Tabletop Squadron Transcript, Karma Interstitial 1, Part 3: Now THIS is Podracing

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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 have the last episode with Karma and Stiro. Playing with Rob was a blast, and if you want to see more of his work and you have a taste for cosmic horror and espionage I strongly recommend that you check out The ORPHEUS Protocol. It is one of my absolute favorite shows. Also, Lilit and I are in the newest arc set in a magically apocalyptic future.

We got a new iTunes review this week. Thank you SparkPlug94. We're glad you're enjoying the show, and thank you for the kind review.

Music this week is Found by Shaolin Dub, Chitarradistorta by Nickk Dropkick, and Scheming Weasel (faster version) by Kevin MacLeod under Creative Commons 4 license.

So now, let's get into the episode.

##

NICK: When we last left karma and Stiro, they had made it to the beginning of the race. They finalized their plans, and we resume with them about to get underway with their plan to make sure that everything turns out exactly as they have foreseen.

NICK: We swipe away to the two of y'all sitting in the stands at the race eating corn, because popcorn is canon in Star Wars now thanks to Disney.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

ROB: Hell yeah. Is that a Galaxy's Edge thing too?

NICK: Yeah. Yeah. So, eating popcorn, and you look at each other and nod, and get started. So, it sounds like the plan was first to sew a lot of discord and then after that to vandalize Sebulba and go from there, right?

ROB: Yup!

CAMERON: Mm-hmm.

NICK: Cool.

ROB: My intent is to use Distracting Behavior, which I have 3 ranks in.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: Which is basically like three range bands worth, to just make a scene that is gonna plant the seed for the rumor that I'm going to lie about some short amount of time later.

NICK: Let's do the roll first on what kind of scene you're going to make, and then you can roleplay that out based on the results.

ROB: That makes sense, yeah-yeah-yeah. This is going to be… interesting. Are there opposed rolls in this?

NICK: Yep, there can be.

ROB: Okay. I'm gonna make a Deception, but I'm gonna take 3 strain to have everybody in three range bands of me suffer three difficulty.

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: On whatever the opposing check is.

NICK: So, what we'll do is use that to do three upgrades to yours, and then the difficulty will be just average, but it will be a red and a purple, because one of the people who is going to see this is one of the head advisors for the race and they're smarter than the average person.

ROB: Sure. Normally, my Deception check is two yellow and a green, so three upgrades to that…

NICK: It's gonna be four yellow, which is obscene.

ROB: What was it you said the difficulty was?

NICK: One red and one purple.

ROB: However, the difficulty is reduced by one from Convincing Demeanor.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: So it's just one red then. I am never letting one of my PCs get that skill. [laughs]

ROB: [laughs]

CAMERON: I want that talent tree now.

ROB: Lie good. Convincing Demeanor is the top, too. It's five points.

NICK: Yeah.

CAMERON: Oh my gosh.

ROB: So that's what we got, we got four yellow and a red, right?

NICK: Yep.

ROB: Okay. let's make a scene. Four successes.

NICK: Yeah, you are extremely successful.

ROB: So, I'm literally sweating, like I'm Daniel Day-Lewis into this performance.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

[music begins giving an outdoor sports event vibe]

ROB: I'm sweating. My eyes are bugging out. I'm running from person to person. It's clear that I have tried to talk reasonably about this already, no matter the fact that this is how I'm starting, everyone who sees it assumes I've been at it for a while here. And people aren't listening to me, and it's deeply, deeply disturbing me. I look like I'm about to have a heart attack.

NICK: Oh man.

ROB: And I'm saying like…

ROB (as Stiro): Why isn't anybody listening to me?! This is a huge deal! Do you know how much money is riding on this? And it's more than money, it's the future of the sport!

CAMERON: [giggles]

ROB (as Stiro): It's the future of the sport, and you are—Hey! You! You, you, here, you're on one of the pit crews, right? Like, it matters to you if this race is legitimate, doesn't it? It matters to you, right? Right?!

NICK (as crew member): [weakly] Of course. Of course!

ROB (as Stiro): You'd be upset if it was fixed?! Well!

NICK (as crew member): The race is legitimate.

ROB (as Stiro): Why don't you ask Fizz's pit crew about what the hell they're doing?

NICK (as crew member): W-What?!

ROB (as Stiro): Why don't you ask them about why they were in Pretel's pit?

NICK (as crew member): What? What are you talk—What?!

ROB (as Stiro): Nobody's saying anything. Maybe we were wrong to not have CorSec here, I don't know, but… [huffs and stammers]

ROB: And I'm already moving on to somebody else like I've forgotten this guy who I was talking to.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: And I just keep going. I'm about to have like an aneurism. [laughs]

NICK: The guy that you grabbed was a Toydarian, so it's like those floaty people with the bald heads.

