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A Revolting Development

by [Annette Stickles](#)

'Things couldn't be better,' Han Solo thought. He and his co-pilot had made an easy-yet-profitable run for the Rebels (and her Royalness) and were going to be paid the usual fee. This trip had a two-fold purpose: drop off the needed supplies to the small rebel force here, and allow Leia to meet with that cell for updates and information exchange.

He walked about cheerfully, just admiring the scenery of the Wookiee homeworld of Kashyyyk, thinking that it was nice that he could make some quick cash while Chewie got a chance to see his family again. They'd been the logical choice, of course, to make the trip. The Empire still had a strong presence here, but by using caution and well-honed skills, Han and Chewie had been able to land secretly. Also, this particular section wasn't patrolled by any ground troops, so the only thing they had to worry about were air patrols. They delivered the goods with no problems.

Now, with Chewie enjoying his family's company and Leia busy with extremely boring rebel meetings, that meant that Han had no responsibilities for the time being and was free to roam at will. At the moment, he was roaming at will toward the nearest tavern.

Although he'd been on Kashyyyk many times, it still seemed unreal that the trees were so enormous that you could land a starship on one of their limbs or inside the trunk. Of course, wide-eyed fascination was more suited to dewy-eyed farm boys, so he kept his facial expressions normal. He did have an image to maintain, after all. He stayed close to the edge, near the safety parapet, so that he couldn't be spotted from above by flying Imperial patrols. He figured the lush greenery that sprouted up tall near the outside edges of the lane would shield him from any nosy airborne Imps.

There were a few other Wookiees walking the lane, and Han waved as he recognized some of Chewie's distant female relatives (either fourth cousins or aunts twice-removed, he wasn't sure; Wookiee relatives seemed endless and complicated to him). The two females were standing in the doorway of the tavern Han had been looking for. They were holding mugs of what Han would just bet was some delicious ale. They waved him over and he nodded an affirmative, glancing up into the sky for any patrol ships. Han was just getting ready to take his first step toward that wonderful ale when a passing Wookiee stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

Excuse me, my name is Nahliack. You are Chewbacca's friend, aren't you? the Wookiee asked.

Han looked up (way up) into the huge Wookiee's face, wondering if this was yet another relative of Chewie's. He didn't look at all familiar, and Han didn't ever remember meeting anyone called Nahliack, but you could never tell when one would crawl out of the woodwork. "Have we met before?" Han asked, playing it safe, his hand near his blaster in case things turned unexpectedly ugly. He glanced over at the two females at the bar entrance to see if they recognized the newcomer, they didn't appear to.

Han went to take a step back but before he could move the Wookiee's arm snapped up and connected solidly with his chin. His head jerked back and he saw odd black shapes dancing before his eyes; he almost fell but a massive fist grabbed the front of his shirt and hauled him up. Han snatched up his blaster but the Wookiee twisted his arm, painfully forcing him to drop his weapon.

In the meantime, the two female relatives of Chewie dropped their mugs and were rushing to help Han. Ultimately, they were too late, as Han's attacker threw him over one shoulder and leaped over the safety wall. By the time the hirsute ladies reached the wall, Han and the kidnapper were nowhere to be seen. At least, the women hoped it was a kidnapping, and not a murder. They wasted no time in contacting Chewie.

Han felt his arm being twisted, and he was forced to drop his blaster. "Ahhh!" he yelped in pain. Suddenly he was being lifted, and the breath was knocked out of him as he was slung over the attacker's hard shoulder. The Wookiee easily cleared the wall and then they were both plummeting downward. Han could do nothing except hang on for his life, and hope to High Kells that this wasn't the end.

The Wookiee, though, had everything under control; he extended his long claws and was able to stop their fall using a thick limb. Before Han could even feel relief that they'd stopped falling, his kidnapper leapt up, still keeping hold of Han, and

launched himself through the air at another branch. As they hit the tree, Nahliack had to let go of Han to be able to grab at the limb. Han thought he was going to throw up, and found himself wishing he'd stayed with Leia in her boring meeting. It sounded much more attractive than his current activity.

After many more gut-wrenching displays of Wookiee tree-leaping prowess, Han found himself dumped into an airspeeder, which was hovering beside a smaller limb, a mile from their starting point. The Wookiee jumped into the driver's seat and sped off, carefully zipping between limbs, tree trunks, and branches.

