

A Day in the Life of a Maquis: Part 2
by Beverly Lightheart

Previously, Dack Hardeen, a member of the Maquis, was shot down by the Cardassians over a planet along the border in Cardassian space. After escaping the wreckage and blowing up a Cardassian outpost, Dack stole a shuttle and flew to orbit where he was cornered by the same Cardassian warship in orbit.

Locked on by a tractor beam, he let himself be pulled close enough to the ship where his shuttle would be angled towards the vessel, then pressed a button on the control panel. The phaser array fired on the tractor beam instantly, and with a small explosion his stolen Cardassian shuttle was released. A grin spread across his face as he activated the impulse drive, and began his trek away from the atmosphere. The shuttle shuddered as weapons fire barraged its hull, and he knew it wouldn't be too long until they penetrated the shuttle's shields.

"Let's see how fast this thing can go," Dack said as he switched to warp drive, and his shuttle shot off into the distance.

It was with a look of disgust that Dack noted the Cardassian warship was following him. "Don't you guys ever give up?" he muttered aloud as he checked his distance to the demilitarized zone. No Cardassian military ship would dare risk breaking the treaty by following him in. He just had to make it there before they got back into weapons' range. And they were closing fast.

Another disruptor burst from the warship knocked out the shuttle's shields, and a final one brought the shuttle out of warp. Quickly his eyes roamed the vicinity in hopes of finding someplace to hide. Anywhere? Asteroids to hide behind? Nebula to get lost in? The black space that met him was depressingly empty.

The Cardassian ship came out of warp almost right on top of him, and he knew it was end game. But he was not about to give up without a fight. No, he had one more trick up his sleeve, and an assault rifle slung over his back.

Removing a small device from his pocket, he switched it on and attached it to the shuttle's systems. "All right, let's see you transport on with this baby." Angling his ship to come around to theirs, he aimed the shuttle right at the bridge of the warship. As expected, he heard the familiar hum of a Cardassian transporter beam activating behind him. Usually the scattering field the device projected kept others from getting a firm transporter lock. But just in case he failed, he decided he'd crash the shuttle nose first into the bridge. Shields might block damage, but who knew, he might get lucky. He chanced a look behind him, enough to see the orange-yellow sparkles of Cardassians materializing behind him, before both faded out of existence.

With a grin he focused his attention back on the viewscreen, and targeted the bridge with his disruptors. He fired blast after blast, and as the ship fired at him, he performed evasive maneuvers taught to him by Starfleet and other Maquis members. His blasts pounded on the shields, but none were getting through. As long as they didn't hit him again though, he could keep this up all day.

As he glanced down briefly at his hands to make a course correction, he noticed a slight yellow glow. They were trying to transport him out instead? Quickly he reached for his device to change the frequency of the scattering field. An instant later, he dematerialized from the cockpit chair.

"Did you get him?" a Cardassian soldier asked his co-worker as they stood behind the transporter controls.

"No, something on the shuttle is blocking our targeting sensors. I'm remodulating the frequency to compensate." He pressed a few buttons on the control panel before trying again. This time, the yellow stars danced above the transporter pad, and two Cardassian soldiers brought their rifles to bear on the incoming figure. But just as soon as it appeared, it was gone. The system deactivated a moment later.

"What happened?" the Cardassian demanded of the transporter chief.

"I don't know. At the last second I lost his signature. He's not on the shuttle anymore, though." With a smug look the transporter chief looked at his companion. "He's dead."

"Gul Duval is going to be so disappointed. He was hoping to take a Maquis prisoner and find out where they're operating from this time. Wouldn't that be a laugh if we find out it's the Federation all along?" A chuckle was elicited from his companion before he slapped him on the back, and went off to report his findings, or lack thereof.

