

The Crossover

A B.E.A.N. Police Short Story

By

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Dockery stood on the corner of Shagari Avenue and Lekki Boulevard wearing a tight fitting skirt and a native print top, revealing more than enough cleavage. He could smell the salt in the ocean breeze and hear the waves as they crashed behind him. It all relaxed him, in advance of what was about to be, he hoped, the conclusion of almost one year of undercover work.

"Any sign of Wale?" Churchwell crackled through Dockery's audio object. Dockery kept a beach bag slung over his left shoulder, with a white bikini top hanging out.

"Sexy, bra. Really sexy," Makupu teased through the audio object. "How much did you spend on your avatar?"

Dockery frowned. "Look sharp, and stay off audio," he scolded. "This guy slipped through us twice already. We screw *this* up, and L.T. will be chewing us out for the next six months."

"Roger," Makupu replied. Dockery heard the audio object, end-transmission chime. Traffic whizzed through the intersection while Dockery spied various netizens avatars through the visual object embedded in his sunglasses. Dockery reminded himself that Wale already knew what he looked like. Pirates make it their business to know who they are stealing or running from. At every heist or ransom drop, Wale always seemed to see them coming. This time, Dockery decided to do the obvious, yet unthinkable. Go female. Nollywood Beach had no shortage of beautiful, brown-skinned women. He would blend in just enough to be noticed, but not noticed enough to seem out of place.

Through his visual object Dockery compared the signature pattern of Wale's avatar to all the netizen avatars he had been

scanning over the past hour. Here in the Nollywood.gov domain, they were on Wale's turf, so he very well could be ready for net-cops, Dockery thought.

Twenty minutes later, a sports car, a truck, and a biker on a cruiser motorcycle, approached the stoplight at the intersection where Dockery posed. Behind the wheel of the sports car was a young, Blasian man in a floral print, beach shirt with his redhead wife curled up in the passenger seat. Dockery's scan didn't provide a match. Next he scanned the two Russlack businessmen in the truck. The visual object returned an "inconsistent match." Dockery looked over the men again.

"Is that him?" Churchwell buzzed in on Dockery's audio object. Dockery couldn't see Churchwell's avatar from where he stood, but he knew she was close by; she always was. The three vehicles stopped at the traffic light. Dockery scanned the large and leathered Caniak man on the cruiser. His scan returned a sixty-six percent probability of a match to Wale.

"Dockery?" Makupu asked. The countdown icon at the crosswalk signal was already down to 3, then 2.

"Take out the biker, now." As the traffic light turned green, Makupu took a small device out of the freezer of his ice-cream rig, and then flung it at the biker. The device struck the biker's shoulder. Dockery smiled at the biker, as he turned to ogle his female icon. The biker started slow enough for the device to dematerialize, and the biker avatar with it. "Gotcha!"

Dockery, followed by Churchwell and Makupu, headed for the domain gateway, two blocks from the beach. They then dematerialized as a swirl of lights swished them back to real-time.

"Where's he at?" Dockery asked Churchwell, five minutes later, as they both entered their patrol vehicles with Makupu and Johnson

behind them.

"The Internet Protocol address puts him at..." Churchwell gasped, and then did a double take on the read out from the Vehicle Management Control System. "You're not going to believe this, but he's at the Bostonia Public Library!"

"Now that's balls," Dockery replied. He took auto-drive offline as he screeched out of the motor pool and joined the flow of traffic on Tremont Street.

When Dockery and Churchwell arrived at the Bostonia Public Library, it was already 8:30 p.m. They whisked through the Dartmouth Street entrance leaving the humid street for the air conditioned ancient foyer. Dockery had agreed with Churchwell not to alarm the library patrons by going in guns blazing, and to give security a heads-up on Wale. The guard woman at the desk looked younger than Dockery. Her body tensed up when she saw Dockery and Churchwell's auto-pistols drawn.

Churchwell put her hand on the guard's table. "There's nothing to worry about. The man we're looking for will be laying unconscious at a computer terminal."

Dockery nodded in agreement. "We're just gonna go in, and take out the trash."

"Okay, if you're sure." The guard rose and began to lead Dockery and Churchwell up the back stairs leading to the main collection hall. "Um, so...should I clear the computer area? Or do you guys want to do that?"

