

The Price of Peace

Von chelle76

Kapitel 35: In the Heat of Battle

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Chapter 34: In the Heat of Battle

Fireball manages to dodge another attack from a group of fighters, destroying two in the process. Not far from him, Saber is doing much the same thing. "We need to try and get these fighters off our backs, Saber," Fireball says sounding irritated.

"Aye. The longer we have to fight them, the closer that battleship and renegade unit get to the colony and Cavalry Command," Saber replies as he hits another fighter.

The fighters from the outpost start making headway in the fight against the fighters, allowing Fireball and Saber to break towards the battleship and the renegade unit. "Who do we engage first, Saber," Fireball asks as they near the battleship.

"Let's try and draw the renegade unit away from the ship. Perhaps the battleships from Cavalry command will get here soon so they can take on the ship," he replies. "Not a fight I care to engage in if we can avoid it."

"Yeah, not one I want to do either," Fireball replies.

They approach the renegade unit from behind and are nearly upon it when it suddenly turns and fires at them. Narrowly, they manage to separate and evade the attack, each firing at the enemy unit in retaliation. Fireball manages to land a glancing hit. The unit charges him and Saber takes the chance to fire his blaster, knocking the unit back just before it can fully strike Fireball with its sword, causing it to make minimal contact. Fireball is thrust backwards from the hit, but damage is minimized because of Saber hitting the enemy unit.

"Thanks," Fireball says over the com-link.

"Don't thank me yet. We've got to destroy this thing. And I think that is about to be more difficult," Saber replies.

"Why?" Fireball says as he dodges another attack.

"The battleship is trying to lock on to us," Saber says grimly.

Suddenly the enemy renegade unit charges Saber just as alarms start going off. Saber flips up his shields and a blinding flash is seen and everything goes dark. He feels himself hurling uncontrollably and unable to stop. He tries in vain to get the controls to work, but nothing responds. He hits the com-link, but it's gone dead. He finally blacks out as the suit continues its spiral.

"Saber!" Fireball yells as the light blinds him. He is thrown backwards as the enemy renegade unit hits him from the force of the beam that fired from the battleship. spiraling out of control, he finally stops after ramming a fighter ship. Whether it is one of his or an enemy's he's unsure. He can no longer see, grappling for his controls he wildly presses buttons hoping to find out if his friend survived. "Saber! Saber! Come in!" he says repeatedly, getting no reply. He feels a jolt and realizes that he must still be under attack. He grabs the stick that is his main control and tries to visualize his console in his mind, just as he hears April's voice come into his mind. He replies, but it's as if April doesn't hear him.

"Fireball, are you there? Saber? Somebody answer me!"

"April?" Fireball says hesitantly.

A sigh of relief in his ear then April's voice again, "Fireball, can you see Saber? I can't get him to answer me."

"No, I can't see anything, April," he replies honestly. "April, can you tell me where the enemy is. I can't read anything here."

"I got a renegade unit coming at you two o'clock."

Fireball tries to remember how to grab the blaster and goes through the motions, and hits the button to fire it. "Did I hit it?" he asks.

The unit is flung back away from him. "Yeah, but it's almost got control again. It's coming at about eleven o'clock, Fireball," April says.

He turns and fires the blaster, making a direct hit. The enemy unit is thrown into the battleship, causing a bit of damage to its main weapon.

The enemy unit fires towards him and hits him directly. His shields were up, but he's unable to move or see anything. "Damn it. This isn't good. April I need some kind of assistance. Where is Saber?"

"I don't know, Fireball. I've lost his signal!" April says allowing the fear to come through her voice. "Here comes the renegade unit. It's at your nine o'clock."

Fireball moves to replace the blaster with the sword and swings hard, making contact with something. The feeling shocks his system and he starts to see fuzzy outlines and lights again. He notices a blip on his screen and turns, ready to react. It comes at him full force and he swings, grazing the enemy unit. It parries and swings, heading for the head of the unit.

