

Dust Runner: Tempest in the Valley 4

Synth music. Suspenseful at first (the same music from the top of Ep 1), but then grows in tempo and a drum is added. Anuk's wings flap steadily nearer. The cruiser whines up louder and louder until: POP, we're in the cockpit.

Mil

You are playing a very dangerous game today, John.

John

Am I? I don't see how.

Mil

How can you trust Anuk to keep his word?

John

Why shouldn't he? He's not doing us any favors, it's in his own interest to kill the mutant council.

Mil

He does not speak with reason in his heart. Anuk is a killer. How can you be certain once he's past the gate he won't kill everyone in the city?

John

There's not enough room for him to fly around within the walls! If he goes mad and tries to take out an entire city himself, he'll be outmanned and gunned down, trapped in an alleyway.

Mil

But not after the deaths of many of the sick.

John

True. But he knows my laser spear can kill him, I would be the first to die. I share that risk. And though it would be a tragic day for your city, they would finally be rid of Anuk the Tenth.

Mil

I see you have an answer for everything. You have thought everything through. Almost.

John

What have I forgot?

Mil

Perhaps I don't wish to rule over an entire city. Perhaps I want only to take my LURA and live quietly and richly in the top levels of Palms Iron.

John

I don't think you will have much trouble naming a successor to the throne. If you don't want to rule, then don't. Assemble a council yourself of wise men and women. Be a figurehead who controls Anuk.

Mil

If Anuk kills the council, I will rule over the city, keep it safe from his tyranny, and you will take your Gems and leave. If Anuk tries to kill everyone, we will die first, but he will be dead shortly after, and the city is free of his tyranny, but not Queen Judge's.

John

The best laid plans still offer some benefit, even in defeat.

Mil

So it would seem. You are a very clever man, John Savage.

John

Ha ha ha! You must not think our chances are very good, if you're willing to admit that!

Mil

You forget, Middle-Man, that the sick are born dying. I keep no sentiment for special occasions.

John

We're getting close. I'll call Krastick, you get Anuk down here and in place.

The cruiser whines to a halt and the cockpit pops open. Mil gets out.

Mil

ANUK! ANUK! Come down, my scaly friend! It's time!

The cockpit closes. John dials up his video phone.

John

Queen Judge Karstick, do you read? This is John Savage.

Queen

I'm surprised to see you, John. Have you decided to run away through the Lizard Dust to find a new city? If you're wounded and seeking help, know I won't send out a party for you.

John

Lucky for both of us then I'm not wounded. It took us most of the night but we managed to slay Anuk the Tenth while he slept in his castle.

Queen

You'll have to prove that to my satisfaction before I open my gate to you.

John

We're towing his carcass back with us. A gift to the people of Palms Iron. Mount his bones in town square. Should make for a good conversation piece.

Queen

You are bringing his body...here?

John

I don't know if you'll want to eat his flesh, he smelled like death when he was alive. But I'll leave that to your judgement. We'll be at the wall before the days end.

Queen

You know you can't trick me, Savage. Once you're inside my city's walls I'll know your every thought.

John

And I expect you too keep YOUR end of the bargain. For me AND my friend.

Queen

I will honor our deal, if you have.

John

Savage out.

Static, click. The cockpit pops open.

John

Anuk, are you in place?

Anuk (off)

This is not a comfortable vehicle to be tied to!

John

It won't be for very long.

Anuk (off)

I have smeared myself with the blood of the fool Tug! So I appear even more dead!

John

Ah...uh...very good thinking, Anuk.

Transition noises. The cruiser whines to a stop outside the gates. Cockpit pops open, John hops out.

John (always shouting)

Ho there! We have returned with the rotting corpse of Anuk the Tenth, ruler of and terror of the Lizard Dust! Open the gate!

Guard (always distant)

Ho there, Duster Runners!

Pause.

Guard

That is Anuk?

John

What's left of him!

Guard

I've been giving strict orders to verify that you have killed Anuk, and not slain some other monster to pass off.

John

Verify then! Do you not recognize the nightmare that has terrorized your city for decades?

Pause.

Guard

Anuk comes at night, and there are few windows in our wall. Not many have actually seen the beast with their own eyes.