Before Churchwell could respond, Dockery interjected. "No!" Churchwell and the guard looked at him. "We want to get the drop on him." Dockery said to Churchwell, who looked back at him and nodded. As they moved up the stairs Dockery then enabled his audio-link. "Makupu, Johnson, we're taking the side stairs to the main collection

area, where the terminals are located. Make sure you have us marked on your visual."

"Roger that, bra," Makupu replied. "Don't worry, we won't need the calvary. He's just one dude."

At the top of the staircase, Dockery and Churchwell pointed to the identification crests on their armored uniforms to patrons, and then Churchwell put a figure over her mouth while waving them toward the stairwell. Dockery stayed on point with the guard woman as they approached the terminal area. Churchwell covered their flank. At the terminal area, Dockery noticed about a dozen terminals in a cluster. Five of which were still occupied by patrons. Dockery covered each with his auto-pistol, scanning them with his Visionary glasses, and dismissing them with a wave out of the area. Most took off, when they saw the auto-pistol. Finally, at the last terminal was a muscular, light-brown skinned, man slumped over the keyboard. He was dressed in a Bostonia University sweatshirt and blue jeans. Next to him was a Bostonia University branded backpack. Churchwell waved the guard woman away, and then circled around the opposite side of the cluster. "Well?"

Dockery circled around, until he could see Wale's face. He then looked at the terminal that was still connected, and saw the image of the Nollywood.gov domain where they had just been. After kicking Wale's chair twice, Dockery checked his pulse. Dockery whipped out his handcuff, cuffed Wale, and then disconnected him from the 'net. "Churchwell, read Wale his rights."

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When Churchwell was about to pull into headquarters, Dockery finally broke his silence since Wale's arrest. "How long is he supposed to be out for?" Dockery asked. He looked back through the partition to see Wale still sleeping like a baby, but snoring like a

drunk.

"You should ask Makupu," Churchwell said. "It's some beta arrest program he bought." Churchwell pulled their patrol cruiser into it's numbered spot. They were about to pull Wale out of the back seat, when his eyes flash open and he yelled, "BOO!" Dockery recoiled and immediately pulled The Blade of Shango, out of its sheath holstered on his hip. Churchwell already had her auto-pistol drawn. Churchwell frowned at Dockery, as she saw the massive knife descend back into it's sheath.

"Ah-aah, Martin, e-z?" Wale replied, and then grinned at the Blade. "I am just playing with you."

"Come out!" Dockery waved Wale out. "Nice and 'e-z'," Dockery said.

"I am coming, I am coming." Wale crawled out. "I must admit, after our first two meetings, I expected you to explode the building."

Churchwell responded, "We're sorry to disappoint you, but we are professional."

At the entrance to the access tunnel, Makupu and Johnson awaited Dockery and Churchwell; their auto-rifles trained on Wale.

"I am a mere businessman, and yet you are treating me like a criminal. You have no evidence I did anything! My lawyers will finish you!" Wale said. The scanners washed over them and took images of Wale. "What was that?" Wale asked. His eyes bugged out.

"That's just to make sure, we didn't kick your ass before we booked you, our before your lawyer arrived." Dockery replied. They continued down the corridor to the inner doors and Wale fussed and fumed the whole way through.

"That would be *lawyers*, Dockery. Remember who we have here," Churchwell said. Dockery rolled his eyes. Makupu and Johnson grinned.

Dockery wasn't laughing. He wouldn't be celebrating anything until Wale was sentenced by a judge, and behind bars. It wouldn't be the first time a perp walked on a technicality, or played on the jury's emotions, he thought.

Dockery and Churchwell escorted Wale to Tran in Booking and stayed there watching every single process Wale was put through, Makupu and Johnson return to the B.E.A.N. Police section area.

By the time Dockery and Churchwell entered Interrogation Room Seven, almost thirty minutes later, Wale was showered, shaven, tagged, and cuffed. The lighting flash on Wale once Churchwell sat him down on the chair opposite Dockery. Makupu and Johnson were in the room as well, faces like stone to Wale. This was all at Dockery's request. Dockery placed a piece of net-paper on the table in front of Wale.

"I am not talking," Wale said. "Just let me call my lawyers."

Dockery looked down at the net-paper. "You don't have to say a damn thing, just listen. So when your lawyers get here they'll earn every credit you're paying them." Dockery passed Churchwell the net-paper. "Tell our guest what he's got to stress about."

