

Buck heard the door creak open and then suddenly Wilma Derring unceremoniously fell into the room. From where he was chained to the wall, Buck couldn't see who or what had propelled her, but he was reasonable sure Wilma didn't really want to join him in the cave like cell.

Buck had been sent by the Federation's defense directorate to gather some intelligence on the Pic's people's stronghold which was located on the outlying planetoid called Oros. And while he had been successful in gathering the information, he had not been so successful in making his getaway.

"Well well well fancy meeting you here" Wilma said as she picked herself up and dusted herself off.

"Are you alright, any injuries?" She asked as she moved over to Buck.

"No, no physical injuries, only thing hurt is my pride. What are you doing here" He replied.

"When you didn't check in on schedule, I came out to find you. It didn't take long for them to find me."

Wilma carefully examined the cuffs around his wrists, the chain and the bolts in the wall.

"Yep, just as I figured, your pretty much stuck. So what happened, how long as you been here?"

"I wish I could tell you but I'm not sure. I was on my way back to the spaceport when I was ambushed from behind. I heard a noise and then that weird feeling from a stun gun. Next thing I knew I woke up here as these two big brutes were chaining me as you see me now. What day is it anyway?"

"It the 3rd so you've been here just over a day and a half. You must have been out cold for a good part of yesterday"

At this point Buck's stomach gives a loud rumble.

"And I take it you haven't been fed a whole lot either" Wilma said with a chuckle

"No they haven't fed me anything. I got the distinct impression that they really didn't know quite what to do with me" Buck replied

"I know that feeling, I don't know what to do with you most of the time either"

"Very funny. I don't supposed you have any food on you?"

"No I didn't bring any food, not that you eat food disks any way"

"Right now I'd love a food disk"

"I'm sorry, I didn't bring any food disks"

Wilma moved into the center of the small room. It was L-shaped with rough-hewn rock sides and a very high ceiling of over 20 feet. Buck was sitting on the floor at the end of the short end of the L, with his feet sticking out into the larger chamber.

"Natural light is coming from those windows, but there are much too high for anybody to get through. I guess the only way out is how we got in." She walked over to the door and began to closely examine it. The door was made of planks of some hard natural material; there was no handle on the door or touch pad on the wall. There was a small opening in the door about a foot square. It would have been at just about eye level for Buck, but was too high for Wilma to see out of. The only covering appeared to be a cross work of metal bars.

"This is one of the strangest doors I have ever seen. It doesn't slide into the wall; it swings into the room. I wonder how it works"

"It's got hinges!" Buck said.

"What?"

"Hinges, H I N G "

Wilma cut him off; "it doesn't matter how you spell it, what are they, how do they work?" She said as she knelt down and closely examined the side of the door.

"It has two sets of loops or barrels; half on the door and half of the wall" Buck said. But he was growing increasingly frustrated, he wanted to use his hands, to show her what he was talking about, but he couldn't. Wilma turned back towards him at the sound of his chains rattling. She moved over and knelt down on the floor next to him.

"Two sets of loops?"

"One set on the door," he said, "another on the wall. They interlock. The bottom loop is on the door the next one up on the wall and so on. Then there's a pin that goes through all of the loops and holds it all together."

"I see and it pivots on the pin"

"Right. The pins usually have a knob or larger cap on top to keep the pins from falling through"

She went back to the door and briefly examined the hinges.

"It's hard to see what's happening everything is covered with some kind of reddish oxidation"

"Rust. If we could get the pins out, the door will fall out."

"No it won't. There's a bar that goes through some slots across the entire door and the wall on either side. They had to slide it completely out, then turn a large delocking device in a hole in the door before they could open it."

"Boy that is an old door I bet it's even older than I am. Try scrapping the rust off with your fingernail"

"What and break a nail?" Wilma said in mock horror!

"Sorry!" Buck replied with a grin. "I wonder if they checked my pockets, I brought those 20th Century nail clippers with me. Come see if they are still in my pocket."

"Good idea, hopefully the brutes as you called them weren't very efficient."

Wilma went back to Buck, reached across him and felt the side of his leg where the pocket was while Buck fought off another grin.

"Now I know why you insist on having some of your clothes made special. Pockets are a nice feature" Sure enough there was the small lump. "Yep, they probably had no idea you had anything stashed there."

