

Into the Deep

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Into the Deep

by [Darth_Nil](#)

Summary

In the deep dark bowels of Coruscant lives an informant for the Coruscant Guard. Both Clone Force 99, the "Bad Batch", and the "Night Stalkers" have been invited to meet with this mysterious informant for unknown reasons.

What do they want?

Who are they?

And why do they smell so familiar?

Notes

Here by demand: Kraken

Let me know if you want me to include the Corries also.

Into the Depths

“I... I thought you said we...” Nokt was hyperventilating, they were going to Coruscant!

They were going back to the horrible place that...

“Easy Nokt, easy.” Hunter said gently, “Don’t worry, we won’t let anything happen to you and if needs be, we can go to the base and you can stay with the Corries, maybe Stitches will be there.”

Nokt looked to Mouse as he appeared beside him, his hand slipping into Nokt’s, looking up to him with a soft determination, “So... who... is this contact Commander Fox... is sending us to meet with?” Clicker asked from the co-pilot’s seat.

“Someone called Kraken.” Hunter sighed through his nose, “They don’t know a lot about them, never even seen them but they’ve been feeding them information on the goings on of the deep Underworld.”

“Deep Underworld?” Nokt asked carefully.

“Below 1313.” Crosshair said, his voice carrying his frown, “I don’t like this, this stinks of a trap.”

“Could be... but every mission could be a trap.” Hunter sighed again, “We just need to be extra vigilant.”

“So how are we going to meet this Kraken... if... if the Corries haven’t?” Clicker looked to Hunter.

“Kraken is allowing us to meet with them and has given us a level to meet on.” Tech said, “Though for what reason they are breaking cover... I am unsure.”

Nokt wasn’t happy with this, he was terrified, it hurt all over again, “Don’t worry Nokt.” Wrecker said gently, his huge hand a comforting weight on his back, “If you come with us, we’ll keep you safe, no one is going to get you.”

“Th... thanks Wrecker.” He smiled weakly.

“The level we are descending to has little in the way of “civilization”, there are trading posts and a few small watering holes, but no large gathering places for people.” Tech looked to them, “I doubt the locals will attempt anything against us, given the sparseness of people, if someone picks a fight with us, then they will be on their own.”

“Which means it will be dark...” Nokt swallowed thickly, “I’ll go with you... you’ll need me.”

“Are you absolutely sure Nokt’ika.” Hunter asked gently, “You can sit this one out...”

“N... no... I’ll be okay.” Nokt nodded, he had to face Coruscant at some point, he couldn’t be scared of everything forever... but it hurt again.

“Come here for a minute.” Hunter said and guided him to the workshop, “It’s hurting again... isn’t it?” The older clones asked softly.

“Y... yeah.” Nokt replied as he fidgeted with his fingers, “But... that man is dead and can’t get me, he can’t make my body betray me again.”

“No one can every hurt you like that again, we will protect you and you will protect yourself, you are a warrior Nokt, just like Stitches says.” Hunter smiled as he cupped Nokt’s cheek, “Be brave, stand proud.”

“Y... yes Hunter.” Nokt smiled, he couldn’t be afraid of Hunter’s gentle side, he wouldn’t hurt him... he said he wouldn’t and Mouse could smell the sincerity of it.

“Come on, I think we’ve began the decent.” Hunter motioned with his head and walked back to the cockpit, Nokt following him closely.

“We’ve begun our... decent and it will take us a few minutes to arrive... at the level.” Clicker looked to them as they arrived, “It’s... I don’t know what we will find down there.”

“Not much I would imagine.” Tech said.

Nokt swallowed thickly as he watched the levels pass the viewfinder, he felt panic in his chest as they passed it... 1313... it hurt again, he jumped a little when he felt Mouse’s hand take his, and Mouse’s big grey eyes looked up at him, “I’m... I’m okay.” He said, “Scared... but okay.”

“Here we are, Level 1333.” Tech as they touched down on an exposed platform.

“I... don’t have a good feeling about this...” Nokt said, looking out the viewfinder, there were buildings, not in the best state of repair, and there were sentients... who looked at the ship with caution.

“Me neither.” Wrecker said, “Why is Kraken this far down? I wouldn’t imagine there’s a whole lotta conspiring going on down here.”

“Commander... Fox... says Kraken moves between levels.” Clicker looked to them.

“Moves between levels?” Crosshair asked, “If nothing else they’ve got guts.”

“I... wonder when the last time they... were on the surface was?” Clicker said as they finished the landing sequence and the ship shuddered.

“Don’t know. We’ll ask if they’re really are an ally.” Hunter frowned, “Okay, gear up. Tech set the ship defences on high, can’t afford to have her stolen, not down here.”

“Affirmative.” Tech replied.

Nokt wasn't happy about this but he knew he could do it, he smiled down to Mouse when his brother gave his hand a squeeze, "Let's go get geared up." Mouse nodded happily, bouncing along beside his brother as they walked to get their equipment. He wasn't sure about this Kraken person, no one knew anything about them, gender, appearance, they just... existed down here, they moved through the deep like their name's sake, maybe that was why they were referred to as Kraken? Maybe he'd ask them, he really hoped that this person was an ally, he couldn't go through that again... he squeezed his eyes closed and gripped his helmet tight, "I can do this." He whispered to himself as he put on his helmet, "I'm... strong... I'm a warrior."

He walked to the group as they converged at the exit, which opened up, "Easy Mouse." Wrecker said, as Mouse gagged at the smell wafting into the ship, it was bad for them and he didn't even want to know how bad it was for his brother.

"Everyone stick together, we can't afford to get separated and lost down here." Hunter said and after they all nodded, they descended the steps and Nokt could see the locals watching them closely, then they saw they were packing heat.

He was absolutely terrified.

In the depths were few live

Mouse wasn't happy about going back to Coruscant, Nokt smelled so scared, Hunter had said they'd never go back to Coruscant but... this strange person had asked to meet them, no one knew who this person was, they knew nothing about them except they provided the Coruscant Guard with information and that they moved between levels, which was so cool. All that was known was they referred to themselves as Kraken, which was a really cool name, Tech said a kraken was a made-up creature... a mythological creature...? Whatever, it was supposed to be a huge, ginormous squid... octopus... thing, maybe this person was really big, like Wrecker?

Maybe, but right now he had to make sure the contents of his stomach... stayed in his stomach, because the smell that hit him full force the second the door opened, made his eyes water and made him gag painfully. He tried to keep his nose out for trouble, but it was proving difficult with the environmental smells... something caught his attention, it was a smell, but it wasn't the environment smell, nor was it one of the very cautious locals, it smelled like them, like a clone but different, he turned in circles trying to pinpoint the scent, then his tracker picked up the scent marker, it was a person standing a little bit away from them, "Mouse?" Nokt asked him, "Something wrong?" The marker moved.

Away from them.

"Mouse! Wait!" He heard Hunter yell after him and he took off, he didn't know why he was chasing this person but it might be to figure out why this person smelled like one of them. Whoever this person was, it was clear that they were built for endurance, they kept going far longer than the others would have been able to, he watched as the tracker vanished up over a wall and through a small gap, he sped up and scampered up over the barricade and squeezed into the gap, then kept up the chase as he started running again, obviously this person didn't account for Mouse's own enhanced endurance because they started taking creative ways in order to try to lose him, over barricades and piles of trash and in through abandoned buildings until they were running in a pitch-black area. There was no one around anymore, just him, the person and a lot of rodents, soon the person started to slow down because he was good but Mouse was better, he wasn't sure where he was or where everyone else was but he had finally caught up with the person who had stopped moving, "Mouse? Where the kriff are you?" Hunter's voice came over his comm, he squeaked in reply, "Tech lock onto his position."

He stared at the person who smelled like a male... like a clone but in the same way the Batch smelled like clones.

The... man?

Yeah?

Yeah, it was a man... he caught the scent markers of a human male.

The man started walking towards him, Mouse should have been scared, after what happened with Nokt but something about the man told him he wasn't going to hurt Mouse, "Mouse!"

He caught the other's smells as they arrived and the person was illuminated by their flashlights, "Who are you?" Hunter asked, blaster raised as he came to a stop beside Mouse, the man still didn't answer but Mouse could tell the man was looking at them, examining each of them in turn, "I asked you a question, who are you?" Hunter ordered. Mouse realised the man was as tall as Wrecker was but he was thinner than Mouse himself was, he was completely enclosed by a set of modified armour, his helmet looked really cool from what Mouse could see, "Kraken." The man replied, his voice a deep rumble.

"You're Kraken?" Crosshair hissed, earning a nod from the man.

"Okay... well... I am Sergeant Hunter of the Bad Batch." Hunter said as he lowered his blaster, "These are my brothers, Wrecker, Crosshair, Tech."

"And... I'm Sergeant Noktowizor of the Night Stalkers." Nokt said, he smelled scared, "And these are my brothers Mouse and Clicker."

"I know." Kraken replied, he really didn't talk a lot, "This way."

Mouse looked to the others when he felt their eyes on him, silently asking if the man was being honest, so he nodded because he couldn't smell any lie, "Okay, we'll bite." Hunter replied and they all followed the man, who brought them through winding alleys to what must be his safe house.

"Come in." Kraken said as he opened the door, Mouse couldn't smell any malicious intent from the man, he didn't really smell of much to be honest, so he looked to Hunter and nodded.

"You asked to meet us?" Hunter asked cautiously as Mouse smelled the air.

He couldn't tell what he was smelling but it smelled alive, he looked to the right of him but the smell wasn't humanoid, it smelled like Kamino... he walked over and realised the smell was coming from a giant tank of water and there were several things inside it, "Is that a kaminoan electroeel?" Tech asked as he came to stand beside Mouse, "And a kaminoan sea-eel?"

"Mm." Kraken replied.

"Why... why do you keep them?" Nokt asked, Mouse could smell weird shellfish also and some other sea creatures.

"I like to be close to them." Kraken replied, "There is no flowing water on Coruscant."

"You miss Kamino?" Wrecker asked.

"I miss water." Kraken replied.

"You wanted to meet with us?" Hunter asked, "Why?"

"99 said there were other defectives." Kraken explained, "Wanted to know if that was true."

“You’re a defective?” Crosshair hissed.

“Mm. CT-9933.” Was the answer.

“We thought there wasn’t any survivors from a batch between us Night Stalkers and The Bad Batch.” Nokt said.

“The... the kaminoans didn’t have... much luck...” Clicker said as he came to stand beside Mouse, looking in the tank.

Mouse looked to the group again, who had all taken their helmets off, so he took his off too, “You going to take off your helmet?” Crosshair asked Kraken, his eyes narrowed.

Kraken didn’t reply or even move for a moment, before he nodded and removed his helmet, revealing a shock of white hair, red eyes and patchy skin, “Albinism?” Tech said, “With vitiligo?”

“Genetic complications.” He replied, “To much with too little room.”

“So. You’re a defective clone... what are your traits?” Hunter asked, Kraken looked to him, “Okay, I have enhanced sensory abilities, can feel electromagnetic frequencies, Wrecker has increased strength and muscle mass, Crosshair has enhanced eyesight, Tech has enhanced mental capacity and intelligence.”

“Clicker, biological sonar and ability to feel and generate infrasonic frequencies. Mouse, overdeveloped sense of smell, can track a scent from five clicks, walking lie detector, also his skeleton is semi-collapsible and he has a high endurance rate. Me, developed tapetum lucidum, which allows me to see in near pitch black.” Nokt introduced them.

Kraken didn’t say anything for a moment as he looked at each of them in turn, “I can deflate my body and unhinge my joints, and I can see colour even in pitch black environments.” He explained, “Se said it was because of an increase in rod opsins that make my eyes capable of capturing every possible photon at multiple wavelengths.”

“That’s... so cool.” Clicker said.

“Is there a reason behind your height?” Nokt asked.

“No idea.” Kraken replied.

“Why break your cover to meet with us?” Hunter asked, his voice and scent carrying his caution.

“No cover broken, people don’t notice me on this level.” Kraken replied easily, “Too busy surviving.”

“Have... have you been lower than this... level?” Clicker asked, “G... given your eyesight... you could do it.”

“I was wondering that myself.” Tech said.

“I have been lower.” Was the reply, “Been to the bottom.”

“You’ve been to the bottom of Coruscant?” Tech asked quickly.

“Mm. Cthon didn’t trust me at first but now they don’t mind me.” Kraken explained, “Lot of things further down want to eat you, have to be quick but luckily ogres and most of the creatures are slow, hive rats, not so much.”

“Where’d you get the stuff in the tank?” Wrecker asked, “If there’s no water here...”

“Traded for them.” He replied, “Traded for everything, that’s how things work down here, credits work sometimes.”

“When... when was the last time you saw sun... sunlight?” Clicker asked softly.

“Don’t know.” Kraken looked to him, “Was sent to Coruscant just after I graduated, how long has the war been going on?”

“We are entering into the third standard year of the war.” Tech replied.

“A while then.” Kraken nodded, “How’s 99?”

“You didn’t hear?” Hunter looked to each of them, “He died in the siege of Kamino.”

“Oh.” Was all they got from the man for a moment, “That sucks.”

Mouse was confused, there was no change in the man’s scent at the realisation that their brother was dead, and then it hit him... the man’s scent hadn’t changed at all in the time they’d been talking to him, “Mouse... Mouse says...” Clicker spoke softly, “Your scent... hasn’t change at all... no matter what we’re talking about... even learning about 99’s death...”

“Do... do you feel emotions?” Nokt finished the statement with a question and Mouse moved to him, he was annoyed that everyone was so much taller than him but he was even more annoyed by Kraken’s complete lack of emotional scent markers, he was a human clone, not a kaminoan... so why didn’t he feel?

“Don’t know.” Kraken replied looking to him, “Too much too little room.”

“What are you going to do with the information you obtained from knowing we actually exist?” Hunter asked.

“Something.” Kraken shrugged, “Not sure what yet.”

“You’re not... sure?” Nokt asked, he smelled confused, so did the others to be fair.

“Mm.” Kraken replied.

“So... how did you hear about us?” Hunter asked.

“Heard about a fight on 1313, heard the guys in the middle of it were wearing armour that looked like clone armour and that one of them kinda looked like a clone.” Kraken explained, “Figured it might be the other defectives 99 mentioned before I left.”

“What... what else did you hear about that...?” Nokt reeked of fear and pain, he was falling into his memories again, so Mouse moved to stand in front of his big brother and Clicker moved to stand behind him.

“You weren’t his first but you were his last.” Kraken said, “Hurt a lot of people that way, killed a few that way too, you were lucky.” Mouse felt his brother cracking, he could smell the hurt, “He was on the fast track to getting thrown down to the bottom.”

“The bottom layer?” Crosshair hissed.

“Mm. Some people get conventional deaths, some get thrown over the edge of the platform, probably get board halfway down.” Kraken replied, “Most people get conventional deaths but the really bad people get thrown. Not so much the further you go down, resources are scarce down there, can’t waste anything.”