ROB: Oh, and it takes him a while to stop spinning? [laughs]

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: Yeah, he's spinning and just—

NICK (as crew member): I—What? [stammers]

NICK: As that scene's going a majority of the stands are looking at you, because there isn't much else to look at. Pit crews are sending people over to go see what you're talking about. You see someone wearing a Corellian suit with a clipboard look very concerned and start to walk towards you.

ROB: Oh yeah. I do the whole pitch at like 110% intensity to him, because he's got a clipboard so he is probably important.

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK: Yeah.

ROB: So this desperate person is gonna want to talk to him about it.

NICK: [smiling] Yeah, and we'll cut away with him talking, but he has an earpiece in and is saying:

NICK (as clipboard man): Now sir, if you could stay calm and stop yelling about "a fix." That's how people get shot.

ROB (as Stiro): [shouting] I AM CALM!

[laughter]

ROB: Yeah.

NICK: Yeah. And we cut back. Several people run out of Sebulba's pit, and karma is standing in the shadows of the stands behind, and you're trying to sneak into the pit?

[sports event music ends]

CAMERON: I am not sneaking.

NICK: Oh.

CAMERON: I am walking with confidence to where it is not a stealth in that no one shall see me, I am shadows, it's a stealth in "I belong here, you don't think it's weird that I'm here."

ROB: Social engineering.

NICK: Mm-hmm.

CAMERON: Mm-hmm. So, Karma is wearing one of Sebulba's pit crew's uniform.

NICK: It definitely has his face on the back of it, like really big.

CAMERON: Oh yeah. It has the fancy Letterman text that says Sebulba above his head.

NICK: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

CAMERON: Yeah.

ROB: So good.

CAMERON: It's got his podracer as a patch on the shoulder. Yeah, it's a legit uniform. She has picked up a metal container that would have some of the fluids that the pit crew would need and is just walking back from the supply area, with that, towards Sebulba's thing, since it has the chain ropes underneath it, ducks down, steps underneath it, continues, walks over, sets it down on top of a pile.

NICK: Mm-hmm.

CAMERON: Picks up a clipboard, because you look official if you have a clipboard.

NICK: [chuckles]

CAMERON: And starts walking around making checkmarks on the clipboard as she circles the pod.

NICK: Great, so social engineering, do you feel like that's a Stealth or a Skulduggery, or a Streetwise? What are you going for here?

CAMERON: I would say it's not Streetwise because I'm not talking to anyone.

NICK: Yeah. Okay.

CAMERON: I think I'm going for Stealth in that no one's going to remember.

NICK: You're aiming for unassuming. Okay.

CAMERON: I want… It should be like, it's just another face, nothing that sets off any alarm bells in anybody's head. I'm just doing my job, they're doing theirs, we're all just going.

NICK: Cool. That's gonna be a hard difficulty Stealth check. Let's see how this goes, because there's only about seven people in this area and two of them are those droids with the little boop noses.

CAMERON: Heh, boop.

NICK: [chuckles] Yeah.

CAMERON: What is my Stealth…? And then I have two blue dice for my Stalker talent.

NICK: Cool. Let's go ahead and flip a dark side point to upgrade the difficulty by one.

CAMERON: I knew that was happening.

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

CAMERON: Alright, so that's a yellow, three green, two blue, two purple, and one red.

NICK: Yep.

CAMERON: That's a lot.

NICK: Yep.

CAMERON: Oh shit. [laughs] Don't worry, it'll be okay.

NICK: Really?

CAMERON: Yep.

ROB: Gulp!

CAMERON: Two successes, an advantage, and a despair.

NICK: Yes! YES! It happened!

CAMERON & ROB: [laughs]

NICK: So, two successes, an advantage, and a despair. How about you use that advantage to give you a bonus to your Mechanics check to damage the thing?

CAMERON: [smiling] Yeah, that'd be a good thing, yeah. Let's do that.

NICK: Eh, don't worry about that despair, it's fine.

CAMERON: Okay, I'm sure it's okay. [laughs]

NICK: So, you find yourself next to the podracer. No one's really looking at you. there's this weird… it kind of looks like a piece of a lamp sticking off the side. It's probably important, but there's lots of things that look important on here. What you're trying to do is damage it in such a way that things go wrong between one and three laps, so you don't want to just break it, you need it to rattle loose or lose efficiency later and you don't want people to see it. Seems like a Mechanics check, doesn't it?

CAMERON: [chuckles] Yeah.

NICK: I'll give you a blue die, because I'm assuming you looked up how to break a podracer before you came.

CAMERON: [laughing] yes, I did.

NICK: [smiling] Yeah, that seems like a good thing to research.

CAMERON: What's the difficulty on it?

NICK: We'll say average. These things are not actually that well put together. They're basically Bowing engines just duct taped to a chariot.

