

The background of the entire page is a detailed cyberpunk illustration of a city street at night. In the foreground, the silhouette of a man wearing a trench coat and a fedora is shown from the chest up, facing right and holding a lit cigarette. The street is filled with tall, densely packed buildings. A prominent vertical sign on the right side of the street reads "双重宇宙" (Double Universe) in Chinese characters. The scene is lit with a mix of cool blue and purple tones and warm orange and yellow lights from street lamps and building windows. A red laser beam cuts across the upper left portion of the sky.

# TALES FROM TORTUGA

03

**The Hunter,  
And the Hunted**  
by Cybrex

### ***Tortuga & Tales from Tortuga***

*Tortuga City* is a community city building project in the world of DUAL UNIVERSE. The city is a place for trade, manufacturing and shady business. You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum, villainy and dashing rogues. Separated from the shackles of organization affiliations and political agendas, the cyberpunk world of Tortuga with its skyscrapers and neon signs will be home to adventurers and agents, artists and militarists, traders and thieves.

*Tales from Tortuga* is a series of fictionalized stories set in this world, created for the entertainment of the colonists of Alioth and abroad. Our adventure doesn't take place in the actual Tortuga of the game, it only takes inspirations from it. The story you will read is not part of the official lore of DUAL UNIVERSE, it's a story within a story.

We love feedback.

Contact the writers and artists on the [Tortuga Discord](#).

DUAL UNIVERSE is a MMO game developed by Novaquark.

Visit the website [dualthegame.com](http://dualthegame.com) for more information.

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### ***About the Author***

**Cybrex** has been an active contributor to the Dual Universe community since 2015, as well as leading the organization *Band of Outlaws* since 2016. Aside from building his online empire, he takes an active interest in video editing, world building, and hiking.

And lots of video games.

You can probably find him lounging somewhere in a seedy bar in Tortuga.

### ***About the Artist***

**Agilulf** doesn't usually do art, he writes: His organization *Serious Spaceship Drama* publishes the *Novean Dreamers Almanac*, a magazine about the Dual Universe community. He is also one of the administrators of Tortuga City, that's where *Tales from Tortuga* got started. In the real world he is a journalist from Germany.

The art for this issue tries to capture the film noir mood. *Tales from Tortuga* will showcase different artists and art styles over the coming months and is still looking for contributors. Get in touch.



# *The Hunter, And the Hunted*

A story by Cybrex

The air was thick with fog in the undercity. A steady drizzle of rain falling down hitting the rooftops and scaffolding overhead, spilling into the streets of the slums. Neon lights flashed and danced, illuminating the rain as it fell creating a spectacular light show. Upon closer inspection you would find what a dump this area of the city was. The undercity wasn't pretty, but it had what you needed at least.

Harker walked along the edge of the street, his black trench coat wrapped around him tightly to keep the bitter cold at bay. His boots thudded against the pavement, with the occasional splash of water as he stepped through puddles. He reached for the cigarette hanging from his mouth, only for his right arm to freeze for a half second. Damn servos again, he thought in annoyance, shaking his arm around. His cybernetic arm did not fair well in the wet cold.

He approached a food stand that was on the corner of the street he was walking on. It was his favorite Chinese take out. Old bar stools lined a high table, where a chef was seen preparing food as he took other orders around him. The rain was clattering away on the shoddy metal awning that covered the eating area. As Harker stepped under the awning, he shook the rain water off, taking a seat for himself. There were two other customers silently eating their food, watching the holo-display in the back.

“The usual Cho,” he said to the chef snapping his fingers, shifting his gaze to the holo on the back wall. Cho put a cup of hot coffee in front of him before going to the back to prepare his meal. The holo was playing the daily news, as always. Just more senseless killing and robbery. In a city where death has no meaning because of resurrection nodes, crime becomes a hobby for some.

As if fighting over the slums was ever worth anything, but it gave Harker a job. He was a merc, a hired gun who made a name for himself as a former Peacekeeper. After being forced out, he took to being a vigilante of sorts in the slums of the city. One job led to another, and now he was a highly sought after gun for hire by many of the mega corporations that headquartered out of Tortuga City to protect their assets as a security advisor.

“Long time no see, John,” a voice from behind him said.

Harker turned around and smiled, recognizing the stranger immediately. The man wore a shaggy brown raincoat and bowlers hat. He

also had two cybernetic eyes that scanned the environment methodically. The man also had a well groomed mustache that Harker always admired.