Mouse felt nauseous at the thought of what he meant, his stomach made that weird noise again, “You mean cannibalism?” Tech asked, his scent was more curious.

“Only cannibalism if you eat the same species.” Kraken replied with a shrug.

“Have... you done it?” Wrecker asked but Mouse wasn’t sure he wanted to know because it made him even more nauseous the more he thought about it.

“I move between levels, so I get food on one of the higher levels.” Kraken’s lack of emotional scent markers was almost as nauseating as the idea of eating people, he didn’t like it. He didn’t know what this man was like because he couldn’t smell it, and that made him scared, he couldn’t protect his family if he didn’t know if the person was a threat or if the person was an ally...

Why didn’t he have emotions?

Mouse hated it.

A lot.

Distress call

“Hunter!” Nokt looked to the cockpit as Tech’s voice filtered up.

“What is it?” Hunter asked as he and Nokt arrived, “What’s wrong?”

“We... we received a transmission from... Commander Fox.” Clicker said, “He... he says Kraken sent a coded message as... normal but he said... that he has been... compromised and is... requesting our assistance.”

“Compromised?” Nokt asked quickly, “Like... he’s been found out?”

“We don’t know... they... haven’t given us a lot to... go on.” Clicker replied, “But... I don’t think they know either...”

“He is a rather secretive person to be honest.” Tech replied.

“What’s happening?” Wrecker asked tiredly as he, Mouse and Crosshair arrived from the racks, “Who’s in trouble?”

“Kraken.” Hunter replied, “No information but Fox says he’s been compromised.”

“We have to go help him!” Wrecker said quickly, Mouse agreed to that with a determined squeak.

“Hunter?” Nokt asked the older clone, he wasn’t happy about going back to Coruscant again, it had been a while since they were last there... but their brother might be in trouble, he could be hurt, he could be dying or... or he could have been... he felt himself spiralling, his world was spinning as he moved to the galley to try and get some air into his lungs, he was terrified because what if Kraken was hurt like Nokt had been?

“Nokt? Hey, can you hear me?” He only realised he’d blacked out when he blinked and realised that he was on the ground, “Hey, you passed out.” Hunter said gently.

“I... he... what if he...?” He couldn’t make his words make sense, either in his brain or in his mouth.

“It’s okay Nokt.” Hunter said gently and he looked to the suddenly there form of Mouse, “Mouse, can you go get something for him to eat and drink, because I don’t remember the last time you did either.” Hunter looked to him again.

“I... I don’t know...” Nokt hiccupped, “Hunter... Hunter what if he...?”

“Easy, come on, up you get.” Hunter helped him sit up and moved him to the dejarik table, “Thank you Mouse.” Nokt noticed the tumbler of water and the small ration pack that were suddenly in front of him.

“Course set for Coruscant.” Tech’s voice came from the cockpit again, “ETA one hour.”

“Rodger that Tech.” Hunter called back, “Eat vod’ika, you’ll feel much better.”

“Hunter... what if what happened to me... happened to Kraken?” Nokt finally got his mouth to say what he wanted it to, “I mean... we don’t know... what level he was on and he...”

“Hey, can you breathe with me? Match my breathing?” Hunter said gently and it was only then he realised he was starting to hyperventilate again, “In through your nose, out through your mouth, in through your nose and out through your mouth.” Nokt tried to match Hunter’s breathing but his hiccupping was making it kind of difficult, “There we go. Now, don’t panic, he survived a long time down there, he knows the ropes, I doubt he would have easily gotten caught off guard by one of those people.”

“Then... what could it be?” Nokt asked, “What could have...?”

“We won’t know until we get there because unless the Corries learn something, then we won’t know either.” Hunter smiled, “Now, eat and drink something.” Nokt nodded glumly and made an attempt to eat some of the ration pack, it was proving difficult with his stomach cramping but drinking the water was helping alleviate that.

“Coming up on Coruscant.” Tech said, it had taken Nokt the entire flight to eat anything close to substantial but he did feel better after it, “We’ve got an incoming transmission from Commander Fox.”

“Patch us through.” Hunter left Nokt’s side to go back to the cockpit, which was quickly refilled by Mouse.

“I’m okay, I feel a lot better after eating.” Nokt smiled to his brother, “I guess I’m just really scared for Kraken... he’s a brother but he’s all alone and that makes me sad.”

Mouse nodded in reply a smile visible under his mask, “You feeling better?” Wrecker asked as he appeared.

“I had a panic attack but I was also running on no food... Mouse says that’s why I passed out.” Nokt explained.

“You need to eat more Nokt’ika.” Wrecker said as he sat opposite the two, “And drink more water and stuff.”

“Yeah... I don’t know why I haven’t been doing that...” Nokt sighed, he really didn’t, normally he had a good appetite... maybe it was because he was stressed? Maybe... but what was making him stressed?

“Gear up guys, we’re landing at the Military base first, getting a briefing first before we head down.” Hunter appeared again.

“Okay.” Nokt replied with a nod, he hoped it wasn’t going to be what he feared it would be.

“Stitches!” Nokt and his brothers wrapped themselves around the medic, who met them at the landing zone, in seconds.

“I’m really glad you’re here.” Nokt said quietly, he was beyond happy because Stitches was here and he would help them, he would keep them safe and if Kraken needed it, he would help their brother also.

“Easy ad’ika.” Stitches replied gently, Nokt was the last of the three to let go but he didn’t want to let go, he wanted to stay secured in the medic’s strong arms. He didn’t feel the same way he normally did when someone treated him that way... maybe it was because he saw Stitches more like a parent? Maybe it was because Stitches had been the one to help him come to terms with what happened? Because he felt safe knowing Stitches would never try to do anything like that, because he was ace? Whatever it was, he felt safe and he didn’t feel like that, he didn’t want Stitches in that way, he just wanted a parent to take care of him and his brothers and Stitches was the best candidate for buir.

Would Stitches hate that?

Being called buir?

Found at the water hole

Chapter Notes

For those who wondered: Yes, Clicker hears Mouse's squeaking as words, which he then translates back to the others. :D

“Tech, you picking up his signal?” Hunter asked Tech as they made their way through the darkness, there were so many horrible sounds and vibrations down here, he wasn’t sure how anything lived this far down, so far from natural sunlight, they were more that three quarters of the way down to the bottom level, it was so cold down here.

“No.” Tech replied bluntly.

“Kark, Clicker? Anything?” Hunter looked to him, “Everyone stop moving.”

Clicker closed his eyes and tried to not hold his helmet, he knew what Kraken sounded like, “I... I can hear something... sounds like a burst water pipe... but I can hear someone... it sounds like his heart beat...” He looked to Hunter, “This way.” He took point, he hated having to take point but he knew where the sound was coming from.

“We’re being watched.” He looked to Mouse, “Not by Kraken.”

“Mouse says we’re being watched.” Clicker informed the others, “But... not by Kraken.”

“Crosshair, Nokt, see anything?” Hunter looked to the two.

“We’ve got watchers.” Crosshair said, “Looks like humanoids.”

“I think they’re the locals.” Nokt said, “Excuse me! We’re looking for a person, maybe you’ve seen them?” Clicker smiled at the fact Nokt was using sign language in combination to speaking vocally, which the person seemed to understand because their answer wasn’t vocal, “He’s called Kraken, he wears armour like ours but has green and purple accent colours.” A moment went by before they got an answer, “Thank you, I’ll leave you some of our ration bars.” He opened his pack and left a bunch of ration bars down on a chest high wall, “She said he’s holding himself up near the water hole, I think that’s where they get their water.”

“Probably the burst pipe you heard.” Hunter said to Clicker, “Let’s keep moving.”

The water sound was getting louder but he could also hear a steady heartbeat under it, “I think I can hear him... he sounds okay but he might not be, his heartbeat and breathing didn’t change when we talked with him last time.” He looked to Hunter.

“I can smell him.” He looked to Mouse again and nodded.

“Mouse says he can smell him.” He translated.

“Does he smell injured?” Hunter asked and Mouse nodded, “Right, did you bring your kit?” Another nod from Mouse.

“Picking up a heat signature near the pipe.” Crosshair said, “Looks like he’s hiding in the pipe.”

“But that pipe is tiny.” Nokt said, “Even Mouse would struggle.”

Clicker stopped walking, he could hear something really big lumbering around, “Clicker?” Wrecker’s hand appeared on his back.

“Something is moving, something big and... mean sounding.” He looked up to the giant, “It’s grumbling and looking for food. I... I think it might be looking for Kraken... it’s near where Kraken is.”

“Kriff, we need to move quickly.” Hunter said, “Everyone keep a sense out of trouble.” They finally arrived at the water hole, which was nothing more than a pool created by a burst water pipe, a big one that looked as though it was purposefully broken, “Kraken. Sound off.” Hunter said, keeping his voice low because of the threat of whatever big and mean thing was wandering around wondering about food.

Was it one of those ogre things Kraken had mentioned?

There was no sound from anyone for a long while before Kraken’s voice appeared, “I didn’t think you’d actually come to help.”

“You’re bleeding, how bad is it?” Nokt said.

“Gut shot but I managed to patch it as well as I could.” Kraken replied, and they all looked up to see the man slink out of the pipe, Clicker could hear the grinding of the man’s joints as he touched the ground followed by the crunch of them sliding back into place and the sound of air filling him up.

“His injury smells infected.” Clicker looked to Mouse, “Not bad, just there.”

“Mm. Mouse says it smells... infected.” Clicker looked to the man, “We... should get you seen too.”

“What happened?” Hunter asked.

“Sepies, well... a sympathiser anyway. Figured my armour looked “Clone Trooper” enough for him to figure out I wasn’t a friend.” Kraken shrugged, “Shot me and followed my blood trail, found my home... blew that up, couldn’t follow me through the waste pipes though.”

“You went through septic pipes with an open wound?” Tech asked, he didn’t sound happy but then again, neither did Mouse.

“I washed it off in the water pipes.” Kraken shrugged again.

“We need to get him to the ship.” Mouse sounded unhappy, “I need to check it out.”

“Mouse... isn’t happy about that, he wants... to get you to the ship so... he can check it out.” Clicker said, “He...”

“Click’ika?” Voices finally made it past the high-pitched ringing in his head, “You’re okay.” He felt Wrecker’s hand on his back again, steadying him.

“I’m sorry... I... I didn’t...” He hated these, they didn’t happen on any kind of rhyme or reason, just whenever they damn well felt like it, it made him upset and flustered.

“It’s okay, we’re going to head back to the ship to get Kraken treated.” Wrecker replied, “You okay to walk?”

“Y... yes. I should be fine.” He nodded, he could hear the big thing getting curious about them, probably smelling them as food, given the rumbling of what Clicker determined to be its stomach, “We should move... it’s getting closer... whatever it is.”

“Ogre but there’s a duracrete slug around also.” Kraken said, “Ogre might eat that instead.” Clicker didn’t like the sounds the thing was making, so he stuck close to Wrecker as they made their way back to the Marauder, if anything could take on something big and mean, it was Wrecker.

“Don’t worry Click’ika.” Wrecker said to him, “I’ll keep you safe.”

“Thank... thank you Wrecker.” He nodded in reply.

“Thank you for your help.” Nokt called to the people they passed on the way in.

Not all people were bad.

Thankfully.

Medical

Mouse wasn't happy that Kraken had been so careless with his health by going through septic pipes with an open wound, regardless of if he washed the wound afterwards, he had exposed it to a lot of nasty things, "Mouse?" He looked to Hunter as the older clone arrived in the workshop, "How's it looking?"

"My injury's gone septic." Kraken replied, "Not the greatest idea I've ever had."

Mouse frowned, 'He will need proper treatment, otherwise he could go into toxic shock if the infection reaches his stomach or liver.' He looked to Hunter again.

"Okay. We're going to have to bring you surface side." Hunter sighed, "We'll get you treatment."

"Mm. I should find a new safe house." Kraken replied, Mouse really didn't like the other clone's lack of emotional scent markers.

"We'll talk with Commander Fox about that." Hunter replied, "Treatment first, no point in you looking for a safe house if you're dead."

"That is true." Kraken shrugged as he fixed his blacks' tunic, Mouse had never met someone with vitiligo, it was all over his face and upper torso, it looked really pretty... definitely odd but pretty, it was a mix of normie skin tone and the skin tone seen in the Night Stalkers, "Wonder what Fox is like."

"You'll find out soon enough." Hunter smiled, which made Mouse smile, he liked it when the older clones smiled.

"Hunter, Stitches said he'll meet us on the strip." Nokt appeared.

"Good." Hunter sighed, Mouse felt happy because if there was one medic they could count on to treat a defective like them, it was Stitches. He hadn't met a lot of the medics off Kamino, he'd met Kix but the man wasn't very nice, discounting Mouse's training and willingness to help them on Umbara... because they were different... not normal... he thought the normies out in the galaxy were nicer than the ones on Kamino but maybe the carnage on Umbara showed them in a different light? He wasn't sure but there was nothing the three of them could do to get the normies to accept and respect them and their abilities as scouts, not when the "Jedi General" branded them spies and traitors. Maybe Kix was nicer when not in the horribleness that was Umbara? Maybe it was just because of Krell...

Stupid Jedi traitor.

Stitches was a good normie, he was like 99! He had taken them in and treated them like brothers, he had become somewhat of a protector to Mouse, Clicker and Nokt, he was their buir, he'd practically adopted both the Bad Batch and Night Stalkers... maybe Stitches would take Kraken under his wing also? Would Kraken accept that? Would Stitches accept another

defective? Mouse hoped so, Kraken might be weird and unsettling to Mouse but that didn't mean he didn't deserve love and safety, everyone needed someone to look out for them, to treat their hurts and give them love, maybe if the Jedi were more willing to do that for each other, then maybe Krell wouldn't have gone bad? "Why don't you talk?" He blinked out of his head when Kraken's voice entered his perception of reality, he looked to the older clone and met those really weird but really cool eyes, "You communicate through sign but why don't you talk?"

'I was hurt by cadets.' He replied, 'Badly.'

"Oh." Kraken replied, "That sucks."

'Did you have issues with cadets when you were growing up?' He was curious, did they pick on him for his skin? His eyes? His hair? Did they pick on him or did they get bored because he didn't have any reactions? Did he ever have scent markers? Or was he decanted like that? Kraken shrugged, which made Mouse frown again, he didn't like this, he was a human clone, not some kaminoan, why didn't he have emotions?

The ship shuddered as it touched down, "Lucky you it's night time! Don't have to throw you straight out into the sunlight." Wrecker appeared with a huge grin, it was so weird seeing someone as tall as Wrecker but it was even weirder because Kraken was thinner than Crosshair was.

The three of them went to the exit just as the steps went down, revealing Stitches standing on the tarmac and before anything else, Mouse and his two brothers wrapped themselves around the sombre medic, "Hello again." Stitches said softly.

"We brought another brother!" Nokt said excitedly, which drew Stitches' stern gaze to Kraken.

"You're a tall one aren't you?" Stitches asked bluntly, earning a giggle from Mouse, he really liked Stitches' special brand of bluntness, "Name?"