John

Surely this monster here meets the descriptions!

Guard

Aye. But I will fetch one of the old Guards. One among them may have seen Anuk themselves. Only then will we open our gates. You'll have to make camp outside the wall until morning!

John (not shouting anymore)

That's queer. Mil!

John walks over to the cock pit. It hums quietly.

John

Any ideas?

Mil

It's strange. But true. Not many have seen Anuk. I don't know why they would doubt their own eyes though. This is clearly the real Anuk.

Anuk

Do they need a demonstration of my power?

John

Shh. Keep still. Keep your head down.

Mil

You must appear dead or they will not open their gates to us.

Anuk

It is very hot. I can feel the scales on my belly burning.

John

Easy, friend. A little patience now will buy you a lifetime of freedom from hunting parties.

Anuk

Hrrm.

Mil

The Queen is suspicious.

Anuk

If I have to play dead all evening and all night-

John

You do, I'm afraid. They're watching us. If you move, then they'll never open the gates, they might even send out a party to kill us.

Anuk

They cannot kill the great Anuk!

Mil

Stick to the plan. Be calm. The sun has almost set, but you must be still.

Anuk

If they do not let us in tomorrow morning, I'm going to tear the dome off the wall once and for all! I'm going to eat every guard I can reach through the windows! And I'm going to start by squishing you little spiders first!

John

The sand whales don't venture this close to the city, do they?

Mil

No.

John

Then let's start making a fire for the night. Stay still, Anuk. They're certainly watching.

Transition noises. Distant sand whale singing. The fire crackles. Soft footsteps approach, then stop.

Sylar

You see? They're asleep.

Tome

I would swear I saw them moving.

Sylar  
That's just the fire's light.

Tome  
What about the lizard? I saw him move too.

Sylar  
You're just frightened. The sand whale's songs are tricking your mind.

Tome  
Let's get this done and go back inside.

Sylar  
You kill the Dust Runner. I'll kill the other.

Tome  
Why do I have to kill the Dust Runner? If he wakes up, he'll kill me easily!

Sylar  
Then do it quietly!

Footsteps resume. Whale song. Synth music again. One of those long pauses again. The music gets tense and the steps slow down.

Sylar  
DUST RUNNER, LOOK OUT!

Tome  
What?!

John  
Haaa!

FIGHT! Grunting and sand kicking and a scuffle. Lots of repeated sound FX, like before. Tome dies. John's laser spear activates.

Sylar  
Hold! Hold! I just saved your life, Dust Runner!

John  
You did nothing. Mil and I have been awake all night. We thought Queen Judge would try

something like this.

Mil

We heard every word you said to your companion.

Sylar

My name is Sylar, I'm not a guard in the Queen's service.

John

The uniform you wear tells a different story.

Sylar

I slit the throat of the guard who wore this. We knew about Karstick's plan to betray you.

Mil

Who's we?

Sylar

We have no name. We are a group who resist the Council's rule. Our goal is to oust the mutant leaders. A city of the sick should be ruled by a kinder hand.

John

What have we got to do with your resistance?

Sylar

Nothing. But having learned that Karstick tried to have you killed, do you not wish to kill her?

John

You think you can manipulate me into doing your dirty work for you?

Sylar

I just wanted to afford you an opportunity.

Mil

She's a fool. Don't listen to a word she says. She works for Queen Judge.

Sylar

Liar! I risked my life to save both of yours for the small chance you would take her life! I would never-

Mil

She can hear every thought that any person inside her walls has. She allows your resistance to thrive because it gives her guards something to fight. A reason to terrorize us. Everything you do benefits her.

Sylar

Perhaps for now. But all we need is one good day to tip the scales.

John

How many of you are there?

Sylar

Even we don't know. We know she can hear our thoughts. We work in rotating cells, meeting up as little as possible.

Mil

There is little use in a gun when you don't know how many rocks it's loaded with.

Sylar

Better than no gun at all.

John

I don't use a gun. I use this.

Laser spear noise.

John

I can't help you. Tomorrow I will tell the Queen she failed to kill me, and if she wishes to live she will open her gate and honor our agreement.

Sylar

She'll never give you whatever she promised you. The mutants are all cruel and hollow.