“Marcus, long time no see, still sporting that ridiculous mustache eh?” Harker said, gesturing to a nearby stool.

Marcus shrugged, shaking off the rain before sitting down next to Harker. Marcus used to be Harker’s partner back when they both served as Peacekeepers. After they both tried to bring some of the Peacekeeper leadership up on charges to the city, they were stone walled and forced to retire early. They helped each other out from time to time now.

In his Peacekeeper days, Harker was an upstanding enforcer of the law. Serving 16 years before being forced out due to “insubordination”. In those days he had something to believe in, like a greater good. The reality of the Peacekeepers was different. They were more like a well funded private army for the mega corporations that owned Tortuga. Corruption ran rampant and Harker tried to fight it. He was lucky he only lost his job in the end.

The Peacekeepers had isolation cells to drop unwanted citizens in. Essentially black holes. Ending up in one might as well be a real death sentence. Not a good way to go really.

“I didn’t come here to chat for long,” Marcus said, removing his hat and observing it.

“You never do. Did you get what I asked for?” Harker replied as Cho laid out a bowl of noodles in front of him. He grabbed his chopsticks and

began eating, his attention still focused on Marcus.

Marcus nodded, sliding a data-chip to Harker across the table. “Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” He asked with concern.

Harker shrugged, wiping his mouth off. “You know what I found out, Marcus. This isn’t going to go away. Someone’s got to do something,” Harker said, looking intently at him. “Besides, it’s me we’re talking about,” he finished, giving Marcus a smirk.

Marcus rolled his eyes, scoffing at Harker. “Always an asshole, you mean,” he retorted, lightly punching Harker in his cybernetic arm. His arm jolted slightly, losing grip of his chopsticks, and Harker shook his head in frustration.

“You still have that arm? I’ll never understand why you got that over a regrown limb,” Marcus said, shaking his head with a grin.

Harker lifted his arm up, clenching his fist as the servos in his joints made whirring sounds. “It has its uses at least, more than those creepy eyes of yours,” Harker replied, continuing to eat his noodles. Marcus chuckled in response, his eyes zooming in and out on Harker.

“Is it true? About the real deaths I mean?” Marcus asked, his gaze now focused on the holo.

“Yeah, it is. And this guy may have some answers for me,” Harker answered, picking up the data-chip off the table, cradling it in his palm before stuffing it in his pocket.

“Everything is on there. Time, location, and contact,” Marcus said as



he sat up from his seat, turning towards the street and rain. He looked back at Harker, “Stay safe, John. Try to be a good guy this time, I’ll check in on you again soon,” he finished, disappearing down the wet street.

Harker watched him leave, pondering what Marcus told him. He pulled out his handheld MPCC communicator and slid the chip into the side port. Contact information for a man by the name of “The Baron” appeared, and an address to meet him tonight at 2100 at “A Hole in the Wall”. Harker recognized the location’s name, it was a popular information brokers club for high rollers. The Baron was a shadowy figure who dealt in information exchange.

Harker got up from his stool, straightening his coat. He glanced back to the street, already dreading the rain. One of the customers was wearing a black Homburg style hat that Harker fancied. Before the man knew his hat was gone, Harker had vanished into the thick fog and rain.



Harker managed to catch a hover-taxi on the way to his meeting location with The Baron. It beat walking in the cold rain at least, and kept his arms servos from freezing up on him constantly. For a popular city, it was nearly always cold and raining.

Harker stepped out of the taxi onto the street just outside his destination. A large blue neon sign flashed above him with the name “A

Hole in the Wall”. It was a reputable brokers den and club for many of Tortuga’s underworld wealthy citizens. The streets outside had little foot traffic, with re-purposed hovercar radiators keeping a group of homeless warm in the cold night.

Harker approached the club entrance, a large solid metal door that appeared to be reinforced. He pounded on it, each knock echoing throughout the street behind him. A peephole slid to the side revealing a pair of yellow cybernetic eyes peering back at him.

“Here to see the Baron,” Harker said, staring back at the figure behind the door.

The slider shut close, and he could hear metal clanking from behind the door as the locks disengaged, swinging open for Harker to enter. The sound of electronic music and laughter filled the air as he entered the club, with the smell of cigars stinging his nose. As his eyes adjusted to the low illumination, he could see that his door man was a rather large Samoan dressed in a nice looking suit. He didn’t say a word to Harker, only gesturing with his bear sized hand to show where he needed to go.