"FIREBALL!" April yell, realizing he's unable to avoid the impact.

Fireball pulls up his sword to try and block the worst of the blow when a blast knocks the unit back, causing it to miss. Fireball blinks in shock.

"Glad I made it back in time," Saber says over the com-link. "Sorry for the delay. My system shut down completely."

"Saber?" both Fireball and April say in a combination of shock and relief.

"Aye, it's me. I'm having a bit of dizziness, but I'm fairly unharmed," Saber replies. Just as several blasts are heard nearby.

"The back up from Cavalry Command have arrived," April states as one of the battleships lands a hit on the enemy battleship, causing a small fire to breakout on the ship.

"How can you do this?" Fireball asks as they instinctively turn towards the blast.

"Do what?" Saber asks, while pointedly moving away from the battleships.

"How can you function when you can't see?" Fireball asks.

"You can't see?" April and Saber ask him at the same time.

"Not really," Fireball replies. "Everything is a bit fuzzy, but it is better than right after that flash of light."

An alarm sounds and Saber's unit is suddenly hit from behind. "What the-" Saber says, his voice cut off from the force of the impact. He manages to steady the suit quickly and turns it around, trying to find the source of what hit him.

"Are you all right?" April asks over the com-link.

"I've been worse. Fireball, you still with me?"

"Yeah. The renegade hit you. I'm glad your shields were up," Fireball replies.

"So am I. We need to take that unit out and fast," Saber says urgently.

"Any ideas?" Fireball asks.

"Well, perhaps we can use the two battleships to our advantage," Saber says.

"Okay..."

"If we can lure it into the middle of the foray, and manage to not get ourselves killed in the process, perhaps we can get lucky and it get hit," Saber suggests as they pull back from where the battleships are fighting, the renegade unit in pursuit.

"Somehow I get the feeling it won't fall for that, Saber," Fireball quips.

"Aye. I'm open to suggestions, Fireball," Saber says as he attempts to evade the blasters of the enemy renegade unit.

The advantage goes back and forth for a while when all three are hit by a large blast, hurling them towards the colony.

"I can't get this thing to break out of the fall," Fireball says obviously straining for control.

"I'm not having much luck either," Saber says as he manages to move enough to grab ahold of Fireball's unit.

"What the Hell are you doing?" Fireball asks confused.

"I'm trying to use our momentum to get us turned so that we don't die when we hit. On three, hit the button for the jet thruster, like you're trying to go up," Saber replies.

"Are you insane? That will hurl us towards the ground faster!"

"For a second yes, but I have an idea. Do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"One...two...three!" The simultaneously hit their thrusters and Saber pulls hard, causing them to rotate down, then turning them so they run mostly parallel to the ground. Just before impact, the suits dig into the ground and they roll for several yards before coming to halt in a heap. The suits are badly damaged and they scramble to climb out of them, meeting next to remainder of the suits. Saber is about to speak when the third suit comes crashing down, a few hundred yards away.

"Are you hurt?" Fireball asks.

"I've been worse. I think I've got a cut on my side, I can feel what I think is blood, but we need to find that other suit and capture or kill the pilot," Saber replies. "How are you?"

"My leg hurts. I think my knee is slightly dislocated, but I can walk, for now at least," Fireball says. Saber nods and they head off in the direction of the crash. After nearly an hour, they reach the wreckage. "I guess it was a bit further than I thought," Fireball says quietly, pulling out his blaster and scanning the area surrounding the crash site.

Saber pulls his blaster and the pair split up, carefully scanning the scene as Fireball moves closer to where the pilot hatch is. "Do you see an movement?"

Fireball messes with the pod and it opens, revealing no one inside. "Empty."

"Did the pilot just vaporize when it hit?"