John

I know what the mutants are. Go.

Sylar

I expected more from a Middle-Man.

John

Go. Before I decide to kill you, too.

She runs off into the night.

Mil

You know, if this plan succeeds and there's a fight waiting for us behind that wall, it would have been useful to have an army on our side. No matter its size.

John

It would. But it wouldn't help us at all if Queen Karstick reads Sylar's thoughts and knows what we're planning out here.

Mil

...but it would be very helpful if she believes we have no interest in revolution.

John

I suspect that when the moment comes, Sylar's army will fight no matter what.

Anuk

I was hoping they would kill you both so I could stop laying on my back on your truck-bed like a hatchling playing games.

Mil

It will be morning very soon. Lie still. Sleep. Tomorrow you have a government to eat.

Anuk

hurrr hurrr hurrrr hurr!

Transition noises. Day time. No more whales.

Guard (always distant)

Dust Runner! Are you still alive?

John

We both are! Tell your Queen to send more competent killers next time!

Guard

She has a message she wants you to hear!

Squeaky static hiss as a PA system is engaged. Queen Judge's voice echoes throughout the city and across the desert.

Queen

Citizens of Palms Iron: For decades we have been terrorized by Anuk the Tenth. A champion and monster hunter came to us, and in a single day managed to do what dozens could not. The rumors you've heard are correct. Anuk is dead.

Faint cheering from the city.

Queen

John Savage, Middle-Man, DUST RUNNER. You stand at our gate with the body of the beast on your cruiser. You have our gratitude. And we will honor the bargain struck. You may keep all the meat and bones from the great lizard. We thank you for what you've done, and wish you well on your journey.

PA system clicks off with a loud echo.

John

Guard of the wall, open this gate! I have business with your Queen still!

Guard

Your business here is over, Dust Runner.

The guards laugh distantly. Mil walks over to John.

Mil

If you want me to think you a clever man, your opportunity has arrived.

John

Sometimes, Mil, being clever will only take you so far. ANUK, HOW ABOUT A SPIDER HUNT?

Anuk

RRRRRAAAFINALLY!

Anuk roars and rolls off the cruiser. He flies into the air and starts slamming his body against the metal wall. There are distant screams from the city, and closer screams from the guards as Anuk grabs at them.

Mil

We could have done THIS yesterday.

John

Anuk isn't going to be able to get that wall down, and if he enters the city through the dome he'll be dead long before he reaches the Queen's castle. We're going to have to open the gate.

Mil

If that were possible, I think it's also something we could have done yesterday.

John

We're going to have to get inside the wall, then open the gate.

Mil

How?

John

Those circular holes in the walls where the guards stand. Big enough to get in through.

Mil

Those are easily 50 feet up!

John

More than that, I think. Get your rock shooter.

Mil

Quickly.

John

ANUK! ANUK! HERE, HERE!

Anuk stops flying and bashing. He flies down and lands heavy in the sand.

Anuk

What is it, little spider?

John

I need you to fly me and Mil up to the holes you're pulling guards out of. We need to get into the wall so we can open the gate for you.

Anuk

And then we destroy the city together!

John

No! Just the mutants! The council castle is in the center of the city. Anyone wearing white robes with blue skin, that's a mutant.

A nuk

I've never had mut-ant flesh before! Come on then! A nuk is hungry!

Mil

I'm ready.

John

Let's go.

He activates his laser spear. A nuk grabs them and flies up quickly. Startled, they yell. The pass by shouting guards. DONNNNG, A nuk hits the wall.

A nuk

Back into your nest, little spiders. Get the gate open quickly! If I have to tear this wall down to get inside I will eat you first!

He flies off and continues bashing the wall, which echoes dully inside the wall. John and Mil's voices echo softly.

Mil

I don't like how often he threatens to eat us.

John

Let's make sure it doesn't happen. Do you know how to open the gate?

Mil

No.

John

Okay we'll have to figure it out together. Just ahead there, down this corridor. That looks like the mechanism.

Guard

They got inside! Over here!

Mil

Uh-oh.

Boots clang on the metal walkway. There's another scuffle. Mil shoots his rock gun. The laser spear lasers. The guards die.

John  
There will be more soon. Hurry.