Harker winked at him playfully, but he didn’t seem amused.

A hallway before him led into the main room where the main attractions were. He stopped to get a better view of his surroundings which were dimly lit by an ocean blue light lining the walls of the club. The bar in the back caught Harker’s attention as he watched a six armed robot taking orders and putting together drinks in mere seconds. His movements

were all a blur to him.

His gaze locked to a beautiful redhead who was on the main stage dancing. Her skin color shifting throughout the color spectrum as she went through her routine. Half the club was mesmerized by her. One of the drunks at her feet tried to climb up, only for the big Samoan to appear out of nowhere behind him, tucking him up under one arm and carrying him out back.

He looked the room over again, looking for the Baron. All he had to go on was a name with no other description provided. He figured he would just ask the bartender, as they always knew everything.

*I could use a drink anyway*, he thought, removing his hat and placing it on a clothing shelf that was next to the exit.

He approached the bar, and the robot shifted its body to be in front of him. The machine's face consisted of a black voice box and four blue cameras for eyes staring at him. The rest of his body a giant sphere with all six of his arms extended tending to the bar.

“Can I get a-”

He was cut off by a loud, monotone robotic voice that came from the machine. “Welcome, I am Axel, the owner of this establishment. I am obligated to greet you,” it said with a hint of disdain. “How may I serve you?” It finished while polishing three glasses at the same time, filling another three for customers.

“You’re the owner?” Harker asked, confused. Since when could a

robot own anything?

“Yes sir, how may I serve you?” Axel responded.

Harker shrugged, he had seen stranger things and it wasn't any of his business anyhow. “I'll take the house special,” he replied, taking a seat at the empty bar stool in front of him.

Axel threw a glass from behind him into the air, catching it with a different arm while filling it up with various liquids. The machine gently placed its alcoholic concoction of red liquid before Harker, keeping its attention focused on him.

“You are John Harker, yes?” Axel asked, stacking empty glasses behind him.

Harker took the glass, swirling it around as he stared at thick liquid before downing it. He scowled, looking at the glass with a puzzled expression as he tasted the various flavors.

“Burns, but not bad,” he noted, placing the glass back on the bar top.

“To answer your question metal head, yeah, I am John Harker. Came here looking for the Baron. Is he here?” Harker asked, leaning forward against the bar closer to Axel.

“He is waiting for you upstairs,” Axel responded, making a few clicking noises from behind his voice box before turning his attention to other customers at the bar. Harker waved his quanta chip over the bartop's check-out, paying for his tab.

Upstairs the music became a muffled beat that pulsed through the

floor. It was another dimly lit room with a group of thugs playing a game of cards in a corner, and two guards standing watch next to a door at the other end of the room across from him.

As Harker stepped further into the blue illuminating light of the room, the card game stopped, and all eyes shifted to focus on the approaching stranger.

Harker raised an eyebrow, surveying the room while his hand rested on the grip of his slugger. Muffled whispers from the table could be heard, but he couldn't make out what they were saying. Harker cleared his throat.

"Here to see the Baron," he said loudly, not moving an inch as he stayed focused on watching all of his potential assailants in the room.

The door across the room opened, and one of the guards motioned with his head to Harker for him to enter. "Talkative bunch, eh?" He remarked with a grin as he walked across the room, stepping inside a dark office. The card game behind him resumed, and the door slammed shut down behind him.

A large, middle aged balding man sat in a chair across from him behind a desk. Behind him holo-displays were playing various news channels and other data. The room was poorly lit, with the only light coming from the holo-displays and a small desk lamp. Datapads and random junk littered the walking space.

"John Harker," the man said, standing up and extending his hand to greet him. Harker stared at him briefly, sizing up the man to get a better

idea of who he was dealing with. He shook the man's hand, taking a seat across from him.

"The Baron, I presume?" Harker asked, leaning back in to his seat keeping his gaze fixated on the man across from him.

The large man across from him sat down, lighting a cigar. Each puff filled the air with a heavy cloud.

"Indeed," the Baron responded, puffing on his cigar as he gazed at Harker for a moment. "I know your reputation, Mr. Harker, and you know mine, so let's skip the bullshit," he spoke, putting his still lit cigar down in an ashtray. He pulled out two glasses and a bottle, filling them both and sliding one across the desk towards Harker.