"Usually if that's the case, they leave some sort of debris behind. I don't see any sign of that," Fireball replies. He starts to head back down when a shot is fired, narrowly missing him. He stumbles and lands hard on the ground and yelps from the pain of the impact.

Saber makes his way to him and drags him to some semblance of shelter the far side of the former suit, firing back in the general direction of the shot. "Are you able to walk?" he asks quietly.

"I'm not sure, to be honest," Fireball replies in obvious pain. He glances up at Saber and notices his left side covered in blood. "We need help, Saber. You're in no better condition than I am."

"Help is something we do not have right now," Saber replies. "We need to get away from here. Can you stand if you lean on me?"

"And risk making you pass out? No. I need to try and walk on my own. If I can get my knee back in place, I think I'll be okay for now."

Saber carefully lowers himself to his keeps and straightens out Fireball's leg, bracing a hand to either side of his knee. "This is going to hurt, Fireball," Saber says. Fireball nods and Saber pops his knee back into place.

Fighting the urge to scream or vomit, Fireball takes a breath and after a minute, he moves to try and stand. "I think I can walk, if I'm careful," he says still obviously in pain as he manages to stand up favoring the leg.

The pair start to carefully make their way and just reach a stretch of shrubbery when they encounter Jesse standing before them his blaster aimed at them.

"You two are making this far too easy," Jesse says with a sneer. "I seriously thought you'd make this a little more fun. Lower your weapons to the ground slowly."

Fireball and Saber start to slowly place their blasters on the ground, neither one willing to move quickly. As he reaches the ground, Saber places his blaster down, grabbing a handful of rocky dirt as he does. Fireball notices the slight movement and does the same. Slowly they start to stand and almost simultaneously they toss the dirt into Jesse's face, temporarily blinding him. They head in two directions, Saber moving around and behind Jesse, Fireball away and to the left. Seizing the chance, Fireball lunges towards Jesse and knocks him down. Grappling for his gun, Jesse swings a punch in Fireball's direction, hitting him hard in the stomach. They continue to fight,

rolling across the ground. Fireball finally wrenching the gun from his hand and tossing it. Just as Fireball gets him pinned, he feels a sharp pain in his shoulder and sees blood dripping onto his attacker. Jesse kicks him aside and Fireball clinches his wound, realizing that he had been stabbed. "How?" Fireball asks, trying to ignore the pain.

"Always have a back up plan," Jesse says in a mocking tone. Fireball goes to get up and Jesse grabs the blaster from the ground and points at him. "Don't move."

Fireball stops his motion and looks up, to face his attacker head-on when Jesse is suddenly hit from behind. The gun he was holding drops to the ground and Fireball rolls towards it. Jesse rolls and turns to face his attacker, pulling a sword from its sheath on his side.

"I'm going to enjoy killing you, Rider," Jesse says menacingly.

"Not the first time I've been told that," Saber replies as Jesse lunges for him, sword out. Saber moves out of the way, fighting back the burning pain in his side. Jesse is quickly on his feet and charging him. Saber parries the attack and the two fight for a while, neither one gaining a true upper hand.

Fireball tries to aim the blaster to shoot Jesse, but can't manage to get a clear shot, because of the constant motion of the two fighting. Moving so that he is a bit covered by the brush, he watches as Saber continually tries to gain the upper hand in the fight.

"Fireball, can you hear me?" A voice calls into his ear causing him to jump.

"Yeah," he replies quietly.

"Thank God you're alive. We lost your signals," April says with relief. "Where are you? Where's Saber?"

"We're on the colony. I think I can see the outskirts of the outpost quite a ways from here, but my vision isn't the best right now. It could be something else entirely. Saber is currently sword fighting with Jesse. I've tried to get a clear shot on him, but I'm afraid of hitting Saber."

"So Saber is okay?" April asks. "He won't reply to me."

"I'm not sure if he can hear you or not, April. This is the first time that I've heard you since we crashed. He is injured, and I'm not sure how much longer he can keep going. He's lost a lot of blood from some sort of injury to his left side."