Dack's world was black when he rematerialized. Disoriented from the transporter beam, he blinked and tried to figure out where he was. He'd tried to readjust his scattering device to block them from transporting him, but had it worked? He wasn't on a Cardassian transporter pad surrounded by Cardassians, but he also wasn't anywhere he recognized. In fact...where was he? What place was as dark as where he now found himself? Or was he dead? He flexed his fingers and limbs, glad they worked, but found them a bit numb, like he'd cut off the circulation. In fact, it suddenly occurred to him that his whole body felt numb, and cramped. In an attempt to stretch out his leg, his foot hit something hard with a resounding thunk before he'd moved it more than an inch. Moving his foot again made the same thumping noise, and he did the same with his hand. It took a moment for him to realize that he was inside something really small.

He decided it couldn't be a prison cell. He'd never seen the inside of one before, but he was sure they were a bit larger. It would be fairly inconvenient for a Cardassian soldier to have to drag out a prisoner and then conduct interrogation. Or had they just stuffed him into a trunk for their own amusement?

He reached his hand about, feeling along the top of what felt like a smooth durasteel wall until he came to distinct depressions that reminded him of buttons. Ahah, no trunk would have a control panel on the inside, it must've been some kind of storage area or maintenance shaft he found himself in. But he could hardly see where the button to open it was. Did he have a light? Yes, he was sure he had a light somewhere, but he could hardly reach it in his cramped position.

Just as he had found a small penlight and flicked it on, he heard the approaching sound of boots hitting a metal deck. He knew they'd probably not see the light through the bulkhead, but he decided not to take a chance and quickly switched it off. Slowly he breathed in and out as the footfalls stopped around his location, and he heard muted voices engaged in conversation. Did they know he was in here? Or were they going to access this storage compartment by sheer luck and find him? With bated breath he waited, and the voices seemed to go on forever.

Finally they stopped, and Dack listened carefully as the footfalls seemed to grow more distant before he tried the control panel again. With a slight hiss it opened, and he peered out in the hallway before venturing out of the crawlspace. Luckily for him, the hallway was empty, and he gave himself a moment to look over the place he'd come out of. It was like a smuggler's cubbyhole; not quite noticeable on the outside unless you knew where to press.

Then he heard footfalls again and he grabbed for his phaser. Had they heard the door open and were now coming for him? Where should he go? Quickly his eyes roamed over the corridor and

he spotted a doorway. It was dangerous to go into a random room, but just as dangerous to remain in the hallway. He ran across the corridor, and made it through the doorway just as a Cardassian turned the corner. He stood behind the door, peering out into the hallway as a Cardassian soldier stopped in front of the locker space, stared at it, then glanced about in the corridor. Then with a shrug he closed it up, and went on his way.

Once the danger was over, Dack looked about the room he'd hidden in; just an ordinary cleaning supplies closet, with nobody in it. This wouldn't last, though. He was on a Cardassian warship, with over a hundred soldiers on board. Sooner or later, he'd run into a whole squad of them, and then he'd really be caught. He needed to figure out a way off the ship. The rumbling under his feet gave no indication as to whether they were in warp or sublight, but he knew he had to assume they'd either be patrolling around the demilitarized zone, or heading back to the battle site. Regardless, he was stranded unless he could find a way to either make it to the hangar bay unnoticed, or contact his fellow Maquis.

He didn't exactly have a plethora of tools, but he figured he could jury rig something so long as Cardassian warships were similar to Federation ships in their wiring. Opening a panel on the wall, he peered at the wiring and capacitor nodes that ran back and forth inside the wall. Now if he knew his engineering right, then the one on the right would be the communications relay. He just needed to modify it to send out a homing beacon that would attract the Maquis ships in the area. Biting his lip slightly, he pulled out a spanner and stuck it inside. One little tweak there, and...

Suddenly the lights went out and he heard rather annoyed shouting through the wall. "Whoops," he muttered to himself. "Wrong wire." The lights came back on as he reconnected it, and he hoped that the Cardassians on the deck would figure it to be a momentary power blip. Given that several minutes went by and nobody showed up, he figured he was probably right. For what seemed like ages, he carefully modified the circuitry inside the wall until he'd finally achieved a makeshift beacon, and used his comlink to piggy back a quick message on their communications system.

