

“Leave it, you’ve got to leave it or you’ll never make it,” Kai Lap’lamiz screamed over the explosion. The pair of civilians trying to carry a large storage container dropped it, realizing the truth in the youth’s words. Unencumbered they accelerated their race towards the transport already hovering with its landing gear retracted.

Kai pushed the sweaty mop of hair back from his forehead. His brilliant blue blade held across his chest. He looked at the ruins of Caelestis City and his heart grieved for its inhabitants. Former inhabitants, he corrected himself. The civil war had damaged nearly all aspects of the city and a mere few days following the declaration of peace, if peace under his Father’s imperial rule could be considered that, these crystalline monsters and their controllers had attacked. All that remained of the former capital were burned out husks of buildings and rubble.

He answered his chirping communicator, “Kai here.”

“There’s one more transport remaining and then we need to get out of here. If there’s anyone left alive it’s Palatinaean forces and they can have their tomb.”

“Acknowledged, how far out are you? This position isn’t secure.”

“Five minutes at the most. Can you hold till then?”

Kai felt the concussion before he heard it. With the collapse of one of the nearby buildings a squad of troopers began to unleash suppression fire on his position. He didn’t have time to respond as his lightsaber twirled in his hands. The blaster bolts were deflected wildly away from the road leading up to the transport.

Kai knew he could keep this up forever but the troopers were advancing steadily upon his position. He began to prepare himself for the inevitable when he’d have to choose between defending himself or defending the transport. His stomach fell as he heard the whine of a military grade speeder approaching from the distance. Perhaps that choice would be made for him.

If Kai had been able to spare a glance he’d have seen a 74-Z whip around a corner. Its armored rider’s cloak billowed behind him as he let loose a rain of fire from its lone cannon. The advancing troopers split their focus with half diverting to the new attack. Then a blood red blade ignited as he made his pass. Several of the troopers were cleaved cleanly in two. The rider rounded and approached Kai’s position. Skidding to a halt the crimson armored attack leapt off, somersaulting through the air and landed beside him.

“Son, you need to do more than just deflect. You need to reflect,” Kamjin Lap’lamiz said, his blood red blade catching three approaching blaster bolts and sending them back at their owners.

“What are you doing here? Don’t you have some speech to give from a castle?” Kai spat back. It was the first time he’d spoken to his father since their last encounter when Lanis had attacked Scholae Palatinae before the civil war.

“These are my people, Kai. I’m not going to let these monsters have them.”

“Your people? Are these the same people you’re shipping off to Plagueis’s territory? Or the ones you’ve let die under the heel of Imperial rule?”

“Kai, I don’t know what you’ve been told by Lanis but none of that is true. I know your mother didn’t agree with me when I was Imperial Sovereign Protector or back in the Minos Cluster but it’s been a decade. This is my empire. This is my system. These are my people and they will be protected and they will have freedoms not experienced before. You have to believe

me,” Kamjin said, reaching out and pulling two of the approaching attackers into the air. They shot towards him and he eviscerated them both in a flourish of his blade.

Kai looked at the smoldering remains of the troopers before him. Was what his father said true? His master, Gathe, had taught him that there was good in everyone and that it was sometimes hard to see how that good chose to manifest itself. His father had leapt forward and was devastating what remained of the troopers. His cloak fluttered as he moved like the wind. His blood red blade reflecting upon the troopers’ armor before leaving a gaping wound.

The hovertruck rumbled into view. Kai leapt forward, a youthful mirror to his father, as he sliced through the troopers that had turned, preparing to fire on the truck. “Keep going, don’t stop. You’re almost there.”

“You’re going as well,” Kamjin yelled back at his son.

“Like hell I am.”

Kamjin threw back his free hand and Kai went flying into the bed of the truck. He crumbled into the bodies hunkered down. Kai scrambled back to his feet as he saw a hulking crystalline reptile appear, escorted by more troops. His father ignited his own blue blade and for a moment Kai had a vision of his father walking a different path. The vision faded as his father connected his two blades into a staff and the blades simmered too a velvety purple. The combined blades twirled like a fan blade as Kamjin propelled himself towards the approaching enemy.

Kai deactivated his blade. These were his people now to protect. “Come on, into the transport,” he said, picking up several of the children to carry up the ramp. As the last of the civilians boarded the transport took off. He looked down at his father, holding his own...no, it was more than that. His father was winning the day against these troops. Perhaps...no, it was too much to hope for just yet.