

Marooned

The planet Garo took up most of the viewing port. A blue world of water dotted with scattered islands; it was one of many in the Caperion Sector. The system had recently seen a naval action between the Empire and what was eventually determined to be a Chiss naval force. The unprovoked attack had seen the Chiss force defeated and driven off. The Imperial force suffered dearly and was forced to withdraw from the system for serious repairs. The action raised many questions. Intelligence was required.

Aboard a Dynamic-class freighter above Garo the young Sith NeMo considered his position. He was one of many the Emperor had tasked with searching out information on the Chiss Hegemonia; their new enemy. Most of those tasked sped off to remote locations where strange occurrences were reported. Leads from central intelligence were ruthlessly pursued. Most turned out to be nothing but rumors. An expenditure of resources that divided the upper echelons of the Empire.

NeMo declined reports from central intelligence and ignored the rumors. He intended to trust his instincts and examine the location where everything started. For several local days he and his companion and pilot Tessa Drae orbited Garo, scanning for signals. In every naval engagement in which ships were abandoned escape pods were jettisoned. Reports from the battle specified that several Chiss vessels were destroyed. Much wreckage remaining in orbit confirmed as much. NeMo was confident at least one Chiss escape pod had landed on Garo.

"We've been out here for days," Tessa lamented, "If there was anyone down there, we would have picked up the signal by now."

"Aye, love," NeMo turned to face Tessa. She stretched in the pilot's seat of the Haggard Vulture; her arms folded behind her head and back arched. NeMo had never seen anyone fill out a flight suit quite like her. "There is yet a villainous Chiss upon yonder world. The Force has told lead me thus."

Tessa shrugged, "All right, then. It's not like I have anything better to do." She winked at NeMo slowly. He knew what that meant, but his mind was elsewhere.

"Later, love. My quarry awaits. I yet feel it."

As if on cue, an instrument on the freighter's console chimed. A signal had been received and not one used by the Empire. NeMo grinned widely. His quarry had revealed itself.

"Home on the origin of yonder signal. I shall don mine armor and inform Kéto."

After a few hours, the Haggard Vulture landed on one of the many small islands scattered across the surface of Garo. The landing site was on a temperate island away from the tropics. As he walked down the boarding ramp, NeMo did not feel the chilly air clad as he was in his full suit of Sith armor. His IG-100 droid, Kéto, followed close behind.

"Be careful, sweetie," Tessa called over the commlink, "Let me know if you need retrieval."

"I shall, love," he responded, "This should not make for a long chore."

The signal was close. Tessa had been able to land very close to its source. The tiny, rocky island was devoid of trees or dense vegetation. What vegetation there was seemed limited to grasses and bushes. Still, there were many places in the rock formations to find shelter and hide.

NeMo and Kéto found the escape pod in short order. The craft was quite small. Only large enough for perhaps two men. Its landing had been a soft one. There was no impact crater, nor was there any evidence of breaking thrusters used to arrest its descent. It was as if the pod had been gently placed upon the ground. NeMo looked about him for any evidence of occupation. The ground was indeed disturbed around the hatch of the escape pod, but there were no discernable tracks.

Vile Chiss could not have traveled far, NeMo thought to himself, Where art thou?

He began to call upon the Force to aide in his search for the marooned Chiss.

"Statement," Kéto intoned, "Master, I am detecting a life form one hundred twenty-three point two meters to the south south-west."

"Well done, Kéto. Arm thyself and lead on! But remember, good Kéto, I require him alive."

Kéto did as his master had commanded, drawing his vibrosword and blaster pistol. NeMo likewise took his forcesaber in hand, but kept it deactivated. The pair moved cautiously over the rocks toward where Kéto had indicated. NeMo hoped that their open movement would provoke an ambush. As Kéto crested a small rise NeMo got his ambush.

High pitched blaster fire rang out across the island. Kéto was struck by one blaster bolt in the chest as he came over the rise in the rocks. The impact of the bolt staggered the hardy droid much more than what NeMo had seen in the past. Despite being shot, Kéto sprang into action. The combat droid leapt and darted amongst the rocks taking advantage of the broken terrain all while pouring withering blaster fire of his own onto his target. The Chiss returned fire with ever increasing accuracy.

NeMo took advantage of the distraction Kéto provided and began to circle around the Chiss' position. The Chiss did not seem to know he was being hunted by two. All his attention was bent towards the aggressive droid. NeMo was able to creep to within a dozen meters of his prey. Kéto ceased his fire to prevent inadvertently hitting his master. This seemed to signal the Chiss that he was made. Just as NeMo was about to snatch the blaster with the Force, the Chiss whirled around and fired at NeMo.

The Sith instinctively threw up a barrier of the Force to protect himself from the Chiss' murderous fire. The impacts were much stronger than he was accustomed. The strange Chiss blaster rifle packed the punch of a heavy repeating blaster. Not willing to weather the firestorm much longer, NeMo reached out and snatched the weapon. The blaster soared through the air into the Sith's outstretched hand. The disarmed Chiss sat in his position completely stunned by what he had witnessed. His attention was so focused on the armored Sith before him that he did not notice Kéto come up to apprehend and bind him.

"You okay out there," Tessa asked over the commlink, "I'm hearing a lot of blaster fire."

"Aye, love," NeMo reassured her, "We now have a guest."

NeMo strode over to the Chiss. He had never beheld a Chiss before. The man in front of him seemed to be of middle age. His uniform was well made and possessed of what appeared to be decorations and rank. NeMo assessed him to be a naval officer of some kind. Perhaps a staff officer.

"Hail and well met," NeMo addressed the Chiss, "I am Sith Battlemaster NeMo of House Acclivis Draco of Clan Scholae Palatinae, and you are my prisoner, sir."

The Chiss quickly regained his composure, stood straight, and looked NeMo straight in the eye. In a strange accent, he addressed NeMo, "So I am."