Churchwell took the net-paper and began, "'net murder, attempted 'net murder, conspiracy to commit murder on the Web, assaulting a net-cop, 'net fraud, 'net terrorism..." Churchwell looked up. "You might want to save your money and just confess. There are enough changes here to put you away for at least...three life sentences."

Just then, there was a loud rapping on the camoglass separating the inner and outer rooms of Interrogation Room Seven. Dockery looked to Makupu and Johnson. "Keep him company." Dockery and Churchwell stepped out to find Lieutenant Arroyo looking irate, his eyes piercing his subordinates.

"Stop questioning this bo-zo, now!" Arroyo bellowed.

"Churchwell, text Johnson to let him lawyer up...I want him outta here."

"Lawyers, L.T.," Dockery interjected.

"Whatever," Lieutenant Arroyo replied. "Get your behind in my office. I got two minutes to debrief you bo-zos, so you can get your bags packed!"

Churchwell put a hand up, blocking Dockery. "Terminating Dockery's employment won't get the commissioner of your back Lieutenant."

"He's not the only one," Lieutenant Arroyo said. "Leave Makupu and Johnson on guard, and get in here! I don't have all night."

In Lieutenant Arroyo's office, Dockery stood against the wall, instead of taking a seat as he usually did. He watched Lieutenant Arroyo pull out a Matacan cigar out of his top, right drawer, rip the end off of it with his teeth, and then light it with his new cybernetic, finger lighter. Dockery's jaw dropped, and turned his glance to Lieutenant Arroyo's cigar cutter lying on the desk in front of him.

"Damn! That bad?" Dockery asked.

"Yes, it's that bad *huevon!*" Arroyo replied. "When I said, don't kill him, I didn't expect you to listen to me."

Just then Churchwell walked in. "You were expecting...collateral damage?" Churchwell asked.

Lieutenant Arroyo nodded and pointed with his cigar, as he exhaled a plume of smoke out of the corner of his mouth, away from Dockery and Churchwell.

"Seriously guys. You did your jobs too well this time," Lieutenant Arroyo said. "Now Homeland Security wants extradition on Wally..."

"wah-LAY," Churchwell interrupted. "It's pronounced wah-LAY."

"Wally, Whalay, I don't give a crap," Lieutenant replied. "If the Nigerian government wants him, we have no choice but to deliver him. Besides, I respect people who take out their own garbage."

Dockery nodded, and then turned to Churchwell. "Okay, so we hand him over to Homeland Security, and they get the credit for getting rid of him?" Churchwell asked. "That doesn't seem right. We did all the work."

"I know, believe me. I see your expense reports, and approved your overtime," Lieutenant Arroyo said. "But you don't get to decide how it ends this time. The mayor's tired, the commissioner is tired, and damn it...I'm tired!"

Dockery studied Lieutenant Arroyo for a moment. "You want this to go away," Dockery said.

"Don't piss your pants he-ro, I've already put you in for a citation," Lieutenant Arroyo said. "A little something to fill up that empty apartment of yours."

"Normally, I'd be all hard up for one...I just can't believe you'd trust Homeland Security to get Wale back to Nigeria," Dockery said.

"I don't trust them one bit," Lieutenant Arroyo replied. "That's why you'll be their unarmed escorts." Dockery and Churchwell turned to each other and mouthed, unarmed.

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A week later, Dockery stood at the Black Falcon Terminal in the South End watching passengers board a massive hydro-cruise ship. The ship registry was Novo Lagos, Nigeria and across the starboard side in green on white lettering, read *Africano Oeste*. Dockery was dressed in white linen trousers, with a matching shirt; the sleeves rolled up and the neck open. As he glanced out to sea, a chill ran down his

spine as her remembered the disaster that was Geneca. Five years ago the meltdown of the off-shore city turned Bostonia Harbor into a hot-tub for almost a week, after its mastermind brought the city to the brink of Armageddon.

Behind him a taxicab pulled up. Dockery turned around to see Churchwell emerge in a light green sun dress that revealed only her toned arms and her legs, below the knees. If it weren't for her military cadence, Dockery may have missed her behind the khaki sun hat and sunglasses. Dockery watched with a smile as she paid the cabbie and insisted on pulling her own suitcase out of the trunk. Churchwell pressed a button on the top of the suitcase, which caused the wheels to emerge from beneath. As soon as she was about three feet away from the suitcase, it began to pursue her with each step, matching her pace.