Han was lying on the floor area behind the pilot's seat, and when the Corellian tried to move, Nahliack reached back and with one hand slapped a Doze-Eze patch on Han's wrist. Then Han felt the giant's hand wrap around his wrist so that Han couldn't remove the sleeping medicine patch. Unconsciousness came quickly. 'I have a bad feeling about th-'

When Han awoke, he was lying on a thin cushion on the floor of a small, high-ceilinged room with no windows. At least, there were no windows in the walls, but there were windows on the ceiling. In fact, the only light came from the sky-lights a good distance above his head. The sky that he could see through the ceiling openings was of the bright, noon sun.

'That's good,' he thought. 'I must not have been out that long.' Then he went to rub his tired eyes and felt, first of all, the binders encircling his wrists, and second of all, stubble on his face. "Guess I was out longer than I thought. I must have slept all night, and this is the second day." His voiced sounded raspy, and his mouth was terribly dry. There was an overpowering smell in the air, making it hard to breathe. It was an awful combination of decay and sulfur, with just a hint of rancidity. He went to pull his shirt up over his nose to keep from gagging, but realized with a start that he was stripped down to his shorts. Stranger still, he was covered from head to foot with a gray, chalky powder. He blinked a few times and sat up, looking groggily around the room.

He jerked his hands in opposite directions, testing the strength of the binders. They were extremely strong; there was no way he could break them. He got to his feet and tried the door; it was locked of course, so he looked about the room to see if there was any way to escape.

The room was an odd sight. There was a huge stuffed reptilian creature that was standing upright, and had two sets of small clawed arms. There was also a shelf containing tiny preserved birds and many delicate-looking eggs of differing sizes, all of which were covered by a transparent box. The display looked very, very expensive and valuable. Han knocked experimentally on the plexiglass of the box; it seemed unbreakable. But the strangest thing in the room was a long tub

containing bubbling brown liquid. On closer examination, Han realized to his disgust that the boiling goo was creating the stink. He found the tub's control module on the front side and gave it a swift kick. To his satisfaction, the unit groaned and stopped working; within seconds the liquid stopped roiling and settled into a quiet, albeit smelly, bath. 'Maybe once it cools down it won't smell as bad,' he thought.

He continued looking around and saw another door; it blended in with the wall so well he hadn't noticed it before. He grabbed the handle and pulled, elated that it actually opened. He peaked outside quickly to see where it led, sighing his disappointment when he saw it was only a closet, or storage room. He perked up when he saw his clothes neatly folded and lying on a wooden shelf. His boots were polished and standing up on the floor beneath the shelf. His beloved blaster was nowhere to be seen, but his gunbelt was hanging on a short wooden peg beside the shelf. After trying to brush off as much of the chalk as he could, he wasted no time dressing, or at least putting on the clothing that he could manage with his hands bound, such as his pants and boots. His shirt and gunbelt would have to wait until his hands were free. After half-dressing himself, he looked around the little store room.

On the floor was a long box that was filled with a solid gray substance, with an odd-shaped hollow in it. With a start Han realized it was a mold of his body. It looked as if he'd been laid on his back in the box while unconscious, then had liquid poured around him. Then, after the liquid solidified, someone had removed him from the box and put him in the next room. Han poked at the mold. It had retained its Han-shape, but wasn't totally firm yet; it felt like it could use a few more hours to be completely dry. Well, at least that explained the powdery substance on his body: when the liquid dried, it turned chalky. But he still couldn't figure why a Wookiee would want a mold of him.

On the bright side, upon examining the box carefully, he came to the conclusion that turning 30 hadn't adversely affected his physique. He winked at the mold. "Lookin' good, pal," he said to it, smirking. He turned his attention to the rest of the room. There was nothing he could use in his escape, so he went back into the main room and looked around again.

He noticed a booklet on the floor behind the stuffed reptile and immediately went to pick it up. Fortunately, it was written in Basic as well as Wookiee. Han's eyes moved quickly over the page, reading the following information:

"The Akkelehey method of mounting large animals, for impressive museum displays with habitat backgrounds, was developed by the explorer and naturalist Attichah Akkelehey. It entails making a mold of the body, from which a mannequin is cast. The animal is then skinned carefully, and the skin is treated with preservative chemicals or tanned, preferably in a hot gorsh tanning bath. It is then carefully fitted over the completed model and the incisions sewn together.