They run on the walk way, then stop at the mechanism.

John  
I don't recognize it.

Mil  
I've never seen anything like this myself. I'm more used to cooking and hunting than mechanics.

Sylar  
I knew you were hiding something!

John  
Sylar!

Sylar  
You're working with the lizard! You mean to let him in so he can devour us all!

Mil  
No!

Sylar  
I won't let you!

She runs at them. They fight. Lots of struggle and synth music. It sounds a little awkward.

John (struggling)  
LISTEN! Sylar listen to me! Anuk is here to free your city from the mutants!

Sylar (struggling)  
He's a beast! He will destroy us all!

Mil  
If he was just a mindless beast he wouldn't have pretended to be dead all night!

John  
Stop!

The struggling ends.

John  
Help us! Help us open this gate! Tell your resistance to take on the guards while we take care of the mutants!

Sylar  
Last night you told me you didn't care about us.

Mil  
He knew Queen Judge would hear your thoughts. We were trying to trick her into opening the gates for us. It did not work.

Sylar  
Why should I trust you?

LASER SPEAR! Sylar yelps. Her knife clatters to the ground.

John  
Because I can easily kill you, and I haven't.

Mil  
Sylar, we only have a few minutes before every guard in the city takes us. Please.

Beat

Sylar  
I'm coming with you.

John  
How do we open the gate?

Sylar  
Go to the other lever, see it there? Pull that while you crank this! Together, hurry!

Footsteps on the catwalk. Lots of cranking and clicking. The gate swings open.

Sylar  
Hold on.

She walks to the guard PA system. It clicks on and her voice echos thru the city.

Sylar  
Brothers and sisters of the revolution! Your time has come! Anuk the Tenth is here to devour the council! Take up arms! Anyone who stands with the mutants dies today! Now!  
Now! NOW!

She clicks it off. The city is distantly shouting.

Sylar  
This way, come on!

They run off.

Outside now. Anuk is flying and laughing his weird Falcor laugh.

Anuk  
Don't try to hide from Anuk, little mut-ants! He sees all!

Anuk whooshes past the opened gates. He's in the city, and everyone is screaming. He's crashing into buildings.

Anuk  
WHERE IS YOUR CASTLE, QUEEN ANT? WHERE DO YOU SIT WHEN YOU SEND YOUR SPIDERS OUT TO ME?

John (distant)  
Anuk! Anuk! Up here my friend!

Anuk  
Eh? HA HA! You have kept your word, Middle-Man! I will not eat you today!

Anuk flies up to where John is on the gate.

John  
Glad to hear it. Can you carry three?

Anuk

Three?? There were two of you a moment ago!

John

This is Sylar. She's going to help us kill the guards of the queen, the men who came to kill you.

Anuk

Then I have room for her as well.

Sylar

Anuk the Tenth can speak??

Mil

And more. Anuk, take us there. That tall building is where the council sits.

Anuk flies off. Sylar screams. Everyone in the city is screaming and shouting. It's chaos. Anuk roars and crashes through a building wall.

Mutant

Gods! It's Anuk!

Mutant 2

How has he breached our wall?

Mutant 3

Run!

Mil

That's them Anuk!

Anuk

These mut-ants don't look so impressive to me!

He roars and starts eatin'. The mutants scream horsely. He's crashing into everything and breaking stuff.

Sylar

In here! This way! The castle walls have fallen! Bring the fighting to the queen!

Resistance members shout distantly.

John

Ha ha! Mil, stay here and make sure he gets them all.

Mil

Where are you going?

John

Sylar and I are going to cut the head off the serpent. You know the way to her chamber from here?

Sylar

Follow me! Mil, when the resistance troops arrive, send them up to the Queen's chambers.

Mil

I will!

They run off. Transition noises. Queen Judge issues orders with her mind. The tone plays every time she "speaks". Guards are running around blocking the door.

Queen

Barricade the door!

Guard

Yes, my lady!

Queen

Make an announcement! Every fighting guardsman in the city is to fight Anuk until he is dead and bloody!

Guard 2

Word has been sent already!

Queen

You will all stand here and protect me from whatever forces come! The last thing I will ever see will be your fallen corpses!

Guard 3

We live to serve you!