"I was scared you weren't gonna make it," Dockery said. Churchwell smirked and then took off her sunglasses, when she reached the platform where Dockery stood.

"David still has a couple of months of unemployment, and it will be good for the girls to bond with him," Churchwell said. Dockery turned to Churchwell.

"Two weeks of bonding is a looong time for a dude who isn't used to being home all day," Dockery said.

"He will be fine." Churchwell looked toward the gangway shuttling passengers into the ship, then she shifted her gaze out onto the ocean. She stared far and wide until she caught Dockery in her corner of her view.

"Well, it will give us both a break...time to think about what we want and what we don't," Churchwell said.

"I'm sorry..." Dockery started, but Churchwell cut him off with her extended hand.

"Nothing happened with us. Nothing physical," Churchwell said looking back at the ocean. "It's a technicality, but I didn't bring home any strays."

Moments later an official-looking van pulled up in the parking lot behind Dockery and Churchwell. They both turned around to see it hum to a stop about ten meters away from them. The seal on the side read, United States Department of Homeland Security. One Blatina woman and a Russite man emerged from the van side door, while the two men driving stared at Dockery and Churchwell without so much as a hi-ya-doing-wave.

The Blatina and the Russite were dressed in his and hers summer shirt and short sets. "Are they for real?" Dockery looked to Churchwell. "They should have just worn their uniforms."

Churchwell replied, "It's not that bad Dockery." Next, the pair pulled a cuffed Wale out of the van. He was dressed in a native print vest and shorts that fit his tall and muscular body well. "Okay, you may have a point."

Dockery watched them as they walked up. The Russite was tall and thick, while the Blatina was thin, and bony. "She's attractive isn't she?" Churchwell muttered. Before Dockery could reply, the Blatina woman extended her PDA to Dockery.

"Inspector Anita Ramirez, Department of Homeland Security." The opposite side of the PDA held her badge with identification number. Churchwell did a quick scan with her PDA, and Dockery glanced over when he heard the *ding* of the completed method.

"I'm Detective Dockery, and this is Detective Churchwell." Dockery pointed to Churchwell with his thumb.

"We know, Martin and Hannah," the Russite replied, looking from one to the other. "Inspector Carl Sullivan. Don't worry, just enjoy the cruise. DHS is taking care of it."

"I'll enjoy *it* more on the ride back," Dockery replied, looking at Wale. "I like to wash my hands and enjoy my beer *after*, I take out the trash."

Sullivan looked at Wale. "He does not like you very much."

"Relax Martin. Ramirez pointed to Wale's left leg. "GPS chip implant with a special surprise if Wale tries to leave the ship."

The DHS guys, Dockery and Churchwell waited until the last passenger had boarded, before bringing Wale aboard. While they weren't dressed in uniform, Sullivan didn't want to take a chances by alerting the tourists to their presence. Dockery thought it better to blend in with the passengers, not to stick out any more than they had, but the DHS was in charge.

A handsome, Caucasian man in his mid-sixties welcomed them onboard with a stern grin and a tip of his cap. He shook hands with Sullivan after seeing his ID. "Captain Crestview," he said. "While I don't approve of this, I understand that I don't have much of a choice in the matter. Make no mistake though, I'm still in charge on this ship."

"Right," Anita replied dryly. "Here are all the documentation your require." Anita passed the captain a sliver of net-paper, which he immediately passed to a robust Blatino, with wrapped dreadlocks.

"My first officer will show you to your quarters. Just remember who's ship you're on, and you'll have a good time." The captain stormed off, and the first officer led the procession of Sullivan, Ramirez, Churchwell, and Dockery down the deck.

"It so nice to be un-welcome," Dockery muttered to Churchwell, who hummed in agreement. After escorting Wale to the brig and releasing him to the captain of the guard, the first officer led them to a set of suits on one of the upper decks. As they rode the see-through smart-lift, Dockery saw the spread of the on-board shopping

promenade and the adjoining casino, with dozens of citizens already exploring the numerous nooks and crannies before ship departure. The smart-lift hummed to a stop, and the pairs were led, past some well-dress couples, to the end of the corridor.

