

First Encounters: Leaving Home

James Roberts-Brannigan

20 Sept 2016

The Mansion

0900 hours

James dropped his bags on his bed. He looked around, remembering the layout of his spacious room. He hadn't been home in months, not since his father's funeral. It all came back to him, the various incarnations his room had taken since his parent moved into this mansion when he was four. Those were happier times, but ever since his father's death, home felt cold and unfamiliar.

A second later, his mother appeared in the doorway. Carrie Anne Roberts-Brannigan seemed to wear the same business attire every time he was home. The same black slacks with a tightly cut jacket and white blouse. She also almost always wore cyan, in one accessory or another, complementing her all-penetrating sky-blue eyes and pale complexion. At thirty-six, Carrie Anne was still slender and imposing with an aura of professionalism and competence. She was, as James's father once remarked, "a steady old pillar that cannot be moved." Those traits being ingrained from generations of successful businessmen, one would never suspect she had lost her entire family at Alderaan.

"You were expelled?" She looked at James inquisitively. "What happened?"

James sighed, "Anolo Ruellis took it too far this time. The perv takes it too far with the girls and makes them uncomfortable. But when someone reports him to the administration, the administration always says they'll take care of the problem, but they never do. Of course, it's because Ruellis is the son of Aarm Ruellis..."

"The Rodian ambassador to Chandrilla," Carrie Anne quipped.

“Yeah, the Rodian ambassador... Well, the perv assaulted my friend when she was asleep in the Lounge.”

“So your friend fell asleep in the Lounge and woke up him feeling her up?”

“Yep. She came to me hysterical and crying. When I asked her what happened, it took her an hour to calm down enough to tell me. But it’s not the first time he’s done this. The administration refuses to do anything about it. They do a quick inquiry and determine there’s not enough to substantiate the claim.”

“What did you do?”

“I punched him...”

Carrie Anne looked at him skeptically, “That’s all?”

“Mum, you saw the inquiry report.”

“I did. You almost killed him. He’s still in the bacta tank. Luckily, his family is not pressing charges.”

“Mum, he had it coming to him,” James protested.

“James, what about your future? Your university acceptance has been rescinded. Ambassador Ruellis is a very influential man in high places. Nearly killing his son ruffled some feathers. It’ll take more than a handful of favors to get you reentrance.” Carrie Anne pressed on further, “While I don’t disagree with what you did, why couldn’t you have been a little more discreet? I talked to a board member and it was his opinion that the board would have been willing to overlook this as another unsubstantiated case if Mr. Ruellis hadn’t identify you.”

James sighed, "I don't know Mum. The last few months have been rough. I just snapped and it felt good just taking it out on his face. I'm sorry."

"Well, we might be able to get you into another school. Maybe the Academy, so you can be a soldier like your father. Do you know what aspirations you want to follow?"

There was a pause of silence before James spoke up, "Mum, I want to join the fleet and travel the galaxy like my great-grandfather."

"James, I need you here on Chandrilla," Carrie Anne paused, "You're the only family I have."

"Mum, I don't want to be on Chandrilla anymore," James begged with her, "I just want to get out of here."

"Absolutely not."

Othcar Transports 1600 hours

After briefly chatting with the receptionist, James stepped into Sen's office and took a look around. The outer walls were constructed of transparisteel and offered a grand view of Othcar Transports. The inner walls were painted slate and adorned with awards, pictures, and certificates that Sen had acquired over the last twenty-two years in the industry. The large desk was clear of any clutter and complimented the slate grey and cool blue transparisteel walls. From his chair, Sen could oversee quite literally the shipping fleet that he and Carrie Anne had constructed since arriving in Chandrilla. The office was one of a very competent, detail-oriented superintendent and an industry leader in this region of space.

Sen Sathel's family had been family friends of the Roberts going back to Carrie Anne's great-grandfather's founding of Othcar Transports. Sen and his family had also escaped the destruction of Alderaan, being on a family vacation in Naboo. The two families reconnected on Chandrilla and while John Solomon went to war, Sen and Carrie Anne rebuilt Othcar Transports. James had known Sen as the fun uncle, being invited to the Sathel family vacation every year as a child with Sen, his wife and four children.

Smiling, Sen rose from the chair and walked around the desk to take James's hand before greeting him, "Good morning James. How are you doing?"

James shrugged and responded, "Sen, I was just expelled from school."

"Yes, I heard about your expulsion from your mother. I hope your friend is doing better," Sen sat down in his chair and looked across the desk at James. "So what can I do for you?"

James took a seat and replied, "I'd like to sign up for the shipping fleet."

Sen perked up, a bit amused and concerned, "Does your mother know?"

"I'm fifteen. I can get a job with the fleet."

"I know James. My sons went into the fleet at fifteen too. I can't say I was happy about it, but I respected it." Sen continued, "However, how does your mother feel about it? Even if I wanted to sign you up, I still work for her."

"Sen, if I can't get a job at the business that my mother runs, I'll go to work for one of the competitors." James placed emphasis on "business that my mother runs" and continued, "I really need to get off of Chandrilla. I want to travel through the stars."

Sen set down his pen and rubbed his forehead, thinking for a moment, before looking across the desk at James. “You know your mother would never forgive me if I turned you down and you went and joined a competitor. So how about we meet halfway. Here’s the deal. I’ll sign you up for a run. But as soon as that run is over, you need to have a chat with your mother. Deal?”

James stuck his hand out, “Deal.”

Sen shook his hand. “Okay, you’re in luck. I just received a request for an additional deckhand this morning. The *Aria Chandra* is leaving tomorrow morning on a run to the Outer Rim. The entire trip should take about three weeks.” Sen printed out documents and handed it to James, “It’s docked in Hanger 5-B. The crew should still be there right now finishing up the loading. Give this to the First Officer and let him know that you’re the relief he requested. Also, welcome to Octhar Enterprises.”

James excitedly took the papers, jumped up, and smiled, “Thanks Sen! I really appreciate it.”

Sen smiled hesitantly, “You know your mother’s probably going to hurt me when she finds out. Just do your best and be useful. The *Aria Chandra* is a good crew. They’ll teach you well.” Sen stopped for a moment and gave James a sincere look, “And remember, you have to talk to your mother when you get back. No exceptions.”