

*Well, crap.* Hades opened one eye, then the other. He looks around at the escape pod, or what was left of it. Sparks and an acrid smoke fill the cabin. Not enough smoke to choke on, just enough to make breathing unpleasant. It finally occurs to him that he is alive and he lets himself chuckle in disbelief. He begins to check himself for injuries only to find just a few large bruises and some scrapes with no apparent broken bones but his right ankle and knee seem badly sprained.

*Amazing.* He thinks.

He then starts to take stock of his equipment and his surroundings. He soon realizes his luck ends just about there. His lightsaber was broken and laying in three pieces beside him. His blaster, broken. Betsy, his scatter gun was also bent and unworkable. His various grenades were disabled in the crash. How he has no idea. Hades takes a slow breath as both the temperature and his temper both begin to rise. Sunlight is streaking from some apparent cracks in the hull through the smoke. Just about anything he would need to defend himself was gone. He does manage to find a functioning datapad and a flare gun, which is good. He types a message about his condition and his location on the datapad but then trails off, his mind wandering back to the battle above and the loss of his beloved *Titan*.

His escape pod was one of the last to leave, as it should be. He had gotten all of the crew off the ship, at least those who were not already one with the Force. Before he abandoned ship with his crew he gave a few final orders to the Tarentum Fleet. The *Affliction* Carrier Group were to withdraw and link up with Arcona's Fleet in order to save itself. And before the destruction of the *Titan* both Frigates of his *Titan* Carrier Group had been destroyed so he had already ordered Rear Admiral Scion "Firebird" Altera to begin to pick up any survivors with whatever ships and shuttles he had available, especially rescue those survivors that made it to the planet's surface. Scion was his Corvette Squadron Commander and his CR-90's, Corellian Gunship and any ATRs left would make quick work of any enemy element attempting to capture his crew members. This gave Hades a little semblance of hope. He just wish he knew where he was.

He looks towards the hatch before he pulls himself up and pops it open. He stares out at the windswept barren landscape that was bathed in the red light from the red giant above and frowns. No landmarks to gauge his position just sand and dirt. *Lovely.* His bad luck was about to get worse, unfortunately. A low whine of a repulsor alerts him to an incoming speeder, which means it is not friendly.

Hades quickly locates anything that would identify him as an actual member of the Dark Brotherhood, including his lightsaber and comlink. He then jumps out of the escape pod with a curse to his injured leg and, with the aid of the Force, digs a deep hole in the sand and dirt and buries them. He fills the hole making sure to cover the top layer with sand and jumps back into the escape pod and quickly closes the hatch. He situates himself back in his original position.

He can hear the whine of the repulsors from inside the escape pod now. He knew it would be a minute or two before the enemy opens the hatch. He pulls out one of the ration bars and the canteen of water and begins to eat. Once he finishes the bar he picks up the flare gun with this free hand. Since the escape pod is angled to where the hatch is facing almost at an almost perfect 90 degree angle straight up from his location inside, once the hatch is opened by whomever is coming for him, he can fire his flare and hope Scion picks it up. Hades then began to drink heavily from the canteen because he didn't know when or if he would get another drink of water again.

He was just about to finish with the canteen when the hatch opens and the sun red light shoots down into his eyes. Hades pulls the trigger instantly and the flare shot out of the hatch and high into the sky above, giving out it's pulsating light and electronic signal beacon. One of the famed Shikari Huntresses jumped down with a stun baton and hit Hades with the high voltage setting. The next thing Hades knew he was outside face down in the sand. He rolled over on his back and coughs out the dirt from his mouth and nose. The taste of the scorched sand remains, however. The face of a Chiss female fills his blurry vision.

"And who might you be?" She purrs.

"Nobody important." Hades groans. He was rewarded for that amazing answer with an equally amazing stomp to the gut. The air is knocked out of him as he gasps and groans, holding his stomach. Maybe all that water wasn't such a good idea.

"Try again, worm. Who are you?" she again asked. Hades sneers at her before she raises her foot above him.