"Here are your keys." The first officer beamed the four of them access keys to their cabins. Each of them authenticated the sequence on their respective PDAs. "You two are in fifteen east." The first officer pointed to Dockery and Churchwell. "And you two are in fifteen west." The first officer smiled at Ramirez and then walked off.

Sullivan watched the first officer stroll off. "We'll be monitoring the package on rotation, every two hours, so you guys can relax," Sullivan said. "We are trained for this kind of thing. Just let us worry about him."

"Well, let us know if you need a break," Dockery said. Churchwell stood silent.

"I said don't worry about Wale," Sullivan repeated firmly. Sullivan entered his room and the door slid with a hiss behind him. Churchwell looked to Dockery who shrugged.

"I have a feeling they don't want us in the way," Churchwell said, as she let them both into the cabin. It was a starboard-facing room divided by a length-wise stretch of camo-glass. Each side identical to the other. One bed, one desk, one chair, and one bathroom. Churchwell walked through the opening in the camo-glass partition into the aft section of the cabin, and placed her bag on the bed.

Dockery smirked. "I'll be sleeping here I guess." Dockery went to the window, which widened when he approached it to almost double its size. He could see passengers strewn across the pool deck swimming, lounging, passing, and posing. Churchwell came up behind Dockery and

tentatively placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Are you okay?" Churchwell asked. Dockery was silent, still looking out the window. "I mean about Wale," Churchwell added. Dockery shrugged. Churchwell continued, "We have him. All the work you put in was worthwhile. I would take Sullivan at his word, and relax...a little."

"I know. It's just...I can't stop thinking about all those people getting infected," Dockery said. "Just like that, instant death sentence?"

"I know. But at least the quarantine directive has slowed contagion down." Churchwell moved closer to Dockery. "Let's have lunch, and pretend to be a happy couple on vacation." Dockery looked at Churchwell and smiled. "Who's pretending?"

At the brig, Ramirez walked down a narrow corridor to Wale's cell. "What is it?" Ramirez scowled at Wale.

"I was bored." Wale smiled. "That *oyinbo* soldier is too serious for my liking. Also, you are more attractive."

"I was told you had a request," Ramirez said.

"Yes..." Wale paused. "I would like to send a text message to my mum to let her know I will be arriving soon; so she can cook a nice dish for us." Wale bursted out in laughter. Ramirez stormed off after sharing some explicative with Wale.

Out on the main lounge deck Dockery and Churchwell ate a lunch of burgers and fries with some domestic beer to wash it all down. Churchwell stared at their meal, and then laughed. "We finally get the vacation of our lives, and look at what we're having for lunch." Dockery stared in a daze at the spread.

"What's wrong with burgers and beers?" Dockery asked. "Especially, when we're not paying?"

Churchwell shook her head. "Nothing I guess."

Dockery placed a hand on Churchwell's forearm. "Don't worry, we got a day or two on this boat; we'll get to the fillet mignon and the Dom Perignon." Churchwell smiled and then pulled her hand back. Dockery glanced down and then looked away to the horizon. "Sorry. I was just playing the roll."

"It's okay. I..I'm on probation with David right now so..." Churchwell trailed off. "It's funny. David said I spend more time with you, than with him. If you count the hours."

Dockery straightened up. "Did you count the hours?"

"Well...you know me," Churchwell replied. Just then Churchwell spied Sullivan flirting with a tall and tan blond in a red bikini at the other end of the deck. "It looks like Carl found someone to help him pass his two hours."

Dockery swiveled around to see the thick in the middle, Sullivan performing well enough for the blond to twirl her hair and avert her gaze. "He's been working her since we got over here," Dockery said, looking at his watch. "It's been more than two hours though." Churchwell furrowed her brow and then stood up. "Hey, maybe she went to the ladies room, or something," Dockery said.

"I don't like it." Churchwell replied, and then left the table headed for Sullivan.

"I'm sure she's just doing overtime," Dockery replied. "You know, I was really enjoying my burger," Dockery said. He then wolfed down the last bite before chasing Churchwell.

Before Churchwell and Dockery reached Sullivan, he spotted them coming and began ending the conversation with the blond. Churchwell waited until the blond left Sullivan, exchanged a hard look with her as she passed, and then continued to Sullivan.

"Where's Anita?" Churchwell asked.

Sullivan rubbed his red face with one of his large hands. "My alarm went off twenty minutes ago..." Sullivan began.