"You want answers, and I need your services, so what do you say we work together?" the Baron finished, placing his already finished glass on the desk, puffing from a the cigar again.

Harker picked up his drink. "What is it that you need that the large bouncer downstairs can't do?" He replied with a smirk, finishing his own glass and placing it on the desk.

"George? Well, he's strong, but dumb. You know how it goes," the Baron said, leaning forward and playing with a holo-display on the desk. The display enlarged to encompass the entire desks surface area. Faces and names appeared that Harker didn't recognize. The symbol 大 appeared on various dossiers as the Baron scrolled through.

The Baron enlarged a photo of a long, raven haired girl who looked



to be in her late-20s. Green eyes and full lips defined her beautiful, sharp featured face. “Who’s the girl?” Harker asked, trying to keep his jaw from dropping to the floor.

“Julia Kinsen, a scientist who lives in the city. She works in the Resurrection Hub center here in the city as one of their research leads,” the Baron replied.

The Baron stood up from his seat clearing his throat as he swiped away the photo of the girl, bringing the 大 symbol up and enlarged it. He stood back, crossing his arms in front of him. “Know what that symbol means?” He asked Harker, slowly pacing back and forth behind his desk.

“I saw it in some old warehouse down in the industrial sector not too long ago. But no, I have no idea what it stands for,” Harker replied, staying in his seat as he pulled a cigarette out of his coat pocket, lighting it.

“Neither do I, if I’m being honest. And it’s rare I don’t know something going on in this city, let alone a damn symbol,” the Baron scoffed, approaching the desk again. He motioned his hands over it, manipulating the interface to display a transmitter box of some sort.

“I’m sure you’ve heard the rumors about people dying recently right? And I mean, actually dying. Permanently,” the Baron said nervously as he paced back and forth.

“Yeah, they aren’t rumors now,” Harker commented, taking a drag from his cigarette, leaning forward to look at the hologram closely. People were dying permanently, and that meant trouble. Big trouble. Society as

we know it here wouldn't have survived without the resurrection node technology. Since the day the first Arkship landed on Alioth, human preservation through resurrection had been the linchpin to society.

"I recognize that device, I saw something similar at the same warehouse as before. It's a signal jammer right?" Harker said, standing up himself as he motioned over the holo to enlarge the image for a better look.

The Baron stood across from him, staring at the device on the holo as well. "From what my sources tell me, it's just a prototype right now," he replied, pulling up the mysterious symbol again. "Whoever these people are, they have something to do with it. They just don't have the resources or manpower to do it I think. Valuable, classified equipment has been going missing around the city, as well as people. They're just disappearing into the night, Harker," he said, shaking his head.

"I believe they are up to something bigger. That they want to upscale this device. I just wish I knew for what purpose," he finished, looking back at Harker.

Harker frowned, standing up from his seat now to approach the holo closer. "But what does this Julia Kinsen have anything to do with this?" He asked, motioning over the holo to show the girl again.

"Her name has been mentioned on some back channels that I have access to that this group uses. I think they want her, and I think she is their next kidnapping victim," the Baron said, sitting back down in his chair.

"I want answers like you, Harker, so when I found out you were

trying to reach me, I knew this was a perfect opportunity for us to benefit each other,” he said, lighting another cigar and smiling as he puffed on it.

Harker remained standing, continuing to stare at the photo of Julia. It was a good arrangement, and the Baron was one of the best information brokers in the business. He needed his resources right now, but felt reluctant to trust the man.

“Fine. I find the girl, get her to safety, and you get me more answers,” Harker said, looking directly at the Baron now. “Oh, and I’ll need a ride,” he finished, smiling at him.

“I’ve sent Julia’s information to your comms device. Check with Axel downstairs about your transportation,” the Baron said, typing in a few commands at his desk console while still puffing on his cigar. “Happy hunting, Harker,” he finished, nodding towards the door.



The Baron spared no expense on providing Harker with transportation. It was an Infinity RX-800 series hovercar designed by Penrose Laboratories. It was an older modified Peacekeeper patrol car, retrofitted with a drone spitter and an automated riot security suite. No strings attached, presumably.

It was near midnight in Tortuga now, and as his hovercar glided along the highway, he took a few moments to admire the sheer beauty of

lights that flashed across the city, the steady rainfall making the city glimmer night. Tortuga could be a cruel mistress, mesmerizing you with its wonder, only to steal everything you owned if you weren't careful enough. He loved this city.

