

# MEET THE CREW:

## NASHIRO KAKOS

Knight Nashiro Kakos of Tyrant's Sword, PIN #14194

Knight Nashiro Kakos hadn't been on a shuttle this old in quite some time, but at this moment, the only concern he had was whether or not the hunk of junk would fly. He pressed his make-shift shiv harder into the side of the pilot's neck.

"Go faster, Slick. I'm not telling you again."

The pilot, a fat, greasy spacer that Kakos had plucked from the few survivors of his escape made a gurgling grunt as the sharpened point of a toothbrush dug painfully into the skin over his jugular. Kakos wondered how much extra force he would need to penetrate the man's formidable jowls and accompanying neck fat if he actually had to kill him. He hoped it wouldn't come to that. Not only was he exhausted from the battle in one of Arcia Cortel's classified detention centers hidden around Selen, he wasn't sure he could fly this starship without an experienced pilot's assistance.

Kakos examined the scanners from his position behind the pilot. Even with his rudimentary understanding of ships, it was clear that no one from the planet's surface had launched to pursue them. "Am I reading this right?" he asked, maintaining pressure against the pilot's throat. "We're not being followed?"

The reply was a raspy whisper. "What?" asked Kakos, pulling the toothbrush away. "Say again?"

The pilot cleared his throat and rubbed a free hand across his neck. "I said, this piece of *poodoo* shuttle doesn't have military-grade sensors. It's a civilian model. There might be a whole *karking* fleet behind us and we'd never know."

Kakos frowned and peered out of the cockpit, struggling to see behind the ship to the planet below. Nothing in sight. He closed his eyes and reached out with the Force.

There.

"Two ships," he said as his eyes snapped open. "Cresting the curvature now." He smacked the back of the pilot's head with an open palm. "Get us *karking* moving!"

"Enough!" yelled the pilot, looking back over his shoulder. "Listen, I don't give a damn if you're going to kill me, but if you hit me like that one more time I'll steer this ship into a *karking* sun and laugh as you burn."

The two men held each others gaze before Nashiro cracked a wry smile. "You're not afraid of me, are you?"

The pilot turned his attention back to his control panel. "No."

"Do you know who I am?"

“Yes,” said the pilot as toggled switches in an attempt to funnel even more power to the engines.

“And still you think...”

The pilot interrupted him. “Can we not talk about this now? I’m trying to get you out of this system.”

Kakos’ smile grew wider. “I have to say, you are by far the most helpful hostage I’ve ever taken. I just might let you live after all.”

The pilot ignored the compliment. “How far out are those ships?”

Nashiro reached out again with the Force, feeding upon the energy of the two pilots. Their minds were cloudy with aggression and cheap stimulants. They were hungry for carnage. The thought of violence was so intoxicating to the Sith that he became lost in the warm embrace of their battle lust.

The ship jerked hard with the impact from a laser cannon.

“Great,” growled the pilot. “Nice work, Sith. Way to use those powers to save our lives. They’re in cannon range.”

Nashiro opened his eyes and waited as the crimson pallet of the world faded into its normal colors. His rage subsided and he returned his focus to the events at hand. “Quiet. I could still kill you.”

The pilot let out a sharp laugh as he slewed the ship to the right, dodging a quartet of bright red laser bolts. “Sure you could. But before that, maybe you could put the coordinates into the hyperdrive computer so we can get the *kark* out of here?”

“The what?”

“The coordinates!” yelled the pilot, pulling back on the control stick. “Input the *karking* coordinates to wherever it is you’re escaping to!”

Kakos narrowed his eyes. “I told you when I first dumped your worthless carcass in that seat. Get me out of Brotherhood space.”

Despite the battle being waged, the pilot looked back over his shoulder at Kakos. “Wait, so I’m just supposed to...”

There was a loud crash from the aft of the ship as lasers tore into the sublight engines. Klaxons sounded throughout the ship, and Kakos was thrown into the co-pilot chair. The pilot furiously flipped switches, but he appeared to be fighting a losing battle. Nashiro righted himself and glared at the pilot.

“I don’t care where you take me, but you need to get us the *kark* out of here!”

“It could take hours to calculate a hyper jump in this bucket! It’s an intrasystem transport! We’re lucky it even has a hyperdrive! We can’t...”

Amid the blaring klaxons and the billowing smoke from the fire extinguishing system, both the pilot and the Sith stopped to stare at an incoming message on the control panel. All text-based, the message simply said:

*Utilize the following coordinates. Sincerely, your friend on the outside.*

The two men stared at each other as another round of lasers impacted the hull.