"Kraken." Kraken replied, "Sir."

"Hm." Mouse smiled at the unimpressed frown on Stitches' face, "I have been informed that you have sustained an injury."

"Yes sir." Kraken nodded.

"Sergeant Hunter, Sergeant Nokt, Commander Fox wants a report. You, with me." Stitches wasn't of rank but that didn't stop him from pulling a rank into existence out of nothingness, he spoke like a Captain or even a Commander!

"Yes sir." Mouse frowned a little, he didn't like the sameness of how Kraken said those 'yes sir' replies, it was like a recording...

"Hm. Mouse, I want a full medical report of your treatment." Stitches looked down to him and Mouse nodded happily, following Stitches as they walked Kraken to Medical.

“Stitches? Who are these two?” A medic met them in Medical, he smelled warm, kind and a little like Stitches, now that Mouse could smell that he realised that Stitches was carrying a little of the other medic’s scent on him.

“This is Mouse. He’s one of the troopers I told you about.” Stitches explained.

“Nice to meet you Mouse, my name is Sawbones.” The medic smiled warmly and Mouse nodded happily with a squeak.

“And this, apparently, is Kraken.” Stitches motioned to the tall clone.

“You are rather tall.” Sawbones chuckled.

“Yeah.” Kraken replied.

“Kraken here sustained an injury and needs treatment.” Stitches sighed.

“Let’s get you treated then Kraken.”

“Okay.”

Poked and prodded

“On the cot.” Stitches said to the young trooper, Nokt had said this Kraken was also a defective clone, they seemed to be coming out of the woodwork now, “Take your armour off and remove your shirt.”

“Yes sir.” Kraken’s voice was very bland and monotone, he seemed to be moving okay for someone with a gut shot that had gone septic.

“How much external stimuli does your body register?” He asked as he looked to the young man again.

“Like pain?” Kraken asked.

“Like anything.” Stitches frowned as Kraken shook his head with a shrug, his gaze examining Kraken as he bore his upper torso to the world, “Does the vitiligo cover your whole body or just your face and torso?”

“I have some on my hands and feet.” The young man replied.

“Your emotional output seems limited.” Stitches said as he walked over to him, putting on a pair of gloves, removing Mouse’s field dressing to expose the wound, “Hm.”

“The others said that also.” Kraken replied, he didn’t even flinch when Stitches examined the wound, “Mouse said to Clicker that I don’t have any emotional scent markers, whatever that means.”

“It means that when we feel emotions, our body produces different chemicals, which Mouse is smelling to determine what a person is feeling.” Stitches replied as he set about cleaning the wound, “Your body is not producing these chemicals, which means you are not feeling those emotions.”

“Oh.” Kraken replied simply, “That makes sense.”

“Have you always had this issue? Were you decanted like this?” He asked as he carefully pushed some infected pus out of the wound.

“No idea, too much in too little.” Kraken shrugged again.

Stitches looked to him, “They tried to give too many genetic mutations to your batch?” He asked.

“Mm.” He nodded.

“That explains the vitiligo and the albinism, but it could also have an influence on your brain’s internal receptors.” He frowned again, “Seeing as I was poking and prodding an open

and infected wound and you didn't even flinch? I would imagine there is little in the way of pain receptors."

"Oh." Kraken replied, his voice didn't change, "Is that bad?"

"Yes." Stitches replied bluntly, "How long did it take you to realise you'd sustained that injury? Was it instantaneously?"

"No. I only realised it when I'd descended three levels." Kraken looked at the injury as Stitches determined if there was much more he could do for cleaning.

"So, yes, that is bad." Stitches replied as he changed his gloves and opened a pack, removing the patch inside and carefully adhering it to Kraken's skin, which was getting warm and sweaty, "You will have to stay in the base until the infection is cleared up. Right now, even though you are probably not feeling it, your body is generating a temperature to combat the infection. I will keep you here for observation because an infection can turn deadly, even to you."

"That makes sense." The young man nodded.

"Commanders Fox and Thorn will want to talk to you." Stitches sighed, "But until I can determine how your body is going to react to the fever, I wouldn't recommend visitors."

"If you think that's best." Kraken looked to him.

"I do." Stitches replied with a frown, he looked to the door as a knock came from it and it opened to reveal Sawbones.

"Stitches, you have people looking for you." Sawbones said, "Oh? Who's this?"

"This is Kraken, he's an enhanced clone." Stitches replied.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, my name is Sawbones." The medic smiled warmly.

"He's going to be staying with us for a while, he suffered a gut shot and it has gotten infected." Stitches looked to Kraken.

"Oh dear. Well, we'll try to make your stay as comfortable as we can." Sawbones looked to Stitches, "Isn't that right cyar'ika?"

"Indeed it is." He smiled softly.

"You are a couple?" Kraken asked, earning a chuckle from Sawbones and if Stitches had been any other man he would have blushed, but he wasn't, so he didn't.

"Not in the way you are thinking of." Sawbones replied, "He is very dear to me, as I am to him."

"Is that allowed?" Kraken looked between the two of them.

“It might be frowned upon by a good portion of our brothers, it isn’t forbidden.” Stitches explained.

“Oh. Does this happen a lot with clones?” Was the question Stitches had been asked more times than he cared to mention, clones were social creatures and needed some type of affection and warmth from another person.

“Sometimes one just wants to find comfort in someone but we seldom get a chance to interact with civilians when out on active fronts.” Sawbones replied, “Sexual relationships aren’t the only kind of relationships out there.”

“Oh. Like what?” Kraken was full of questions for someone who’d spent nearly three years alone, although, that might be why he was asking them.

“For us, it is just one of comfort and love.” Sawbones was so much better about talking about these things, not that Stitches got embarrassed or hated talking about it, it was just something he didn't enjoyed talking about with strangers.

“That makes sense.” The young man nodded, Stitches had a similar conversation with Nokt but Stitches felt safer talking to the Sergeant about his relationship with Sawbones, the boy needed confirmation that his feelings towards Hunter were not bad, as long as boundaries were set and both parties were aware of the feelings of the other person because while Hunter wouldn’t return Nokt’s feelings and Nokt understood that and that Hunter understood Nokt’s feelings, they could continue to be brothers.

Nokt had been so badly hurt by Coruscant.

“Were you decanted alone?” Sawbones asked as he sat down beside Kraken.

“My batchmates died in the tubes.” Kraken’s lack of emotions was very unsettling, even talking about the deaths of his brothers, his batchmates, he showed nothing.

“Oh dear.” Sawbones, however, looked so sad.

Strange.

Doctor visit

“So... any idea what’s wrong with him?” Hunter asked Stitches, as he sat down in the seat on the other side of the desk, “Given his lack of emotional scent markers and all that.”

“Given the other myriad of genetic kark-ups he has? It could be any number of things, pathologic apathy, flat affect, psychosis, I can’t tell you at this current point but what I can tell you is that he also has issues with pain registry. So, given he has a combo of both, there is a probability there was an unforeseen mess up in his brain’s neurological receptors.” He replied with a frown as he leaned back in his chair, “The kaminoans were probably throwing mutations at the wall to see what stuck, which would definitely explain the vitiligo and albinism but it might also explain his inability to feel either emotions or pain.”

“Mouse is very freaked out by it, he keeps asking why Kraken is like that, he’s a “human clone not a kaminoan” as he puts it.” Hunter sighed.

“It could be that the kaminoans did this on purpose.” Stitches shrugged, “If they could make a clone who felt neither pain nor emotion, then they could have these clones work until they dropped because they wouldn’t feel injuries, nor would they be emotionally affected by the battles. I have seen many a traumatised trooper come through those doors, if the kaminoans could do away with that, then they could keep a squad going without question.”

“That’s...” The Sergeant was clearly sickened by that thought, it wasn’t the most pleasant of ideas but there was a very strong chance that that was where they were headed, the fact that Kraken was the only one of his batchmates to survive... it could mean that their genetic mashup was too much for their tiny bodies and they just flat-lined from the stress their bodies were going through.

“They must have botched the batches between him and the Night Stalkers, and between you lot and him.” He sighed, massaging the bridge of his nose.

“That’s a lot of babies... dead...” Hunter looked heartbroken.

“Yes. It is.” Stitches replied, “Solely because the kaminoans got greedy.”

Hunter sighed through his nose, “Commander Fox wants an update.”

“Of course he does.” He sighed in response.

“Thank you Stitches.” The younger clone said, causing him to look at him with a raised eyebrow, “You have done so much for us, all us defectives...”

“You are brothers Hunter, all of you.” Stitches replied, “The same heart that beats in my chest, in each and every one of us regular clones, beats in you also. Some people just judge based on visual appearances, especially clones because we’re a sea of identical faces, with only minor aesthetical differences. Hair styles, facial hair, tattoos, scars, none of it can cover up the fact that we all have the same face, we’re identical. The only way we differ in any

great capacity is in our personalities, how our experiences shaped us, how we react, how we choose to show our affections, because that is one thing that can't be cloned." He sighed again, "A million identical faces but a million different experiences."

"You okay?" Hunter asked softly.

"I'm fine." He quickly, "I just..."

"You don't want to talk about it, I get that." Hunter smiled, "But you can talk to us if you need too." Stitches searched the younger clone's features for some form of lie, a con, anything but he couldn't find one, he didn't need Mouse's sense of smell to realise Hunter wasn't lying, he was being honest in his want to help.

"Thank you Hunter." He replied with a nod, "I extend the offer to you, should you ever need to speak about something, then I will be there to lend an ear."

"As long as you don't throw the ear at me." Hunter grinned.

"Don't tempt me Sergeant." Stitches chanced a small smirk.

"I don't even want to know where you'd get an ear!" He laughed.

"I have my ways." Stitches replied easily, Hunter reminded him of his brothers, his... he heard the explosions, the smell of dust and blood and ash... he heard screaming.

"Stitches? Hey, you okay?" He realised he'd clamped his hands around his upper arms, they'd absolutely bruise.

"I... can you call for Sawbones..." He somehow managed to get his words out, "I need... help..."

Hunter vanished and he heard the younger clone calling for Sawbones, he felt himself start shaking, "Cyar'ika." Sawbones appeared in front of him, his warm, soft hands cupping his cheeks, "You're okay, can you breathe with me?"

He didn't know where Hunter had gone, was he still in the room? He caught the movement out of the corner of his eye, "Sergeant Hunter... can you... go check on Kraken?" He didn't want to break in front of him, he didn't want him to see him like that...

Broken.

"You sure?" Hunter asked softly.

"Don't worry Sergeant Hunter." Sawbones smiled to the younger clone, "I've got this."

"Okay... but call if you need me." Hunter looked to him before nodding and leaving the room.

"Why... can't I stop...?" He curled in on himself, head between his knees as he tried to regulate his breathing, the sounds overwhelming him, "Why can't I stop... screaming!?"

“Shh, easy cyar’ika, you’re not screaming.” Sawbones’ voice pierced through the memory of explosions, of his damned screaming, “You’re scared, you are falling into the past, but you are not screaming.” He shouldn’t be like this, he had patients to help, he should be taking care of Kraken! Not breaking down in a room because he thought about his brothers! “Easy, you’re okay. Just breathe with me.” Sawbones was trying to get him out of hyperventilating, “Remember your training, in through your nose, out through your mouth.”

He squeezed his eyes shut as he tried to block the sounds out, the smells, he knew they weren’t real!

But he couldn’t stop screaming!

Sepsis

Kraken looked to the door as it opened, he could feel his brain going odd as the fever he couldn't feel tore through him, he knew he was shaking but he couldn't feel it, "Hey, how're you feeling?" Sergeant Hunter appeared.

"It's very bright in here." Kraken replied, it didn't hurt but it was making seeing a chore.

He blinked and the light dimmed considerably, "There, better?" Hunter sat on the end of the bed, looking to him with a soft smile, he wondered what it was like to smile.

"Mm." He nodded, he could see better, so that was something, "The medic said I should stay in for observation."

"I can tell from here you're running a massive temperature, surprised you're not hallucinating." Hunter replied, "You should drink a lot of fluids, you have an I.V. drip but it might help to drink also." The Sergeant moved again but this time he placed the back of his hand on Kraken's forehead, "I'm going to go ask for some cold packs, should help with the fever." He watched as Hunter left the room, why was the man so concerned about him? Was it just because they were both defectives? He sat in silence for a while before Hunter arrived back, "Here, put that behind your neck." He handed him a cold pack, then placed another on his chest, "There, that should help. Do you want some water?"

"Why are you so concerned about me? Being nice to me?" He asked, "You barely know me, so is it because we are both defectives? I can see no other reason for it."

"You're our brother, you're injured and in need of help, so of course I'm going to be concerned, sure we're both defective but doesn't mean a lot to me." Hunter replied with a smile, "Brothers help each other but I can guess you haven't had help from others." Kraken blinked, why would others help him? He was there to do a job and nothing more... he blinked when a hand waved in front of his face, "Kraken? You okay?" Hunter looked so concerned, "You had a fade out, the fever is hitting your brain."

"Oh." He replied, that would explain his swimming vision and fogginess in his brain, "That sucks." It was difficult to move because his joints were getting stiff, his loose tunic was stuck to him with sweat, his breathing was coming in shorter and shorter bursts, and he was shaking, shivering actually... but still he couldn't feel anything. He wondered what this might feel like to everyone else, would this be painful? Uncomfortable?

"Come on." Hunter moved to his side, "This should help your breathing." He blinked at the appearance of an additional pillow that propped him up at an angle but the Sergeant was correct, it did help with his breathing, it didn't help with anything else though. He closed his eyes as he continued to shiver, as his brain got foggier and slower, he felt Hunter's hand again moving from his forehead to his chest, "I need to call for a medic, your temperature is becoming dangerously high."

“Okay.” He replied, he knew everyone was so unnerved by his monotone but there wasn’t anything he could do, there was nothing to add to it. He opened his eyes to the sound of something at the vent, he could see something long and wet slither out of the slats followed by an eye appearing in the vent... he must be hallucinating, “I believe I might be hallucinating.” He said to the older clone as he arrived back with the medic from before.

He felt something in his ear, heard a beep, “You have a fever of 107, no wonder you are hallucinating.” The medic said.

“Oh. Is that bad?” Kraken looked to them.

“Yes.” The medic replied bluntly, “We need to bring this down, now, before you suffer any permanent damage to all the important organs.”

“Oh. So that would be why it’s bad.” Kraken nodded then found himself suddenly needing to evacuate his stomach contents, it smelled pretty bad.

Hunter moved to him and rolled him onto his side as the medic went to the door, “Easy, you’re okay.” Hunter said gently as Kraken continued to throw-up, did this hurt for other people? Was this a painful experience for them? He’d never had something like this happen before, so maybe it was supposed to hurt?

“Sawbones!” He heard the medic call and soon the other medic from before arrived, “Hyperpyrexia.”

“Administering.” He heard the other medic, Sawbones, say and he felt something coming through the drip, “Stitches, get a cold I.V. fluid bag.”