ROB: Well yeah, especially Sebulba's, right?

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

ROB: he's like, if he were a gamer he would overclock his PC so hard that it melted occasionally and he had to buy a new one.

NICK: Yep. [laughs] Yep.

CAMERON: Alright, we can do this. Karma is not smart.

NICK: She's okay.

CAMERON: Karma is very average in intellect. This is why she's not the mechanic. But it's okay. A success and an advantage.

NICK: Great. You'll use that advantage here probably in a second. So tell me how do you semi-damage this pod?

CAMERON: So, I've been walking around the pod, touching things, jiggling them slightly just to make sure they're firmly in place, putting a checkmark on my paper, continuing on to the next thing. Reach the area that has the piece that I'm going for, to knock off, and wiggle it, put a checkmark next to it, and then as I turn hit it with my shoulder to where it's now oh, it's no longer sticking out, it's now dangling, and then continue onto the next piece. Complete my circuit, set the clipboard down, turn to leave.

NICK: Great. You walk up to the chain, and you bump into somebody. Feels about waist height.

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK: You find yourself looking at a Dug, a particularly nasty Dug, who says…

NICK (as Sebulba): Ichana naboonga.

ROB: [nervous noise]

NICK: …and grabs your leg with his weird leg hands. He's speaking Huttese, but we'll speak in Basic so that the listener can understand.

CAMERON: Karma speaks Huttese.

NICK: Yeah, of course she does, she's a bounty hunter.

CAMERON: [simultaneously] She's a bounty hunter.

ROB: Yeah.

NICK: So, he grabs you, and you can feel the force of his grip through the armor that is under your jumpsuit that you're wearing.

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK (as Sebulba): What are you doing? You're not one of my pit crew.

CAMERON (as Karma): I'm sorry, Mr. Sebulba, sir. I don't understand you… I'm so sorry. Um, I'm just— Do you, do you need me to get something for you? What… I was gonna go get more oil. Is that…? What do you… What do you need?

ROB: [pleased] Oh god, the language barrier.

NICK (as Sebulba): Eechuta!

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: And the race is about to start! He literally doesn't have time! Oh, it's brilliant!

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: He goes to pick you up, because he's very angry. You can try and roll a Deception to make him just think that you're a shitty crew member he didn't notice before.

CAMERON: Okay. I am going to Deception. I am going to try to Deception. Alright, what is the difficulty for this Deception check against Sebulba?

NICK: I'm gonna say average.

CAMERON: Okay.

NICK: He's not that smart, and also you can have a blue die for doing the language barrier thing. I liked that a lot. That was cool.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: Very, very good.

CAMERON: [giggling] Who expects Nautolans to speak Huttese?

NICK: Yeah, that's fair.

ROB: Yeah, and well, he's just crotchety about it. He's not used to having not his own pit crew.

CAMERON: Yeah.

NICK: The ones that are used to being beaten.

ROB: yeah.

CAMERON: [chuckles] Alright. Four successes.

NICK: Hey! So he 100% buys it. You see him squint at you, and in Huttese he says…

NICK (as Sebulba): Why did I get an intern on my team?

NICK: …and he picks you up and throws you out of the pit, into a pile of crates, and you take 5 damage.

[laughter]

ROB: Wilhelm scream.

CAMERON: I take no damage.

NICK: I'm gonna say you still take 2 damage beyond your Soak—

CAMERON: Dang.

NICK: —from the force of his grip. He has actually bent one of the armor plates in your leg.

CAMERON: Ow.

ROB: Oof.

CAMERON: Rude.

NICK: Yeah. He's really strong. He drives jet engines duct taped to a chariot, like, that's—

[laughter]

ROB: His traps are enormous! He's fucking yoked!

NICK: Yeah. But besides that, he jumps into his pod and we can see people walking across the starting line holding flags for the various pods and they move out to the start. You all regroup. I think you probably jump into a nondescript speeder piloted by Seeley.

NICK (as Seeley): Alright, I guess that's step one, no one's dead. Where are we going next?

CAMERON (as Karma): Parsec 7? Whatever the next pit stop is, I guess.

ROB (as Stiro): Yeah. We need to make a small disturbance at Kelbit Fizz's pit, and then I make the call.

NICK: Cool. We get a circle swipe as the pods are starting up. Right before the doors of the speeder shut, you hear Delbo Dawnbringer.

NICK (as Delbo): [through megaphone] And here we go! The beginning of the Inaugural Circuit, a new dawn in the age of podracing.

NICK: Jing-a-ling-a-ling. Jing-a-ling-a-ling.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: And they're starting up. Seeley throws it into gear – speeders don't normally have a stick shift, this one does – and he throws it into gear.

NICK (as Seeley): Man, I'm just like really amped up about racing right now.

