

The Price of Peace

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Kapitel 3: Voices in the Dark

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The Price of Peace
Chapter 2: Voices in the Dark

Darkness. Emptiness. Pain. That's all that he could feel for a long time. Gradually other things became noticeable, the whirring of machines nearby, a constant beeping, and a steady stream of whispered voices. Searching his memory, he tries to make sense of the voices, trying to find one that's familiar to him. He wills himself to move, make a sound, anything that can be noticed, but it's like his mind is separate from his body. He could tell there were people coming into the room, but they always seemed to stay away, no one would come close enough for him to get their attention. It seemed like years he was trapped in this state. He was ready to just give in, when he hears someone enter his room again.

"Has there been any change?" A female voice asks hesitantly.

"Not really. The doctor said they may take him off the ventilator today. He says that then it'll be up to him. We can't make him hang on, April. He wouldn't want us to," a male voice says, concern evident in his voice.

April sighs, "I know, Fireball, but -"

"We've been over this, we all agreed." Another male voice says interrupting her. "I don't like it either, April, but we've done everything we can."

"I know, Father," she replies quietly. "I just wish we knew if he can even hear us," she says exasperated. She goes over to his bedside and she places her hand on his. "Can't you just find some way to snap out of it? You're better than this!" she says sounding more angry than she intends. She squeezes his hand tightly, and slowly releases it. "Damn it Saber, you're the one that's always okay. Come out of it already."

"April..." Her father begins quietly, placing a hand gently on her shoulder, "I know this

is hard, but you're not completely well yet yourself, try not to get so upset."

She sighs and shakes her head, "I'm mad, father. I'm mad at him, I'm mad at myself, I'm mad at Jesse..." She makes a fist and punches the bed, close enough to him that his body moves from the impact. She turns and looks at the monitors, hoping for some sort of change, but nothing happens. "Come on, do something," she whispers.

Once more he begs his brain to get his body to do as he asks. He reaches out in the darkness and wills something, anything to move. He tries for a hand or finger, he hears no reply from the people that he's sure are there, so he tries harder and focuses on moving a foot.

April is turning to face her father when just for a second she thinks she sees movement, "What?"

He's sure she saw something, so with all of his willpower he tries once more to move his foot.

"Look!" April says astonished, "I swear his foot just moved!"

Soon he hears other murmurs coming closer, so he tries one more time, managing a slightly more deliberate movement.

"I saw it that time!" one of the male voices states, the mix of excitement and relief evident in his voice.

"I'll go and get the doctor," the other male voice says.

He hears a door open and soon other voices are entering the room.

"Someone try and get him to move again." a new voice says.

"April, he seemed to respond to you," Fireball says.

April leans close to him and takes his hand, "Saber, if you can hear me, do something, anything to let me know that you can hear me, please."

The room falls silent and he imagines several people watching him for any sign of movement. After what feels like an eternity, he hears several simultaneous sighs of relief as he moves his other foot.

"Well, that is a good bit of progress. I was beginning to wonder if he was even still alive," the doctor says. "He seems to be breathing on his own right now, should we try and remove the tubes before he's fully awake?"

"I think so. Maybe then he would wake up on his own," April replies, her hand still grasping his. The doctor nods and she leans closer to him again, speaking softly to him, "Saber, I don't know if you can understand everything that's happening, but they are going to take the tubes out of your throat. Don't fight it, okay? It's not going to

feel good when they do it, but it'll be better after they're done, trust me. If you understand, try and signal me."

Silence again while waiting for a reply. He wills himself to move a few fingers on the hand she's holding.

"He moved his hand. Not much, but I felt it. Can you work around me?" April asks.

He's suddenly aware of several people close to him. He feels more pressure on his hand and tries to return the gesture. Then he feels like he's choking and struggling to breathe. Alarms start going off, and rapid beeping is heard.

"Saber, relax, it's okay. The tubes are out, slow breaths." April says soothingly as she , places her other hand on his chest. "Slow calm breaths. You can do this, come on."

The machines slowly start to become slower and more steady. He's still in darkness, but he can breathe. He makes an attempt to mouth words, but his throat is so dry it hurts.

"Don't try and talk yet. You need to get some ice chips down to wet your throat. We need to try and move you to a more upright position, if that's okay, can you squeeze my hand twice?" April asks.

He squeezes twice, the second time weaker than the first, but enough that it's noticed. Slowly he feels the bed changing his position.