Final touches include placing of glassine eyes, modeling of the face, touching up faded coloration with paint, and combing of the hair or fur to create a natural effect."

He could read no more; he thrust the booklet from himself with horror and a sudden feeling of nausea. It had hit him what the Wookiee had planned. "He's gonna stuff me," Han mumbled, dazed. "Just my luck to get nabbed by some lunatic taxidermist! Why do these things always happen to me?"

Han wasted no more time on lamenting his misfortune. He had to get out, somehow. He looked around the room with renewed vigor, hoping to find some useful tool. The stuffed reptile caught his eye. Of course! He could use the reptile's razor-sharp claws to cut through his bonds. He stepped over to it and reached up toward the lower set of clawed arms. He was free in seconds, and immediately went back to the store room to get his shirt and gunrig. By the time he'd finished dressing an idea had come to him: Reptile = Escape.

He stood behind the creature and pushed experimentally on it. It seemed very solid, solid enough to hold Han's weight as he used it to climb up to the sky-light above the lizard's sizable head. Balancing precariously on its narrow shoulders, he pushed up on the window with both hands, hoping it would open enough for him to climb out. It didn't budge. He pushed harder; nothing. It looked like he would have to do things the hard way. "What else is new?" he asked himself sarcastically.

Still keeping his balance on the reptile, he carefully removed his shirt and his gunbelt. He wrapped his shirt around his hand, and then did the same with the belt. He hoped that he could break the window if he hit it hard enough with the metal piece of his gunrig. He turned his face away and punched the window hard, hearing with satisfaction the shattering of the pane. Unfortunately, the fabric of his shirt didn't offer enough protection from the protruding shards, and he felt sharp pain in his hand and wrist, which caused his hand to spasm and drop the gunbelt outside the sky-light. He heard with dismay a muffled clunk as the belt hit the roof and slid down over the side, into the trees. He hissed a foul curse and jerked his hand back inside the window.

By this time, he was really off balance and didn't at first feel that his makeshift reptile-ladder was toppling over. Evidently, his last maneuver had overtaxed the stuffed lizard, and they both fell like a plummeting meteorite toward the ground. Han's eyes widened as he saw himself plunging directly onto the shelf that held the plexiglass box that protected the expensive bird egg display. He had about a quarter of a second to envision a host of new gashes and cuts, which would make the ones on his hand from the ceiling window look like a paper cut.

He fell upon the box, crashing through the shelf, while the reptile fell over onto the gosh tanning bath, tipping the tub over. The foul-smelling liquid washed the

floor in a putrid odor, and immediately began dripping through to the living quarters below.

Han ended up sprawled on the floor, along with the sodden, mangled lizard, pieces of the shelf, and the transparent plexiglass box. To his relief, the box was intact, so he hadn't been cut, but the delicate birds and eggs had been tumbled to bits. Tiny, beautiful feathers fluttered around inside the box before settling among the broken egg shells and misshapen birds of the display.

Han lay there stunned, lying in a pool of stench, recovering from the blow his head took during the fall. He shook his head to clear it, trying not to gag at the repulsive odor that permeated the room (not to mention his hair and clothing), but found himself being picked up by the neck and shaken roughly.

His Wookiee captor, summoned by the loud crashing noises, had rushed to investigate the disturbance. When he saw ruins of his taxidermy room, and in particular, the remains of his avian display, Nahliack became incoherent with rage. He enjoyed watching Han's head bob back and forth, but finally stopped when he saw the human turn blue and stop struggling to get free. Nahliack, though still furious, didn't want to damage his newest project. There was no point in bruising the specimen or breaking any of its bones. That would only cause more work for Nahliack later.

Han was barely aware that the huge Wookiee had stopped choking him; he found himself gulping for air when Nahliack dropped him on the floor and left the room. As Han, still laying on his back, slowly came to his senses, he heard his kidnapper reenter and saw Nahliack looming above him. Han feared the Wookiee had had second thoughts and was going to kill him immediately. But Nahliack had other ideas; he had figured out how to keep Han out of trouble. Han was flipped over onto his stomach and his arms were pulled behind him; the Corellian felt his wrists being secured together behind his back with some kind of strong tape. After winding the tape around Han's wrists a dozen times, the Wookiee then turned him over and stood him up, wrapping the tape around Han's wrists and waist several more times, thus making sure that Han could move neither his hands nor his arms. Then (in what Han decided was over-kill) Nahliack wound the tape around the human another dozen times, this time around Han's chest, back, and biceps.