“Kraken, whatever you do, don’t go to sleep.” Hunter said gently.

“Why?” He asked as his body shook.

“Because there is no guarantee that you’ll wake up again if you do.” Stitches said, “Because of your idiotic decision to go swimming in waste water with an open wound, it has gone septic.”

“Easy cyar’ika.” Sawbones replied, Kraken still didn’t understand their relationship, he hadn’t really thought about relationships before but he thought they usually involved sex... wasn’t that a big part of it? Sawbones said their relationship wasn’t a sexual one, it was one of comfort and warmth, whatever that meant, but there was no sex... was that a common thing? He’d have to ask once the world stopped spinning and he stopped needing to throw-up.

“Don’t worry vod’ika, you’ll be okay.” Hunter smiled, “Just ignore the grumpy medic... ow!” Stitches smacked Hunter across the back of the head, “What the kark was that for!?”

“Stitches, go outside.” Sawbones sounded quite stern, he didn’t know why, he heard the other medic hiss and leave again.

“What’s his problem?” Hunter rubbed the back of his head and Kraken wondered how much that hurt the Sergeant.

“I’ll explain later.” Sawbones replied, his voice returning to its softness, “Let’s get you out of the danger zone.”

The surface was such a confusing place.

Colour spectrum

Chapter Notes

Kraken's eyes are based on the vision of deep sea fish, who live so deep that no natural light gets down there, they have no need to see red light spectrums, they only need to see the blue or green lights created through bioluminescence. So he basically sees everyone as a member of the Blue Man Group.

“What the kark is up with Stitches?” Hunter sounded upset when Kraken regained his purchase on consciousness, “Is this... is this something to do with his episode?”

Episode?

What was an episode?

He didn't know about anything except the episode thing that docuseries had, he saw people watching them when he was wandering, “Normally he only acts this way towards himself, I have only seen him get physically aggressive towards another person twice before in the span of three years.” Sawbones replied with a sigh, he was upset too but more exhausted than Hunter, “He usually falls back on his words, they're his strength, his preferred weapon but...”

“Sometimes words aren't enough?” Hunter finished the sentence.

“Yes.” Was the reply.

Kraken looked to them, “Hey, you're awake.” Hunter smiled warmly, “How do you feel?”

Kraken blinked and tried to move but he was still stiff, his skin was still coated in sweat, his breathing had returned to normal however, “I...” His words got lost somewhere in his bone-dry throat, so he coughed a little to clear it.

Suddenly a tumbler of water appeared in his vision, “Here, drink.” Sawbones smiled to him, he nodded and took it before sipping the fluid.

“We nearly lost you there.” Hunter said as he sat down on the edge of the cot.

“It appears I passed out.” Kraken looked between the two of them.

“Your brain over heated, which is why we had to apply more cold packs.” Sawbones explained, “We had to do two cold I.V. fluids just to bring your temperature down.”

“Oh.” He replied, “Is that a lot?”

“More than I would have liked, given how it cemented the severity of your fever but you are recovering very well.” The medic smiled.

“I’m still stiff and sweaty.” He looked at his chest, at the tunic that was stuck fast to it.

“Once you can move better, you can have a shower.” Hunter said.

“A... shower? Moving water?” He asked, he would have to get more fish, he wasn’t sure how it happened but he liked having them.

“Yep.” Hunter grinned, “I’m sure if you asked nicely, we could give you a ride back to Kamino.”

“Back to Kamino? Why would that be an option?” He asked, “I have to find a new safe house and get back to my job.”

“Yeah... about that...” Hunter rubbed the back of his neck, “When that guy shot you, he told everyone on that level you were a spy.”

“Oh.” He replied, “That sucks.”

“It does.” Hunter sighed.

“That means everyone on that level will be on the lookout for you and depending on the movement of people between the levels...” Sawbones explained.

“It means my cover is blow on the top levels.” Kraken replied.

He should have expected it, it was only a matter of time before he was found out, the separatist sympathisers were getting more and more vocal on 1313 and up, however levels lower than 1313 would be fine, no one cared enough about the war, the Republic, the separatists, that wasn’t something they had to deal with on a daily basis, they only cared about surviving, “Fox and Thorn want to talk to you personally about this, seeing as they are in charge here.” Hunter said.

“Mm. That makes sense.” He nodded.

“But first we have to get you back in working order.” Sawbones smiled, he smiled a lot, it was a soft smile that would help make anyone calm.

“What did you mean by “his episode”? What is an episode?” He looked between the two of them again.

“Stitches suffers from post traumatic stress disorder.” Sawbones replied with a soft sigh, “What we mean by “episode” is he experiences flashbacks, he gets agitated and as seen... he can get aggressive, though not always and rarely against another person, his aggression is usually directed towards himself.”

“Oh.” He blinked, “That sucks.”

“Indeed it does.” The medic replied.

“So. What’s next for me?” Kraken asked, “Below 1313 would still be safe enough for me, people down there don’t have time to care about the war, too busy trying to survive, I could go back there.”

“You don’t want to stay on the surface?” Hunter asked.

“I am bred and designed for dark environments.” Kraken replied with a shrug, “The Coruscant Underworld is the perfect environment for me.”

“Oh, I see. The surface is too bright for you isn’t it?” Sawbones asked.

“Mm.” He nodded in reply.

“Like Nokt then.” Hunter sat a little straighter.

“He can see in low light conditions, correct?” He looked to the Sergeant.

“Yeah, he developed tapetum lucidum but he can’t dilate his pupils to restrict the light entering his eyes, so he sees everything at six times the normal light level.” Hunter explained, “It’s why he has to wear his goggles, to act as substitute dilation of his pupils.”

“That makes sense.” Kraken replied.

“What about you?” Sawbones asked, “In what way is it too bright for you?”

“Se said it is because of an increase in rod opsins that make my eyes capable of capturing every possible photon at multiple wavelengths, normal people have one while I have 38 in total. This is useful in the underworld but...” He replied.

“But?” Hunter encouraged.

“I have no receptors for the red colour spectrum, so being up here, where the red spectrum is more abundant, it can make seeing a little difficult.” He explained.

“Protanomaly?” Sawbones asked.

“Mm.” He nodded, “I can only see in blues and greens.”

“Isn’t... infrared only detectible as heat radiation?” Hunter blinked, “Man... I should have Tech here to explain this.”

“So, where we see reds, pinks, browns, oranges, yellows... you can’t?” Sawbones looked intrigued.

“No.” Kraken shook his head.

“It also limits the amount of time you can use a datapad or computer?” The medic asked and he nodded.

“My helmet helps correct the brightness issue but it can’t correct the colour issue.”

“That sucks.” Hunter said.

“Yeah. It does.”

Embarrassment

Chapter Notes

No shame in that man what-so-ever! XD

Poor Nokt is now scarred for life.

Kraken stood staring at the water that came out of the shower head, he reached out to let his hand be swallowed by the heavy torrent of falling water, the longer he stared the more he felt something in the back of his brain, he didn't know what it was but it was there, he shrugged his shoulders and stepped into the shower, watching as the dirt and grime flowed off him and down the drain, maybe he should cut his hair? It was very long, was hard to maintain, got matted and dirty very easily, not to mention it got in the way a lot... maybe he'd ask Hunter or Stitches how they maintained their hair? His body relaxed under the hot water, it was a long time since he had one, he had missed running water, moving water, maybe he could go with them to Kamino? Not for an extended period of time, though, that would suck.

"Kraken? You okay in there?" He heard Hunter on the other side of the refresher door.

"Yes." He replied.

"Do you need any help?" Hunter asked.

"No." Kraken replied, he knew people disliked his monotone, his very blunt and emotionless way of talking but it wasn't like he knew how to fake any emotion... he didn't know what they should be like, he knew other people's emotions but he couldn't replicate them.

He stepped out of the water and picked up a towel, he looked around and realised he hadn't brought in the spare blacks Sawbones had provided, oh well, "Woah!" Hunter looked away when Kraken walked out completely naked, "Not shy about that are you?"

"What? It's just a body." He replied.

"Hunter, is Kraken... oh Maker!" Nokt appeared in the room but instantly turned around in embarrassment, "I... I'm so sorry! I... I didn't... the door was unlocked! Had... had I known I wouldn't have intercourse! I mean entered!"

"What?" Kraken asked, looking between them, why were they embarrassed? It was just his body, they had one too, they had all the parts... he shrugged in slight confusion.

"I... was wondering if you were feeling better!" Nokt sounded flustered and he hadn't turned back around yet.

“I’m fine.” He replied as he picked up the leggings, they looked a little loose, “Who’s are these?”

“They were Wrecker’s but seeing as you’re a whole lot thinner than him, Stitches modified them.” Hunter replied, he seemed to get over his embarrassment faster than Nokt did despite Kraken’s nakedness, was it to do with what happened on Coruscant? The man had done really bad things to Nokt... would seeing a naked man hurt him?

“What’s going on in here?” Stitches appeared and Kraken looked to him, “Forgot your change of clothes before entering the shower?”

“Mm.” He replied, the medic didn’t even bat an eye at Kraken’s lack of clothing, didn’t even seem a little embarrassed.

“Right.” Stitches replied, “Nokt, Hunter, wait outside while I check Kraken’s injury.”

“Don’t need to tell Nokt twice.” Hunter went to the young Sergeant and they left the room.

“Enjoying the breeze?” Stitches raised his eyebrow.

“What?” Kraken asked.

“Put some pants on.” The medic sighed, “You might not feel the cold but it can still affect you.”

“I don’t get those.” He replied.

“Comes with not having the capacity for emotions I imagine.” Stitches replied as he grabbed some stuff from one of the cubbies.

“I think I hurt Nokt.” Kraken said as he pulled on the briefs.

“He’s still recovering, it will take him a long time, so seeing a naked man didn’t help his mental and emotional well-being.” Stitches looked to him, “Hm.”

“What?” He blinked.

“Your vitiligo covers a lot more than your torso and face.” He replied, “Complete vitiligo is quite rare.”

“Oh.” He replied.

“Sit down and let me have a look at the wound.” Stitches motioned to the cot and Kraken nodded before doing as he was told.

He stared at the medic as he examined the wound, “Sawbones said you usually get aggressive against yourself, why?” He watched as every muscle in the medic tensed, the medic didn’t say anything for a long while and Kraken wondered if he said the wrong thing.

“Because sometimes I hate myself, because I couldn’t do what I was trained to do and save the people closest to me when they needed me.” Stitches replied after a long silence and his voice seemed tight.

“Oh.” Kraken replied, “That sucks.”

“Yeah... I suppose you could say that.” Stitches sighed, “I’m going to apply another bacta patch but your fever has broken and faded, so you should be able to move around the base. The Commanders are itching to get you into a meeting, they have been good and listened to me and Sawbones about isolating you and haven’t made an attempt to visit you.”

Kraken thought on his words for a moment, “How do you maintain your hair?” He asked, earning him a raised eyebrow, “I have difficulty with mine.”

“Hm, it is quite long, I would suggest cutting it back to a more manageable length, then you would only have to combat the thickness.” Stitches replied, “I take it, it gets very matted?”

“Mm.” Kraken nodded, “And dirty.”

“Yes, I imagine so.” The medic nodded in reply, “Hm, I can ask around and see if anyone would be willing and able to cut it for you.”

“Okay.” He replied, “Can I ask you something else?”

“You can.” Stitches replied as he took off his gloves to pick up the pack containing the bacta patch.

“I don’t feel... I know that... but when I looked at the shower water, something felt weird in the back of my brain.” Kraken looked to the adjoining refresher.

“You were decanted and raised on Kamino, then you went to the depths of Coruscant as soon as you left, you haven’t seen running water in what? Three years?”

“Mm.” He nodded.

“You miss it?”

“I do... a lot.”

Commanders and a haircut

“So you’re Kraken.” He looked between the two older men in the office with him.

“Yes sir.” He replied with a nod.

“Well, I am Commander Fox and this is Commander Thorn.” The man called Fox explained, he looked and sounded very tired, stressed even.

“Mm.” He nodded again, “You wanted to speak with me?”

“You have done a lot of good for the Coruscant Guard and the security of the Senate from underworld instigators.” Fox leaned back in his chair and Kraken wondered if it was because he was very tall and the Commander didn’t want to strain his neck or something to look him in the eyes.

“Yes sir.” He replied again, earning a slight frown from Fox and a confused look from Thorn, Mouse had informed him that his manner of repeating words or phrases, in his very monotone voice, was quite creepy, “I am unsure if I can continue to do that to acceptable standards anymore, given the current climate of 1313 and up.”

“That’s what we wanted to talk to you about.” Thorn said.

“Seeing as you are effectively black-listed from the levels that pose a threat to the Senate, we will need to relocate you and assign you a different mission.” Fox looked to him with the stern gaze of a Commander.

“I don’t know how my skill set can be applied to other situations sir.” Kraken shrugged.

“Indeed you are very specialised but I’m sure we can find you something.” The Commander replied, “Sergeant Hunter has informed me that you would not do well up here?”

“No sir.” He replied, “I am designed for dark or pitch-black environments because of my eyesight.”

“Yes.” Fox narrowed his eyes, “Seeing as you are an enhanced clone and we are not, would you care to tell us how your eyesight differs from ours?”

“Mm. Se said I developed an increase in rod opsins that make my eyes capable of capturing every possible photon at multiple wavelengths, so, while normal people have one, I have 38 in total, which allows me to see colour in complete darkness.” He explained for the third time since meeting other clones, “But because of the environment I was designed to exist in, I don’t have any receptors for the red colour spectrum.”

“So... you can’t see the red colour spectrum?” Thorn asked and Kraken shook his head.

“No. I see in green and blue.” He explained, “But because the red spectrum is more abundant on the surface and even though I can’t perceive it, it makes it very bright up here, making seeing a little difficult.”

“So... you can’t see the red accents on our armour?” Thorn looked very interested in this development.

“No.” He replied simply, he wondered what it was like to be able to see red based colours. Would people’s skin tones be different? Normal? Would he be able to see the colour the Coruscant Guard chose as their accent colour for what it actually was?

“So, what I’m getting from this, is that we don’t ask you to do bomb disposal.” Thorn grinned.

“Probably not a good idea.” He replied, “I am not designed for that type of job.”

“The kaminoans dug themselves into a hole with you enhanced clones, making you singularly specialised seems counterproductive.” Fox sighed, massaging his forehead, “Sergeant Hunter has put in a request that should you wish to return to Kamino for however long, that we should allow it.”

“And?” He asked.

“Well, do you want to go to Kamino for any length of time?” Fox replied with a raised eyebrow.

“Not a long time. That would suck.” Kraken replied, he liked being close to the water, the crashing waves and rain make him feel... safe? Was that something? He’d have to ask one of the medics... probably Stitches, he seemed to know things about defectives.

“Hm.” Fox frowned, were all Gen Ones built on frowns and disapproving sounds?

It was odd.

“Well, I’m sure you could catch a lift with Clone Force 99 and the Night Stalkers.” Thorn chuckled at Fox’s unimpressed face.

