know how to buy a suit, walk up and look at Karma.

NICK (as Suit): Hey, are these seats taken?

NICK: And Karma just glares them down.

CAMERON (as Karma): Yes they are.

NICK: And they slowly back away and leave the bar. [laughs] I think through his masterful control of body language Stiro is able to basically communicate to Karma.

ROB: Oh yeah, Karma gets some kind of subtle hand gesture that means the Star Wars equivalent of like sock on the doorknob.

[laughter]

NICK: And that hand gesture happens, Karma goes "oh," and we get a George Lucas style side swipe and we're at a new scene and we're at a breakfast café in Stiro's neighborhood, somewhere that is Stiro's comfort zone, and Karma and Stiro are there debriefing the next morning.

ROB: Yeah, and the caf flows copiously.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: I don't think Stiro got a lot of sleep.

NICK: No, probably not, not with seven successes.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: I mean, it is a time honored cornerstone of trade craft, let's be real.

NICK: Yeah.

ROB (as Stiro): [stretches] Thank you for your assistance last night, Karma.

CAMERON (as Karma): I don't feel like I did much.

ROB (as Stiro): Well, you know, my confidence was a lot better because I felt safe as a babe in arms the whole way through.

CAMERON (as Karma): Well, glad I could provide that service.

ROB (as Stiro): So, I think we have found a very good opportunity.

ROB: What's the name of Diana's overboss?



NICK: Yeah, so, the mark's name – as you were able to identify between other activities last night – is Cord Trustbuilder.

CAMERON: [giggles]

ROB: Wonderful. [laughs]

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: Oh dear.

ROB: So, I will give Karma the rundown on Cord Trustbuilder, his position in this now recently made obscenely wealthier corporation, and his likelihood to embrace off the beaten path business strategies.

NICK: Yeah. The information you were able to gather: First of all, Diana is able to put you on his calendar as just an important opportunity at your leisure, and that's just one com call from happening, she'll just do that for you, because while she was quite taken with you she also thinks this is a big career move for her.

ROB: Oh yeah.

NICK: So, it's like, hey you're great, you're pretty cute, but also the money though.

ROB: Yeah. Given the scam that I'm planning on running has admitted criminal aspects to it, the story I'm telling him is going to involve breaking laws. Diana is under the impression that I am a representative of a rival gang to Kettle's gang.

NICK: Oh, very good.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: The way Corellia functions that isn't a deal breaker, that's how a lot of these things work. You don't become a super-corporation like Serres Super Structure without having dealt with the underworld a certain amount.

ROB: I mean, they can help you or they can harm you, and one of them is a lot better for business.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

NICK: Yup. You struck old, because Cord Trustbuilder is the CFO of Serres Super Structure.

ROB: [deep chuckle]

NICK: He is the guy with the chess book- with the... tech- Bleh.

CAMERON: Checkbook?

NICK: Checkbook! As a millennial I find that word hard to say.

CAMERON: I understand.

ROB: Yeah, what is that?

NICK: Yeah. [laughs] He is the guy with his hands on the purse strings. Diana related his business structure, because you were asking about it. We get the shot of you both in a futuristic looking bed and she has the sheet up to her neck and you have the sheet at your waist even though that's not how sheets work.

ROB: Right. Death stick hanging from my mouth.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs] She's talking about how aggressive he is with his investing and how, she makes an offhanded comment about how lucky he seems to be as well in that he gambles for fun, with big numbers, and always seems to win. But she also talks about how he's taken some very risky, some might say illegal moves of investing money into other projects before the first project has been completed and using that money. That's how he got to be CFO. He's pretty young, but he made really risky investment moves that paid off and the ends justified the means and now he is where he is.

ROB: Yeah. This is a guy destined for a meteoric rise and probably an epic downfall at some point.

NICK: If you have anything to say with it, yeah.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: Well, [stammers] yeah, maybe my thumb's on a scale a little, but I mean who's to blame me for, uh, yeah.

NICK: [laughs] Yeah. So, you know if you can get in and talk to this guy that if you can tell a good enough story, make yourself seem dangerous and smart enough, you could probably get a big hand on this money, but nobody gets to be that level without also being careful. They make the risks on purpose. So, you're gonna have to tell quite a tale to get him to give you money.

ROB: Sure. Well, the good thing is my pitch doesn't even involve directly giving me money, so...

NICK: Ohh~

ROB: Yeah. I'll relate all of that to Karma about the obscene amount of money this guy has control over and how not risk-averse he is compared to anyone else who has ever had that amount of money without being a conquering military general in the history of the galaxy.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: You can actually see Stiro's eyes light up when he's talking about this man's personality from the intelligence he's gathered. He's a kid in a candy store. He can't believe that he has this guy as the guy that he gets to talk to. It's like the best thing that's ever happened to him. He's practically giddy at this point.

CAMERON (as Karma): Alright so, next step is to go talk to him?

ROB (as Stiro): As a matter of fact I've got a meeting with him. [chuckles] I'm on his calendar.

CAMERON (as Karma): Wow, how official.

ROB (as Stiro): Yeah. Don't you worry, the alias that I'm using is not connected to Kettle and not even in an ancillary way to you. Don't need to have a worry in your head about that.

CAMERON (as Karma): I tend to not be super worried about stuff like that. People kind of assume when you're a bounty hunter that you're just there to get paid so they don't tend to say that it reflects poorly on you that you happen to be taking that person's money.

ROB (as Stiro): When you realize that everyone is just here to be paid you see behind the curtain.

CAMERON (as Karma): Yeah.

NICK: [laughs]

ROB: And I grin. I order up a second plate of food. I'm clearly just in a great mood today.

NICK: It's bacon, scrambled eggs and toast but looks like there's an Instagram filter on it that makes all the colors wrong, because Star Wars.

ROB: Yeah, of course. Fantastic.

ROB (as Stiro): So, are you in the mood to stand about looking statuesque and imposing and professional for a little bit?

CAMERON: Karma rolls her neck and it cracks.

CAMERON (as Karma): I can do that.

ROB (as Stiro): [laughs] You sure can.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: End of episode.

## Outro

CAMERON: Thanks for listening to Tabletop Squadron. If you enjoyed our show, please consider logging onto iTunes and giving us a five-star review. Five-star reviews will help new listeners to find the show,

and every time we get one the squad adds five pounds to our max bench press. If you're so inclined, you can also help support the show through our Patreon which can be found in the show notes, on our website, and basically anywhere else we post things. We have all sorts of Patreon levels including some of my favorites: Bantha Buddy, Tarkin's Underwear Drawer, and Build-A-Beru which all have fabulous rewards and super great names.

Stiro Kuwe is played by Rob Stith. You can find him at @LordOfTheStith on Twitter and on his podcast, The ORPHEUS Protocol.

Karma Nailo is played by me, Cameron Robertson. You can find me on Twitter at @midnightmusic13.

Our game master is Nick Robertson, and you can find him on Twitter at @alias58.

Our intro song is Space Jam by Pablo Ribot.

Additional music by James Gunter.

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