"Twenty minutes?" Dockery yelled, catching the attention of a few passengers.

"THEN," Sullivan continued, "I received a text from Anita telling me to come down in thirty minutes."

"Is that normal for her?" Dockery asked?

"Now that I think of it...no," Sullivan replied. Dockery looked at Churchwell and then saw two robust men in shorts waving out to sea. Churchwell followed Dockery's gaze out to sea, to a small vessel about half-a-mile away speeding toward the them.

"You're not expecting any company, are you Carl?" Dockery asked.

"Ah, no," Sullivan replied. Dockery raced off deck. He beckoned them to follow with his trailing hand. Churchwell ran while Sullivan jogged behind him. "Hannah, let the Captain now we got ourselves some pirates!"

"How do you know they're pirates?" Sullivan asked. "Aren't you being hysterical?"

"Too small to be hauling real cargo, too fast to be working fishermen," Churchwell answered.

"Sullivan, come on!" Dockery said. The three swarmed into the stairwell leading to the upper-decks with Churchwell running up the stair to find Captain Crestview, and Dockery and Sullivan running down the corridor towards the brig.

"Just remember it was your big idea not to have guns on board." Dockery said to Sullivan.

"Well there are two of us, and one of him." Sullivan replied. When Dockery and Sullivan got down to the brig, they saw Ramirez and the captain of the guard lying on the floor, bruised and beaten.

Immediately Sullivan reached for the alarm, while Dockery checked vitals on both Ramirez and the captain of the guard.

"Her pulse is steady, but his is weak," Dockery said.

Sullivan tapped the emergency com. "Medical emergency!"

Dockery and Sullivan waited for the medical team to arrive before racing to the bridge where Churchwell was arguing with Captain Crestview.

"I cannot jeopardize the welfare of the passengers and this crew," yelled the Captain Crestview. "All they want is their leader. We give them what they want, they'll go. I've see this before"

"You must be joking! These aren't just some thugs looking for rent money. Their leader is an international terrorist with outstanding warrants on three continents," Churchwell said. "Once Wale gets free, he will see to it that there is NO evidence of his being on this ship. That's means sinking it, and everyone on it."

"You can't let Wale go," Dockery said. "You'll be signing our death warrants."

"I am in command," Captain Crestview replied." Dockery and Churchwell looked to Sullivan.

"He's right," Sullivan replied.

Dockery kicked the chair next to him over. "I'm not going to let you give him a get-out-of-jail-free card, after all we went through to catch him in the first place," Dockery said.

"My decision has been made detectives. Besides, If I'm not mistaken, Agent Sullivan is the only authorized individual operating in an official capacity. So unless you would like to take Wale's place in the brig, I strongly urge you to remain in your cabins until this thing is blows over," said Crestview.

Dockery looked to Sullivan for any response, when none came he proceeded to leave the bridge. "You don't know who you're dealing

with." Churchwell looked to Sullivan before following Dockery. Before she breached the, Sullivan spoke.

"Don't worry Hannah. We'll contact the Nigerian navy to intercept them once they leave the ship. It's safer than attempting to engage them on the ship," Sullivan said.

Churchwell stopped. "I saw this man burn an entire bus in the middle of rush hour, even though the driver had done what he had asked. Then he disappeared for nearly six-months, just like that, in the middle of a regional manhunt."

As Dockery and Churchwell made their way to the lower deck, they heard Captain Crestview, over the intercom, order all passengers to their cabins, indefinitely.

"He just turned this into the world's largest floating prison," Dockery said.

"At least it will lower the body count," Churchwell said.

"For now," Dockery replied.

Churchwell turned to Dockery. "So what now?"

"Just like master said. We go to our cabin...and wait," Dockery said. Swarms of passengers scurried past them as they strolled to their cabin, while the Captain Crestview repeated his message for passengers to return to their cabins in a calm and orderly fashion.

"That's it? You've already given up?" Churchwell asked. "What would the Lieutenant say. I mean you were the one who didn't trust DHS with Wale in the first place. This is your big 'I told you so', and you want to go lay down?"

Dockery and Churchwell both entered their cabin, and then the door swooshed closed behind them. "If I've learned anything from you, is waiting for the right moment." Dockery pulled out Juliet, his personal digital assistance and ran a tracking program. "Call L.T. and let him know what's going on. He'll be pissed off, but maybe he

can pull some strings to get us out of this."