Han looked down and saw that the tape was wide, all-purpose adhesive tape. He groaned inwardly; that tape was extremely tough and strong. He had some on board the Falcon, in fact. He remembered seeing on the tape package that the product had been touted as having a million uses, "from sealing a leak in your hydro-bed to fixing your pack-beast's work harness."

'Make that a million-and-one uses: tying up the Corellian you want to stuff so he can't get away,' Han thought sourly. He then had a worse thought about how

much it was going to hurt when the Wookiee removed the tape. That is, if he were even alive at the time. Just when Han thought the situation could get no worse, it did. Nahliack took a piece of sturdy cloth from his leather pouch and tied it around the tape in between Han's shoulder blades. To do that he had to pull the sticky tape away from Han's skin ("Ouch! Ahhhh!"); once the cloth was tied into a loop, Nahliack effortlessly picked Han up and took him into the store room, hooking the loop onto the wooden peg that had previously held Han's gunbelt.

Nahliack returned to the tanning room, proud that he had controlled himself enough that he hadn't damaged the human like he'd wanted to. He'd wanted to preserve a human for a long time, but had never had the opportunity. But when he'd heard that the Mighty Chewbacca's friend was on-planet, he couldn't resist. He imagined having the famous Han Solo standing in his den, glassine eyes shining in the sunlight. Of course, that wasn't the kind of display that one could show off; it was only for personal enjoyment and satisfaction. After all, if Chewbacca or one of his relatives heard about it, they would exact revenge.

Nahliack fully surveyed the gorsh tanning room. The extend of the damage infuriated him, but he tried to take keep his anger down. The more he looked, the more enraged he became. It might have been possible to fix reptile, although its face was smashed and its hide torn. The bird display was totally gone; 15 years of careful and expensive purchasing and hunting was nothing but feathers and egg chips. But the last straw was when he returned to his living quarters downstairs and saw that the tanning liquid had dripped through the ceiling and saturated his table, his furniture, his other preserved animals, and even his bed. When he saw the damage that Han had caused, his anger exploded and he rushed back up into the storage room. The Wookiee hit his helpless captive hard in the stomach twice, then flicked out his long, sharp claws, ready to tear Han to ribbons. The only thing that saved the pilot was that the door chime sounded at Nahliack's front entrance.

I will kill you later, Solo! I promise you that! The Wookiee pulled back in his claws and used his fist to punch Han in the jaw before leaving the room.

The Corellian had managed to stay conscious up to that point, but the Wookiee's final blow to the jaw had been too much for the battered pilot. His head sank onto his chest as he passed out and everything went black.

The next thing he was aware of was Chewie cradling him, carrying him down a hallway into the kidnapper's living area, and placing him gently on a malodorous, soggy bed. There seemed to be quite a few Wookiees standing around watching him, and he couldn't help but notice the tiny human female that was among them. Han tried to sit up but Chewie's firm hand on his chest gave him no choice but to lie there.

Be still, cub. You are safe now and the deviant has been taken away, Chewie informed him. *Are you hurt?*

"Nah, I'm fine," he slurred, "I just cut my hand tryin' to break a window. Oh, and I hit my head a couple of times. And Nahliack used me as a punching bag. And I smell like guano. Other than that I'm fine."

Glad to hear it, little brother. Chewie chuckled. *Balomean here is a physician; he will take a look at you.* Chewie gestured toward the crowd of Wookiees and one stepped forward. *No arguments, Han. You can't fight us all! Besides, someone has to remove all that tape.* Chewie said forcefully, forestalling Han's inevitable complaint and/or refusal.

"Ok, ok. But do we have to have all the gawkers? I feel like I'm in a zoo. Why don't you hang up a sign that says, 'Don't feed the Corellian.'"

The crowd, mostly Chewie's relatives, snickered and filed out. Leia, whose face was full of concern, hung back, unsure if she should leave as well. Han made the decision for her. "Hey, not you, babe. You can gawk at me any day, sweetheart!"