"I think I have a rough fix on where you are. I've found the wreckage of two units."

"Um, are the two units together?" Fireball asks.

"No. I'm only getting visuals. It's like the suits have completely shut down."

"Then what you're most likely seeing is our two suits, that crashed as one, and Jesse's

suit. We would have died had Saber not had us crash they way he did," Fireball replies.

"We've got people coming, including a couple of field medics. It'll be a little bit of time though."

"Time that I'm not sure we have." Fireball says. He notices Saber starting to falter and he moves to get a little closer to the pair. "April, how close are those medics?" he asks, he gets no reply. "April are you there?" Still no reply. He starts looking for an opening to try and shoot Jesse. He gets into position, ready to shoot.

Saber stumbles and Jesse moves so that he closing the gap between them. Jesse brings his sword up for the killing strike when Saber rolls slightly and a shot is fired. Jesse drops the sword, barely missing Saber as it falls. Almost automatically, Saber pulls his sword up and slices into Jesse's abdomen. Another shot is fired and Jesse drops completely, gasping for air. Saber looks around for the source of the shot and sees Colt step out from the far side of the clearing.

Amanda wakes to the sound of the children crying. She goes to get up and realizes that she is rather stiff and not able to move very quickly. By the time she is up and walking to the pen, Elaine has come from the other side of the makeshift curtain and scoops up Moria and begins rocking her gently. Amanda takes Eryn from the pen and starts trying to console her. After a few minutes, the twins have settled and Amanda and Elaine have changed them. Amanda cradles Eryn against her as she feeds her, Elaine rocking the other to keep her calm until she can be fed.

"I'll be glad when we can get ahead again," Amanda says, enticing a chuckle and a sympathetic look from Elaine. Eryn finishes and she swaps with Elaine, so that Moria can be fed. "Has anyone heard anything?" Amanda asks quietly.

Elaine is silent for a few minutes, thinking of the best way to reply. "Mr. Wilcox spoke with Commander Eagle and April about two hours ago," Elaine begins. "They have lost contact with both Mr. Hikari and Saber." Amanda gasps involuntarily, her chest suddenly feeling tight from fear, but Elaine continues, "As far as they could tell at that time, they were both alive. Their suits crashed onto our colony, but so far, they have not communicated with either of them. The enemy also crashed, from what they could tell. Mr. Wilcox set out in his Bronco Buster to try and find Saber and Mr. Hikari. We've not heard anything else since then."

Amanda nods, unable to speak from the fear building up. Moria finishes and begins squirming in her arms. She turns Moria so that she is resting against her shoulder and rocks her, to try and settle both herself and the child.

Elaine goes to say something when Alex moves the curtain aside and clears his throat to announce his presence.

"I apologize for the intrusion, but I've just spoken with Colt," Alex says.

Elaine nods after making sure Amanda is covered once more, and he enters the area, sitting across from the two women.

"Colt says that he found the wreckage of the two suits that he believes were ours," Alex begins. "The good news is, it appears that both Fireball and Saber at least survived the crash."

"And the bad news?" Amanda manages to whisper.

"The bad news is that at least one of them is hurt. There was a lot of blood in the pod of one of the suits, and a little blood in the other one." Amanda nods, accepting the news and he continues. "Not knowing who was in which suit, we have no way of knowing who is injured and how they are doing. Neither of them was found close to the suits and it appeared that they headed off together. So if there is any good out of this report, it is that they are both alive and are together, so they have a chance at defending themselves."

"I suppose that is something positive," Amanda says quietly. "Thank you for telling us, Alex."

Alex nods and studies Amanda carefully, "Colt went out injured, perhaps I should have gone with him."

"No. If something happens, we may need you here to help protect the children, Alex," Amanda replies.

"I just feel like I should be doing more than just sitting here," Alex says obviously irritated.

