

*note: Italicized "flashbacks" are either not my own work, or submitted in a prior fiction (506+26 at the top here, but feel free to double check)

37 ABY - Caelestis City

Kadrol had expected to feel... something. For someone who had been everything to him the last year and a half, how could he not think anything of it? Elinia was dead. A traitor to the Empire. Bantha crap. It was enough to make his blue skin turn bright purple. If he knew one thing about Eli, it was that she had given everything to the Empire. If he knew another thing, it was that all the Sith in Scholae would be coming for him as well. *I need to get out of here.*

Kadrol scanned the room to assess the packing situation. Most of the decor was still tucked away in a large lock box; the dark, steely walls of the clan barracks continued to lack any personality. He'd been given a total of four such lock boxes when he'd joined the clan, and never really asked if he was meant to return them. He reckoned Eli or Shadow or any of his other superiors would have said something if it was a problem.

Deciding to get a move on, Kadrol stood up from his bed and made his way to the closet, where all four boxes were stacked one on top of the other. He reached for the top one, and lifted it down to the ground, sliding it across the floor to his desk. The desk itself was nothing special. It had all the clutter you would expect from a teenager and came with a front row view of the corner. He systematically took everything off of his desk and out of the drawers and placed them in the box. He then went throughout the rest of the room and his closet, packing everything into the four boxes. After he had finished, one box contained all of his weapons and gear, one held all of his devices, trinkets, and papers, and the final two contained his clothing and armor. Unfortunately, because of the size of the boxes, he would be forced to take two trips.

"Come on, Tenz. We're leaving now." The Pantoran picked up the first box, with the BB unit at his feet. As they made their way through the barracks towards the speeder, Kadrol prayed that nobody would see them. When the boy and his droid reached their destination, Kadrol set down the box and turned to go get the next. He pointed to the box. "Watch that, Tenz." The droid whirred in response. A couple of minutes later, the Pantoran emerged once more with the second box. It was a struggle to place the boxes into the netting, but by tilting the speeder and using a lot of sheer might, Kadrol prevailed. Luckily, no one was around at this time in the morning to see him struggle... or kill him. He then mounted the speeder and picked up Tenz, placing the droid in his lap.

Finally, Kadrol was able to start on the journey towards the docking bays. To his dismay, however, he couldn't gun it down the highway as fast as he would've liked. The constant side to side shifting of the boxes behind had him fighting the controls the whole time just to keep straight. Having Tenz on his lap wasn't helping matters either. After a stressful couple of minutes, Kadrol reached his freighter. After he had come to a full and complete stop at the foot of the ship, Kadrol set Tenz down on the ground and opened the ramp. He carried the boxes just

inside the ship. They would have to be moved towards the front and secured down before he took off, but that was a problem for later on.

“Stay here and guard the ship.” Kadrol instructed his droid before scuttling his way down the ramp and closing it behind him. He hopped back on his now unencumbered BARC speeder and sped back off towards the barracks. When he arrived, he leapt from the bike and sprinted inside, letting momentum carry the speeder into the parking stall. The first box he was able to carry out without any issue, but as he was walking out with the final box, he suddenly tensed up. “Good morning, Kad,” a voice called from in front of him, “what are you up to?”

Kadrol looked up to see Aylin, a Nautolan he had known for some time, and even fought alongside a few times. But this time, Aylin was here to finish him off.

“Uh... just taking some things out. New place in the office.” Kadrol stammered, trying to keep his voice steady.

Aylin tilted her head in confusion. “Really? It’s a bit soon for that, isn’t it?”

Kadrol felt a cold sweat break out on his forehead. Was Aylin onto him? Did she know what he was truly up to? Was she about to kill him right here and now? He took a step back to assess the situation, but with the heavy box in his arms, he wouldn’t be able to defend himself if Aylin attacked.

“I-I just want to get an early start, you know?” Kadrol said, his eyes flicking over towards his way out.

Aylin smiled, but there was something in her expression that made him uneasy. “Be safe, Kad. You know how dangerous it is out there right now... We wouldn’t want a Palatinaen who is *actually* loyal to be killed.”

With one last glance back at Aylin, Kadrol quickly made his way to the speeder, feeling as though he was being watched every step of the way. He didn’t dare look back, not even once.

When he reached his speeder, he secured the boxes in the same struggle as before. The Pantoran let out a sigh before hopping back on his personal vehicle and taking the same journey back to the ship.

As he was in the transit lane, nearing the docking bay with the second and final load of gear, he zipped past his Battleteam Leader, who was out on his daily stroll around the city. Kadrol pulled his BARC speeder over to the side of the transit lane and waited for Reiden to make up the rest of the distance. Reiden, a toned man with blue eyes and short, neatly trimmed hair, greeted Kadrol with a friendly “Hey Kad, how’s it going?”

“Reiden, you need to help me get out of here. They’re coming,” Kadrol explained.

Reiden stared back at him blankly. "What?"

"Just meet me at Docking Bay 6 just around the corner here."