Churchwell pulled out Romeo, her PDA, and attempted to connect to Lieutenant Arroyo, but her connection kept getting reset. "I can't keep an open connection." Churchwell looked to Dockery, who was still staring at his PDA. "What do you have there?"

"I'm using your program to track Wale," Dockery said. He then showed Churchwell the display. "I guessed that maybe Anita had him refided sometime before we boarded. I just needed some time and a whole lotta luck to find Wale's frequency."

"Refi-what?" Churchwell asked.

"Radio Frequency Identification, R-F-I-D," Dockery replied.

"That's not what you said." Churchwell looked at the display to see a diagram of a the ship and a green dot in the center. A red dot appeared over the top-right corner of the display. "Very, nice."

"So let's go get him," Dockery said, heading for the sliding door.

"Not so fast," Churchwell said. "They're probably armed, and we're not." Dockery scanned around the room quickly, until he noticed the bed-side desks. He walked over, grabbed one of them.

"Nice and cheaply made." Dockery slammed the table down on the ground, separating the legs from the base. "Here you go." Dockery wrenched two legs off, and then passed one to Churchwell.

"Well, you always liked to go clubbing," Churchwell said, grinning ear to ear. Dockery rolled his eyes, and shook his head. Dockery and Churchwell headed for the door. It didn't slide open as they had expected. They both looked at each other, and then nodded. Churchwell pulled out her PDA. She pointed her PDA at the door and ran a series of unlocking programs, until the third program disabled the lock.

Dockery and Churchwell slid the door to the right with their

bare hands, until Dockery could fit the end of his club into the gap. After that, Dockery used his PDA's spaghetti camera, to see who might have been in the hallway waiting for them. After seeing no one, Churchwell then began to pull the door back, as Dockery pried the door with the club. Once through the door, Dockery headed out into the hallway and then waved Churchwell after him. A few steps later, Churchwell poked Dockery. "I'm going to connect to your PDA so I'm not so blind...no offense," Churchwell said.

"None taken," Dockery said. When Dockery saw Churchwell's connect request on his PDA, he granted access with a tap on the screen. Churchwell could now see the red dot representing Wale location. It was still in the same place as before. The overlay of the ship schematics showed Dockery and Churchwell were just a few decks away. As they crept to the first corner, Dockery could hear the rukus of a brawl.

From Churchwell's PDA display, she could see two figures represented in blue, right next to their green dot. Dockery peeked around the corner and saw the captain of the guard struggling with a young, thin and muscled brother. Dockery waited until the black man's back was facing him, and then he raced out, and clubbed him with the table leg in the small of his bag. When the pirate seemed to take his time going down, Churchwell finished him with two swift taps to the head.

"Is he dead," the captain of the guard asked, as Dockery stripped the pirate of his audio-link, and auto-rifle.

"I didn't hit him *that* hard." Dockery tossed the auto-rifle to Churchwell, and then put on his audio-link. He then switched the microphone to mute.

Churchwell helped the captain of the guard off the floor and they all continued to followed Wale's signal on their PDAs.

"How many more are there?" Dockery asked.

"Five, minus the one your partner took out," the captain of the guard said.

They stopped at an intersection of corridors. "What's the best way to get to this dot." Dockery pointed to his PDA.

The captain of the guard studied the PDA. "He's...he's in a lifeboat. A lifeboat on deck three. We can avoid the main deck by going through Engineering." He lead Dockery and Churchwell down the corridor in the direction they had been coming, and then he popped open a hatch, which revealed a narrow stair-ladder. They each inched down the ladder, and into the dark.

Once in the innards of Engineering, the captain of the guard seemed to relax, and increase his pace. "We should hurry, by now they will notice their man missing," he said.

"Do they have any hostages?" Churchwell asked.

"Beside the captain, no," the captain of the guard said. "All other passengers and the crew are locked in their cabins."

"What about Ca...Sullivan...?" Dockery asked. The captain of the guard looked down.

"He tried to negotiate, but he failed," he replied. "They threw him overboard once they figured out he wasn't in charge."