“In the mean time we can figure out what to do with you in terms of mission.” The Commander said, “Once you return to Coruscant we will debrief you on what we come up with.”

“Yes sir.” Kraken nodded.

“Dismissed.” Fox sounded very authoritative.

“Yes sir.” He replied and did the customary salute, he hadn’t had to do that in a long time, it was odd but then again a lot of things were odd about the above ground, was it because they had access to things the underworlders didn’t? He walked out of the office and decided to look for Stitches, he wanted to ask him about things again, maybe he had found someone to cut Kraken’s hair?

“Welcome back Kraken.” He was met in medical by Sawbones, “I do hope you haven’t sustained any injuries.”

“No.” He replied.

“Oh, then are you looking for someone in particular?” Sawbones smiled, the man liked smiling, maybe that was why Stitches liked him.

“Stitches.” He said, “But... maybe you could help.”

“What is it you need?” Sawbones looked a little concerned.

“My hair.” He pointed to the object in question, “It’s hard to maintain.”

“Oh dear.” The medic chuckled, “Yes. Stitches had been asking around in hopes of finding someone to do that, well, how about I do it for you?”

“You?” He asked.

“Of course! I do Stitches’ hair and beard when he’s here.” Sawbones chuckled again, “Come, let’s get that hair into a more manageable state.”

“Okay.” He followed the medic, why did Stitches need someone else to do his hair? “Is he not based here?” He asked.

“No. He’s based out of Kamino but Sergeant Hunter requested him because of his familiarity with enhanced clones.” Sawbones replied with a soft smile.

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded and sat down where the medic motioned to.

“How long since your last haircut?”

“Kamino.”

“So?”

“Three years.”

“Ah.”

Maybe it wasn't a bad thing

Chapter Notes

Kraken is so freaking confused.

Kraken ran his hand through his hair, it wasn't regulation short, it was probably around Hunter's or Stitches' length but even that made it a lot lighter, Sawbones had done a good job with it... he liked the medics here. He knocked on the door of Stitches' impromptu office, he waited a moment before knocking again and this time the door opened to reveal the older clone, "Kraken?" He asked, to which Kraken nodded, "Sawbones said you were looking for me, I do apologise for not being able to see you, come in." The medic walked back to the desk and sat down, "You wanted to talk to me about something?"

"Yes sir." Kraken replied, then took a seat when offered by the medic.

"What can I help you with?" Stitches leaned back in his chair, hands clasped loosely on his abdomen, an icon of relaxed.

"I am confused." He replied.

"About?" Stitches asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Everything. The surface is very confusing, people are very confusing and I don't know how to adjust." Kraken explained.

"I see." Stitches replied, "You have spent nearly three years of your life underground, surrounded by people who probably didn't like or trust you."

"I didn't talk to people, not unless I needed something." He replied, running his hand through his hair, failing to remember he'd gotten most of it cut off, "It was my mission and now I can't do that..."

"If you had the emotional scent markers present to allocate an emotion to your words, I would guess it would be fear but that is completely natural, you have lived a certain way for three years and in the blink of an eye, it is ripped out from beneath you." The medic explained easily, "The Coruscant Guard will find you a replacement mission however, it may not be the same or in a different part of the planet but they will find something."

"That makes sense." Kraken nodded.

"Hunter told me you'll be joining us on the flight back to Kamino." Stitches' eyebrow stayed half way to his hairline, "What brought this on?"

“I miss water and Hunter suggested going back to Kamino but I won’t stay long.” He replied, “That would suck.”

“That it would.” A small grin appeared on Stitches’ bearded face briefly before it vanished, “But I do believe it might do you some good to return and remember the sounds of the ocean.”

“Yeah.” He nodded, “I don’t feel, so why do I miss it? Not Kamino or the kaminoans, just water.”

“As I said before, you were decanted and raised on Kamino, a water world, and if your brain grabbed onto that sound as the sound you associate with comfort, then it stands to reason you would miss it.” Stitches replied easily, “You may not produce emotional scent markers that make you feel longing but the primitive part of your brain wants that comfort back.”

“Oh.” He nodded, “That makes sense.”

“Does it?” Stitches asked as he leaned his elbows on the desk and Kraken blinked, what did that mean?

“What do you mean sir?” He asked.

“Do you completely understand what I meant? Or are you agreeing based on a surface level understanding?” Stitches leaned back in his chair again, his eyebrow practically vanishing into his hairline, “What did I mean?” Kraken stared at him, for the first time in his life he was stuck for words, “As I thought.” Kraken was about to talk but was cut off by Stitches’ comm chirping, “Stitches.”

“Hunter here. We’ve just finished restocking and basic repairs, ready to leave when you are.” Hunter’s voice came through.

“Very good Sergeant. Your brother will be joining us also.” The medic looked to him.

“That’s great to hear.” Hunter replied.

“Kraken’s coming with us?” He heard the voice of Nokt.

“Indeed he is ad’ika.” Stitches’ voice softened a little, why did he talk to Nokt like that when his voice usually displayed some form of irritation?

“It’s going to be a packed flight.” Hunter chuckled, “Whenever you’re ready ori’vod.”

“We’ll join you shortly.” Stitches closed the channel and looked to Kraken again, “Trust me on this Kraken, the longer you spend with brothers, the more you will come to know about yourself and the effects small things have on you.”

“Y... yes sir.” He nodded.

“Very good. Go pack whatever you have and meet us on the landing strip.” The medic stood up.

“Yes sir.” He nodded again and left.

He wondered if his fever did something to his brain, was that possible?

“Something wrong Kraken?” Sawbones’ voice appeared nanoseconds after his hand did on his shoulder.

“Could a fever make my brain go weird?” He asked.

“Possibly, you still speak in a monotone voice and I can tell you aren’t suddenly awash with emotions but it could have jostled somethings.” The medic replied gently, his hand giving Kraken’s shoulder a soft squeeze, “You should go get ready.”

“I don’t have anything to pack.” He replied, “I should just go to the strip.”

“Well, isn’t it lucky we all packed some things for you.” Sawbones chuckled and suddenly there was a pack in his arms, “Small things, a spare set of blacks, some ration bars, a small medical kit.”

“Oh.” He blinked and looked in the pack, he pulled out a sheet, “Stickers?”

“Yes. That was Mouse’s idea.” The medic smiled, “He also put some candies in there for you.”

“I should thank him.” He nodded, putting the sheet back in.

“You have family now, you are not alone in your fight.” Sawbones said softly, “Here with us, with Clone Force 99 and the Night Stalkers, so don’t worry about finding a place to fit in.” Kraken stared at him, the surface was a very confusing place, Mouse was clearly unnerved by Kraken and his lack of scent markers but he still gave him stickers and a pack of candies...

It was confusing.

But maybe that wasn’t a bad thing?

Maybe.

Kraken? Meet Minnow

Mouse stared out at Kraken, the older clone was sitting out on the platform, in the poring rain and he smelled relaxed... calm, as though he could actually feel something real, "Hey, you okay?" He looked to Wrecker as he came to stand beside him.

'It's weird, he smells like he is actually feeling.' Mouse replied, he was confused because there still wasn't any emotional scent markers for any emotion but Kraken was almost happy with the rain and the sound of the ocean waves crashing against the supports.

"Stitches mentioned to Hunter that Kraken felt something close to comfort with the rain and ocean." Wrecker replied, "It's been nearly three years since he last saw it, so it makes sense he missed it."

'Yeah.' Mouse looked to Kraken, 'He should come in soon, he might get sick if he stays out in the rain.'

"How long's he been out there?" Wrecker asked.

'Since we landed.' Mouse looked to him.

"Yeah... let's go get him." The giant grinned and Mouse nodded, following after him into the rain, "Hey Kraken?"

The lanky clone looked to them, "Yes?" He asked, Mouse was slowly getting used to that monotone voice, it was just who Kraken was and that was fine.

"Come on, let's get inside out of the rain and get you sorted in the boy's bunk room." Wrecker said, Mouse was proud of Nokt for allowing Kraken to bunk in their room, maybe it was because Kraken didn't have the scent markers that would make him do something? Mouse wasn't happy, however, with the information that Kraken had no issue walking around naked as the day he was decanted, it hurt Nokt but Kraken hadn't seemed understand that... at least as far as Nokt was aware.

"Okay." Kraken nodded and stood up, Mouse was getting used to his voice but it would take a long time for him to get used to the height of Kraken, everyone was taller than Mouse but now there was a second person who was taller than the others.

"Like the hair by the way." Wrecker nudged Kraken, like he did with every other brother, Kraken didn't smell sure of the interaction.

"It was too long, had to make it more manageable." Kraken replied with a shrug.

"What do ya think Mouse, is he a contender for 'Best Hair'?" Wrecker laughed as they walked through the halls, luckily the cadets and stationed troopers were still well aware that the enhanced clones were under the protection of Stitches, so they kept a wide berth of the three of them and settled for confused looked directed towards Kraken.

‘I have to ask Gonky.’ Mouse replied with a bounce, ‘But I think he would be.’

“Best hair?” Kraken asked.

“Him and Gonky have little competitions on random things, currently Hunter sits upon the ‘Best Hair’ winner’s throne.” Wrecker laughed, “Gonky didn’t know Stitches at the time so he wasn’t in the running, but maybe now that they’ve met, Hunter might be dethroned!”

“Do these competitions have any bearing on the mission? Or the group?” Kraken asked.

“Nah.” Wrecker nudged him again and Mouse could smell Kraken’s continued confusion at the interaction, was it because of his mission on Coruscant? That he was so far away from brothers, from people who weren’t a threat?

‘They’re just silly little things.’ Mouse bounced again, ‘Crosshair would win “who can stay still the longest” because he’s a sniper.’

“That seems like an unfair advantage.” Kraken replied.

“Yeah. We’re not going to hold that against him though!” Wrecker grinned.

“There you guys are.” Hunter and Nokt met them in the hall outside the Batch’s bunk room.

“We had to grab Kraken out of the rain.” Wrecker replied, which made the two Sergeants look at Kraken.

“You’re soaked.” Nokt said, he smelled equal parts worried and scared, if Kraken was soaked through then he would have to change clothes but if he didn’t there was a chance he’d get sick.

“I’m fine.” Kraken shrugged.

“No you’re not, there is a spare set of blacks in your pack, go get changed.” Nokt motioned to their bunk room, Mouse smiled at his brother pulling rank, he didn’t get to do it often because he was a Sergeant and most of the troopers they met and interacted with were Captains or Commanders, sometimes they interacted with the Generals.

It was nice.

“Yes sir.” Kraken nodded.

“Mouse, show him where his things are.” Nokt looked to him, “The bunk beside yours should do for the time being.” Mouse nodded and took hold of Kraken’s hand, much to the confusion of the older clone, he was experiencing a lot of new things now that he had brothers!

Kraken stopped and looked around once Mouse brought him in, “What’s that?” He pointed to Clicker’s sleep pod.

‘Clicker sleeps in there. It stops vibrations from getting in and it dampens the vibrations he makes.’ Mouse replied, ‘It means he can sleep without being in pain.’

“Pain?” Kraken asked.

Mouse nodded, ‘He can feel the vibrations in the environment but until he got his protective suit, none of us could make physical contact with him because the vibrations our bodies create caused him a lot of physical pain.’

“Oh.” Kraken replied, “That sucks.” That seemed to be Kraken’s go-to repeat phrase but Mouse nodded and squeaked in agreement. Mouse squeaked to get Kraken’s attention and pointed to the empty bunk beside Mouse’s own one, “Who’s is this one?” The lanky clone asked and Mouse pointed to himself, “Yours?” Mouse nodded, “Oh. Why do you have so many blankets and pillows?”

‘I like nesting.’ Mouse replied with a bounce, ‘You can have some if you want.’

“No thank you.” Kraken replied then noticed Minnow, “A bantha?”

Mouse nodded and bounced, picking her up to show Kraken, who took her carefully, his smell returning to confusion, ‘She’s called Minnow, she is my best friend.’

“Minnow? Like the fish?”

‘Yep.’

“Can I hug her?”

‘Of course ori’vod.’

Understanding

Chapter Notes

I'm convinced Minnow is a bloody Jedi at this point! 😞

“Hey Mouse, where’s Kraken?” Nokt asked as he and Clicker arrived in their bunkroom, Mouse looked to them and pointed to the spare bunk, which was Kraken’s for the time being and Nokt spotted the white hair of Kraken, the older clone was asleep, curled up in the corner of the bunk, he hadn’t covered himself with a blanket or anything but Nokt noticed that he was wrapped around Minnow, “Is that Minnow?” He looked to his brother who nodded.

‘He asked to hold her, he sat on his bunk and curled up around her.’ Mouse replied, ‘Then he fell asleep, I was thinking about putting a blanket on him but I don’t want to sneak up on him when he’s asleep.’

“Yeah... he mightn’t... like that.” Clicker said.

“You okay to sleep without Minnow tonight?” Nokt asked and Mouse nodded happily.

‘He needs her more than I do.’ He smiled and bounced, ‘It’s still weird that he doesn’t have emotional scent markers but I’m getting used to it.’

“That’s great to hear.” Nokt smiled.

“Do you... want to bunk with me Nokt...” Clicker asked him, taking hold of his upper arm, “If... if you don’t feel safe... that is.”

“Thanks Clicker... but I’ll be okay.” He replied, he hoped he would be okay, Kraken wasn’t someone who would do anything, he was like Stitches so he probably... hopefully... wouldn’t see him and take advantage.

“Mm. If... you need either of us... just wake us up... yeah?” Clicker smiled to him.

“I will.” He hugged his brother then hugged Mouse, “Okay, time for bed, lights out and no datapads.” Both of them nodded and went to their bunks, Nokt watched them for a brief moment and cast one last look to Kraken before he went to his own bunk, he would be okay, nothing was going to happen and he was safe.

“Easy Nokt, hey it’s okay.” A voice somehow broke through the screaming that was escaping him, “I’m coming closer okay?”

“Don’t touch me!” He sobbed as he wedged himself further under what felt like a sink, he didn’t know where he was but he knew he didn’t want anyone near him!

“I’m not going to touch you Nokt’ika.” He looked to the owner of the voice once he managed to open his eyes, it was Hunter, he looked worried, “Are you okay?” He asked gently, Nokt hiccupped and shook his head, he wasn’t... he really wasn’t, “Tech can you call for Stitches?”

“Affirmative.” Came the reply.

“I... I’m sorry...” He barely managed to get out past his tight chest, his fear.

“Don’t worry Nokt’ika, I was expecting this after Coruscant.” Hunter smiled to him, “You didn’t wake any of your brothers, not even Kraken.”

“How... how did you know then?” Nokt asked.

“We were just arriving back to our bunk room when we saw you making a mad dash for the refresher.” Hunter sat down, “Is it hurting?” Nokt nodded as he tightened his hold on his knees, pulling his legs closer to himself, “Don’t worry, Stitches will be here soon.”