He engaged the autopilot, leaning back as he pulled up a holo-display to begin going over the dossier file for Julia Kinsen. She was a 28 year old Caucasian female who worked as a research and technical lead for their Energy program at the Tortuga Resurrection Hub Center. She lived in an apartment in the Presidium Quarters that was located in the upper part of the city. It had been a while since Harker had been "top side". He wondered if anything had changed.

Top side was different. It was higher society living, and as such, had better security. Harker knew he'd have to be careful not to draw any attention to himself. Peacekeepers were likely to give him a hard time if they saw him considering his past, and if this humanitarian group were after this girl, then spooking them before he got to the girl would likely end in a bad scenario.

"Be subtle, be nice and be easy, John," he said to himself as he continued to thumb through more files on woman.

*Locate her, and get her to safety. Shouldn't be too hard,* he thought. Being so late at night, he would have expected her to be in her apartment sound asleep. Thanks to the Barons resources however, her last reported location was at the Resurrection centers laboratories.

He pulled up surveillance feeds of the facilities exterior. Camera footage showed nothing out of the ordinary, and the parking lot outside was nearly empty save for a few hovercars. Being so late at night it shouldn't be too much effort to bypass any security they have. There wasn't much else to go on however, and time was of the essence. She was next on the list. They could already be making a move on her now.

"Guess we're winging it," he remarked, closing the holo-display and sitting back up, taking manual control of his hovercar still gliding along the highway. The Resurrection Hub was located near the center of the city, with the Research & Development labs located a few blocks further down the street from it.

Towering skyscrapers pierced the sky, with the surrounding infrastructure all sharing the same sleek, elegant design. Neon lights still littered the sky here, each flashing and dancing with the rain fall, reflections bouncing off windowed buildings. Automated drones dotted the urban landscape cleaning the streets and sidewalks. A Peacekeeper patrol ship passed by, not taking any notice of his presence.

Harker parked his hovercar near the labs entrance, engaging its lock-down protocol just in case. If anyone tried to boost it, or harm it while he was inside, they would get a quick ticket to the Resurrection Hub down the road. He secured his ablative vest, and checked his slugger for a charge. *Can never be too careful*, he thought, spinning his pistol in flourish as he holstered it.

The entrance was a solid layer of reflective glass that stood before him stretching 10 stories above him. A sidewalk surrounded by freshly cut grass led from the parking zone to the entrance, which was transparent set of revolving doors. Harker whistled quietly as he walked along the sidewalk, taking note of the freshly cut grass. *You don't see green around here all that often*, he thought in amusement.

He heard an all too familiar sound muffled coming from inside the building. The sound of gunshots.

“Varking hell,” he whispered, unholstering his slugger and approaching the side of the door. He cracked the door open, leaning inside with his weapon at the ready. The lobby looked clear, and he entered.

Clearing the doors and corners, he took note of any damage. The lobby was still in pristine condition, no one here, but at least there weren't any bodies. Gunfire echoed into the lobby again, louder this time.

Following the gunfire down the hall to his left, he walked carefully trying to mask the sound of boots thudding against the pearlescent ceramic floor. The whole place was just various shades of white. He passed various doors to empty offices and lab rooms with no sign of any shooters or the girl.

Then he heard the screaming, and it was close. As he tried to pinpoint the location, turning down more hallways and climbing a flight of stairs, he could hear some people talking, though he couldn't make out what they were saying.



He was coming up on a corner and could tell wherever it was coming from was on the other side. With his weapon ready, he hugged the wall approaching the corner. Peeking out, he could see two heavily armed individuals wielding automatic rifles standing guard outside of a security checkpoint leading into a secure lab. He didn't see any recognizable markings on them.

Harker could hear multiple people in the lab beyond the security checkpoint begging and screaming. So there were two guards out front, and likely two or more inside the lab itself. He had to play this one quiet.

The guards in the hallway were busy talking with one another, completely oblivious to Harker as he ducked, moving around the corner swiftly, snapping the neck of the closest one, followed up by sucker punching the other with his cybernetic arm. The force was enough to crush half the guards face, dropping him dead instantly.