In the minute it took Reiden to reach the Aurore-class freighter, Kadrol had already started dismounting the boxes from the speeder.

"Help me secure these," Kadrol said from behind a box in his arms, "They're after me, we need to be quick."

"If you say so." Reiden walked to the back of the ship and picked up one of the boxes, bringing it to the fore of the ship to be ratcheted down. Meanwhile, Kadrol had finished securing the two boxes that were on the bike and sprinted to the back to grab the final box. There wasn't a ton to do, but the extra help was still appreciated.

Having secured the last of the cargo, Kadrol turned to address his battleteam leader. "Thank you so much for helping. I'll be-." He promised.

"Kadrol," Reiden interjected, "I know you're upset about Elincia's death, I am too, but don't you think you're taking this a bit too far? If anyone had wanted to kill you, they'd have already done it."

"Maybe they're just waiting until I let down my guard. Now if you'll excuse me," Kadrol reiterated, tentatively placing his hand on the button which would raise up the ramp.

"Look, I can't stop you, but before you go, you should know that you'll always have a place here."

With Reiden's words still lingering in his mind, the pantoran raised the ramp and headed to the cockpit. Sitting down, Kadrol punched in a random set of coordinates that were saved in the ship's database, and took off, leaving Reiden, Scholae Palatinae, and everything he had grown close to over the last seventeen months to slowly shrink into just another speck in the sky. Out in space, consumed by the nothingness which surrounded him, safe from everyone and everything, Kadrol finally found time to reflect.

He remembered a routine patrol that had turned into a data goldmine...

Kadrol had trailed enforcers of the Nayama Dynasty back to an old warehouse. When Kadrol had gotten there, they had set down a large backpack in the corner and left. An obvious drop for illegal activities. The Pantoran snuck into the building, and made a beeline for the pack. Inside he found a datapad, which he radioed in to Elincia.

"I've found something I believe to be related to the Nayamas." Kadrol whispered excitedly.

“Kadrol, that was not your mission. You were assigned to patrol the area, not snoop.” His master responded.

Even though Kadrol had just happened upon data with invaluable data that could be of immense use to the clan, Eli had immediately reprimanded him.

He remembered his knighting trial...

Kadrol proceeded to the final room after a series of trials, and was greeted by his master. “You’ve grown a great deal since you joined us, Kadrol, both as a person and as a warrior of the Empire. Your powers in the Force have grown immeasurably, as has your talent in combat, as we’ve seen in the Rite of Supremacy and in your fight with my personal guard.”

“Xiaying was taking it easy wasn’t she?” Kadrol questioned; it bugged him that she conceded so suddenly.

“Xiaying could probably kill us both with her eyes closed,” Elinicia said, a smile creeping across her face. “She was there to assess your ability. The fact that you can tell shows how much you’ve learned.”

“Thank you master,” Kadrol inclined his head respectfully.

“But now the learning truly begins, for now you are a Knight of Scholae Palatinae. From here on you must take an independent role in your own development and training. Your studentship was just the start of your journey as a Dark Jedi. This is where the hard work starts. Now, can you work out who the empty seat is for?” Elinicia questioned.

“Me?” Kadrol answered, expecting a trick question.

“No, me,” Elinicia responded with a laugh. “Seat for the Emperor and a seat for the master. I just can’t sit in both.”

During the most important rite of passage in a young Force user’s career, Eli hadn’t even so much as congratulated him. No, in that defining moment she had only the wherewithal to remind him that she had control over him in more ways than one.

He remembered the moment that had led to him being proclaimed the hero of Ulr Uvi...

Hearts were racing. Kadrol stood guard at the door, lightsaber in hand. Behind him, Aylin Sajark and Elinicia Rei hastily searched the office holding Moldate transaction records. Aylin left no stone unturned in her physical search of the office while Elinicia’s fingertips on a terminal threatened to give them away. The distraction team had failed to draw guards away, leading to tighter security than had been expected.

“A datapad,” Aylin said in a hushed voice.

“It’s not much but it will do,” Elinia responded hastily, sending all the data she could find on chemical transactions across a secure network back to clan HQ in Caelestis City.

“Are you sure that’s enough evidence?” Kadrol questioned as Eli sent the data back to clan HQ, surprised Elinia would be satisfied with such little data.

“No,” the Empress admitted. “But sometimes you have to make do with what you-” at that moment a security guard walked into the room on a routine patrol, which was immediately cut short by a slash of Kadrol’s lightsaber. “It won’t take them long to find that,” Elinia said, activating her own lightsaber in a flash of violet. “Let’s move.”

His defining moment as a hero had only been the routine dispatching of a security guard. He had been officially credited on clan records for leading that team, and yet his master had done all the work while he stood lookout.

All of those memories had a common theme, and they led Kadrol to come to a conclusion. If Eli had truly cared about him at all, there would have been a goodbye: A letter, a holotape... just something. So, as he sank down to the cold floor of the transport, a single idea replayed again and again: he had never meant anything to her. With that, he wept.