“What happened?” Stitches asked as he arrived, then upon spotting Nokt, he relaxed his posture and moved much more carefully, “Ad’ika?” The medic knelt down close to him, “Can you tell me what happened?” Nokt felt so safe when Stitches called him that, it reminded him so strongly of 99 when their big brother would call him that after his nightmares as a young cadet.

“Nightmare from what I gather.” Hunter answered for him when he couldn’t muster the words.

“Is it hurting again?” Nokt nodded quickly, “Okay. Do you want to come down to medical and I can check you over?”

He nodded again, “Can... can you come too... Hunter?” He looked to the older clone, who looked surprised, “I... don’t want to be... alone...”

“Of course Nokt’ika.” Hunter replied with a gentle smile.

“Come, let’s get you up and sorted.” Stitches said and held out his hand, which Nokt hesitated in taking, once he was standing he realised the two noticed the stain on his pants.

“I... had an accident.” He hugged himself and hid in face in shame.

“Easy Nokt, it’s okay.” Stitches said gently, “I have some spare briefs and blacks down in medical for you.”

“O... okay.” Nokt nodded.

They exited the refresher and walked down the hall towards medical, he heard Hunter talking to his brothers, he wondered if he should tell Mouse and Clicker where he was going... “I’ll alert them should they ask.” Stitches’ voice was soft.

“How... do you always know... what we’re thinking?” Nokt looked to the medic who chuckled.

“I like to think my observation skills are my best skills but enough about that, let’s get you sorted and changed, yeah?” He nodded to Stitches, a small smile finding its way back to his lips.

Nokt sat curled up on the cot in the cubicle, his face buried in his knees, his pain hadn’t been an indicator that something was physically wrong, merely a psychosomatic pain... a pain made by his scared mind, he jumped when the end of the bed dipped, his gaze darting up to see who it was, who had been able to enter without Nokt noticing? He was met with the odd, red eyes of Kraken, “K... Kraken?” He started shaking.

“He tried that with me also.” Kraken explained, “I managed to get away because of how my body works.”

“W... what?” Nokt felt his heart stop.

“When I first went to 1313, grabbed me and pulled me to an alley.” Kraken replied, “Managed to wriggle out of his hold and made a break for it. Think he thought I was an easy target because I wasn’t reacting either physically or emotionally, jokes on him though, even my instructors couldn’t keep a hold on me and they were sober.”

“Why... didn’t you say something... to us... me?” Nokt swallowed thickly.

“Didn’t know you.” Kraken shrugged, “Minnow helped.”

“She’s... good for that.”

“Yeah.”

Food time

Kraken liked the rain, he spent as much time out in it as he could, Stitches and Mouse said he shouldn't because even if he couldn't feel it, he was still at risk of getting sick but he just wanted to be out in it for as long as he could get away with before either of them came to bring him inside, until then he would listen to the rain, the sound of the waves crashing against the supports, feel the water hitting him, he felt so... calm? Was that a thing he could do? It wasn't something he was supposed to be able to do, he shrugged and closed his eyes, he would ask Stitches later... Nokt seemed to be doing better this morning, after what happened last night, Kraken wondered what that was like, having nightmares, he didn't know what dreaming was like. Nokt seemed to relax a little when he explained what the man had tried, that man had tried and succeeded too many times with people, Nokt and himself were lucky, he was luckier than Nokt was though, he'd gotten away before there was contact, Nokt had contact but got away before insertion.

He was hurt.

Kraken understood that, he couldn't feel for Nokt but he could understand, "Hey kid." He blinked and looked to Hunter.

"What?" He was confused by the... nickname? Was that what it was?

"Come on, grubs up." Hunter held out his hand to him.

"Oh." He nodded and took Hunter's hand, letting the older clone hoist him to his feet, "Okay."

"Mouse left a dry pair of blacks in their bunkroom, we normally eat in our bunkroom so you can join us after you changed, sound like a plan?" Hunter asked as they walked back across the platform.

"Yes sir." He nodded,

"Just call me Hunter, no need for formalities." Hunter laughed.

"Yes sir." He replied, Hunter sighed and shook his head but he wore a smile, they walked in silence for a while before Kraken just had to ask, "Why did you call me kid?" He looked to the older clone, who chuckled lightly.

"Well, you are my vod'ika." Hunter replied easily.

"Vod... vod'ika? What's a vod'ika?" He asked, now very confused.

"Vod means sibling in Mando'a, a vod'ika is a younger sibling, while ori'vod is an older sibling." Hunter smiled to him, "The diminutive 'ika means little, you've probably heard us referring to the boys as Nokt'ika, Mouse'ika and Click'ika, the use of the diminutive denotes a term of endearment."

“Oh.” He replied, “What’s ad’ika then?” 99 had referred to him as ad’ika for a long time, he never knew what it meant though.

“It means little one.” Hunter smiled warmly, “I take it 99 called you that?”

“Yeah. I guess until I wasn’t so little anymore.” He shrugged, the surface was so confusing, so many words to learn.

“Seems he had to go through that twice, once with Wrecker and then you.” Hunter chuckled, “Everyone was taller than him but you two are just unfair!”

“Oh. Sorry.” He looked to the door of the bunkroom as they arrived.

“You’re fine kid.” Hunter replied, “Go get changed, we’ll keep you some food.”

“Mm.” He nodded and went to the other bunkroom, he entered and looked around, he hadn’t had a room like this, probably because he was on his own but this room smelled... warm? Was that a thing? It smelled like people lived here, not like his room which was a box he barely went to, it was... nice? He looked to his allocated bunk, which suddenly had a few more blankets, he walked to it and looked at the note left for him, >Mouse thought you got cold last night but didn’t want to spook you by covering you. So we managed to acquire a couple more blankets for you!<

Why had they done that for him?

None of what the two squads were doing for him was making any sense to him, Hunter had said it was because they were brothers... but was it something he just wasn’t... or couldn’t see?

He shrugged and started to strip out of his soaked blacks, he wondered how much pain that man had physically caused Nokt, he had caused a lot of mental and emotional damage... but how much had he done physically? Even he knew that wasn’t a question he should ask Nokt, maybe he should ask Stitches or Hunter? He shrugged and pulled on the dry briefs and blacks, before reattaching his armour pieces and leaving the bunkroom, he hadn’t been in the Batch’s bunkroom, was it different? He knocked on the door, which opened to reveal Wrecker, who had a massive grin plastered to his face, “You made it!” The man laughed and pulled him into the room, “Kraken’s here!”

“We saved... you some food.” Clicker said, he had his hands clamped down over, what Kraken assumed to be, noise cancellers.

“We didn’t know what you liked so Mouse picked up some of everything for you.” Nokt said with a smile.

“Mouse picks up food?” He asked, looking to the smallest member of the two squads, Mouse nodded and bounced with a squeak. Kraken was beginning to understand why Mouse was given his name, there weren’t many rodent species on Coruscant, mostly rats but had seen mice for sale in a market, probably used as food for other exotic pets.

“Through the vents.” Hunter explained, motioning up to the vent cover in the ceiling.

“Vent crawling?” He looked at Mouse again, who nodded, “That why you are so small?” The others chuckled at the unimpressed huff from their smallest brother.

“Sit, Tech has a million questions to ask you and you’ll need all the energy you can get.” Crosshair said, he was frowning but he wasn’t speaking aggressively.

“What?” Tech seemed to realise there was a conversation happening, his nose had been his datapad up until that point.

Did that happen a lot?

Probably.

Yeah.

Show and tell at dinner

Chapter Notes

Anyone who's seen an octopus slink into tiny spaces, think that but human... that's what Kraken's deflation is like.

P.S. I like to write Tech, I get to sound smart!

“Hunter said that you cannot perceive the red-light spectrum.” Tech asked him almost the second he sat down.

“Mm. I have no receptors for that spectrum.” He replied, looking at the food that was suddenly in front of him.

“So you only see in what... blues and greens?” Crosshair asked.

“Mm.” He nodded as he ate.

“So... we're all members of the blue man group to you?” Wrecker asked.

“Isn't... isn't infrared invisible... to most people?” Clicker asked, “It's... heat isn't... it?”

“While we cannot actively see it, it does allow us to see red based colours, red, orange, pink, brown, et cetera, et cetera.” Tech said, “Because of the increase in opsin rods in your eyes, anything in the wavelength range you can perceive would be visible to you, even in black-out conditions? Yes?”

“Mm.” He nodded again, “Humans have one but I have thirty-eight.”

“So... it's like a beefed-up version of my eye sight?” Nokt asked, Kraken hadn't noticed the dimmed light until he saw Nokt's eye-shines.

“Not really.” Was the reply, “The tapetum lucidum is a biological reflector system, it is a layer of tissue in the back of the eye that reflects visible light back through the retina, increasing the light available to the photoreceptors.” He continued the explanation, “Opsins are proteins made light-sensitive by the chromophore retinal found in photoreceptor cells of the retina, this means they mediate the conversion of a photon of light into an electrochemical signal,”

“Can... can we have that in basic?” Hunter asked, which confused Kraken, hadn't the older clone mention he wanted Tech there the last time to explain these things?

“He... means that Nokt’s eyes reflect light to allow him to... see in... low-light conditions... but... Kraken’s convert any light particle no matter... how small... into full colour vision... even in pitch-black areas.” Clicker explained, “Crosshair’s vision is based on distance, so... his ability to focus his vision over large distances... is due to an enhanced depth perception... which is why he is such a good sniper...”

“Do you ever feel really dumb Mouse?” He looked to Wrecker, who was looking at Mouse and the tiny clone nodded.

“You ain’t in that boat alone.” Crosshair sighed, a toothpick appearing between his teeth.

“How do you deflate your body?” Tech changed the subject very quickly, “How does it affect your internal organs and skeletal structure?”

“I can expel a lot of gas from my torso, bones that usually aren’t flexible, are for me.” He replied.

“Like?” Hunter asked.

“Your.... your hips would be flexible?” Clicker asked.

“Mm. They’re like my ribs.” He nodded again.

“Fascinating.” Tech sounded... intrigued?

“I can show you if you want?” He looked to Tech.

“Yes.” The older clone said very quickly, Kraken was unsure of his interest, he had seen him coming out of the narrow water pipe.

“I don’t think I’m going to like this...” Wrecker said and he heard Mouse agreeing.

He looked around and saw a very narrow case, “What’s in that?”

“Just my spare blacks and things, why?” Hunter replied.

“For a demonstration!” Tech said quickly.

“Right...” Kraken followed Hunter over, “You sure about this? It’s quite narrow.” Hunter looked to him as he emptied the storage locker, “Even Mouse would struggle...” Kraken didn’t reply, just waited for Hunter to finish, Tech had arrived very quickly, he sat on the end lip of the locker, he was too long for it but he could still demonstrate, he lay back so he was lying on the top, then exhaled... he exhaled all the air and gas he could and his bones shrank into his chest cavity so he could easily slide into the narrow space.

“That... that’s so cool.” He heard Clicker and looked up at the two older clones beside the locker.

“Agreed Clicker.” Tech was typing quickly, probably documenting this.

“Is that not uncomfortable?” Hunter asked.

“No.” He replied, “I can still breathe and move.”

“Is the process similar for reinflation?” Tech looked to him again.

“Mm.” He nodded.

“Is it painful?” Nokt asked, he wondered if his lack of pain receptors weirded them out like his lack of emotional scent markers did, it weirded a lot of people out... not Stitches though.

“No.” He replied, then manoeuvred his arms so he could grip the sides of the locker to pull himself out, he filled his chest cavity back up as his bones slid back into place.

“Yep... was correct.” Wrecker said, he sounded a little nauseous and Kraken heard a confirmation squeak from Mouse, who didn't sound much better.

“Do you exhale all gases or are they specific ones?” Tech asked, “Seeing as it is both your chest and abdominal cavities, I would expect a myriad of different ones are expelled to allow for such extreme deflation... how soon after can you eat? Does it matter if you haven't used the refresher? You can still intake air, so the lungs must still be functioning, at a decreased rate I would imagine...”

“Tech, breathe.” Hunter sighed and Kraken looked between the two before he stood up again “One thing at a time.”

“Mouse's skeletal structure is semi-collapsible but this is near complete collapsing of the entire structure while still maintaining structural integrity!” Tech said before moving quickly to what Kraken assumed to be his bunk.

“And... that's him entertained for the evening.” Hunter sighed, “Come on, finish your food.”

“Yes sir.” He nodded and moved back to the table.

They sat in silence for a while as they ate, “So... you can regulate the amount of light entering your eyes?” Nokt asked.

“Not really, surface is bright because sunlight.” He replied, “Artificial lights aren't as bad, except the fluorescent lights, they can be too bright.”

“Is that why you have those weird pupils?” Hunter asked.

“Don't know.” He shrugged.

“Mouse thinks... your hair suits you.” Clicker said.

“How do you know what he's saying?” He asked the younger clone.

“Sound vibrations.” Clicker replied.

“Oh. That makes sense.” He replied.

Quit while you're above ground

Chapter Notes

Run Kraken, run!

“Can I ask a question sir.” Kraken approached Hunter, who was talking to Stitches.

“Which one?” Hunter asked with a confused look.

“Either... don't know which of you can help me.” He replied with a shrug, “Sirs.”

The two older clones looked to each other, “Let's talk in my office.” Stitches said and guided them both to an unassuming door but the room inside was... unnaturally neat and tidy, there wasn't a spec of dust or dirt or anything anywhere in the whole office, “Take a seat.” Stitches' voice broke through his train of thought, motioning to the two chairs on one side of the desk while he took a seat in the other on the other side, “Now, what is it you want to ask?”

“How badly was Nokt hurt physically?” He looked between them, the looks on each of their faces was different to the other, Hunter looked upset and a little angry but Stitches remained unnaturally calm.

“Nokt said that that man tried something similar with you.” Stitches leaned back in his chair, clasping his hands on his abdomen, “Nokt didn't know what to think about that bombshell.”

“Wait... what?” Hunter looked a mixture of shocked and angry.

“First time on 1313, he tried but couldn't keep a hold of me, so I got away.” Kraken gave the short version, “Probably thought I was easy pickings, given my lack of emotional... reactions.”

“Yes, from what I hear he was a known one on 1313.” Stitches replied and Kraken nodded, “And that his rap sheet was not a pretty read, nor was it a short read.” Kraken nodded again, “Even more evidence to prove how lucky Nokt was, how lucky you were.”

“Nokt had brothers. I had genetics, even my instructors couldn't keep a hold of me and they were sober.” He nodded again.

“To answer your question, he was hurt badly.” Hunter sighed, “He's only just making steps towards getting back into the swing of things.”

“That makes sense.” He replied, “I take it that is why he ended up in the refresher.”

“Yes. He was hit by memories, which made it hurt all over again.” Stitches explained, “Nokt was incredibly traumatised by that incident, he is making massive steps towards healing, such as letting you bunk with them, eat with them in an enclosed space.”

“Mouse said it was because I don’t have emotional scent markers.” He looked at the medic again, “Nokt probably doesn’t think I’d do anything...”