Well equipped, but stupid he thought to himself. He could see inside the lab now, and could make out multiple hostages scattered in a large laboratory just beyond the checkpoint he was looking from. No one appeared to be dead, but he could make out at least three other guards in the room. Two standing watch, while one was interrogating a hostage by a holo-terminal.

He unholstered his slugger again, getting a firm grip on it as he began his ritual breathing exercise. It helped steady his hand, and was something he tried to do before any firefight. Staying focused was important.

He shot the lock off of the first security door leading into the decontamination chamber. The gunshot alerted the rest of the guards in the room beyond. They opened fire on his direction only for the rounds to pelt harmlessly against the reinforced steel and bulletproof glass.

Harker smiled, reeling his cybernetic arm back, punching the door in front of him hard enough to send it flying off its hinges into the room. Stepping quickly through the doorway, he faced left, firing two rounds into the chest of the guard on the left knocking him into a wall. Harker dove to cover behind a desk, flipping it over quickly to use as cover. The remaining guards remained on the opposite side, closer to the hostages.

He peaked around the side of the desk, shooting out the kneecap of the other guard, firing another at his head as he crumpled. Harker pulled back as the remaining guard began returning fire from behind a half wall, spraying the room with energy rounds.

The hostages ducked low as debris flew in every direction. Harker slid out from cover onto the floor, getting a clearer shot at the last man. He shot out both of his knees, dropping him to the ground instantly. He'll live for now.

Harker bounded to his feet, keeping his weapon trained on the man who was writhing in pain on the floor across from him. He holstered his gun, approaching the guard who was trying to crawl away.

He grabbed the man by his throat, raising him up against the wall with little effort as he squirmed, grasping at Harker's arm. "Now, I know

how much you'd like to die so you can just resurrect and not have to deal with the fact that both of your legs are nearly blown off, but I need some answers first," Harker said, slapping him in the face to wake him up.

"Let's start simple. Who are you, and who do you work for?" Harker asked calmly.

"Screw you, you piece of-" The guard was cut off by a swift knee to the stomach, leaving him gasping for air.

"Try that one again," Harker said, digging his thumb into one of the man's open wounds.

He screamed, spit dribbling out of his mouth as he struggled to speak. "Who I am isn't important, but I work for the Reapers. We came here looking for someone, a girl," he said, whimpering every word out.

"Who? Which girl? Is she here?" Harker asked, slapping him again just to be sure he hadn't died yet.

"No no no no, we we're looking for a Julia. Uh-uh Julia Kinsen!" He spit out, grasping at Harker's arm, struggling to breathe. He started to laugh. "Go ahead. Kill me. I'll come back. We already have back-" He went silent as Harker crushed his throat with a quick squeeze, throwing his lifeless body to the ground with a sickening thud.

His attention turned toward the hostages, who were quite visibly shaken from the gunfight. "Julia Kinsen? Is she here? Do any of you know where she is?" Harker asked, walking over to help untie them from their restraints.

“I am,” a meek voice said from under a desk. It was the girl he saw in the picture. It was Julia. “Th-they were asking for me. W-Why?” She stammered out, clearly in shock from the situation.

He didn’t have time to coddle anyone right now. As soon as those men resurrected, they would be calling in backup here if it wasn’t already on the way. They had to go now.

“No time to explain, I need you to come with me now.” He grabbed her arm, helping her stand to her feet. She was dressed in all white lab coats like the other scientists in the lab. Her hair was tied back into a ponytail, her makeup running down her face from crying.

“I can’t leave, the-the Peacekeepers are coming and they can help. I don’t know you, get away from me!” She jerked her arm back, running back to her colleagues to help tend to their wounds.

He sighed, visibly growing annoyed with her.

“Look, lady, I can either carry you out of here, or you can just walk with me. Your choice. Either way you need to decide now because we need to leave. They’ll be sending more reinforcements any minute, and I suspect the Peacekeepers may not have any interest here,” he said, thinking about the patrol ship he passed by on his way here. Odd how they weren’t here actually, as the alarms had gone off.

Julia applied a coat of coagulant gel around one of her colleagues’ leg who was bleeding, giving positive reassurance to everyone.

“Now, Julia. They’re after you, which means we stay any longer,

we're putting your friends in more danger," Harker demanded, already making his way over to her.

She jerked away from Harker again, standing up to him as she matched his gaze. "Let's go then, but I expect some answers," she said, frowning at him.