ROB (as Stiro): [strained] That's great news.

[laughter]

CAMERON: Stiro and Karma have switched seats this time around, so Karma's in the back seat, and it's the—If you've ever seen the movie 27 Dresses, that's what I'm referencing here.

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: She's a bride's maid in two weddings and is having to switch back and forth between the bride's maids dresses. That is what Karma is doing in the back seat as Seeley is driving ridiculously. She's taking off Sebulba's pit crew uniform, has her armor on underneath it, is turning it inside out and is putting it back on, and it's Kelbit Fizz's now.

NICK: Yeah, so you're swapping out the jumpsuit, zipping it up—

CAMERON: But flying around the back seat.

NICK: Rattling around.

ROB: Yeah.

CAMERON: At every turn.

NICK: Karma's leg gets thrown over the front seat into Stiro's lap, and you notice there's this weird, long handprint bent into the metal of her leg plate, and then she gets thrown back into the back seat again. We get a swipe of that, and then the next scene is Seeley doing a 270 degree turn into a parallel parking space.

ROB: Oh my god!

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: And he looks up at the roof of the speeder and holds his hands off the wheel.

NICK (as Seeley): Like a glove~

[laughter]

CAMERON: Karma sits up from the back seat and her head tails are like, some of them are falling over her face. It was a rough however long this took to get here, but she looks a bit frazzled from having been thrown around in the back seat.

ROB: Yeah, Stiro looks a little green himself.

[laughter]

NICK: You are able to get out. You are one alleyway away from the back side of the pit crews. So, the next thing we see is you all walking up into a very similar setup. These are like sunken mechanical bays on the side of the road. It's at the edge of a building sized sewer exit, just this giant tube, and you can hear the sounds of the pods – you have no idea how far away they are…

ROB: Sure.

NICK: …but you can hear them, because they're in the sewers under the city right now, doing stuff. In the background you can hear the announcer, Delbo.

NICK (as Delbo): And F4-ST, using some illegal razors to get a bit ahead, always love to see that.

CAMERON & ROB: [laughs]

NICK (as Delbo): And Sebulba, in the middle of the pack, strange for him, but otherwise everything seems to be going great at this, the Inaugural Circuit!

NICK: And that's where the crowd goes (breathy cheering sound). You're able to walk up to these mechanical bays that are on either side of the road next to this just freaking giant sewer exit. It does not smell good. It smells like wet garbage.

CAMERON: Hmm, shocking.

ROB: So, I think the plan is for me to get on the line with someone who's involved in the administration of the race, which is something we would have figured out off-screen earlier on.

NICK: Stiro, you have the phone number of one Lisha Quirk. You're surprised how many favors you had to cash in to get this person's com number. She is the person managing and running this whole race. You see someone wearing basically cargo pants stuffed with different coms and data pads and what looks like a business woman's top, and she has a tight braid wrapped around her head, and has a very, very nice data pad and a com earpiece in, and is directing everything from the ground level of this area. She is managing the show, and you have her number.

ROB: I will call her up.

NICK: She answers the phone and just says:

NICK (as Lisha): Go.

ROB (as Stiro): Okay. I'll try to make this quick. My name is Stiro, Stiro Truthcaller. I'm an investigative journalist. I'm covering the race, and there is a big, big problem. It took me some effort to get this number, but… Kelbit Fizz is trying to spike Mouse Kretel's pit crew. I saw one of his pit crew interfering with stuff over in Mouse's pit. I think it may still be going on right now somewhere near camera 2. This whole thing could go up in flames if I'm right about this. I'm praying that I'm wrong, but I saw what I saw.

NICK (as Lisha): Yeah sure. Kelbit Fizz is rigging it. Sebulba killed three people. F4-5T is actually a battle droid brain stuck into a podracer. I've heard all these things.

ROB: I'm gonna give the hi sign to Karma to, in the Fizz uniform, make herself conspicuous at Kretel's pit.

CAMERON: Karma jumps into the pit and is just moving things around, didn't bring anything additional with her, but is just picking up some carts, moving them to the left, restacking them in a different order.

ROB (as Stiro): But isn't it egg on your face if all it takes is to check the camera? And tell me that I'm wrong, and tell me that I'm an idiot and I'm wasting your time, and hang up on me. That's fine, but what if I'm right? I saw it. I saw what I saw. It takes you two seconds.

NICK: You can see her in the crowd. I don't think you need to roll for this. You have a very good point. She presses a button on a data pad and then looks at the data pad then looks across the street to see Karma and then throws the data pad into a pocket, pulls out a different one, puts another com in another rear.

NICK (as Lisha): Thank you for the service you've done to podracing.

NICK: Hangs it up, and starts frantically calling and waving and things.

ROB: [laughs]

NICK: And a bunch of security people are headed towards Karma within like ten seconds.