"Here." April says and she places a spoon with some ice to his lips.

The cold is a shock at first, but then he manages to take some in and feels it going down. They repeat this for several minutes before he tries to talk again. "Dark" he finally manages to mouth.

"Dark?" April asks hesitantly. He gently squeezes her hand twice. "You can't see?" April asks a bit shocked. He squeezes her hand once to indicate no. "He can't see," she says to the others in the room.

Several gasps are heard and then he feels someone touch his other arm. "Captain Rider, I'm doctor Izumi. Does your head hurt?"

Saber squeezes April's hand twice. "Yes." April says in reply.

"A little or a lot?" Dr. Izumi asks.

A long pause, "Little. Dizzy," Saber manages to whisper.

"I'm going to need to run some tests. It could just be temporary as your body readjusts to functioning on it's own again. But we need to see if there is anything else going on that could be causing the blindness and dizziness." Dr. Izumi looks over him carefully, "I don't see anything actually wrong with your eyes, so this should just be

temporary. Can you tell me your name?"

Saber takes a bit more of the ice water, "Saber," he replies his voice a hoarse whisper.

"Do you know where you are?" The doctor inquires.

"Hospital." he replies.

"Do you know what happened to you?" Dr. Izumi asks.

"Accident?" Saber replies hesitantly.

Dr. Izumi sighs, "You don't remember?"

"No," he admits quietly.

The others cast a nervous glance to one another. The doctor turns to the group, "I'm going to see about setting up an MRI and CAT scans, talk with him for a while and I'll be back." Dr. Izumi leaves the room and the others slowly approach the bed.

"Saber?" April begins hesitantly. He turns his head slightly towards her. "Do you remember who any of us are?"

He closes his eyes, thinking and nods slowly, "I know you are friends and that I trust you," he finally replies slowly some hesitation evident in his voice. "Although your names are a bit fuzzy. Right now, I honestly couldn't tell you my full name," he adds quietly.

Commander Eagle places his hand on Saber's shoulder, "I'm Commander Charles Eagle, don't try too hard to figure things out. Frustration might make your recollection come back more slowly. Yes, we are all your friends. April is the one to your right, holding your hand. She is also my daughter. We also have Fireball, who is standing behind me, and Colt is here with his wife, Robin. All of us are taking turns staying with you, you won't be alone."

"How long have I been here?" Saber asks.

"Almost three months, Saber," the commander replies.

Saber shakes his head a little, trying to process the information. "How...what happened?"

A long silence follows before Commander Eagle finally speaks, "You, April, Fireball, and Colt are part of an elite group of Star Sheriffs. You help keep peace. A colony called Tranquility put out a distress call, so you and your team went to see about it. Based on a brief report you sent while returning to Calvary Command, which is where you are now, you were ambushed. All of you were working to free some colonists. Taking different routes in, you met in the middle and began helping people escape capture. There was a series of explosions. April was caught in one and was thrown into

a building which collapsed on to her. Fireball went to tend to her and got her out and back to your ship. Colt was caught in it as were you. You were closer to the center, you said you were thrown back and through a wall. According to the report, you hit your head on something and you were aware that you were bleeding, but didn't feel it was serious. You got out of the building you were in, saw Colt in trouble and got him back to the Bismarck and got all of you here. You made sure the others went to get checked, but collapsed in my office. All of you were in the hospital for a while. The others are still recuperating, but they are allowed to move about now. Once they know that everything is okay with you, I'm sure they will let you out too."

"The people we were rescuing?" Saber finally asks quietly.

The commander sighs, "Most were killed in the explosions. A few other groups of Star Sheriffs managed to rescue some of the people that were able to hide when they were invaded. The colony was pretty much destroyed."

"What about the people that attacked the colony?" he asks.

"They vanished. We have been unable to find any trace of them. We are still looking though," Fireball replies venturing closer to the bed and placing his hand on Saber's arm, causing him to jump slightly at the touch. "Sorry, I didn't mean to make you jump, I just wanted you to know that I'm here."

Saber nods slightly. "So which one are you?" he asks trying to sort out the different voices.

"I'm Fireball."

Saber nods. "So we have all known one another for some time?"

"Yes. My Father and I have known you a bit longer than Fireball or Colt, but we have worked together as a group for a number of years. We're like family," April replies.

Saber shakes his head a bit, trying to clear it. "This is just so..."

