

# Somewhere I Belong

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The familiar sounds of planetary re-entry, the gentle creak of the ship as repulsorlifts fought against gravity and the bulking durasteel frame. Old lights gently flickered as they pulsed in time with the shield generator's attempts to adjust to the atmospheric pressure and the friction that built on their ascent. 'The Armistice End', an old Type-B Escort Shuttle, had been retrofitted for duty as a carrier by the aged Mandalorian and his crew of misfits, but she was showing her age at this point, and he knew it. Ritz, their RX-Series Pilot Droid, often commented about finer things the ship needed, parts he had trouble sourcing for maintenance, or protocols the ship stressed to maintain. Chris, their weapons expert and designated marksman, often commented on the ship's dreadful lack of facilities and failure to provide a dedicated Armory. Niko and Ryoma's complaints often mirrored Chris' but were less critical. The whole crew understood they were working on a budget. What Wulfram had done, however, was something entirely personal.

In spite of the things 'The Armistice End' needed and the creature comforts each one of them probably could have enjoyed with it, Wulfram shook his head and looked over his shoulder at his helmet upon the bed and then opened the crate at his feet. Into his hands, he lifted a newly minted Mandalorian Helm with a slimmer profile. He looked down at the armour within, plates with more mobility and less overlap, improved systems, and aesthetics similar to the sets worn by the Douve matriarch and patriarch; there was one oddity to the entire ensemble. While Wulfram recalled the crest of their clan, it was a clan that Alexandyr never grew into. The boy's brief years among them before abduction were fraught with anxiety and constant relocation, no better for Wulfram's arguments with the Douve patriarch as the man assigned blame for The Purge on children like him and the countless dead for being faithless. The other was the crest he had taken for his own clan, no longer willing to sit under the weight of another's name; Four broken swords pointed upwards through a broken dome, the signet of Clan Armis.

Wulfram doubted Alexandyr would adopt Clan Armis as his own. He accepted that his little brother would take his own family's name and carry Douve's crest into the dark. Perhaps he'd take foundlings and have children of his own too. A flicker of doubt played on the elder Mandalorian's mind as he rubbed his thumb across the back of the helmet and turned it slowly in his palms before he replaced it in its crate and closed the lid. Family was such an awkward thing to Wulfram; he had lost his own during the Night of a Thousand Tears, his adopted family was full of strife and pain, and when he finally felt as if he may have pieced things together once again, his own mind pulled it all apart in front of him. He doubted his ability to have a semblance of normalcy, happiness, or family, his ability to function as anything more than a soldier.

Doubts whirled through his mind in the same circular way they had since he had established contact with Lillian, Alexandyr's older sister, which made the question of Alexandyr's allegiance even more agonizing. Because now for all three of them, the questions of pride, loyalty, and affection would be raised, when choosing where to tread. Everything he

wanted was within reach or already at hand. A family of his own, the crew of 'The Armistice End' and his found family, pulled back together for the first time since the years following the Night of a Thousand Tears, but his own insecurities seemed to better him every time he grew close to holding one together.