ROB: yeah. Whatever com contact we're in I will be like:

ROB (as Stiro): [strained] It's time to go!

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: Karma jumps out and takes off.

NICK: So are you just running from them? Is that your plan?

CAMERON: Moving quickly, but trying to use the crowds as ways to cut off, and is doing the stereotypical spy movie thing where slowly removing pieces of the costume to become a different person in the crowd.

NICK: Nice.

CAMERON: We're gonna say that surprise, you thought this was a full mechanic onesie, but it's not! Oh look, the sleeves are velcro and they rip off. That was crazy.

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: Whoa, the pants are tear-away pants? How ridiculous. Just slowly shedding pieces to have them lose track, because they're looking for a Nautolan wearing "this."

NICK: Right. I'm gonna need a roll.

CAMERON: What roll would that be?

NICK: That feels like Skulduggery.

CAMERON: Okay.

NICK: That really feels like Skulduggery.

ROB: I'm gonna say something real quick here.

NICK: Okay?

ROB: They're looking for a Nautolan in a pit crew uniform. They're not looking for a Nautolan helping their idiot Human friend who already got black-out drunk at the event back to wherever he's coming from. So, I'm again taking 3 strain for Distracting Behavior at three range bands.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: Wow. Okay.

ROB: Giving three difficulty to whatever people are trying to see through her charade with.

NICK: Yeah, so I was going to say it's hard, but Cameron upgrade that three times, because Stiro is waiting in an alleyway.

[quirky music begins]

ROB (as Stiro): [sniveling, pretending to be drunk] Look, I'm so- I'm so sorry. [sniffs] I'll make it up to you. I know this is the first one and everything and there's not ever gonna be another first one, but like, if they do another one it'll be the second one. And the second one's not…

CAMERON (as Karma): You're not supposed to start celebrating until the person you bet on wins.

ROB (as Stiro): The second one's… I know, I know, but they had, I got on my com, you know, those targeting advertising things. Damn it. I got a two for one deal and I was, you know, I knew you were here but you hadn't come over to where I was yet and I thought I would just do it again, and I guess I was a little excited.

ROB: I just go in this stream of consciousness thing about like when we were friends as kids and she would always help me when I was an idiot and I haven't learned a thing since then and blah-blah-blah. I'm gonna get all weepy.

[laughter]

NICK: Alright, roll it.

ROB (as Stiro): [sobbing] What am I doing with my life?

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: Two successes and a triumph.

NICK: Okay. My first thought for the triumph is that you get a helpful status update on the situation, which is that these security guards in a group go running by, Stiro convincingly barfs on a wall, and Karma's just holding him. They run by.

NICK (as security): Oh. Did you see another Nautolan run by here wearing a pit crew suit?

CAMERON (as Karma): No, sorry, I've been… dealing with him.

CAMERON: Points at still barfing.

ROB: I'll like, look up, and like—

CAMERON (as Karma): No, no! Don't move your head!

[laughter]

ROB: And then, yeah, get a little bit (nauseous sound) again and have my eyes do that thing where they're trying to clear but they sort of can't.

ROB (as Stiro): [stammers] I did. I did. She didn't see, but, because she was helping me walk, but over that…

ROB: I'll point down the other fork of the alleyway.

ROB (as Stiro): Yeah. She looked like a mechanic was running on that way. I remember it because I thought she was cute, but…

CAMERON: [giggles]

ROB (as Stiro): …I was a little bit drunk, so I didn't wanna like talk to her because she might get the wrong idea, you know, and you wanna be polite and you gotta be a gentlemen and…

NICK: And they start talking over you.

ROB: Yeah.

[laughter]

NICK: And then you hear them on the coms.

NICK (as security): We've lost contact. We're still looking. Go ahead and do the investigation now. Shut it down. Keep them busy. We can't allow cheating.

NICK: They go running off, and you can hear Lisha Quirk's voice just screaming through their earpieces with feedback going:

NICK (as Lisha): WHAT?!

CAMERON: [chuckles]

NICK: So that was very successful, like extremely successful.

CAMERON: Huzzah.

[quirky music ends]

NICK: We get an overhead shot of this race. You have a location on the course with the holo feed of what's going on, it's like walking distance, and you're able to get there and watch the race. The announcer is talking about various things. You can see that there is a separate picture in picture of the F4-ST droid podracer completely off the course, smashing through glass windows and buildings—

ROB: Oh no!

NICK: —and CorSec is chasing it and shooting at it and they're having a running car chase.

CAMERON: Oh goodness.

NICK: It decided it didn't want to race anymore. That's a thing that happened. So, that's going on in the corner.

CAMERON: Wait. Did they say that was the same manufacturer as the HK-67 series? Oh no. [laughs]

NICK: [laughs]

ROB: This is not a good advertisement for self-driving speeders either.