Amanda fights to hide the small smile forming on her lips and takes a breath before speaking, "Alex, you are helping, more than you know. You are a source of protection, and our link to the people at the outpost. If you were not here to keep us updated, I'd probably be more worried than I am now. At least with you here, I have someone else that can wield a sword and shoot a blaster if needed. Thomas would defend any of us with his life, but having three of us to help defend this place is a lot better than the two of us."

"Colt?" Fireball says standing up and carefully making his way to where Jesse is crumpled on the ground. Saber is struggling to get up and Colt comes rushing over.

"I heard ya'll had crashed, and I figured one of ya was hurt bad," Colt says looking towards Saber. "We need to get you to the medbay and fast, Saber."

Saber goes to stand and suddenly Jesse makes a lurch towards him. Managing to get to his knees, Saber clutches the sword and plunges it with as much force as he can manage into Jesse. It pierces through him and he drops limply to the ground, his eyes glaze over and his body evaporates, leaving a small puddle where his body had been. Saber drops to the ground, barely conscious and Colt and Fireball immediately turn to him.

"Stay with us, I don't want Amanda to kill me for not bringing you back alive," Colt

says. Saber manages to open his eyes and give an almost invisible smile before blacking out.

"Great. We need to get him to the outpost, Colt," Fireball says looking around.

Colt looks him over and notices that he is favoring a leg, "Are you up to helping me carry him to the Bronco Buster?"

"I'll manage," Fireball replies. "You can't exactly sling him over your shoulder in the condition that he's in. That might just do him in."

Colt chuckles as the pair lean down and carefully lift Saber, slowly making their way towards Colt's waiting vehicle. After what feels like an eternity, they reach it and carefully plop Saber into it, then getting in themselves, Colt takes off for the Outpost.

"I've got 'em, April," Colt says over his com-link.

"Both of them?" A voice asks coming over the com.

"Yeah. Gonna need medics to meet us. Need a gurney, and a wheelchair or a second gurney."

"How bad?" she asks hesitantly.

"Saber has lost a good deal of blood from a wound on his left side. I can't tell if it's his only problem though, he's covered in blood and he's lost consciousness," Colt replies.

A stunned silence for a moment, then Commander Eagle's voice comes in, "And what of Captain Hikari?"

"I'm alive, sir," Fireball replies. "I've been hurt worse. I dislocated my knee, but I think Saber put it back in place. I have a few bruises and scrapes and a bad headache, but I think I'll be okay."

"You forgot to mention your shoulder wound, raceboy," Colt says giving him a glance.

"I've got medics coming out to meet you. We're tracking your movements and they should be upon you within a few minutes. Let them get Saber into a med transport, so they can begin working on him."

"Do you think it's wise to stop outside the outpost, sir?" Fireball asks. "What if Jesse has other fighters nearby that are waiting for such an opportunity or something, we'd be sitting ducks."

"If the medics met you at the gates what would your ETA be?" the commander asks.

"Probably ten minutes, sir at our current speed," Colt replies. "If we don't run into any problems."

"Then I will have them meet you at the gate. I want both of you to be checked out as well, as a precaution."

"Yes sir," they both reply.

The rest of the ride is uneventful. They pull into the outpost and the medics come and load Saber onto a transport and rush him into the medical area. Colt parks nearby and he and Fireball are met by Commander Eagle and April. April looks over the two men carefully, stopping where she sees Fireball covered in blood. "You should go and be checked, Fireball," April says sternly.

"Most of the blood you're seeing is Saber's, April," Fireball says quietly. "I have a small cut here," he says pointing to his upper leg, "but it feels minor, and my headache has eased off. The worst is my shoulder, but it doesn't hurt as bad as I thought it would."

April nods. "Let's still get you checked out, both of you," she adds glancing to Colt. "I know you really shouldn't have gone out, but I am grateful that you did."

They all head off towards the medical facility, having various conversations as they go.