

## Run, Run, Run

[Continuation from Phase I Fiction "Finders, Keepers"]

"I've got it. The situation got a little fishy, but I'm ready for transport pickup. Aul, out."

"You heard the human, let's get in there," Darkblade's voice came through.

"Roger, we're on the way," came Qyreia's reply. The Zeltron was an experienced pilot in her own right, and for every ounce of skill she had twice as much gumption. Aul trusted her piloting with his life and was relieved to hear of her involvement in his rescue.

As moved out of the clear and into the shadow of a nearby building, he heard a noise of rustling in the snow. He knelt down and squinted his eyes to try and increase the visibility. A shadow moved in an alleyway a few meters away. He carefully grabbed his comlink and connected again to his rescue transport.

"You might want to hurry, I think I've got company-"

His communication was cut short by a flurry of blaster bolts coming at him from not just the alleyway he saw the shadow in, but from two other adjacent ones as well. He was being ambushed.

The Gray Jedi grabbed his lightsaber and ignited the light blue blade with a *snap-hiss* with no time to spare, as the blade came up and deflected a bolt aimed squarely for his throat. The bolt ricocheted off the lightsaber with a sizzle and impacted with the duracrete wall next to him, leaving a scour mark.

Three platoons of Palatinaein soldiers emerged from the alleyways, their armor shining in the reflection of their blaster bolts. Behind them strutted Lexiconus Qor, his face looking as smug as a Quarren's face possibly could.

"You've got something of mine, human," called out Qor.

Aul placed a hand on his belt pouch, ensuring the clasp was still sealed tight, securing the vial of Aorth-6. He would die before letting this vial fall into the hands of Qor or Scholae Palatinae. Doing so would mean ultimately destruction of Naga Sadow and their entire realm. But he was no match for this many soldiers *and* Qor at once. He made a decision: to run.

Aul back further into the shadow of the alley he was taking cover in, killed the ignition of his lightsaber and called on the Force. He channeled the energies surrounding him into his musculature and skeleton and reinforced his already tensed strength. He bolted down the alley at superhuman speeds. As he reached the end of the alley, he jumped, steadily landed a foot on

the wall of the building in front of him and turned the corner. Eyeing a ladder, he changed his trajectory and scaled the building.

Aul looked around frantically for his rescue team while he heard the footsteps and blaster fire of the Palatineans getting closer. Just as he was about to comm in again, he saw Q's ship rise over the tallest buildings in the distance.

"You called for a lift?" Qyreia's voice facetiously chimed through Aul's comlink.

"Hey, nice of you to show up! See those bugs down there? Light 'em up, Q!" Aul replied desperately.

"With gusto," the Zeltron replied, following by maniacal laughter. Her ship's forward blasters blazed to life as she mowed down the Palatinaean soldiers. Qor, seeing his fate ahead of him, didn't hesitate for a moment to turn and run out into the Mygeetan night.

As Qyreia closed in on Aul's position, the boarding ramp of her ship opened and she gently hovered above the building. Darkblade stood at the top of the ramp, a grin spread across his face.

"You can never just hang out and wait for a lift, can you? You've always gotta go starting fights with the locals," Darkblade playfully chided.

Aul laughed and hopped aboard the ramp, ascended into the cabin of the ship. He carefully patted the pouch on his waist.

"You'll never believe what I've got here."