When Dockery, Churchwell, and the captain of the guard exited the lower deck, Churchwell took a look at her DPA and saw two figures to their immediate right. From the read out, they were about ten meters away. Dockery put his finger to his lips, then pointed to the captain of the guard. He then counted to three with the fingers on his right hand, and then made a pushing motion with both hand. The captain of the guard nodded. Dockery put away his PDA, and watched Churchwell signal a holding pattern to Dockery with her balled fist. A few seconds later, she gave Dockery a thumbs-up.

Dockery gave a finger count, to three, then they waited until the two unsuspecting pirates strolled through with rifles slung. In a flash, Dockery and the captain of the guard rushed forward and body-checked the pirates hard enough to send them against, and then over, the railing. The sound of metal clanged and their wails could be heard, as their bodies plunged below.

Dockery peered over the railing to see the pirates' mangled bodies amongst some metal contraptions below. "That's what you get," Dockery said. "Let's..." Dockery was interrupted by a torrent of gunfire from the right. They quickly dove for cover. When Dockery recovered, he saw that one shot had grazed his shoulder, and the other nicked the captain of the guard in the leg. Churchwell led the scramble away from the gunfire, and towards Wale's location. As Churchwell approached the first cluster of lifeboats, she saw a figure scrambling out of one of the lifeboats toward the stern of the ship. She snatched up one of the table legs in mid-stride and chased after Wale. As he ran, Churchwell whipped the table leg across the deck, and pursued Wale as it spun towards him.

Churchwell watched the table leg catch Wale between his legs, and sent him flying across the deck. When Dockery and the captain of the guard caught up with Churchwell, she saw they were both splattered with blood. "Why do men always have to take a bullet to feel alive?" Churchwell asked, as she ran to subdue Wale.

"I didn't sign up for this rubbish," the captain of the guard said. Dockery just grinned.

"We'll be all right, thanks for caring," Dockery replied. The captain on the guard took off his belt and cuffed Wale, while Dockery got some loose rope to finish the job. Churchwell then heaved a groaning Wale upright, after softening him up with a few whacks to the midsection.

"Your friends are here." Churchwell said, "Want to say hi?" Dockery ripped a piece of Wale's shirt off. Before Wale could respond in protest, Dockery gagged him with it.

Meanwhile the captain of the guard dressed both their wounds. Churchwell examined their dressings. "Not bad, not bad." Wale attempted to scream with the cloth in his mouth, then he began trashing. Dockery put a stop to that with a knee to Wale's groin.

"Three down, three left," the captain of the guard said. "Now we're even." Dockery grabbed the table leg from Churchwell and stood in wait, while Churchwell and the captain of the guard, hid behind some massive piping.

Dockery could not only hear, but feel, the heavy footfalls coming towards him. He waited to see the shadow of one of the pirates, then he swung for the head of the first one that passed by. Dockery caught the pirate square in the jaw, sending him sprawling across the deck. Dockery then felt a sharp pain in his side, as the second pirate jabbed him with his rifle. Immediately Churchwell and the captain of the guard jumped into the fray, overpowered the third pirate, and then disarmed him. By the time the second pirate recovered, Churchwell and the captain of the guard had rifles trained on him.

Once the captain of the guard and Churchwell had secured the pirates, Dockery grabbed a rifle and then strolled over to Wale.

Dockery leveled the rifle down on Wale. "It's over!" Dockery said. "And please, do something stupid so I can add more iron to your diet."

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By the time the Africano Oeste reached Porto Novo, twelve hours later, the crew and passengers had been released. A few cheered and waved hands as they disembarked. Rivera was whizzed by into an

ambulance by the ship's medical officer. Dockery and Churchwell walked a bound and gagged Wale toward the docking gate where a tall and thin caucasian man, wearing a cowboy hat, stood.

"Is that the guy?" Dockery asked. Churchwell looked at her PDA, nodded, and then showed the image to Dockery.

"Inspector Morefishco," Churchwell added.

"I hope there's more than just him," Dockery said.

When Dockery and Churchwell got close enough, Morefishco ran up and knocked Wale out cold with a fist to his face. Dockery and Churchwell watch as Wale buckled down, and then back at Morefishco in shock.

"My deputy says we're out of arrest drugs in our police bus," Morefishco said, "and your Lieutenant Arroyo authorized me to...subdue criminals that present a national security risk while in transit."

Dockery and Churchwell grinned.

"Inspector Morefishco." Morefishco said. He then waved Dockery and Churchwell to follow him through the dock gate as he turned to leave. "Welcome to Novo Lagos."

THE END