

Project Kaldur: Mission on Traven

by Luis Casiano

There were thousands of stars in the light speed tunnel, all of them focusing on the orange planet, Traven. A white freighter passed through it and landed near rocky mountains on the planet's surface.

The freighter carried four members, All exiting the spacecraft and embarked on their mission.

“Hey, kid, over here,” said Canary as she gave August some protective gear. She grabbed her blaster and continued to march forward. She saw the rocks on the ground. The sand almost seemed artificial, as if something or someone put it there for an unknown reason.

“This isn’t my first mission, you know I have done other missions for the Empire,” said August, while maintaining his gear.

Phoenix patted his shoulder and said, “Yes, they know. I have told them all about you.” Phoenix went down the ramp of the freighter and put his hand on his katana.

“Yes, we heard much about you and your achievements, but that doesn’t change the fact that you’ve never done a mission offworld before,” said Canary. She took out a pair of binoculars, scouting the area ahead. She noticed a small passageway between all the big rocks in the area.

“This place kinda looks like Mars,” said Matchstick, he put on his backpack full of supplies for his blaster. The sound of explosive detonators were heard rattling around.

Canary turned her head back to Matchstick and asked, “How in the hell do you know what Mars looks like?”

“I saw it in an old book back when I was in the academy,” responded Matchstick as he saw August struggling to put on his gear. He helped him and said, “There were some pictures on it that were taken back when us humans were still on Earth.”

“Really, I thought those types of documents were classified,” said August as he finished putting on his full gear with the katana on his belt.

“I’m pretty sure what he just said was bullshit. Hell, I’m sure he’d drank a whole bottle of vodka before reading this, old book,” said Canary as she did air quotes. She marched forward to the passageway in the rocks and the others followed behind her.

“Oh come on, don’t you believe me?” said Matchstick as he was right behind Canary. He equipped his blaster and then said, “Look, I know I have a slight problem with my drinking....”

“Slight?” said Phoenix. “You were so drunk that one time you thought that Canary was one of your ex wives.”

“Wives?” said August.

“That’s a story for another time, but I’m certain that I saw pictures of some orange sandy planet and it read Mars,” continued Matchstick.

Canary put her hand up to signal them to stop moving.

“Cut the chatter, I heard something,” said Canary.

“What is it?” whispered August. He put his hand on his katana.

Phoenix did the same.

Matchstick put his finger near the trigger.

Canary put her hand up to signal them to stop moving.

There was an uncomfortable silence. No animals or bugs heard for miles. There were just high rocks on each side of the passageway. Artificial sand on the ground overlapping some pebbles.

Canary put down her hand and said, "It seems it was nothing." She took two steps forward and she began to sink. "What the?"

"Shit! August, help me," said Matchstick as he grabbed onto one of Canary's arms.

August rushed to Matchstick's side and grabbed Canary's other other arm. They both began to pull.

"What is this?" asked Canary as she struggled.

"It's like quicksand!" said Phoenix as he hooked his arms around Canary's stomach.

All three of them pulled as hard as they could. They managed to stop Canary from sinking. They just needed to pull her out completely.

"Come on, men, let's get her out," said Phoenix as he pulled with all his might.

"You owe me a drink after this," said Matchstick.

"I'll buy you a whole six pack if you just get me out of here!" said Canary as she struggled.

August helped Phoenix by grabbing Canary's waist. August then said, "We got this!"

They pulled her out, fell towards Phoenix and August.

Canary got up instantly. She suggested, "We'll have to climb the sides."

"You want us to climb up?" asked Matchstick.

“No you idiot, I want you guys to climb sideways. Once we pass through this grey sand, we can start walking again,” continued Canary. She pointed out the mushy grey sand she clawed her way out of. The grey sand did not combine well with the rest of the planet. The whole planet was orange, the mist in the air, the artificial sand, all but the quicksand which was a dark grey color that stuck out like a sore thumb.

“It kind of looks like the sand around Echo City back home,” said August as he climbed the rock.

“Yeah, I don’t know. This planet is too quiet for my liking, thinking about the weird things on this planet is just going to annoy me more,” said Canary. She saw how far the grey sand stretched out and said, “How about we continue the rest of this conversation when we are done.”

“Sure,” said Matchstick.

“Yes, Ma’am,” said August.

“Yeah,” said Phoenix.

The crew passed the quicksand and made it to a huge area close to the coordinates given by higher ups.

Night had come.

They all turned on their flashlights on their helmets.

“Why exactly did we come to this shitty planet for again,” asked Matchstick with a tired expression on his face. He seemed to be having a hard time keeping his eyes open.

“We came here to get a valuable metal for the Empire..... or something like that,” said Canary. She took out her binoculars as they all got closer to the objective.

Phoenix approached Canary and whispered, “I’ve heard about all the human experiments that were orchestrated at the Echo City Research and Development Lab.”

“Are you talking about the Harvesting?” responded Canary.

“Riza!” said Phoenix as he pointed out August’s presence.

Canary was angered, but nodded her head and kept marching forward.

There was a moment of silence.

“What’s the metal called?” asked August.

“I overheard one of the higher ups called it, Kaldur,” said Phoenix. He proceeded to pass August as he felt something.

“What is it?” asked August.

“Don’t you feel that?” asked Phoenix.

The ground shook, there were small tremors happening under them. Some faint scratches were heard, then the ground began to crack.

“Everyone! Get away from the cracks!” yelled Phoenix.

Everyone jumped away.

A green winged creature with big fangs and claws broke through the ground. The human sized creature charged straight at Matchstick.

Matchstick was on the ground with his backpack on his side. He got up as the winged creature chomped on his backpack. The creature was moving him around side to side.

“Let go of the backpack!” said August.

Matchstick disconnected himself from it and fell to the ground. He ran away from it.

Canary put up her gun and shot directly at Matchstick's backpack and it created a huge explosion. The shockwave pushed all of them away.

"Jesus!" yelled Phoenix as he was pushed back.

They all got up slowly after that.

"Is it over?" asked Matchstick.

In that moment another winged creature came out of the ground behind Canary.

Phoenix saw and charged at the creature. He was able to impale the creature's wing into a pointy rock. August rushed behind Phoenix and decapitated it. He then said, "For the Empire!"

"Damn, I guess being a samurai isn't all that bad," Matchstick remarked. He then saw a glowing metal in a hole. It was a long rectangular piece of metal surrounded by grey rock. While he put on his gloves he noticed a small tear on the right one.

"How do we know that's the metal we were looking for?" asked Canary as she approached it.

"The images I saw of it are very similar to this," said August.

"Look, kid we don't even know if this thing is our objective," said Canary.

"It is. Trust the Empire," responded August firmly.

Canary stayed quiet and just stared at August.

"Wow, you were so quiet this entire time, but it seems you grew some balls to speak up to the Canary. You must really have a lot of trust in our government," said Matchstick as he climbed down the hole.

"Of course, we serve for its prosperity and future," said August.

“We better get our own prosperity for our service then,” said Phoenix.

Matchstick proceeded to get close to the metal and attempted to grab it. He noticed the tear in his right glove. “Hey, this reminds me of when you had that tear on your dress that night at the ball with a bunch of the higher ups,” said Matchstick as he showed Canary the glove.

“Forget about that already, will ya,” said Canary.

Matchstick touched the metal with his bare skin from his right glove and he felt a shock sent to his head in that moment. The feeling went away and proceeded to lift up the metal, making his way back up.

They all walked back to the freighter.

“Hey, you better not bring up that shit about my dress again, you hear!” demanded Canary.

Matchstick put his hand on his head and said, “Canary, what the hell are you talking about?”