

STARLIGHT: THE WAIT

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FIVE Pages

For general reference: the story is set some time after the defeat of Typhon and before Duke returns to Earth. This point is chosen because it allows the “legend” of Captain McQueen to have begun to take hold. Starlight isn’t explicit on how long this period is, presumably not too long, but I figure there must be enough time for Duke to fit in a minor adventure.

I don’t know if we’re going with “The Wait”, or “Starlight: The Wait” or just “Starlight” for the title on the page—that’s obviously an issue for editorial to decide, but please note that “The Wait” isn’t essential, it’s just a title of convenience.

NOTE ON LETTERING: This script features no speech bubbles. All dialogue is in the form of voice-over narrative captions. The narration is a dialogue between two different characters (ARLA and MYM) so their captions need to be distinguished in some way, ideally by different colours. Or whatever makes it clear that there are two distinct voices. But I don’t want “floating heads” or similar next to the captions, as the actual reveal of the speakers is saved for the last page.

PAGE 1 — Four panels

1/ Fairly close view of young DUKE MCQUEEN on some kind of flying one-man jet-bike type of thing. Something suitably in keeping with the technology aesthetic of Tantalus we saw in Starlight. Duke is in his typical uniform with sword and pistol. The background can be blank, as he’s alone in a clear sky and flying across a desert.

MYM : Will he come, **Arla**?

ARLA : Yes, **Mym**. He will come.

2/ A closer view of the handlebars of the jet-bike, so we can see the instrument panel and a flashing red light.

SFX : beep **beep** beep

MYM : But how will he cross the endless **Debian wastes**?

3/ The jet-bike is nose-down and descending at an alarming angle, Duke gripping the handlebars and grimacing as he realises that this is going to hurt ...

ARLA : He will fly across them with Queen Attala’s entire **air armada** at his back.

4/ This should be the big panel on the page. There's a vast, featureless desert. Way over on the left of the panel is the wreck of the jet-bike. Leading away from it is a trail of footprints made by Duke, who is way over on the right, determinedly continuing on foot. He's alone and has nothing but his sword and pistol with him. Title and story credits would ideally go at the very bottom of this panel, below the trail of footprints.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 2 — Five panels

1/ Still trekking across the desert. Duke is shading his eyes as he looks ahead. We see a cloud of dust on the horizon, as you might get if a huge horde of riders was galloping towards him.

MYM : What of the numberless **Skaliskan nomads**, Arla? Will they stop him?

2/ The riders have closed with him now, hundreds of them (or as many as can comfortably fit in a panel). They're a pretty fearsome bunch. Dressed in flowing robes as you might expect desert nomads to wear, but they're not human, they are feline humanoids with tiger-like markings on their furry faces. And each one carries a long spear. And the creatures they are riding are bipedal lizards. Ok, so you've got spear-armed tiger-men riding velociraptors. And there's lots of them, riding round Duke in a circle. Duke remains unthreatening, not going for his weapons.

ARLA : He will not let them stop him, Mym.

3/ Duke stands in a circle of levelled spears. His hands are at his side, making no move for his weapons, and he looks fairly unconcerned by the dozens of spears levelled at him.

MYM : Can he fight them **all**?

4/ Still in the circle of spears, Duke is holding one hand out, palm up. There's a small disc on his palm, and from it is projected a holographic image. The image is of Mym and Arla, but ideally we don't see their faces, so maybe we just see the back of their heads or something, if there's a point of view for the panel that will allow that while still showing Duke's face and at least one of the tiger-men. The key thing to show is that Duke is talking to the tiger-men and the tiger-men are looking at the image he's projecting and have lowered their spears.

ARLA : He will cut through them like a **scythe** through **sherra grass**.

5/ The circle of tiger-men has parted and Duke is walking through their ranks unchallenged. The tiger-men have their spears raised above their heads, as if in a salute.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 3 — Five panels

1/ We are out of the desert and in a mountainous region. Duke is climbing a cliff face, fingers scrabbling for holds.