"It can't take another hit like that," said the pilot.

"Then we don't have a choice," said Kakos.

With little fanfare, the pilot input the coordinates and flipped the lever to send the shuttle into hyperspace. In only a few seconds, the mercenary and the Sith left the two pursuing ships far behind.

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"Ma'am, the prisoner has successfully departed the orbit of Selen."

Arcia Cortel looked up from her datapad at the young man monitoring the communications station in her command post on the surface of Selen. "Likely destination?"

"Stand by." The officer was silent for a moment as he waited for his equipment to display the answer to the Proconsul's question. "Dajorra System, ma'am. In vicinity of Station MS-171"

Cortel smiled. "Good. Then he's taken the bait."

The communications officer nodded. "It would appear so."

"Very well. Major Tal?"

A handsome man with close-cropped blonde hair and a chiseled jawline straight out of an Imperial recruiting poster appeared at her side. "Yes, ma'am?"

"You have the floor. Communications officer, have your team bring up a secure Holonet line with the Consul in my private chambers. I need to inform her what has been accomplished today."

"Yes, ma'am," the two men said in unison as they moved to complete her orders. Cortel turned on her heel and left the floor of the operations center. Though outwardly calm, inwardly her mind churned at the possibilities of Nashiro Kakos loose upon the Brotherhood again. As she approached the turbolift that would take her to her quarters, she returned her attention to her datapad where Kakos' dossier was open along with the Consul's instructions for his release.

*"Kakos' 'escape' must seem real," Atriyu had written, "and it must result in Kakos finding his way into Tyrant Sword. Mirus may be better able to teach Kakos how to harness those powers that you can never understand."*

The turbolift doors opened and Cortel stepped in without looking, reading snippets of the message again from her superior. This was the tenth time today she had read those words, but each time, the anger was fresh.

*"It was my fault for allowing such a dangerous practitioner of Sith arts to be trained by a non-Force user. I accept the failure to train Kakos as my own."*

Cortel clenched her teeth so hard her head hurt. The doors opened again, this time revealing her private quarters, but Arcia remained in the turbolift to read the final line.

*"Kakos belongs to Mirus now. With luck, he will be able to correct our mistakes."*

Cortel shook her head and shut down her datapad. Stepping into her quarters she glanced at the Holonet terminal in the corner of the room. The light still showed amber, meaning there was no link yet. Arcia made a mental note to chastise the communications officer later. When she said she wanted a secure link to her Consul, she meant immediately.

As she waited, Cortel did what she did best: planned. She had fulfilled her role in the release of Nashiro Kakos to Mirus Hi'ija and his sad band of pretend pirates; however, she wouldn't let this Dathomiri Sith usurp her position as Atriyu's right hand. Cortel would use everything in her power to destroy the Tyrant Sword and crush any attempts by Hi'ija to rise through the ranks of Clan Arcona.

And right now, her most potent weapon was a Dark Jedi named Nashiro Kakos.

The Holonet terminal beeped and the light turned green. Arcia flipped the switch to reveal her Consul's image. "Shadow Lady," said Cortel, bowing her head. "I would like to report the successful release of Knight Nashiro Kakos."

\* \* \*

Mirus Hi'ija waited patiently in the Rat's Nest, a charming little cantina on the creatively named MS-171 mining outpost deep in the heart of the Dajorra System. Surrounding him were a collection of quiet, burly men and women who were either recovering from a shift in the mines or numbing their minds with alcohol in preparation for the next. Either way, Mirus was certain that he was the only sober person in the cantina.

To any other person, MS-171 would seem an odd place for a meeting with a prospective crew member, but Mirus had other reasons for choosing this location. This particular mining station serviced an asteroid belt where specialty ores could be extracted that were critical components in the Sith alchemical blades the Titan of New Tython was famed for crafting. Here, as he awaited the arrival of his newest crew member, Mirus had been hard at work fashioning another blacksmithing masterpiece.

Mirus ran a large hand across his newest creation, now wrapped tightly in oilcloth and lying on the durasteel table in front of him. He had toiled for weeks on this weapon, and though it did not rival his own, it was still a fine sword. The blade was simple, with only a few Sith etchings, but the edge was sharp and tempered through ancient techniques. The handle was wrapped in rough bantha hide and had no hilt to protect the wielder of the weapon. Mirus knew the sort of swordsman Nashiro Kakos was, and defensive moves were not in his repertoire. It was an unpolished, rough, wicked-looking blade that would be a weapon of carnage and destruction.

