

For the People

A Submission to the Competition:
The Day Of



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39 ABY
Caelestis City, Ragnath

Reiden finished strapping on the special holster that held his blaster and lightsaber and stood in front of the mirror, looking at his reflection. It wasn't often that he donned his uniform. It still felt odd to him – both being dressed up and getting ready for an award ceremony. He fidgeted with the cap on his head for a moment before tearing it off and throwing it to the ground in a huff. It just wasn't working for him, felt too formal even given the circumstances.

"I thought I might find you here. Do you need any help?" A woman with pale pink skin, amethyst hair, and elegantly tapered ears walked into the room, laughing quietly.

He watched her in the mirror, offering her a warm smile and shaking his head. Lyra Janus was a Sephi-Zeltron hybrid that he had met ten years ago. He had been in a dark place following the death of his master, Angelo Dante, during one of the Brotherhood's conflicts. When he had thought all hope was lost, it was Lyra that had helped him to see that light still remained. He never knew why she had decided to speak to him that night in the bar on Coruscant, but it was something he wouldn't forget.

It was during that time, as he took a break from Brotherhood and Scholae Palatinae business to work through the roiling emotions within him, that the two had grown close in a rather short period of time. He had made frequent trips back to Coruscant since then to see her, but it wasn't until a couple years ago that the two had made an effort to see each other with more regularity. These days, she called Caelestis City home when she wasn't taking care of her father's shipping company and managing a network of business contacts.

"I'm fine," Reiden replied, shaking his head. "I just don't like the cap, it's...not me. Honestly, none of this really is – the formal dress, the awards ceremony. But it's happening and there's nothing I can do about it."

"Sometimes you just have to make the best of a situation," Lyra replied as she bent to pick up the cap. A small set of jaws had clamped down on the brim, and a gizka was lifted into the air with it. She gave the creature an affectionate scratch on its head. "Go on, Silver, let go."

The gizka rumbled softly in appreciation and released his hold on the cap, dropping to the floor. It rubbed against Lyra's ankle and quickly disappeared, likely to go explore somewhere.

"I swear, he likes causing all sorts of trouble at every opportunity," Reiden laughed.

"He's just curious and adventurous. He can't help it, it's in his nature."

"I suppose you're right."

Reiden watched as Silver left the room and then turned back to the mirror. He remained silent. So many thoughts swirled around in his head, flashes of memories came forth. Much had happened since he first encountered the gizka on the clan's medical station. It already felt like so long ago, despite only being four years. So many battles had been fought, so many lives lost. But he had to remind himself that many lives had also been saved. He was brought back to the present by a soft touch on his shoulder.

"What's on your mind, Rei?" Lyra's eyes shone with concern as she looked at him in the mirror.

"There's just so much we could be doing other than having this ceremony. There's still reconstruction that needs to be done. There's always more training that's needed. And we've never gone all-out like this with awards before, I just don't think now is the time."

"Things change, you know this," she advised. She paused for a moment, careful with how to choose her words and broach the subject on her mind. Her arm slid down to encircle his waist. There was a certain glimmer of pride in her eyes. "If only your parents were here to see you..."

Reiden let out a quick, harsh laugh – harsher than he had meant. "I don't think they would approve of some of the things I've done to get here."

"After all that you've been through since they...died, you survived. You're still here, alive. You're their son and they would love and be proud of you no matter what. Trust me on this, okay?" She fixed him with one of her determined looks. It was something he had seen many times before and knew better than to argue with her when she got like that. When she saw the resignation on his face she smiled softly and nodded.

Reiden wanted to argue with her, but deep down, he knew she was right. He knew that he had done all that he did to survive. It was a hard life after his parents were killed, but he made do the best he could. He may not have liked everything that he had to do, or felt like he had to do, but it all helped him to survive, to get to this point. He was sure that his parents would understand that. He had also fought to help others. He had fought to stop people from mistreating others. He had done some good. And he was trying to be better as well. Trying not to be ruled by his emotions – but that was a work in progress. Either way, he knew that his parents really would be proud of him.

"So," Lyra began, looking at him. "What's the real issue here?"

"You know I hate big, formal things like this," he replied, letting out a breath. "I neither need nor want an award, or any kind of recognition, really. A simple thank you and nod of the head would do for me. I was just doing what I thought was the right thing, same as I've always done."

“Well, think about it this way. Maybe the award ceremony isn’t for you? Maybe it’s for the people, to give them further hope. Let them see all that you have done and let it inspire them. Let them strive to be better by seeing your example.” She paused for a moment, a sly little smile appearing on her face. “Let this also be an example for those two little nephews of yours. I’m sure they’d be happy to see you up there, getting this award.”

Reiden thought of the Empress, Shadow Nighthunter, and her twins, Artorias and Deus, and smiled. “I doubt they’d even understand what’s going on.”

“Even so, they’d like seeing you there. I bet if someone explained it to them – and maybe they were a little older – they’d be proud of you, too. I haven’t been able to meet them yet, but from what you’ve told me, it seems like they really like you.”

He pictured the two boys. He remembered the first time he met them at the little cabin Shadow kept away from everything else. They had looked so small and fragile. More than that, he knew right away that he liked them, that he wanted to protect them and keep them safe. Any time he was fighting, he wasn’t just doing it for the clan or because he had been ordered to, or because it was the right thing – he was also doing it for them, too.

“Yeah, they would. Out of all the unfamiliar faces they might see that day, they’d probably like being able to spot one that they know.” He smiled again. “Maybe you’ll be able to meet them soon. Shadow can still be a little protective with them, but I’m sure she’d be open to letting you see them. After all, if you keep spending so much time here, you’re bound to be introduced eventually.”