Concern changed to anger, she snorted in disgust, rolled her eyes, and stalked out, pushing past several walking carpets. Han didn't know, nor would she ever tell him, that she had been the first to find him in the storage room.

After Han's kidnapping, the two females from the tavern had quickly alerted Chewie and his family, who had immediately began the search for the missing captain. Chewie's extensive network of family and friends had started scouring the city for clues. One of Chewie's young relatives, Meertavahh, and her search partner, Leia, had spotted Han's distinctive gunbelt hanging from a high tree branch. When Meertavahh had retrieved it, she climbed from the tree branch onto the sloped roof of the nearest tree home, she had quickly seen the broken sky-light and peeked in. She had seen a huge, furious Wookiee taping up Han as if there was no tomorrow.

Meertavahh knew that there was no way she, at a mere 55 years of age and a third of his size, could take on the powerful Wookiee kidnapper. So she quickly descended and told Leia that Captain Solo was indeed there. Leia couldn't really understand the Wookiee language, but she got the gist of the message.

"Call Chewie and have him come over right away!" Leia ordered, going into crisis mode. "I'll go up to the sky-light and keep an eye on things. OK?"

Meertavahh agreed and gave the diminutive human a boost, then got busy on the communicator.

By the time Leia figured how to get from the tree branch to the sloping roof without falling, Nahliack had already hung Han from the store room peg and had gone down to the living area. When she looked in through the broken ceiling window, she was worried that she couldn't see Han. She listened for a little while, but on hearing nothing decided to go into the room. She knew she would be safer trying to open the window instead of trying to squeeze through the broken area since there were still jagged edges all around. Leia worked on the latch that secured the window, but it wouldn't come open at first. Just when it unlocked, Leia heard a terrible howling, and an enraged Wookiee roared into the room below, then darted into an adjacent storage room, looking ready to draw blood. Leia hoped Han wasn't in that room, but she figured that with Han's usual misfortune, he probably was. And there was nothing she could do to help him.

Unexpectedly, Leia heard a low sound of a chime, and she exhaled in relief as the Wookiee left the room, presumably to see to the door. She took advantage of the distraction and opened the window. She lowered herself through the opening and hung for a second, preparing herself for the 14-foot drop. She landed on the wet reptile, which broke her fall. The stench in the room was almost unbearable, but she wasted no time in heading for the storage room. The sight that greeted her took her off guard.

When she'd first heard that he'd been kidnapped, and might be dead, she had been terrified. Yes, they fought a lot, and many times she wanted to kill him herself. He was arrogant, argumentative, disrespectful, and foul-mouthed, but the thought of him in real danger made her realize just how much she cared about him. Even if she would never admit it to him. She would die of humiliation if he ever knew, or if anyone knew, just how he could get under her skin.

He definitely got under her skin now. Her heart was pounding, partly from the adrenaline surge, but partly because of the way he looked. So vulnerable. And so hot.

"It'd be a dream come true," she murmured, "if only his mouth was taped, too." She could see he was breathing; she quickly went to check to see if he was badly hurt. He was battered, but not seriously injured. His jaw was starting to swell, and his stomach looked bruised, but other than that, he looked fine. 'Very fine,' she thought with a smile of approval. She took a minute to look at him, openly appreciative, which was something she never would have allowed him or anyone else see her doing. She reached up and touched his face, his bruised jaw, then pushed the hair back from his forehead. The recalcitrant locks fell back into place on his forehead. "Hang on, Han. I'll have you down in a second," she said softly.

The stench was still just as strong, and she realized that Han was steeped in whatever stank so bad. "How typical." She wrapped her arms around him and tried to get him off the peg. She had no choice but to lean close to him, her cheek

pressed against his stomach. Not that she minded. Anything in the line of duty. She pulled, tugged, pushed, and lifted, but could not get him down. By the time she thinking about giving up, she was breathing heavily (which she regretted) and her face was pink from exertion.

Need some help, Princess?

She jumped in surprise, and leapt back from the unconscious Corellian. "Oh! Chewie!" she stammered, not understanding what he'd said. "He's okay, but I can't get him down; he's too heavy!" She hoped to high heavens that he hadn't seen her a minute ago.