"Fine. Whatever. Let's go," Harker responded visibly annoyed, gesturing towards the exit. If all went well, they could get back to the hovercar safely. Once they reached the fog into the lower city, they would be in the clear and out of harm's way. The remaining hostages still looked terrified, but the danger was gone. They would be OK.

"I've got a car parked out front we can take, so stay on my rear, keep quiet, and just do as I say," he said, readying his slugger again. They entered the hallway and Harker backtracked to the entrance carefully. No one else in the building still, so far so good he thought.

Lights could be seen flashing outside in the parking zone. Peacekeeper lights. Harker groaned quietly, while Julia sprinted ahead outside the door with her hands up. "Please don't shoot me! I need help!" she exclaimed. Harker chased after her holstering his weapon. He still had some friends in the Peacekeepers, maybe he could manage a way out of this.

Three patrol cars were parked around the entrance, with Peacekeepers clad in their standard black and red flak armor aiming stun rifles at them both. Harker put his hands in the air, trying to shield his eyes

from the spotlight they had on him.

His hovercar was parked just behind them, and looked untouched. As he slowly walked out front to get beside Julia, he leaned over to her. “Stay quiet, let me talk,” he muttered, hoping she would. It would make things so much easier if she did.

“Harker? John Harker?” A masked voice behind the light shouted. The spotlight turned off and Harker could see clearly now. Nine Peacekeepers surrounded them from behind their vehicles aiming stun rifles at them. One of them walked closer to Harker, taking his helmet off to reveal the face of grizzled man, a face that Harker recognized.

“Taggert?” Harker said incredulously.

Taggert used to be Harker’s occasional partner out in the field when he served. He was a good man, or so he at least hoped he was.

“Hey Taggert, I took care of everything already. Three shooters inside are down. They had hostages, everything is in the clear now,” Harker said quickly, trying to shift any blame off of himself. Julia looked over to him, as if she were about to say something but she kept her mouth shut, looking back at the officer again.

“It’s *Captain* Taggert now, John,” Captain Taggert responded, turning his attention to Julia. “Thank you for bringing her out to us. When we got the call you brought three of our men down inside, we thought you’d gotten away,” he finished, turning around quickly to hit Harker in the side with a metal baton. Harker dropped to a knee, flinching slightly.



Taggert kneeled down to Harker's face, whispering in his ear.

"You're messing with forces you can't even comprehend, John. We'll take the girl from here, and you can enjoy the rest of your life in an iso cell," he said, standing back up above Harker. "I don't care who you were, or whatever history we had before, John. You're a low life now, and always will be," he finished, walking away while putting his helmet back on.

"Harker!" Julia yelled at him. "Get up!"

Captain Taggert motioned to the other Peacekeepers nearby to detain them as he walked away to his patrol car, putting his helmet back on. Two Peacekeepers were approaching them both with stun batons extended. Harker brought his wrist-link up to his mouth, giving the Peacekeepers a wink.

"Engage riot control," he uttered.

The hovercar deployed smoke, and a small turret on top extended that began firing rubber rounds at the Peacekeepers. Harker reached for Julia, keeping her head low as he guided her to the hovercar. The turret provided covering fire for them, already incapacitating several Peacekeepers. As he secured her and himself into the car, he fired up the engines disabling the riot control system.

His hovercar screamed onto the highway as Harker kept checking his exterior cameras to watch for anyone chasing. "Hold on, I'm going to taking us through the fog," he said, swerving around the early morning

traffic that were on the highway now.

“The fog? What? But that goes down to the lower city...” Julia said with disdain, shaking her head. “What the hell is going on?!” she exclaimed at him.

“There’s some group in this city who wanted to kidnap you and use you to help them with some device that can stop people from resurrecting. Meaning people can die,” Harker said while pulling up the files the Baron gave him on a holo-display, trying to remain focused on the road.

Julia’s eyes widened as she glossed over the data in front of her, turning to look at Harker. “They want to kill people? With this thing? Who would want to do such a thing!?” she said in disbelief, leaning back into her seat shaking her head.

“I’ve never heard of these people, or any of this until now. I only worked in the Energy R&D Sciences division for this cities resurrection center,” she claimed, gazing at the holo in front of her.

Harker remained stoic as she spoke, focused on the drive as he kept a watchful eye on his surroundings for anyone chasing. He thought for a moment before looking at Julia and saying, “These people wanted you for a reason. What kind of work did you do there in this whatever division?”