It was a perfect compliment to Nashiro Kakos himself.

Mirus' comlink buzzed and he pulled it from his belt thumbing the switch on the side. "Report," he said in a low tone.

"Captain, a shuttle hailing from Selen has just requested permission to dock in the hangar bay. Traffic control and assigned them a landing bay. Mr. Cruise and two others have departed to escort shuttle personnel to the Rat's Nest."

Mirus smiled. It was good to have capable people to rely on, even if this capable person happened to be a droid. "Acknowledged, M-9PO. Let me know if Kakos gives the men any trouble. I don't want violence today, but I won't have him harm any of the crew."

"Aye, Captain." The military protocol droid pronounced the title perfectly, enunciating every syllable,

unlike many of the crew of the *Broken Blade*.

“Out here,” said Mirus tucking the comlink back into his belt.

As he waited, Mirus reached out with the Force to see if he could sense Kakos, but it was obvious that Cortel’s training had provided the young Sith with a capable set of mental defenses. Mirus could not recognize even a glimmer of Force-sensitivity on the mining station, much less a full-fledged Knight of the Brotherhood. He tucked that knowledge away in the recesses of his mind. Kakos’ abilities to move undetected might be useful to the crew one day.

There was a dull *thud* from the exterior of the cantina. Mirus frowned. He hoped the crew members who approached Kakos did so carefully. He had initially planned to approach the Sith himself, but it had been Rhiann who had talked him out of it. She was concerned that the towering Dathomiri warrior would put Kakos on edge and in the resulting fight, Mirus would be forced to kill him. It was a valid point, but could Cruise’s diplomacy convince Kakos that he was among allies here in MS-171? Mirus hoped so.

An electronic *buzz* from the entrance announced a new visitor to the cantina floor. Mirus looked up and locked eyes with Nashiro Kakos, still wearing the bright orange jumpsuit identifying him as a prisoner of the Arconan detention system. Behind him was a slovenly spacer who eagerly eyed the bar in the center of the floor.

“Concussion grenades?” announced Kakos to the bar. A dozen surly miners looked up from their beers and quiet conversations. Kakos continued, “You thought you could stop me with *karking* concussion grenades?”

Mirus sighed. So much for Cruise’s diplomacy. He stood from his chair. “Are my men still alive?”

Nashiro stepped down the three stairs that led to the floor of the cantina. Mirus watched as the dirty spacer took a seat at the bar and reached over the counter to grab a bottle. The bartender stood silently watching the exchange between Kakos and Mirus.

“No,” said Kakos simply.

“That wasn’t necessary, Kakos. They helped to free you.”

“Or maybe. I’m not sure.” Kakos looked over his shoulder towards the spacer. “Dash, did they look alive to you?”

The spacer popped the top off his bottle by slamming it against the durasteel counter. “Yeah, they’re fine. Just shook up a bit.” He up-ended the bottle and began furiously pulling at the beer inside.

Mirus struggled to keep his anger under control. He spared a quick look around the bar. The miners were still attentive, but thankfully none had moved yet. Mirus had no doubt in his own combat abilities, but he didn’t want to disrupt the operations of an Arconan mining company by killing an entire shift in a pointless bar fight. “Kakos, I think we should have a seat and talk.”

Kakos smirked. “Yeah, I think we should.” He moved to the seat across from Mirus and the two sat. “So, you sent me the coordinates, right?”

“Correct,” said Mirus as the gentle hum of cantina conversation returned.

“Which means that you helped me escape.”

“Yes.”

“And you are?”

“Mirus Hi’ija.”

Kakos raised an eyebrow. “And why did you rescue me?”

Mirus leaned forward. “I’ve been tasked by the Shadow Lady to form a new team of the most capable warriors from the clan. This team will operate outside of the Brotherhood as pirates and privateers, and we...”

Nashiro held up a hand. “Stop.”

Mirus clenched his teeth and subconsciously gripped the worn hilt of his Sith sword. “What is it?”

“I only have one question,” said Nashiro quietly, his sickly yellow eyes boring deep into Mirus’ ice blue orbs. “If I join you, do I have to wear a funny hat? Maybe get a little lizard monkey to ride on my shoulder? Oh! I can wear an eyepatch!”