Just as he was putting the metal plate back on the wall, the door opened. Dack looked up to see a rifle pointed at him, and he flashed a rather awkward smile. His phaser was on his belt, and in the time it would take for him to grab it and aim, the Cardassian could twitch his finger and end him right there. "Heheh, would you believe I'm just making sure that everything is in order and the power is on?"

"Get away from the control panel," the Cardassian barked, and jerked his rifle to signal Dack to step away.

Very slowly, Dack stood up and stepped back, raising his hands in the air. "I didn't do anything. Really. See for yourself." He gestured to the control panel.

The Cardassian stared at him and performed what could've been an eyeroll, before he stepped towards the control panel. His rifle was still aimed at Dack, but he took his eyes off him for just a moment. And Dack chose that moment to attack. As he collided with the Cardassian, the rifle fired, the energy bolt searing the ceiling where it hit. They grappled as they fell on the floor, each of them struggling for the other's weapons and to end the life of his assailant before the other could. He knew he needed to hurry before security heard the noises and arrived, and he also needed to avoid using his phaser as much as possible. Still, when the Cardassian's gun hit the ground, he reached for it, and managed to grab it before the Cardassian could. Swinging the rifle hard, he caught the soldier in the head with the butt of the rifle, effectively knocking him out.

Panting as he climbed to his feet, he discarded the rifle at the Cardassian's side before peering out into the hallway. He heard no sounds, so he ventured out into the hallway, choosing to head for another door. He'd made it half way down the hall before he heard running footsteps, and he grabbed his own rifle from off his back. As the first Cardassian appeared in the hallway, he swung

it around, firing a quick burst that caught the soldier in the chest. His companion followed almost instantly, and Dack had to swing around the corner to avoid the blast that followed.

"As much as I like shooting at y'all, I really need to get off this ship," he hollered as disruptor blasts splattered the wall opposite him. "Could you direct me to the hangar bay?" He came out again once the blasts had stopped for a second, firing another round that downed yet another Cardassian. He retreated just in time to avoid getting it in the chest, then fired a few useless blasts down the hallway as he moved away from that corridor.

He fervently hoped that a Maquis cell was in the area, because with his luck he wouldn't make it to a safe hiding place. His beacon would attract them from a far distance, but it'd probably take hours for them to arrive, assuming they chose to attack a Cardassian vessel outside the demilitarized zone--assuming of course they were in Cardassian space. Dack hoped they were still sitting on the edge and had even ventured inside the DMZ. That would give the Maquis a good reason to attack their vessel and hit them hard.

He'd gone maybe three hallways before he ran right into three Cardassian soldiers. Their rifles came to bear almost the moment his did, and he found three rifles about a foot away from him. Far too close for comfort, and far too close to try avoiding them if he wanted to live. He wasn't sure which was preferable, being tortured in perfect health, or being tortured while injured. Where was that suicide pill? He could throw it at them or something.

"Now come on, that's not fair," he complained as he raised his hands in the air. "If you're going to come at me, at least do it in a line, single file, say about thirty meters from me."

"All right funny human," the lead Cardassian said as he took the rifle from Dack as well as his phaser. "You've managed to give us a merry chase, but you're not getting away from us this time. Now move."

The Cardassian jerked his rifle towards the path in front of them, and Dack had no choice but to move. As Dack walked down the hallway, the three Cardassians behind him, he wished he'd just gone ahead and shot them. At least they'd have killed him. Now they'd probably torture him, and he was none too eager to relive the war stories of his Federation counterparts. Well at least his Maquis cell would've fled to join others, and they were segmented enough to avoid being wiped out all at once. It wasn't like he was an important leader figure.

Halfway to the brig the ship rocked violently as if they were under attack. Glancing up at the ceiling Dack said a silent thanks that the Maquis had detected his jury rig and decided to investigate. The Cardassians with him stopped walking as the one leader contacted the bridge.