NICK: No.

CAMERON: [laughs] No.

NICK: But as it's going, the rest of the pods are up on this small track of city streets. It's like a bunch of left-right turns real quick between these buildings. There are barricades set up that look like CorSec officers with their speeders just hanging out but are effectively blocking traffic, traffic's backed up, except for one road where the CorSec officers have left for some reason, so the podracers are having to swerve through occasional civilian traffic and it's super-duper unsafe.

ROB: [laughs]

CAMERON: Oh no.

NICK: So that's going on. They go up out of the city, back into the sewers, and then you have that for a few minutes, and you can hear some commentators – not the main announcer – but some commentators saying:

NICK (as commentator): You know, it's very strange, actually. Sebulba seems to be hanging a lot further back in the pack. It's like he's not getting the horsepower you would expect.

NICK: They come out onto this very long drag that goes back to the beginning of the race at the end of the first lap, and this is where Mouse Kretel, the fastest podracer in the circuit, just guns it and slams into first passing everybody, and everyone is super excited and it's really high energy. As this is going, Sebulba also slams on the accelerator, because he has the second fastest pod, and starts to pass people, and we see from ours, not from the news view, but that rattling piece snaps loose, Sebulba's power coupler in the middle goes out, and he's still able to drive with it for a while. We see a zoomed in of silver fox Sebulba with the streaks in his goatee…

CAMERON: [snickers, giggles]

NICK: …just flexing as hard as he can, holding the engine straight just with his weird hand-feet, but just muscles everywhere and he's yelling as it goes, and then he finally gives out and the engines fly off and he goes skidding in the seat onto the ground. It skids to a stop and he punches the controls.

NICK (as Sebulba): Poodoo!

NICK: And he's out of the race.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: Perfect!

NICK: [laughs]

ROB: Got it!

NICK: Yeah. The race continues on. They finish the first lap. As they are coming in they do pit, because the race is long enough and goes through the sewers that a lot of stuff goes wrong with these exposed mechanics, and as they go into the pit stop Kelbit Fizz's pit crew is not there.

ROB: [laughing] They're being questioned.

NICK: Yeah. He has this big diamond face, a round body, little antennas sticking up, otherwise he's just arms and legs. The pod slows down, pulls to a stop, drops into this mechanical bay, and he pokes his head up, and he looks around, and there's no one there. From your holo view you can see the pit crew is nearby but surrounded by security, and Lisha Quirk is yelling at them and is brandishing a stun baton and is really intense.

ROB: Shit just got real.

NICK: yeah. She is not happy. So, Kelbit is essentially stuck right now, because he can't move. He shut his pod down and it takes more than one person to turn one of these suckers on, so he's just gesturing wildly and the crowd are laughing and throwing stuff at him from the stands.

CAMERON: Aww.

ROB: Oh, poor guy.

NICK: Yeah, he's upset.

ROB: Well, in some omelets you're the egg.

NICK: Yep. The rest of the racers all pull in. They have a quick pit stop. They get up and they go. Longtanno, the four-armed, very skinny alien is in a comfortable first place, probably 20 seconds ahead of everybody else, which in podracing is a big deal, and takes off. Quickly afterwards we have a couple of racers unnamed, they're just people, it's fine.

CAMERON: How is Toonba doing, though?

ROB: Yeah, I was gonna ask.

CAMERON: That's the real question.

NICK: So, a couple of the other racers from the pack, not favorites, get up and go 20 seconds behind, and then about 10 seconds behind them Toonba picks up. He probably would have been tied with them, but during the pit stop he jumped out of his pod and stood on the side where the crowd could see him and was hamming it to the crowd and waving at them.

[laughter]

[cheering effects play]

NICK (as crowd): [slowly chanting] Toonba! Toonba!

ROB: He's just having too much fun.

NICK: Oh, he's having a blast.

[cheering effects end]

You can see his head of his pit yelling at him, telling him to get back in, and he gets in and shoots a flare gun off that does a little firework and then goes.

ROB: Oh for god's sake.

NICK: Yeah. He's having a blast. The rest of the race stays kind of like that. Longtanno is in first. You do get a quick shot of the F4-5T droid being hit with rockets from a battle speeder and exploded in a city square.

ROB: Holy shit.

NICK: Yeah. The walking droid in the pod hops out and starts to run away and is blasted down by CorSec members, so there's just this flaming wreckage of this pod kilometers and kilometers from the course. It made it pretty far. Longtanno is in a comfortable first. There's a couple of podracers still in the race, ramming, and then Toonba is taking up the rear. We get past the third lap, and you get an indication on your data pad from Kettle who's been watching the books. Not all the gambling is through Kettle, but Kettle knows who all of the gambling is going through.

ROB: Sure.