“Because you have no desire to do so?” Stitches raised an eyebrow and Kraken nodded, “Hm. Similar to me I suppose.”

“What?” Kraken blinked.

“I have scent markers but I have no desire for a sexual relationship.” The medic replied with a shrug.

“Oh.” He replied, “Is that how your relationship with Sawbones is different?”

“Exactly.” Stitches nodded, Hunter looked so confused, “He is speaking of my cyar’ika, no doubt Nokt has told you about that.”

“He did. Not in great detail, given the situation we were in at the time.” Hunter replied.

“Well, both of us are asexuals, so our relationship is purely about comfort and reassurance.” Stitches sighed and massaged his forehead.

“He was the one who helped you when you got hurt?” Kraken asked, he saw Hunter freeze beside him and the medic stopped moving, save for his gaze which fell on Kraken, it was hard and stern and full of other emotions that Kraken didn’t know.

“Get out.” The medic hissed, his voice was tense, like he was trying to hold himself back.

Kraken was confused, “That’s the reason isn’t it?” He tried again.

“Kid, now would be a good idea to quit while you’re above ground.” Hunter said quickly, taking hold of his arm.

“It’s just a question...” He looked between the two of them, “You got hurt and he helped you... why...?” Hunter grabbed him and pulled him to the ground as a tumbler exploded against the wall behind them.

“GET OUT!” Stitches yelled, he was standing now and Kraken didn’t need emotions to realise he’d messed up, Hunter pulled him along as the medic made it around the desk.

“Move it or lose it kid!” The Sergeant said as they made it out the door.

“Sergeant Hunter what the...” Script appeared but they all had to duck when something hard and heavy hit the wall behind them, “What the kark did you say?” The medic looked at the form of Stitches as the older clone appeared in the door frame.

“Foot in mouth, gotta move.” Hunter said quickly, he had to get Kraken out before Stitches resorted to a non-stim sedation because Kraken may be flexible as kark... Stitches could take down normal clones with a punch, so Kraken’s head wouldn’t stand a chance.

“Go.” Script ushered them away quickly, “Stitches, vod, it’s okay! He didn’t mean it.” Another tumbler exploded to the side of Kraken, hopefully Script would remove any other projectiles from Stitches’ reach while they made their escape, “I need help here!”

They made it out of medical in relatively good condition, despite the exploding glass and heavy things being thrown at them, “Kid, word of advice, from personal experience, when you piss the scary medic off, don’t keep poking him.” Hunter grumbled as he leaned against the wall, “That was a very dangerous move you just pulled... be glad his reaction speed is hindered when he’s seeing red.”

“I don’t understand... it was just a question.” Kraken said, it was a simple question.

“That’s like saying it’s just a body to Nokt.” Hunter sighed, “It’s not just a question and it’s not just a body.”

“Oh.” He nodded, he hadn’t thought of it that way, he had hurt Nokt by walking around naked and he had hurt Stitches with a question.

“Yeah. You shouldn’t try to do that again.” The older clone said, “Come on, we don’t want to be here if he gets past Script and the others.”

“Yes sir.”

“Call me Hunter.”

“Yes sir.”

Big brother

“Hunter? What happened?” Nokt asked as the two arrived back, there was what looked like glass glinting off both Hunter’s and Kraken’s armour.

“Kraken, go inside.” Hunter said with a sigh, “Shake down for glass.”

“Yes sir.” Kraken nodded and vanished in the Night Stalker’s bunkroom.

Nokt watched until the door slid shut, then looked back to Hunter, “I thought that you went to speak with Stitches, what did Kraken do?” He asked.

Hunter massaged his forehead, “Pissed off our nexu buir.” He said, “Like... really pissed him off, throwing things pissed off... Stitches got really angry and started throwing stuff at him and by association, me. Script was trying to talk him down, hopefully he managed to get Stitches to either calm down or he managed to sedate him but Stitches was seeing red.”

Nokt felt his stomach drop, “What... what did Kraken do... or say?”

“Asked a question about Stitches’ trigger, Stitches told him to leave but Kraken didn’t see why that question was wrong.” He looked to the door then back to Nokt, “He kept asking his question, even when I told him to stop... Stitches snapped and threw a tumbler at us with force, we somehow got to the door and opened it, we were met with Script, I don’t know what Stitches threw at us but it sounded heavy... then he threw another tumbler while we were making our escape.”

“I need to go see him.” He said quickly.

“Not a good idea Nokt’ika.” Hunter replied, “He wasn’t in the best mental state when we were escaping, we have no idea if Script managed to calm him down or if he’s been knocked out.”

“That doesn’t matter! He shouldn’t be alone!” Nokt didn’t know why he was getting so worked up, “He needs someone to be with him!”

“Nokt... it’s okay.” Hunter said gently, holding up his hands, he wasn’t going to touch him... not when he was like this, “He’s going to be okay... he always is. Remember?”

“But...” He hiccupped.

“He’ll be fine.” The older clone affirmed, “Do you want a hug?” He asked and after a moment Nokt nodded and let the older Sergeant embrace him and hold him against his strong chest.

“I’m worried about him...” He returned the hug eventually.

“I know. I am too... but he’s strong and he’s got Script with him.” Hunter sighed, “We can go visit him in the morning, yeah?”

“Yeah...” Nokt sighed in return, “Okay.”

“Go get some sleep Nokt’ika.” Hunter smiled, “You know where we are if you need us.”

“Mm.” Nokt nodded, he wasn’t happy with what Kraken had done, he had hurt Stitches... but he clearly didn’t know why, he supposed it was similar to him not knowing why him walking around naked hurt Nokt, there was only one person Nokt wanted to see naked and that was...

“Nokt?” He snapped out of his head to Hunter waving his hand in front of his face, “You okay? You’ve gone bright red.”

“O... oh... nothing. It’s nothing just... lost in my own head again.” He replied quickly, “I... should go get some sleep.”

“Okay, you need me, you call me, okay?” Hunter looked concerned.

“I will.” He nodded, “Night Hunter.”

“Night Nokt’ika.” Hunter ruffled Nokt’s now-past-regulation hair, he watched the older clone walk away and smiled to himself, he was getting better, slowly but surely he was getting there.

He entered the bunkroom, Mouse was down for the count, wrapped around Minnow in the middle of his nest, with a soft smile Nokt walked over and covered his brother with a blanket, which Mouse snuggled under with a happy sound. Then he looked to Clicker’s sleep pod and walked over to it, opening it to make sure Clicker was okay, his brother had kicked the blanket off so Nokt placed it over him again, smiling when Clicker wiped his eyes and stilled again, he closed the pod and looked to the last bunk, the one they gave Kraken. He walked over to the bunk, smiling slightly at the lanky clone, he was sleeping much like Mouse was but he was tucked into the corner of the bunk with his back to the wall, Nokt picked up a blanket to cover the older clone with and watched as some of the tension left Kraken’s narrow frame. He wondered if Kraken was unwilling to sleep in the open, given his years living in the depth below the shining planet city, was he cautious about where he slept? Who he was with when he slept? It would make sense, given he probably would have had to find somewhere safe to sleep so he wouldn’t get stabbed in the night... or whatever the underworlders referenced sleep time, given the lack of natural light... but he was safe here. Nokt walked over to the door and switched off the lights completely, then returned to his own bunk and cast his gaze out at the rolling waves, Kraken was a weird person, with no emotional scent markers, or pain receptors, or even a grasp on how a lot of things worked topside... but he was a brother and brothers looked out for each other, through thick and thin, come hell or high water. He touched the transparisteel that separated them from the relentless storms of Kamino, he was so worried about Stitches, this was the first time, that he knew of, that the medic had actively attacked and chased down some with intent to harm... he must have been so angry... but why was he so angry? Was it due to his insomnia? How long had he been awake for? Had he eaten anything in the time he had been awake? With a small sigh he removed his armour and put his goggles on the shelf in his bunk space, then climbed in

under the blanket and stared at the window briefly before rolling onto his side and tried to find sleep.

He hoped Stitches would be okay...

Nexu buir

Stitches groggily came too in a cot, not the one he had in his office but it was a medical one, he knew these things like the back of his hand, he was face down and his uniform was riding up in all the uncomfortable places. With a groan he rolled over so he could sit upright... what happened? He massaged his forehead and tried to remember, he could feel the tingling residue of sedative in his system, someone had sedated him... he would kill them when he found out who... Kraken... Kraken had been in his office with Hunter and the lanky clone had been asking about Nokt then he asked Stitches... he made his way back to his office, "Hello?" The voice on the other end of the comm asked.

"I've messed up cyar'ika." He sighed.

"Oh dear... what happened?" Sawbones asked quickly.

Someone had cleaned up the glass in his office and the hall but there was still a dent in the wall opposite the door to his office, he wasn't even sure what he threw, "I..." He started but stopped to sigh, "I got angry, throwing things angry and I'm afraid I hurt Hunter and Kraken."

"Why were you angry?" Sawbones' voice was soft and comforting.

"Kraken... he asked about why you helped me... about my getting injured." He leaned back in his chair and massaged his forehead as he tried to reign in his thoughts, "I... why can't...?"

"Stitches, cyar'ika, listen to my voice. Can you do that?" Sawbones interrupted him quickly.

"Yes..." He managed, he could hear the distant explosions and...

"Listen to my voice, you are not back there, you are here and you are not screaming, drown out the sounds and focus on my voice." His cyar'ika said firmly, "Listen to my voice, you acted out of self-preservation, you saw his question as a threat and you wanted him to stop, yes?"

"Y... yes." He nodded.

"Did Hunter help you or him?" He tried to remember.

"He... told Kraken to stop but... Kraken was confused about why a question would..." He hugged himself tight.

"Kraken cannot feel emotions, we know this, so he would have little grasp on why an action would hurt someone or why a question would hurt someone." Sawbones spoke nothing but facts, so why was Stitches struggling to accept it? Kraken should have realised when Stitches told him to leave, when Hunter told him to stop... why had it taken Stitches actively attacking them to get the pain he felt through Kraken's thick skull!? "Cyar'ika, breathe with

me, remember your training.” He realised he wasn’t breathing and tried to match Sawbones’ breathing, “In through your nose, out through your mouth.” He finally managed to reign in his breathing, “Good, okay, now what I want you to do is get something to drink, then eat something, you always get more aggressive in these episodes when you haven’t eaten. Have you been sleeping okay?”

“No... not really.” He sighed, “Someone sedated me and I don’t know who...”

“Obviously you were beyond the point of reasoning cyar’ika, you would have hurt someone if they hadn’t.” He replied softly, “So it was sedation or that.”

“I know... I just hate being... being sedated.” He massaged his forehead, he hated being unable to move... to feel trapped in...

“Cyar’ika, you are slipping again, reign in your thoughts.” Sawbones’ voice pierced through his dark thoughts, “Get something to drink, something to eat and if you feel you have to, talk to Hunter or Kraken, or any of them because you can’t bottle these things up when I’m not there.”

“I keep putting things on you... I’m so sorry...” He pinched the bridge of his nose, “But I have no one but... you...”

“You have a lot of people Stitches, you just have to learn to lower that impossibly high wall you built up around yourself, you are a paranoid person and you were before any of this even happened.” He replied, his voice was always so comforting to Stitches, “But walls cannot hold forever and you just have to take it down brick by brick, instead of waiting for it to collapse and causing more harm than good.”

“You make it sound so easy cyar’ika.” He sighed, “You always do.”

“I believe in you, you just have to trust in those who have gravitated to you, like the Night Stalkers and Clone Force 99, they want to help, you just have to let them.” Sawbones affirmed, “Now, I have to go prepare for a mission, go get something to drink that isn’t caf, get some food and try talking to them, can I trust you to do that?”

“Yes.” He replied softly, “Thank you cyar’ika.”

“No problem cyar’ika.” Sawbones said before the channel closed.

He sighed and set about doing what he was told, then he decided that he should go find Hunter and Kraken and apologise for almost causing grievous bodily harm, he approached the corner that turned to the hallway containing their bunk rooms, “Hunter? What does buir mean and why did you call Stitches that?” Stitches paused at the corner... he called him what?

“Buir... it uh... it means parent.” Hunter sounded a little unsure of his reply.

“Oh.” Kraken’s monotone voice replied, “Stitches is an older clone, an older brother, an ori’vod as you explained.”

“Well he’s a little more than that at this point.” He looked around the corner to see Hunter rubbing the back of his neck, “He’s done more for our families in the year we’ve known him than anyone else has in our entire lives... so yeah, we kind of see him as our buir.”

“Oh. Why did you call him a nexu buir?” Kraken looked confused and he wasn’t alone.

He called Stitches what!?

“He protects us like a nexu mother protects her kits.” Hunter explained, “And he’s kind of scary when he does it.”

“That makes sense.”

It did in its hole make sense!

Discipline

“You... you wanted to see us?” Hunter sounded unsure of himself but Kraken had his ever-present blank look.

Stitches frowned, “Sit.” He motioned to the chairs on the other side of his desk, “Sit.” He repeated with a frown when they didn’t comply, he felt his irritation building at their hesitation but he swallowed it back down, “I’m not going to throw things at you but if you don’t sit I might think about it.”

Hunter sat down first and Stitches moved his gaze to Kraken, who seemed to hesitate, clearly his survival instinct wasn’t working at full throttle, “Kraken, sit.” Hunter said carefully, as though he was trying to keep his voice level.

“Yes sir.” Kraken said and finally sat down.

“Is this about what happened yesterday?” Hunter asked.

“How observant Sergeant.” He replied with a frown, “Yes, this is about what happened yesterday.” He held up his hand to shush Kraken when the young man opened his mouth, “I am not entertaining that line of questioning today, nor should you.” He couldn’t afford to go through that again, he might actually kill the young man if he did.

“Yes sir.” Kraken replied, obviously someone told him that if someone says to stop asking something, you stop asking about it.

“What happened yesterday should not have happened at all, had you listened to both myself and Hunter, who I might add, is a superior officer to you.” He leaned back in his chair, trying to stop himself tensing up, “Yet you continued on with your “just a question”, without regard to the detrimental effect it was clearly causing myself. If it was up to me, I would have you scrubbing toilets for the remainder of your time on Kamino.” Hunter looked nervous, scared even, this was a brother to him, one he should be protecting and training... Kraken was still the same but he was clearly taking in what was being said, “But it isn’t, Sawbones has reminded me of your emotional shortcomings, they don’t excuse your actions but they played a hand in the way you acted.”

“What action are you going to take?” Hunter asked after a moment.

“Seeing as I almost killed you and you seem to have realised your mistake, after the fact but you did figure it out, I shall be lenient.” He replied, his hands clasped on his abdomen, “Mouse comes here to help when grounded for any length of time, you will help him in any way he wants you to, you will report to him and he will report to me, if I find your work satisfactory, then and only then will I allow you to go. Understand?”

“Yes sir.” Kraken nodded, which made Stitches frown again.

“Do you?” He asked.

“Yes sir.” Kraken replied, his repetitive responsive were like a broken recording on loop.