"What's going on?" he asked in Cardassian, and conversed back and forth with the bridge. Dack looked on rather clueless, but he swore he heard the word "Maquis" in there somewhere. "Your friends have arrived. They'll be joining you pretty soon," the leader said to Dack with a rather dark chuckle. "At least figuratively."

"You say that as if you're sure they'll be destroyed. We've had some rather good success with your ships," Dack retorted.

"I guess you didn't get the message when we shot your ships down over Catara III," the Cardassian responded rather smugly. "They won't get through our shields."

"Oh." Dack pursed his lips thoughtfully as the ship gave another hard rock, before looking up at the humanoid. "So, you think they'll make it through if I overload the junction connected to the shield generator?"

The Cardassian snorted. "Good luck making it down the hall before I shoot you. Now move."

He jerked his rifle again and Dack started walking, biting the side of his lip. He had no doubt that the Maquis raiders could get through the shields, but that didn't solve the problem of getting to the hangar bay. And they seemed to get to the brig far too quickly, the Cardassians' footsteps never faltering even with the repeated rocking of the ship. Dack stepped into one of the cells, and the forcefield hummed as it visibly activated behind him.

With a chuckle and a comment to one of the others, the Cardassian leader and the other two left the brig. Dack watched them go, wondering why he hadn't attacked them when he had the chance. Now he was trapped, and he didn't happen to have anything on him that would short out the forcefield. With an annoyed expression on his face, Dack glanced over to the sole Cardassian who was standing behind the forcefield controls. Dack wondered just how conversational he would be, and whether he could goad the guard into letting down the forcefield to come at him.

He didn't have to, though. The ship shook rather violently from an explosion, and the lights in the brig went out. The air shimmered in front of Dack in blue sparkles, indicating that the force field had gone down as well. He quickly moved out of the cell, and, crouching slightly, ran full tilt at the last known location of the guard. He felt himself crash into the body armor of the Cardassian, and the two toppled to the ground as a disruptor burst left the guard's weapon. They grappled with each other for what felt like forever until Dack finally managed to fire the guard's own weapon at him. The silhouette went limp in his arms, and he raced out of the cell block as the lights turned back on.

Nobody came at him as he ran down the hall. But it was probably due to the dangerous rocking the ship was doing, and he could swear he heard it creaking. Several explosions sounded in the nearby halls, and a pylon nearly fell on his head as the ceiling collapsed behind him.

By the time he made it to the hangar bay, the ship was a mess. Collapsed pylons were everywhere, with debris and small fires scattered around the deck. The Cardassians in the bay were far too busy preparing shuttles for launch to notice him, and he managed to slip into the only one not being worked on. Inside, he was met by three surprised Cardassians, one of whom was starting up the flight sequence. A few quick rounds from his disruptor and they all slumped in their chairs.

Shoving the one out of the pilot's chair, he sat down, and maneuvered the shuttle out of the warship's hangar bay. Outside he could see several Maquis ships of various sizes, coming around in a familiar strafing run over the bow of the vessel. A moment later the ship exploded, sending debris flying everywhere and rocking his shuttle from the concussion wave.

He grinned triumphantly at the Maquis' success, then frowned as the shuttle registered fire from one of the Maquis raiders. "Whoa, hey!" he hollered as he opened a channel to the Maquis. "Don't shoot! It's me, Dack! This is the second Cardassian shuttle I've had to acquire today."

"Dack! We thought we'd lost you! Is the rest of your crew with you?"

"They're dead," Dack said with a frown. "I crash landed on Catara III. I'm the only survivor."

"Many of ours have died today," the other said with a sad lilt in his voice. "But I think we've struck them hard this time."

"Yeah," Dack agreed solemnly. Then his eyes averted to the scanners when they beeped. There were a few more ships on the way! "Well, time to get back to base before the rest of them catch up to us!"

The Cardassian shuttle and the Maquis raiders then turned, before they disappeared into the inky blackness of space in a flash of light.