NICK: That confirms that the amount of money bet on this race, which is being broadcasted throughout a big chunk of the galaxy, just tripled with one bet. You assume that would probably be it. All of the odds go wild. They actually have to shut down the betting early because the computers crashed from trying to figure out what happened there. Then, the race continues for a little bit and it continues much the same. Longtanno is in first, there's a few other racers in the middle, and Toonba is taking up the rear although he's about joined with most of the rest of the pack. You get a call from our good friend, Mr. Trustbuilder.

NICK (as Cord): So, I noticed that Toonba is still in dead last.

[relaxed jazz music begins]

ROB (as Stiro): As I said, as I said, and you saw me work my magic early on… I want the race to develop naturally for as long as possible so that the strange things that happened earlier on are as far from people's minds as possible when Longtanno has her unfortunate accident, you understand, with minor adjustments to the efficiency of the other craft.

NICK (as Cord): I see what you're saying.

ROB (as Stiro): You know the story of the dewback and the womp rat, right?

NICK (as Cord): It's been a long time since I've read fairy tales.

ROB (as Stiro): Heh. The moral of that story is that you don't need to be the fastest, and here's the moral that people don't take but they really should, it's that it doesn't matter who's in first place before the race is over. It only matters who's in first place when it ends.

NICK: You're on the com and Karma is loading crates into a really nondescript freighter, and we can see next to that nondescript freighter is a Starwind pleasure yacht which is just the weirdest looking ship. It kind of looks like if you took a flying saucer and duct taped two shipping containers to the side and then stuck the Millennium Falcon's cockpit in the middle of that, and this one is spray-painted with a military mat black finish and has a pin-up girl on the side and says Afternoon Delight on it.

ROB: [chuckles]

NICK: It's next to this nondescript one, and Karma is helping load up crates, and there's some members of the neighborhood family also loading things up and gesturing and yelling, and then we cut back to Stiro on the com as they're loading things.

ROB (as Stiro): Toonba's victory has to be a surprise. Having him out in front for any length of time is gonna become farcical with that heap that he's driving around the track. You understand that. But rest assured, this situation is in the most capable possible hands. I told you how it works. You don't aim for the center, you aim off to the side a little bit where the targets are softer, where nobody's paying attention. And there's another thing that I didn't tell you before but it's a sort of core value of how I do business. Any system, be it a casino, a race, a gang, is only as secure as the least secure part, and the least secure part you understand is basically always the stupidest person. That's how it goes.

NICK: You say that, and Seeley who's loading crates it like:

NICK (as Seeley): Hey!

[laughter]

CAMERON (as Karma): I don't think he means you.

NICK (as Seeley): Look, I do my job, and he does this thing about the stupidest member, and he always looks at me, and I don't appreciate that.

ROB: [laughs]

CAMERON (as Karma): I think he just understands that it gets under your skin and he thinks it's funny.

NICK (as Seeley): Well, I don't think it's funny.

ROB: I've got a shitty grin on my face while I go back to my call.

[laughter]

[relaxed jazz music ends]

NICK: They're still loading things. We see there's a holo screen in this warehouse that's still playing the race, and you see Toonba makes a move and comes up with the other few podracers, and there's three of them, and Toonba and the two nondescript racers are pulling up near Longtanno, and Longtanno is fading as she is very carefully maneuvering through some of these burned out trees. Mouse is tearing up from behind, has been back by Toonba most of the race because her super-fast pod can't turn very well, and juts ahead, and Longtanno manages to ram her and she hits one of these trees and just goes down in a fireball.

CAMERON: Oh no.

ROB: Oof.

NICK: At this point, there is a little picture in picture of Kelbit Fizz is about two laps behind everyone else, because he was finally released to continue the race because they couldn't find anything wrong with what Kelbit was doing.

ROB: Mm-hmm.

NICK: So there's a little one. It's like in Mario Kart when it's finished, it's playing the theme music and he's trying to do his thing. Longtanno takes out Mouse, and these nondescripts and Toonba are going, and Toonba actually, someone tries to ram Toonba who hits the gas and they go flying off the course and into this dry ravine and they're stuck down there driving the wrong direction, so it's down to this nondescript racer, Toonba, and Longtanno, and they're moving up. The nondescript racer rams Toonba, knocking them over some, and rams them again, and they're forced to back off a little. We're coming into the final stretch, and this nondescript racer pulls even with Longtanno and they're jostling for position.

[relaxed jazz music returns]

ROB (as Stiro): Now imagine how strong and well-guarded and highly scrutinized the center of a system the size of, say, the Galactic Empire must be. Now that thing off to the side that people aren't paying attention to, heh, and that stupidest person, my dear Mr. Trustbuilder, is none other than you.