Wilma slipped her hand into the pocket "Stop wiggling!" And pulled out the small folded clipper.

"Maybe I will have some of those pants with pockets made"

"Do all us guys a favor and don't bother" Buck said with a devilish grin.

Wilma shot him a look over her shoulder as she went back to the door. He couldn't see the smile on her face as she bent to her task. After a few minutes

of concerted effort she was able to see the top of the pin in the bottom of three hinges.

Wilma returned to Buck's side. "So if we can get the pins out of the hinges except for the bar across it on the other side, it should fall right?"

"Right. But we would have to make sure the door fell when and where we want it." Buck replied. "If we knew when some one was going to open it, once they had pulled the bar and used the delocking device, if we could get the door to fall out into the hall there a good probability it would take out anybody in the hall." "Your right about that, it's very heavy. What if we were able to push it at the top?"

"That would work, I'm not sure how hard we would need to push it though. We would need to know when they were going to open the door."

"That part we'll have to think about. In the meantime we can get the pins out and see what develops."

"And how are you planning on getting the pins out?"

As Buck was talking, Wilma shifted to a kneeling position and reached around to the heel of one of her boots. She gripped the heel and turned it 90 degrees, revealing a small cavity.

"Holy Cow! The Wild Wild West!"

"What?"

"Hey how come you get to bring stuff, and I didn't"

"Because you weren't expecting to get captured and I was. Now let me see, I think there's enough here. Sorry, I don't think I can get the cuffs off your wrists, but we can break the chains holding the cuffs."

She pulled a small length of wire from the recess in the boot heel, carefully twisted off a piece about 2 inches and wrapped the short length around the link connecting the cuffs to the chain.

"Turn your head", she told him as she gave the wire a jerk and turned her own face away. Suddenly there was a small popping sound and a puff of smoke and Buck's arm dropped.

"Neat!" Buck said

Wilma broke off another short length of the wire and tossed to Buck. "Here you should be able to get the your left hand free with this, I'm going to work on the door."

As Wilma was working on the pin on the bottom hinge, a shadow moved across the floor as someone walked between the door and the light source. Buck had just emerged into the larger chamber.

"Shhh" Wilma hissed with a finger to her lips. She craned her head close to the small crack in the door and listened intently. She could just make out what was being said. Both Buck and Wilma heard the laugh of one of the men as he moved off back down the hallway.

Buck silently moved over to Wilma.

"Could you make out what was said?" he asked.

"Just about. It seems we are to be the main attraction at a war counsel in about 10 minutes. Brute one left to get one more guard, they think you may be a

handful and want 3 guys. "

"Me a handful, never."

"Yea right. Anyway it means we have less than 10 minutes to get these pins out. I have this one ready to blow so look out."

She turned her head and gave the wire a quick pull. There was the same popping sound and puff of smoke. The knob at the top of the pin tumbled to the ground but the pin stayed put.

"We'll have to knock it out." Buck said. "Do you see any sticks or anything long and thin?" He asked.

"No", Wilma replied as she looked around the floor. "Just some good sized rocks, we could use them to pound on the pins"

"Hang on, where's my nail clipper? Grab one of those big rocks over in the corner."

Wilma passed Buck the clipper and went over to pick up a couple of rocks, each about 6 inches around.

Buck took one of the rocks, placed the end of the clippers squarely on top of the sheared off pin and gave it a good whack. And the pin dropped out.

It didn't take very long to get the other two pins to drop out as well.

Once they were out, Buck moved over to beside the door next to the window and surreptitiously glanced out. Their cell was at the end of a narrow hallway, about 50 feet long. He could just see the back of the guard at the end of the hall. Buck gently ran his finger along the edge of the window, judging its thickness.

"This is a very heavy door. I doubt we would be able to push it over without taking a running jump at it, and then we'd end up in the hall too. "

" Well how about if we use some contact explosive?" Wilma asked as she again knelt down, this time revealing the cavity in the other boot.

"Man, what else you got in there?"

"This is it, that's all I have, just an ounce or so of explosive" She told him as she removed a small white blob of material and began to knead it in her hands.

"If we put it at the top of the door, that stuff may force the top out first and knock out everybody in the hall behind it."

"If we can detonate it." Wilma handed the now clear blob to Buck who reached up to the very top of the door and stuck the blob in the middle just below the edge of the door.