“I’d like that,” Lyra admitted with a smile. “But with this ceremony, don’t forget that I’m proud of you, too.”

She got up on her toes slightly and kissed his cheek. It was then that Reiden noticed she hadn’t finished getting ready herself, having yet to put on some shoes. Lyra gave him another of her smiles before turning to walk away.

Reiden looked back into the mirror. As much as he hated getting dressed up, at least for occasions such as this, he realized that she was right. This was a time of healing and hope. Scholae Palatinae, and its home of Caelestis City, needed something to look forward to. They needed to be shown, as Lyra had with him, that there was always something on the horizon.

The words of another friend popped into his head. Grex, a Lasat enforcer he had met on Nar Shaddaa, had once told him that when he was young, just before he was sold into slavery, he had met someone that told him to never give up hope. That’s exactly what Reiden had done after his parents were killed and he was forced to survive on his own. No matter how bleak things had gotten, Reiden had always clung onto the hope that things wouldn’t always be that way, that he could fight through it all and emerge stronger on the

other side. He knew that Scholae Palatinae would be the same. If this award ceremony was part of that process – if it was something that the people really needed – then so be it.

His datapad chimed, breaking him from his thoughts. He picked up the device and saw a message from Orion Gale. It seemed his bounty hunter friend wanted to meet up before the ceremony. Reiden smiled when he saw the location that was provided.

Former Battleteam Krennic Barracks

Reiden stepped inside the building that had once been full of soldiers that made up the ranks of Battleteam Krennic's military force. He was glad the building hadn't been converted to another use yet. The large space some lounge areas with various forms of entertainment, sleeping quarters, refreshers and showers, a firing range, and an armory which had long since been cleared of its contents. Reiden still took time to stop by every now and then when he needed to clear his thoughts or wanted to get in some target practice and didn't want to be interrupted.

But the area that held his interest at the moment was the small bar located beside the main lounge area. Exiting short hallway just inside the building's entrance, Reiden glanced over at the bar. Sitting there was Orion, two glasses in front of him filled with an amber-colored liquid. The Kiffar waved him over.

"You look all dressed up. It's so...not you," Orion said, trying his best to stifle laughter.

"Yeah, yeah," Reiden said with a wave. "Get it out of your system while you still can."

Orion slid one of the glasses across the bar as Reiden approached. "I know you don't like making a big deal of things, so I thought this would be more your speed. You did good, Rei."

The Force user held out his hand and the glass lifted from the bar and floated to him through the air. "Just doing what anyone would do."

"If that were true, more people would be doing it. Just take the drink and the compliment and shut up, would ya?"

Reiden grinned as he brought the glass to his lips to sip. The amber liquid warmed his throat on the way down. But the flavor gave him pause and he raised an eyebrow at his friend. "You brought out the good stuff?"

"Of course! Like I said, you did good, and this is to mark the occasion." The bounty hunter raised his own glass into the air before finishing its contents. "I know you've got somewhere to be, but I thought a quick detour wouldn't hurt, y'know?"

"That's true. I appreciate it," Reiden acknowledged. He walked over and leaned against the bar, casting his gaze around the space. Flashes of memory went by his mind's eye, recalling the time he had spent here while commanding Krennic. "We should get the old crew together again sometime - all of them. It's been a while since we managed to rope Riley in."

“Sounds like a good idea. I’m sure those two pilot girls would be happy to have a little fun.”

“Talina and Amara? Yeah, they would,” Reiden said absentmindedly.

“Of course, we can’t forget Sloane and Warner. They’ve been with us even longer.” When his friend said nothing, the bounty hunter fixed him with a worried look. “Rei, what’s going on?”

“What? Nothing, just thinking.” He sighed, shaking his head and finishing his drink, setting the glass down on the bar. “We’ve lost so much since the last time this barracks was full of soldiers. Commander Pierce died...”

“Listen, brother,” Orion began. “We just gotta do what we can. We fight so that others won’t have to. We fight so that we honor the memory of those that can’t fight anymore.”

“I know. That’s what I’ve always done. Being a fighter is how I got to where I am right now. I’ll keep fighting to protect those I care about. You know me; I won’t stop until I can’t continue anymore.”

“That’s why they give you the awards and the fancy ceremonies,” Orion quipped.

Reiden laughed. “Yeah, you’re probably right.” He moved away from the bar and nodded towards the glass. “Thanks for the drink. I have to get going, but we can meet up afterwards. For some reason Lyra seems to like you, so she’ll no doubt want to see you.”

“Looking forward to it.”

The Force user stuck his hands in his pockets and turned to walk away. He took in his surroundings once more. He wanted to keep this place going somehow, but wasn’t sure what to do with it. At the very least it was one way to honor those he fought with, just as he was being honored today. He owed them that much. He’d have to give it more thought, maybe ask Shadow if she had any ideas for it. Besides, as the Empress, he’d have to run it by her anyway.

The cool evening air greeted him as he stepped outside, a light breeze tousling his hair. Off in the distance, he caught a glimpse of the sun setting on the horizon as he headed in the direction of the starport. That was where Lyra was waiting to fly him to Judecca Station for the award ceremony where he and other members of the Scholae Palatinae were to be honored for their accomplishments. This was one of his favorite times to be out in the city. Caelestis City was only the latest in a string of places that he had called home over the years, but he had come to love and embrace it nevertheless. And he would continue to protect it.