NICK (as Cord): Oh kriff.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: So, as he says oh kriff this small, nondescript pod throws on some afterburners, you can see bits of the jets burning away with the force of the acceleration, and actually passes Longtanno. It comes to the finish line, Longtanno in a close second, Toonba… finishing now, just a bit behind, still just gesturing, shooting off the flares and having a blast. You see this just dirty, wearing rags, gutter kid pulled out of the pod and hoisted high by a ragtag band of droids…

CAMERON: Ugh! [laughs]

NICK: …and adults who look desperate, and raised up high. Stiro, you feel almost like you see yourself in that small kid who raced to the finish.

ROB: Yes.

NICK: But that thought is quickly crushed down by the fact that you bet a bunch of money on Longtanno to win.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: Yeah… Here's the thing. We've got the 10% cut that we've pre-arranged. Yeah, I think we bet the most on Longtanno. I wouldn't think it was that unreasonable that we covered the spread a little bit…

NICK: Oh yeah, for sure.

[jazz music fades]

ROB: …because we knew there was gonna be this huge influx into a for-sure losing bet, so it's not like we were gonna put any money on Toonba or Sebulba or Fizz or any of those people. But yeah, we're not gonna be able to keep our hands on as much as I thought. [laughs]

NICK: Yeah. This one is a hit. It was a big surprise. You put money on there just because mathematically it made sense to.

ROB: Right.

NICK: But it was just racer number 7, this kid didn't even have a profile filled out, but they won. Seems like their life has been changed. There will be no ramifications for that.

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: But the important thing is all of that money that Cord Trustbuilder put into this has now been put into the black market economy. It is gone. It has been taken away from this company, and you have a large influx of it. There was a plan already in place with the bookies that had done this. Part of Kettle's work was to make sure that money went to the right place. So what happened to it?

ROB: Well, all the money that we could exercise control over is basically deposited as charitable donations to local businesses, charities, any place that is accepting money, which is most places.

CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: The point is we are gonna spread this money around so thinly, part of the whole red string board notepad frenzy was to figure out roughly how much money it costs to pay CorSec people – or occupying Imperial troops, depending on what the situation is – like what the logistical costs of arresting someone and investigating them is, so that every person is getting less money than that, and it's spread across the

number of people necessary to have it be a smaller number than that, so that if the Empire attempts to recoup its money logistically it is foregone that they have to spend more money than they can get back.

[laughter]

NICK: The amount of money in this bet was maybe a billion Credits, so you've spread this out over at least a million different businesses and things. This definitely hits multiple cities on the planet, maybe some satellite planets and other causes as well. This has been dispersed very quickly by a team of expert financiers and slicers. It works out really well that Kettle has a lot of cells in different places good at different things, because she was able to help organize this very quickly, once you had pitched the idea to her.

ROB: Mm-hmm.

NICK: So that money is gone. It will cost more to get that money back than it will to figure something else out.

ROB: [heavy, satisfied exhale] I pull out a cigar.

NICK & CAMERON: [laughs]

ROB: I cut it with my vibro-karambit with a spin, and I light it.

ROB (as Stiro): [exhales] Thank you for your assistance today, karma.

CAMERON (as Karma): I'm glad that I didn't have to actually be a good mechanic to accomplish anything that we did today. [laughs]

ROB (as Stiro): [laughs] How does it feel to have cost the Empire at least a billion Credits?

CAMERON (as Karma): I am feeling very good.

NICK: We see Kettle's gang jump into this nondescript freighter, and we see karma run into the Afternoon Delight. She jumps into the pilot seat, and sitting in the co-pilot seat is the camtono of abyss sea dragon scales, and these two ships both lift off. There is an Imperial flight of TIE fighters flying in towards these two freighters, and you see proximity alarms going off, and Karma's grip tightens on the steering wheel and Seeley's grip tightens on his yoke.

CAMERON: [laughing] Oh gosh! They're letting Seeley pilot the freighter?!

NICK: [smiling] Yeah!

CAMERON: Oh no.

NICK: [smiling] He's a good pilot. It's fine. And the TIEs split and go around and you can see them flying towards the main city of Coronet and towards the Serres Super Structure spire. You can see a couple of Lambda shuttles coming to land nearby. As the ships pull up into the atmosphere, they're calculating the

hyperspace jump, and you see stormtroopers streaming into that immaculate lobby where you all had passed just a day before.

ROB: Ha. I think just before the jump Karma gets a little message on her com that says "Truly a pleasure doing business. We should do this again sometime."

NICK: [laughs]

CAMERON: [laughs]

NICK: Karma, do you do a little two-finger salute towards the other ship?

CAMERON: Yup.

NICK: And we see the two freighters snap into hyperspace… and that's the adventure.

ALL: Ba-naaa~!

CAMERON: Woo!

[laughter]

NICK: [claps] Wow Rob, that was really fun.

CAMERON: [laughs]

Outro

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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.

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