Wilma watched as he then turned around and selected one of the heavy rocks they had used on the pins.

"Stand next to the door and let me know when they have the bar out, I'll set off the explosive with this"

"Are you sure you can hit it?" She asked

"No problem, I was an All American as a kid"

Wilma didn't know what that was but she knew it meant Buck could hit the blob and detonate the explosive.

Wilma took a position where she could see the window in the door, while Buck moved back towards the rear of the cell. Within a moment or two, Wilma heard the sound of the guards moving down the hall toward the door. They were

talking loudly in the local language. Wilma could only make out a word or two but it was enough to tell her they were discussing some type of sporting event that they had seen. Obviously they were not very concerned about their task. She moved to the side of the door once they arrived outside the cell. She heard the bar being pulled out of its slots and a clunk as it was put against the wall. Then the sounds of the delocking device turned in the hole. She turned to Buck, as soon as she heard the lock click said "Now!"

At that Buck threw the rock at the top of the door, hitting the blob of explosives dead center.

There was a loud POP and the door hung for a split second before blasting out of the doorway and down the hall. It landed a few feet from where it had been hanging, with the 3 brutes unconscious beneath it.

"Oops I think we used a little too much" said Wilma as she fanned the smoke away.

"Don't worry about that now, let's get out of here!"

Buck and Wilma carefully moved through the doorway.

The two terrains stepped around the door and quietly made their way down the hall. When they reached the corner, Buck started to go to the right, but Wilma grabbed him.

"This way" she said.

"Are you sure?"

"Which one of us was awake when we came in here. We'd better hurry, those guys won't stay out for ever." Wilma retorted.

They made their way down a couple of hallways making two more turns.

Eventually they came on a door that stood open to the outside. The door wasn't the main door, and was only guarded by one brute. He was standing at the end of a short walk with his back to the building. He was so concerned with preventing anybody from entering the building, he never noticed Buck and Wilma slip out, hug the side of the wall and disappear into the crowd. Soon the 2 terrains were causally making their way to the far side of town.

"I left a ship in a clearing just outside of town" Wilma told Buck as they reached the outskirts of the little town.

A short time later, Wilma and Buck arrived at the edge of the clearing in the forrest where Wilma had left her small but powerful shuttle. And now there was a new problem. Standing near the ship was yet another of the brutes and this one was armed with a long-range weapon slung over his shoulder. It was very obvious he was guarding the ship, and waiting for someone.

For a brief moment Wilma's face showed a look of indecision, but then she said, "We'll need to go back to the space port and see if we can get on a shuttle somewhere else. I think there is service to the Precio moon, from there we.."

Buck was shaking his head as she was whispering to him. Finally he blurted out "Wait" He held up his index finger, as if to say watch and learn.

"Stay here, I'll take care of this guy" With that Buck slipped away circling the clearing just in the trees. Even though she was watching him, Wilma soon lost sight of him. Buck was carefully picking his way, make no noise at all. Shortly

Wilma caught a glimpse of Buck as he emerged from the woods at the rear of the ship. Meantime the guard continued to scan the edge of woods towards the front of the ship. It was obvious he was expecting some one to come from that direction. As the guard's head was turned towards the front of the ship, Buck threw a small rock. It landed with a loud thud in front of the ship. The guard was instantly on alert. He swung the weapon down to the level of his hip and stared into the woods. He didn't see or hear Buck as he moved out of the woods and right behind him. Buck simply tapped him on the shoulder. The brute never knew what hit him as Buck nailed him with a right cross to the chin when he was turned around. The guard crumpled to a heap at the side of the ship, out cold.

Buck turned to wave to Wilma but she was already jogging across the open area to the ship.

"Nice job" she said.

"Thanks" replied Buck. But now he turned to the ship and scratched his head. There was no door on the side of the ship, there didn't appear to be a hatch or even a window. There was no touchpad or control panel; no way into the ship.

"I give up, how do we get in?"

Wilma held up her index finger and walked over to the fuelage and pushed on the center of the zero in the serial number painted on the side of the ship. Silently a small panel in the middle slid open; Wilma put her hand flat on the wall. The ship responded with a "beep beep boop" and a door silently swung up to allow access to the interior.

"After you!"

Soon the small ship was raising straight up and once it was it had cleared the trees the two Terrains were heading for home.