

“`M you look like crap, go get some sleep – that’s an order”. Boliv always was a charmer. But he wasn’t wrong.

Locke was the first to notice, such a good bloke. While some may argue that is part of his job being my Flight Leader and all – keeping an eye on the mental wellbeing of his dedicated Flight Minions. It was more than that, he always had his eye out for trouble and let’s be fair; I have been known to cause my fair share of trouble.

While it would have been nice to admit the cause of my tiredness was the last two weeks of solid, uneventful patrols. In truth, our recent assignment wasn’t a particularly long stretch –some similar patrols we had done during years past; it wouldn’t have been a shock to triple this amount with minimal sleep, limited caff supplies and a complete lack of comfort stashed aboard a smaller ship for the duration.

But that was neither here nor there.

With a nod and silent thank you to Boliv, a final swig of my drink and a few more respectful nods to selected people in the general vicinity I wandered out of the Cantina headed towards the Typhoon Squadron quarters and my comfy bunk.

Given the rather late hour and the not-so-long walk, I didn’t meet a soul until I was almost at my destination.

“General”.

Turning towards the voice I couldn’t help but smile when I saw Lt. Colonel Denys Elara, the fearless Wing Commander of the mighty and deadly Wing X.

An extremely impressive pilot in her own right, she had taken the WC role several years ago and had excelled in the space. Stoic, fearless and almost robotic-like in her dedication to the Wing she was very popular with her Wing and superiors alike, the very epitome of what an Imperial Officer should be.

So naturally I liked to make her life interesting. It was amusing attempting to break that iron-clad façade of hers.

I had heard rumours that Boliv and Locke had a bet going on how long it would take her to punch me. Considering I hadn’t been sent to the Security Office and confined to the cell I know Rapier has reserved especially for me, I figured I was still on her good side. Besides she was a lot of fun when she loosened up.

I put on my best charming smile which I knew she’d see right through and greeted her. By the time we parted this evening I could tell I had not truly convinced her, another point in her favour.

“Denys, we need to stop meeting like this. People will talk! I was just heading to bed, but if you’d like to go get a drink? I’m sure I could squeeze one or two more in me”.

A frown formed on her face clearly intending to dissuade the motion of a drink and perhaps suggest rest was a good idea when before she could voice this opinion, I gave her a wider smile and continued, “On the other hand, my mighty leader COL Boliv ordered me to get some rest. So best I do as he says”.

“Goodnight”.

I turned away and managed about three steps before she spoke up, “`M are you ok”?

There was a level of concern in her voice that shook me, not to mention the fact she didn't refer to me by either my rank or full name, I knew she was serious.

Looking at her face I could see despite her hesitation to ask she knew she had to. I must have really looked terrible. A great one for the ego. I guess I was more tired than I realised.

I wondered if I could trust her. Every instinct and even the force screamed yes, I could, but there was still doubt. She hadn't listened to the previous warning I had given her. They didn't listen and the result, the away team had released something. The mission itself had been shrouded in secrecy but Locke had enough titbits of memory left to paint enough of a picture. He wasn't sure what happened, but something had been released. Energy – what it was he didn't know but it had sent up a signal. Someone out there would detect it, understand it.

I know I should tell her, but now wasn't the time. I needed my mind fresh; I needed sleep.

I tried my best to reassure her, nightmares, lack of sleep. Like I said before, she didn't truly believe me.

With another concerned glance she wished me a good night and wandered off to wherever WC's like to congregate and I headed to bed.

Looking at the rather plain and non-descriptive ceiling I let my mind drift. The thrum of the mighty engines of the starship reverberating deeply across the ship – a beautiful symphony of power. It calmed my busy mind.

I knew they all cared; they were all worried. But to be fair I didn't know how to explain it.

Nightmares had long been an unfortunate byproduct of my way of life. You didn't fly a starfighter during several wars over multiple decades without some form of mental trauma, despite what you might have liked to admit.

Strangely enough they had never really bothered me. There were times that I dreamt of battles long fought, where death was a constant, where my survival rested on nothing more than my skill, adrenaline and whatever higher power was watching. I had seen countless battles, defended and fought over the decades, I was a warrior, and each time I came out stronger. I knew who I was. So, no. These dreams were nothing more than filler material.

There had always been darker ones as well, there are creations of unspeakable horror that slept out in the forgotten dark corners of the universe. Those were the things that usually kept me up at night when my psyche demanded it.

But lately something had changed.

Between all the normal noise, there was something else. Dreams of time spent on Eos. Lessons in the dark side.

I had never been an active member of the Dark Brotherhood. This much I was sure on. I had never undertaken training in their arts, lessons or anything else.

While it was true; I had helped them in various roles throughout my career especially as TAC and my work with Darth Carnifex. But I had never officially joined.

But something had changed. And I couldn't figure out what.

The fleet may be focused on acquiring the technology of an advanced race and some wild rumours of a hidden Empire and while both important goals (ones I will support), something was amiss.

Carnifex warned me before he left. History may remember him like most other Dark Lords and that he slipped into madness, but the truth couldn't be further from it.

I don't know what he saw but he couldn't be persuaded not to go find it. Madness a convenient cover used. He warned me about the future, he didn't know what was coming but the warnings were clear. Prepare.

I had done best I could. The fleet was more than prepared against whatever could be thrown at it, but still Eos called. My dreams all pointed there, and I needed answers. I knew I couldn't do anything now. The tour in progress, there was no way I could duck out for long enough. But my course was clear. I needed to go to Eos.

For now, with a course laid and a deep breath, I closed my eyes and relaxed hoping that finally rest would no longer be alluded.

Tomorrow would need me at my best. The Squadron demanded nothing less, damned if I wouldn't deliver.