Chewbacca, as a matter of fact, had been watching her for some time, and had been enjoying himself. Not that he was a peeping-Tom, but he knew Han had feelings for Leia, and that she had feelings for Han. Not that either of them would admit it, but it was nice to see that Chewie's intuition was correct: The Princess loved the Captain.

Chewie patted her on the shoulder and easily gathered his best friend into his arms, growling angrily as he saw the bruises on Han's jaw and abdomen. A minute later, Han was deposited in the bed downstairs, and then had practically ordered out the surplus Wookiees. When Han made the comment about Leia gawking at him, she was mortified at the implication. She was a princess and a respected member of the Rebel Alliance! What was she thinking in ever imaging that he'd ever be anything to her but a loud-mouth, scruffy-looking, insolent, full-of-himself vrelt? And to make it worse, she *had* been gawking at him, and the thought embarrassed her now. As she stormed out, she had one thought stamped on her mind: 'I hate him!' Her only consolation was that it was probably going to hurt like High Kells when they took that tape off him.

Han stood in the shower, luxuriating under the strong spray of hot water, rubbing his skin with a wash cloth. He still smelled of tanning solution, but in another week it would wear off, at least that's what the physician assured him. "A whole week of smelling like this. This stinks, no pun intended," he grumbled, wrinkling his nose.

At least you still have your good looks, cub, Chewbacca joked, sitting on a high bench beside the shower stall.

Han was quiet for a minute; Chewie knew his Captain was thinking of something other than his good looks. This experience had rattled him badly. Finally Han spoke.

"You know," he muttered, not meeting his partner's eye, "you paid off your life debt a long time ago." He looked up through wet hair. "I mean, you just saved me from getting stuffed, for cryin' out loud. I don't want you to be chained to me forever."

It wasn't me who saved you. It was Meertavahh. And your Princess.

"She ain't my Princess. She can't stand me. And I sure can't stand her. Besides, you know what I mean! You were the one who took him out when he answered the door."

You want me to leave?

"Well, no, of course not. But you have a wife and kid. For Kreth's sake, you should be making a life with them, not wasting it with-"

Chewie interrupted him. *Wasting it? Wasting my life? I would not even have a life if it weren't for you. I wouldn't have a wife or cub. And,* he continued seriously, *I wouldn't have a friend like you.*

They looked at each other for a long minute. Finally, Han turned back toward the spray of water with a smile. "Well, I guess you're pretty useful to have around. You should ask your boss for a raise," he teased.

While his words were light-hearted, Chewie had been his partner and friend long enough to be able to read him with ease; the Wookiee could see how affected the Corellian was. *Ah, my boss is a lousy cheapskate,* Chewie returned, chuckling.

"Very funny, fuzzball. You know, I don't think I'll ever get this smell off me," Han grouched, resuming his vigorous scrubbing. Chewie changed the subject, having thought earlier how he could put an amusing spin on Leia's 'rescue attempt,' which Chewie had briefly mentioned earlier.

Hey, Han, I didn't get a chance to tell you what your little Princess was doing to you when I came into the storage room.

"Huh? What was she doing?" Han asked quickly, a mixture of excitement and wariness in his voice.

Chewie continued, eyes glinting with humor, *Well, she was pressed up against you. Very close.*

"Really!?" He was pleased and confused. That didn't sound at all like her prim and proper self. "Maybe the fumes overcame her and messed up her judgement."

And she was breathing hard.

"Breathing hard? I'm surprised she wasn't holding her breath; I smell like the village compost heap!"

Chewie couldn't contain himself any longer; he laughed heartily and slapped Han on the back, knocking his Captain into the side of the fresher. *Ah, cub, I'm just teasing you. She was just trying to get you down, but you were too heavy. Maybe you should go on a diet and lose that ale gut!*

Han's eyebrows knit and he threw the wet wash cloth at his partner. "Get out of here, gruesome. I don't need that kind of aggravation." Chewie snickered and left Han alone in the washroom. He leaned against the smooth wood wall of the fresher and crossed his arms, imagining the small princess with her arms around him. He decided he liked that image. A lot. "Course, that'd be the last thing on her mind."

Little did Han know that later that night, that *was* last thing on Leia's mind. Literally, that is: the last thing she thought about before falling asleep was holding a certain dark-haired Corellian close to her. That night she had odd dreams about bare-chested pirates and adhesive tape.

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