The door is banged loudly. It echoes through the chamber. Everything goes quiet. It bangs

again. After a pause, the laser spear cuts right through it. The guards march quickly to surround the queen.

Queen

John Savage, you betrayed me!

John

And you betrayed me! That makes us even enough.

Queen

You've killed us all! I see your mind, you think you have Anuk in hand! Once he's finished with us he will kill everyone in the city.

John

I don't think so. I think you're scared. I think you want every guard in this room to believe that so they'll fight to the death.

Sylar

Your council is gone, Krastick. And once you're gone the sick of the city will take care of ourselves.

BOOM.

Sylar

You hear that? That is Anuk the Tenth, eating his way through the council.

BOOM. Dozens of footsteps running up distant stairs.

Sylar

He's coming for you now. And my resistance fighters come as well.

Queen

You're one of those criminals who fights the guards. You have no idea how much harm your people are doing right now. In the streets you're all killing the guardsmen. Your own people!

Sylar

We fight oppression! We fight you! You men, stand aside. No harm will come to you. We can all be free of her! All you have to do is stand aside, and you can live as free men.

BEAT

Queen  
KILL HER!

The guards yell and run forward! BOOM! ANUK ARRIVES ROARING! RESISTANCE MEMBERS SHOUTING! EVERYONE YELLS!

Anuk  
Is she the last one?

Sylar  
She's the last one.

Anuk  
What about the little spiders?

John  
You can have them too.

Sylar  
All you had to do was stand aside.

HE EATS EM! They yell and scream! Anuk Roars!

Queen  
You savage people will never be able to control- (she screams hoarsely outloud.)

Anuk is done. It's quiet now. Mil runs in.

Mil  
Is it done?

John  
For all her power and influence, she was just a frail old monster.

Anuk  
I do not like the taste of mut-ant.

John  
And what about the taste of spiders?

Anuk

That I still like. But you kept your word. And I keep mine. I will return to my castle in the caves on the Sand Sea. But if you send out any of your men to me, I will kill them in a flash.

John

Not my men. I'll be moving on soon. The city isn't mine.

Anuk

Then the sick one. Know that if anyone comes for me in the night-

Mil

I will be the first to die. I agree to your terms.

Anuk

Hrrmph.

He flies out into the city, breaking through the wall. The crowd gasps. He roars distantly.

Sylar

As easy as that, he came and went?

Mil

You weren't here for the hard part.

John

The hard part is yet to come. The city is damaged. The council gone. You'll have to do more than rebuild. You must create a new society. It won't be easy. Or bloodless.

Sylar

You're not going to stay?

John

No. I was promised a power gem for my troubles, I'm going to take one and head off into the dust. I have to keep searching for more like me.

Sylar

And you? What were you promised?

Mil

Governorship of a block. Though after what happened to the other governors, I'm not so

sure.

John

Ha! I think you'll make a fine and fair leader. Though now it seems you've inherited an entire city.

Mil

Me? Rule all of Palms Iron?

John

A man who struck a deal with Anuk the Tenth? I think word will spread quickly.

Sylar

Him?? I've been trying to take down the council for years. I rode on the back of Anuk just as he did. I saved your lives AND opened the gate. These men fight with me.

Resistance Folks

Aye!/Here-here/Hoo-ha!/etc

John

Queen Sylar?

Sylar

I have the resistance army to keep the old guards in line.

Mil

You are the clear choice. I think Palms Iron will be in good hands with you.

Sylar

Will you be on my council? The first of the new rule. A rule of compassion and prosperity.

Mil

I think I've had all I can of Palms Iron. I think I would like to travel beyond the sand seas. Maybe visit some of those cities you told me about, John.

John

We make a good team. You're welcome by my side for as long as I travel, my friend. My queen, I humbly ask your permission for the favor of a power stone from your city.

Sylar

As new queen and ruler of the sick of Palms Iron, I grant you permission to take whichever stone pleases you most. And if you ever return. You will be honored in this palace as it's highest guest.

John

Thank you Queen Sylar.

Mil

Long live the queen.

The city chants "Long Live the Queen" as the music plays faster and faster. Just a little too long. Then the sound of the cruiser revs up and drives "toward" the audience, and Anuk roars a final time!