“You insolent whelp!” yelled Mirus and he leapt across the table to grasp Nashiro by the throat, but the Knight had been ready for the attack and pushed hard off the table and toppled onto the floor. As his chair struck the ground, Nashiro rolled to his feet and assumed a combat stance.

Mirus drew himself up to his full height and hefted his massive blade. Miners scurried to clear a path between the two combatants, and Mirus could hear bets being wagered on the results of the pending fight.

“Don’t be foolish, Kakos. You are unarmed and merely a Knight. I am a Battlemaster with years of experience with this blade. You cannot win.” Mirus hoped he would listen to reason.

Nashiro sneered. “Yeah, but it’s two against one. I like my odds.” Kakos jerked a thumb behind him. Mirus looked back to see the fat spacer holding a blaster carbine at the hip leveled directly at Mirus.

“Where did...” Mirus began, angered at his momentary lapse in attention.

“Behind the bar,” said the spacer. “Most bartenders keep something like this,” he said, pointing at the carbine with a free hand, “to stop things like this,” he finished, pointing at the two Sith squarred off in the middle of the cantina floor.

Mirus could not hide the annoyance in his voice. “And you are?”

“The *karking* guy with the gun, big man,” said the spacer, slightly slurring his words. “But you can call me Dash. One time hostage of this here prisoner, but now I’m kind of invested in his survival.”

“We had a nice long talk on the shuttle,” said Nashiro. “Turns out, Dash is kind of tired of getting screwed by the Brotherhood, specifically the leaders of Clan Arcona.” Nashiro smirked. “I can relate. So we became fast friends. Such good friends, in fact, that he has my back against big, hulking barbarians with ancient weapons threatening to drag me back into Arcona.”

Mirus thought about ripping the carbine from Dash’s hands and beating both of the men to death, but thought better of it. If Kakos picked up Dash at the detention facility, he was most likely one of

Cortel's mercs. He would be expecting a telekinetic attack.

This wasn't the time to escalate the situation.

"Fine. Kakos, tell your dog to calm down. I have something for you." Mirus kept his eyes on Kakos as he reached down to pick up the cloth-wrapped blade that had fallen to the ground. Grasping it in one meaty hand, he tossed the sword to Kakos. The young Sith caught it easily.

"What's this?"

Mirus kept his voice calm. "Your dossier was clear in your preference for swords. If you come with me, you'll have a chance to use that one."

Kakos unwrapped the top of the blade, peering at the fine edge before turning his attention back to Mirus. "And if I don't?"

"Then you can use it on the assassins that are coming to kill you tonight."

Nashiro cocked an eyebrow. "Say again?"

Mirus allowed a wry smile. "Only one faction of Arcona wanted your release. There are still powerful players in the clan leadership that would rather see you dead than loose in the Brotherhood."

Nashiro's eyes narrowed. "Arcia."

Mirus nodded. "She has contracted out a number of Jedi Hunters from Plagueis to kill you. I am certain they are on their way, all eager to be the first to bring your head back to Arcia and earn their Knighthood."

Nashiro looked over his shoulder at Dash. Mirus continued, pressing the issue with a calculated guess. "Your shuttle won't make it another jump, Kakos. I know the condition the hyperdrive is in."

Nashiro returned his attention to Mirus. "So what do you suggest?"

"Come with me. Join the Tyrant Sword."

"Who?"

Mirus sighed. "The team of hardened warriors that I invited you to join before you decided to be... insulting."

Nashiro looked back at Dash. The fat spacer shrugged. "Better than trying to fight off a bunch of assassins with some rusty old sword." He threw the carbine back over the counter. "I mean, that power pack barely had enough charge to tell me it was empty. Without a gun, I'm no good in a fight."

Nashiro turned back to face Mirus, glaring at the Knight with a face of stone. "So I'll get to use this?" he asked, holding up his new blade.

"Constantly."

"And who will we target?"

"The enemies of Arcona."

Nashiro's voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper. "What about our enemies inside of Arcona?"

Mirus considered the deeper meaning for a moment. "I can't promise that I'll support your own personal vendettas," he said, "but I won't stand in your way."

Nashiro nodded. "Okay. We're in. For now."

"Hangar 2," said Mirus, hefting his sword onto his shoulder.

Nashiro turned on his foot and motioned for Dash to follow. Then he looked back over his shoulder. "But promise me that one day," he said with a malicious grin, "you and I will finish our little talk."

"Without a doubt," said Mirus as he exited the cantina with his newest crew members.