MYM : But the warlord's **fortress** is so well guarded. How will he get in?

2/ Hundreds of feet up the cliff is the entrance to a round pipe, obviously artificial. It's maybe a metre in diameter, big enough so that a man could crawl through it. And flowing out of it, not filling it but a steady flow, is a foul-looking brown stream. Yes, it's a sewage outflow pipe. Duke is clinging to the cliff next to this pipe, and from his expression he doesn't like the smell of what's coming out of it.

ARLA : The warlord's guards will not stop him, Mym.

3/ Duke is crawling into the pipe.

ARLA : He will storm the gates in a **glorious** battle!

4/ We're now inside the "fortress". It's a stone corridor, like you would find in a stereotypical mediaeval castle, but well-lit (we can show fluorescent tubes or something, but it's not necessary). Set in the floor is a round iron drain cover, and Duke is lifting this from below so he can check the corridor is clear.

ARLA : Captain McQueen is **unstoppable!**

5/ Duke is out of the drain and making his way stealthily down the corridor. He has his sword in his hand now.

NO DIALOGUE

Page 4 — Five Panels

1/ Duke turns a corner and comes face-to-face with a pair of guards. They are dressed in armour but not mediaeval armour, it's the kind of SF armour you might find on Tantalus. They are more surprised than he is, and fumbling for holstered blasters.

MYM : But Arla, you promise this but how do you **know?** The journey is so long and the odds so great. Will he come? **Will** he?

2/ Duke runs one guard through with his sword, and with his other hand is holding the wrist of the second guard who has drawn his blaster and it struggling to bring it to bear on Duke.

ARLA : Mym, you know the giant statue of Captain McQueen they are building in the city?

MYM : Of course!

3/ Duke head-butts the second guard unconscious.

ARLA : Do you know **why** they build that statue?

MYM : Because the Captain is the greatest warrior that ever lived!

4/ Duke is now at an intersection and is cautiously peering round the corner.

MYM : Because he slew so many enemies!

5/ Duke springs round the corner. From a point of view behind him we see down a corridor with a solid wooden door at the far end flanked by a pair of guards. Duke now has his pistol in his hand and is drilling a hole in each guard's chest.

ARLA : No, Mym, that is not why they build the statue.

Page 5 — Four panels

1/ Duke stands in front of the door, his foot lifted as if to kick it in.

MYM : Then why, Arla?

2/ We now cut to the other side of the door. It's a small, square cell, but we can't see anything in it because it's dark. But we're looking at the door which Duke has just booted in from the outside, and light is spilling in through it as it crashes inwards.

SFX : **WHAM**

ARLA : They build it because, when Tantalus **needed** him, Duke McQueen came.

3/ Duke stands silhouetted in the doorway, and now we see MYM and ARLA properly for the first time. One is a young teenage girl and the other is her younger brother, maybe 8 or 10 years old. They are dressed as typical children on Tantalus might dress (not fancy uniforms, just civilian clothes) and their clothing and general appearance is unkempt, as you might look if you have been locked up in a cell for a while. The boy has rushed towards Duke and thrown his arms round him. The girl stands further back, and she has a look of wonder on her face as if she doesn't quite believe it. Even though they are now on-panel, I'm still going to use voice-over captions for their speech. (I know we're not explicitly identifying that these are Mym and Arla but I think it should be obvious. And note that we're not even identifying which is which anywhere on the page. Because you know what? It doesn't matter. Swap their names and the whole dialogue still works, whether it's the boy who has the blind faith and is reassuring his big sister or the sister telling a story to stop her kid brother being afraid: any interpretation the reader wants still works. The point is that these stories are being told, and Duke is already a legend to these kids.)

ARLA : And that is how I **know**, Mym.

4/ Duke is making his way on foot back across the desert. But this time he's carrying the boy on his shoulders and the girl walks alongside with her hand in his.

ARLA: Because when he is needed, **Duke McQueen** will always come.