"Knight, Joseph. Fleet Admiral. Emperor's Hammer Strike Fleet. Serial Number 281. And that's all you're getting you bantha sniffing son of a AAAHH!" Hades screamed as he was hit with a lower but painful stun from another Shikari stun baton after giving the woman his true former identity of a life long past.

"Emperor's Hammer, huh?" She gave him a once over and smiles. "Explains the uniform. Why are you in Brotherhood's war Mr. Knight, Joseph. Fleet Admiral?" For good measure the Chiss woman rests her boot on his stomach to remind him what will happen if he is insolent once again. He sneers at her but then looks away.

"If you take on the Brotherhood and win, then you will come after the Sith and other Force Users we have and eventually the Emperor's Hammer as a whole. If we can help the Brotherhood stop you now, then we are safe from that possibility later." The venom in his words were palpable, as if the very breath it took to speak them were full of poison. Kendra Icasta laughs at the man below her. Her prisoner.

“You are pathetic. You will come to know pain like never before. I am sure Rath would love to see what is rolling around inside your head. You are a prize to behold, proof of collusion between the Brotherhood and the Emperor’s Hammer!” Kendra laughs like a lioness after a kill. The double explosion that knocked her off her feet and rolled Hades over to one side came suddenly and without warning. If he could have laughed, he would have. But first, he’d have to get his breath back.

The two speeders the Shikari used to locate the downed escape pod lay in smoldering ruins as two Tarenti TIE Defenders broke into split formation and circled off in opposing directions to make another pass. A Tarentum ATR pumps a few turbolaser bolts into the ground thirty meters away for good measure as it lands and disgorges its complement of stormtroopers who begin firing on the Shikari. Hades takes this opportunity with the distracted Shikari and rolls onto his good leg and makes a clean sweep of Kendra’s legs from behind her. With one hand he grabs her stun baton hanging off her utility belt and with the other he grabs her throat and follows through with her momentum to the ground, giving a quick shot to her brachial artery, stunning her. He then flipped the strength on high and planted the stun baton into her side as he let go of her neck. The blue light dances over her body as she was knocked unconscious.

Two of the other Shikari Huntress lay dead but the others were putting up a valiant fight against the Stormtroopers as they fell back behind the escape pod to provide themselves cover. Hades grabs Kendra’s DE-21 slugthrower and starts to fire upon the remaining Shikari. He rolls the Chiss’ limp body onto her side to provide himself cover as he does so, knowing the others will hesitate before firing on the body of their leader. Hades fishes around on Kendra’s utility belt before finding a thermal detonator. He arms it for a two second fuse and with the aid of the Force, tosses it to where the other Shikari have taken cover. The explosion ceases all outgoing fire from that location. Tarentum Stormtroopers swarm the area but soon return with their blasters in a resting position. Satisfied that the threat was neutralized, Hades sighs.

“Trooper, I need stun cuffs.” Hades says towards the troops close by. A nearby trooper nods and promptly secures a set onto Kendra’s wrist that were now behind her back. Hades stands up with the help of the Force due to his injured leg. He gives the Chiss another hit with the stun baton to ensure she was out before stripping her of all of the items she was carrying and patting down her clothing to ensure she has nothing to hide.

“Comlink for you, sir.” A Sergeant steps forward and hands him a wrist link as a Corellian Gunship maneuvers overhead.

“Hades?” The voice asks.

“Scion, I could almost kiss you. That was close.” Hades motions to Kendra and then to the Assault Transport as an order to load her up.

“You’re welcome, my Master.” Scion replied. Hades tosses the comlink back to the Sergeant and moves over to where he buried his lightsaber and other items and quickly retrieves them. He then boards the ATR with the rest of the Stormtroopers. Within a few minutes they were halfway to space and to link up with the Arcona fleet and the *Affliction* Carrier Group of the Tarentum Navy. Hades was quite finished with being a Prisoner of War.

SBL Hades #8596