"Frustrating?" April offers.

"Yes." he admits begrudgingly. Silence follows for a while, no one sure what to say. "Do I have other family?" he asks to no one in particular.

"You did at one time, Saber. Your mother was ill and died a few years ago, during the temporary peace treaty of the Outrider war. Your father was killed near the end of the war, about a year ago. As far as we know, you have no other family. I'm sorry," Commander Eagle replies quietly.

Saber shrugs, "I just wish I could remember something, someone, anything."

A knock at the door and Dr. Izumi enters, "All right, Captain Rider, I'm taking you down for a few scans, is that okay with you?"

Saber nods slightly, "You ask as if I have a choice, Doctor."

Dr. Izumi chuckles, "I suppose technically you can refuse, but I would advise against it."

"Then let's go and get this over with, shall we?" he replies.

"Would you like someone to come along?" Dr. Izumi asks.

"If they want to come, they can. It's not like they can come in the room, right?" Saber replies.

"That is true, Captain." Dr. Izumi acknowledges and then turns to Commander Eagle, "Are you waiting here or coming along?"

Commander Eagle looks to the others and shakes his head, "If it's okay with you, Saber I think we'll stay here. We will be here when you're done."

"It's fine with me if you wish to stay. No point in coming that I can tell." he replies.

"Then let's go, Captain Rider," Dr. Izumi says as he arranges everything so that he can roll the bed to the rooms for the scans and then leaves with Saber.

Colt let's out a whistle, "He got clocked pretty good, didn't he?"

"Colt!" Robin admonishes.

"What?" he asks innocently.

"That's not appropriate." Robin replies.

Fireball chuckles, "I was thinking the same thing, Colt. I just knew better than to say it out loud."

April groans, glad for the temporary diversion, "Boys, I'm glad you didn't say anything while he was here. I just wish we could do something. What happens if he doesn't regain his memory, or if he is blinded permanently?"

"He was injured on the job April, Calvary Command would have to find something for him to do," her father replies. "Although if it turns out to be a more permanent hindrance, I don't see him allowing it to slow him down for long. If he can get his coordination back, he could easily be an excellent teacher blind or sighted."

"Is there anything we can do to help him with his memories, I wonder?" Colt asks aloud.

"Remember when Fireball lost his?" April replies.

"Not really," Colt replies sheepishly.

"You put me back in the Bismarck and tried to let me do things in the ship, hoping it would snap me out of it. We almost died because of my hesitation, but obviously, I remembered in time," Fireball says.

"Perhaps taking him to his estate would help? Once he's cleared otherwise, I mean." April offers.

"Not a bad idea, April. Something calm and familiar could prove helpful to all of you," Commander Eagle says approvingly. "They have access to good doctors there, so all of you could still be checked out should something happen, and it gets all of you away from here for a while. After we see how this turns out, I'll talk with Dr. Izumi."

Several heads nod in agreement and they veer off to various conversations. A couple of hours pass before a nurse comes in pushing an empty bed. They all look at each other with worried expressions when Dr. Izumi returns with Saber, who is now in fresh clothes and wearing sunglasses and in a wheelchair looking a little more relaxed than before.

"Welcome back, Saber." April says brightly. "You look a little better."

"It's amazing what a shower and fresh clothes will do to a person's disposition," he replies with a hint of amusement.

"How did the scans go?" Commander Eagle asks as they settle into the room again.

"Well," Saber begins, "during the MRI, I started seeing flashes of light, but the pain was excruciating, so they stopped the scan, and turned out the lights in the room while they went over the images they had. Next thing I know, they bring me these dark shades and I put them on and they turn the lights back on."

"So you can see?" April asks.

"Not really. Bits of light and some shadows, and that's not even consistent." Saber replies hesitantly.

"He still has some swelling near the sight of the initial head wound," Dr. Izumi states. "A small infection below the skin is what has been putting pressure on the optical nerves, causing the blindness. It could also be partially responsible for the memory loss, although I'm inclined to believe that the memory loss is from the concussion, and not the infection. He has been given an injection of steroids and a mass spectrum antibiotic, so hopefully, we can get rid of the infection completely and perhaps over the next couple of weeks have his vision return to normal. However, there could be other issues affecting his vision and/or memory, we will just have to wait and see."

"So what now?" April asks nervously.

"We wait and see what happens," Saber says sounding a bit irritated, causing April to smile.