“Energy, mostly. Resurrection still consumes a tremendous amount of energy,” she replied, turning the holo-display off in front of her, leaning back into her seat. “I don’t understand why they would need someone like me,” she finished, staring out the passenger window watching the lights

and hovercars pass by.

Harker pondered, putting the pieces together in his head. “Maybe that’s why they haven’t used it again,” he said, nodding his head. “That’s why they wanted you. They figured you could get their device working again. To solve an energy or fuel problem they have. That explains why there hasn’t been any recent real deaths since the first time they used it,” he finished, smiling to himself as everything suddenly started to make sense to him.

Harker glanced over to her to see that she remained quiet, staring out the window into the dark rainy morning. He focused back on the road, they were nearing the fog and would be safe soon. “I have a safe house near the market slums that I keep stocked. We can stay there for a while,” he said, trying to reassure her.

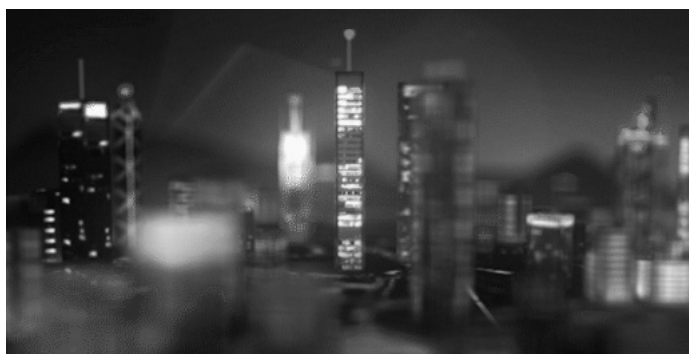
If Peacekeepers were involved in this, he knew they wouldn’t just let them go without consequence. They wouldn’t be able to stay at the safe house for long, as he was sure they kept tabs on him just in case.

Harker focused on the road again, silently cursing to himself about the situation. It was the calm before the storm, and he was going to need to use every trick he knew to accomplish this task.

*To be continued.*

# Tortuga Talk

There have been a few things happening with the Tortuga project recently. The end of October saw the release of a cool new logo animation, posted



on the [Tortuga city community page](#). It also introduces a new slogan for the project: "A dark place in safe space". Which describes pretty well what Tortuga plans on becoming.

Later, Tortuga CEO Alethion was interviewed by [news outlet Dual Insider](#) and answered questions about the origin and future of the community city. It became clear, that there is still a lot of scepticism.



The relationship between the Tortuga project and the organization *Band of Outlaws* seems to still be a cause for concern for people. That's why it has to be emphasised, that both are distinct entities. With Alethion at the helm, the city is still lead by a member of BOO, but half of the current admin team is not affiliated with the organization outside of Tortuga. And with the city being built in a safe zone, there will be neither raids nor grieving.

It's actually worth looking back at historical Tortuga, a Caribbean island that was contested between Spain, England and France in the 17th century. But at the height of its power, formally as a "French colony", it was home to French, English and Dutch nationals and even some freed slaves. Many of them were pirates, but Tortuga was the "safe space" to live and trade in.

"Corsairs, after cruising and robbing along the Spanish coasts, retired to Tortuga to refit and find a market for their spoils. Plantations of tobacco and sugar were cultivated, and although the soil never yielded such rich returns as upon the other islands, Dutch and French trading ships frequently resorted there for these commodities, and especially for the skins prepared by the hunters, bringing in exchange brandy, guns, powder and cloth. Indeed, under the active, positive administration of [french governor] Levasseur, Tortuga enjoyed a degree of prosperity which almost rivaled that of the French settlements in the Leeward Islands."

*The buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII century*, Clarence H. Haring

# TALES FROM TORTUGA

## Released

**Episode 1: *Do Not Go Gently* by Kurock**

**Episode 2: *The Artful Affirmative* by Ben Fargo**

**Episode 3: *The Hunter, And The Hunted 1* by Cybrex**

## Coming on November 16th

**Episode 4: *The Hunter, And The Hunted 2* by Cybrex**

## Planned

**Episode 5: *Apple Tree 1* by Einu Vei**

**Episode 6 by Einu Vei**

**Episode 7 by Ben Fargo**

**Episode 8 by Agilulf**

**Episode 9 by Lethys**

**Episode 10 by Kurock**

**Episode 11 by Empress**

**Episode 12 - The Finale**