“What did I mean?” He raised his eyebrow, “If you understand it, tell me what I meant.”

“But you already know what you meant, why would you need me to tell you?” Kraken asked, obviously confused.

“Maker preserve me and give me karking patience.” He hissed and massaged his forehead, “Report to Mouse and he will allocate your tasks, dismissed.” Kraken stood up and left the room, Hunter hadn’t moved, “More to add Sergeant?”

“How are you feeling, we were really worried about you.” Hunter’s voice softened.

“As much as I despise being sedated, I understand the need to do it.” He sighed, “As Sawbones nicely put it, my brain saw his question as a threat, one my usual weapon wasn’t working against...”

“So you tried to get rid of the threat another way?” Hunter finished for him.

“Essentially. It has been a very long time since I’ve acted that violently against someone.” He massaged his forehead again, “I would have killed him... you would have been collateral damage... luckily Script got someone to blindside me with a sedative.”

“Can I ask why you hate sedatives so much?” Hunter’s voice didn’t carry a threat, he wasn’t asking to hurt...

“Because I have seen what addiction can do to a person, I’ve seen the worst effects, I’ve had troopers purposefully injuring themselves to get more.” He replied, he couldn’t get the image of Cane treating a trooper who’d jumped off the roof of landing pad 3, shattering both his legs... just so he could get a fix of sedatives, “I can regulate how much I give my patients...”

“Your medic brothers would help you.” Hunter smiled, “So would we.”

“Yes, well, I suppose one would help a buir.” He replied and Hunter went several shades paler, opening his mouth to say something but nothing came out and he shut his mouth again, “Though a nexu wouldn’t need that much help I imagine.” He almost smirked at the very embarrassed look on Hunter’s face.

“You... heard that?” He finally found his voice.

“Oh yes.” He replied, “I heard.”

“I... we...” Hunter’s words were failing him again.

“While I cannot change your perception of me and my help for your families, I would ask that you refrain from calling me buir. As a Gen One, I am old but not that old.” He smirked at Hunter’s face.

“We... we can do that.” The younger clone said, “We... had hoped you would help Kraken, the way you help us...”

“I will try to help him understand how things work but there is no guarantee that I will be able to.” He sighed.

“He does take in what you say and chooses to ask you things over asking me or Nokt.” Hunter chuckled, “He just needs time to adjust...”

“As long as he is on Kamino, I will attempt to help, should he approach me with questions, then I will answer as long as there is no detriment to myself.” He nodded.

“Maybe... maybe you’ll talk to us also?” He stared at the Sergeant with a raised eyebrow, “You can rely on us like we do you.”

“Maybe I will.”

Reason behind the punishment

Chapter Notes

So, been doing my research, the closest thing I can find that checks the boxes of Stitches eating problem, is probably something called Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) because people with this disorder experience disturbed eating either due to a lack of interest in eating or distaste for certain smells, tastes, colors, textures, or temperatures.

Kraken understood why the medic was upset and angry, Kraken had done what Hunter called a “Foot in Mouth” incident, he’d pushed the medic too far and Stitches had said he was throwing to kill... Kraken was lucky he came out with just glass shards and a stern talking to. He entered the ward and walked up to Mouse, who looked at him slightly confused, “Stitches said I’m being assigned to help you.” He explained to the smaller clone.

Mouse paused for a moment, ‘Oh right.’ He nodded, ‘As part of your disciplining.’

“Yeah.” He replied, “So, what do you want me to do?”

‘Wash you hands and help me strip and make the cots.’ Mouse motioned to the sink, ‘A lot of clones were discharged, so we have to get the cubicles ready for the next patients.’

“Right.” He replied and went to the sink, he stared at the water running from the tap... he was drawn out of his head by a frustrated squeak from Mouse, “Sorry sir.” He said and washed his hands, then returned to Mouse, “I’ve never made a bed before.”

‘Stitches showed me how to make them to medical centre standards, if you can move then it’s not correct, so I can show you.’ Mouse bounced, ‘After this we need to sort out any stock that came in, the stationed medics don’t get to do it when the supplies arrive.’

“Yes sir.” Kraken replied, he wasn’t very good at domestic stuff, like making beds or organising things but he had to learn sooner or later, maybe Mouse was a good teacher? Making beds wasn’t nearly as complicated as some people made it out to be, it took him a few attempts to make it to medical centre standards but he got there, he wondered if they did this to actual patients... it would be useful for patients who would get physical, if they couldn’t move or whatever.

They finished that task and went to the store room, where crates were stacked and each one was labelled, ‘I’m glad they have pictures of what’s inside also.’ Mouse looked to him.

“Why?” He asked.

‘Well, because I can’t read.’ Mouse replied.

“You can’t read?” Kraken blinked as Mouse nodded, “Oh. That sucks.”

‘Kinda does.’ Mouse sighed, then bounced, ‘Let’s get started.’ It was kind of relaxing, the repetitive nature of opening a crate, figuring out what was in it, cataloguing it and putting it in the correct storage space, Kraken wasn’t sure he like this kind of thing but it wasn’t the worst thing.

“I hurt Stitches.” He finally decided to say something, “I’m unsure of why my question hurt him that much...”

‘He hates talking about his past, his scent becomes so sad and angry when he thinks about it.’ Mouse looked to him, ‘None of us know the true extent of how much he was hurt or how he was hurt, all we know is that he said to Nokt that his batch died.’

“Oh.” Kraken blinked, “That would explain it.” He looked at the box in his hands, he needed to be much more aware of things up here, because, between hurting Nokt accidentally and almost getting killed by a man he unknowingly hurt very badly, he was beginning to realise he didn’t know much about anything, “Has he gotten that angry before?”

Mouse shook his head, ‘Not that we’ve seen. He usually keeps a levelish head when facing down anyone trying to hurt him.’ He explained, ‘But he has insomnia and an eating disorder, so he can get really aggressive, especially if he’s suffering an episode, if he hasn’t been sleeping or eating correctly.’

“Oh. Is that kind of thing common in regular clones?” He asked as he put the box he was holding into its allotted section.

‘I don’t think so.’ Mouse replied, ‘He said his batch was decanted perfectly normal.’

“Huh... weird.” He picked up another box, “He’s like a defective clone, without actually being one.”

Mouse looked at him confused, then down at the box in his hands, he put the box in its space and looked back to Kraken, ‘Never thought about it like that.’ He said, ‘Probably why he wants to help us.’

“Hunter says you call him a buir? And that that means parent?” Kraken noticed the small smile on Mouse’s face.

‘We haven’t had a good run of things, he’s the first normal clone that us Night Stalkers have met, that actually wants to help us. Not sure about Hunter and the others but yeah.’ He bounced, ‘He more than an ori’vod to us, he’s a buir.’

“That makes sense.” He nodded, “Would... would he help me?”

‘I am one hundred percent certain.’ Mouse squeaked happily as he bounced, ‘It might take a while for you both to warm up to each other but he will help you anyway he can.’ Kraken nodded again, he wondered what emotion he would be feeling at this moment had he been able to produce the scent markers... happiness? Love?

He had a lot of questions to ask about things... he wondered if this was the actual goal of this disciplinary punishment, why make him work with Mouse when he could have shackled him with anyone else, if it wasn't for him to talk with Mouse and learn this stuff? The medic had a weird idea of things, he went from actively trying to kill Kraken, to sending him to Mouse to learn he had brothers... people who wanted to help him, "Why do you want to help me?" He asked.

'You may be weird and kinda freaky to me but you are our brother. Us defectives need to stick together, we discovered on Umbara that when the going gets tough, we can't rely on the normies.' He looked to the floor, 'Some are nice but us Night Stalkers found that you can't trust someone until you've seen them at their worst.'

"That makes sense."

It did this time.

Debriefing

Kraken walked to Stitches' office once Mouse's shift ended and he had talked to the medic, he wondered if he'd done enough to warrant Stitches' approval, or would he have to do it all again tomorrow? His talk with Mouse had been informative, he had brothers... that was a strange concept to Kraken, he'd been decanted alone and spent his life not needing other people but now there were other defectives who wanted to be there for him... it was weird. He knocked on the door to the medic's office, looking at the impressive dent in the wall opposite the door, he didn't know what was thrown but he knew that if it had hit him, he wouldn't be walking away from the confrontation... at all... were all normal clones that strong? He thought only Wrecker was designed for brute strength but he hadn't really gotten into confrontations with normal clones before and never with one in a melee fight... so maybe they were and Wrecker was just beefed up from that? He returned his gaze to the door when it opened to reveal the medic, "Ah, Kraken, come in." Stitches said, it confused Kraken that the Night Stalkers and the Bad Batch held this medic in such high regards that they called him buir... when he could dish out such violence, maybe it was against people he didn't know? "Mouse has given me his report of your performance today." Stitches explained as he sat down, motioning to the chairs on the other side of his desk, "Sit." He knew better now than to disobey the older clone, that was a good way to get on his bad side, "How do you think you did?"

"I think I did okay." He said as he sat down, "But it seems that I can't trust some of the things my brain says."

"Hm." Stitches replied with a frown as he leaned back in his chair, "An interesting observation, what makes you say that?"

Kraken blinked, "Because you..." He had never been more stuck for words in his life than he did when talking to Stitches.

"Because I what?" Stitches raised an eyebrow, Kraken was so confused now, talking to Stitches was incredibly confusing sometimes, "You don't have to take what I say at face value Kraken." He continued, "Contrary to what many people seem to think, I don't know everything about everything, I am not a droid and can be subject to a lack of knowledge." He met Kraken's gaze, he was the first person to actually hold Kraken's gaze for longer than a second, most people were freaked out by his eyes, even his instructors couldn't hold it, Hunter couldn't and Nokt didn't seem to be able to hold anyone's gaze, "So, in your opinion, not what you think my opinion is, how did you do today?"

"I think I did okay. I learned a lot from Mouse, more than just how to make beds and sort stock." He replied, "I think you had an ulterior motive for sending me to work with Mouse."

"Oh? And what ulterior motive would that be?" Stitches' eyebrow was practically in his hairline.

“You could have sent me to do my disciplinary punishment with anyone else but you chose to send me to Mouse, I think you wanted me to talk with Mouse, to figure out how this whole family thing works.” Kraken explained, he wondered what emotions he would be feeling had he been able to.

“And?” Stitches prompted.

“It makes sense sir.” He nodded, “Actually makes sense.”

“Good to hear.” Stitches replied, “Seems you learn better on the job than sitting here and listening to someone talk your ear off.”

“They called you buir.” He said, he didn’t know if the medic knew this or if this was a big shock to him, “Why? Mouse said it is because of the help you have given them.”

“It appears that I have been upgraded from ori’vod to buir without my knowledge.” Stitches shrugged, “Though I am unhappy with the title change, as a Gen One I am older but not that old, it seems I cannot change their opinion of me.”

“What did you do to make them refer to you as buir?” Kraken asked, it must have been something bigger than just a normal clone treating a defective clone nicely, something more intimate than that.

“As Hunter tells me, I’ve done more for them in the year I’ve known them, than any normal clone or person has ever done for them in their whole lives.” He shrugged.

“You helped Nokt, didn’t you? After Coruscant?” He asked, that would explain why the three were so attached to the medic.

“Yes. I was also the one to help them after the disaster that was Umbara.” Stitches sighed, massaging his forehead.

“Oh.” Kraken blinked, “Haven’t heard about Umbara.”

“It was a karking druk show from start to finish.” Stitches replied, “There was a traitorous Jedi General there that made the troopers of the 501st and the 212th attack each other, many brothers were lost because of his lie. Unfortunately for the Night Stalkers they were caught in the middle, the traitor made both squads think they were spies and traitors because they didn’t look like clones, though I can confidently say it was because they had cottoned on to his lie, his fib.”

“Had they?” Kraken asked, Mouse was a walking lie detector and Clicker could hear everything.

“They had.” He replied, massaging his forehead, “Didn’t do them much good.”

Kraken was silent for a moment, “You really care about them.”

“I do. I care for the Batch also.” Stitches sighed, “I suppose that’s why I was upgraded.”

“And you help them?” He continued.

“I do.” The medic nodded, “And should you need help, while you are here on Kamino, I extend my help to you also.”

“You... do?” Kraken blinked.

“Yes Kraken, you might be a strange clone but no less deserving of family.”

“Oh.”

That sucks

“Hey kid, you okay?” Hunter asked him as he approached the bunk rooms, “Mouse just got back, expected you to be with him to be honest.”

“Stitches wanted to talk to me.” He replied with a shrug.

“Did he sign the adoption forms already?” Hunter chuckled, “Or is Sawbones still sending them over?”

“What?” Kraken blinked in confusion, “What adoption forms?” What even were adoption forms?

Hunter smiled to him and put his hand on Kraken’s shoulder, “Welcome to the nexu family.” He grinned, which made Kraken even more confused, was this to do with them calling Stitches buir? He knew they called him a ‘nexu buir’... “He said he’d help you, so now you have been adopted.”

“Can... is that allowed?” He asked, they were all clones, sure Stitches was older... but then again, he had thought any relationship other than “brother” wasn’t allowed between clones.

“Anything’s possible up here.” Hunter laughed, “Come on, grubs up.”

He followed Hunter into the bunkroom, still incredibly confused, “Kraken? We expected you back a while ago.” Nokt said as he looked to him and he had to admit that those eye shines were pretty cool looking, he imagined that that's what stars looked like... he only realised he was staring when Nokt’s cheeks changed colour, he figured it was a blush seeing as Nokt got embarrassed really easily apparently.

“Park yourself Kraken!” Wrecker grinned and patted the bench beside him, it would forever be odd to Kraken that there is another clone that matched him in height, he had nowhere near the small body mass as Wrecker, he was more in line with Crosshair and the three Night Stalkers in that regard, he shrugged and sat down beside Wrecker, then stared at a container of food as it was placed in front of him.

“Mouse got you... a little of everything.” Clicker said, the younger clone had an odd way of talking...

“Why do you have to stop talking every few words?” He looked at him.

“He has to give his body brief moments of silence between outputs of noise vibrations.” Tech explained, “Seeing as excessive noise vibrations can have a detrimental affect on his skeletal infrastructure.”

“In summary, he means that taking can hurt Clicker if he’s not careful.” Nokt sighed.

“Oh.” He looked to Clicker, “That sucks.”

“Yeah...” Clicker nodded.

“Mouse said that’s why you have that weird sleep pod thing.” He looked at the food, he had forgotten the standard rationing for the military, at least he didn’t have to fish this one out of the dumpster.

“Mm.” Clicker nodded again, “It... nulls the vibrations that I... make and the environment makes.”

“Growing up here must have sucked, with all the thunder storms and the like.” He shrugged as he ate.

“Yeah...” Was the soft reply.

“Clicker, Nokt and myself were the worst affected by the storms.” Hunter sighed.

“You can sense the electromagnetic fields can’t you?” He looked to Hunter.

“Yep, guaranteed way to be down for a day with headaches, nausea, migraines.” The older clone shrugged.

“Migraines?” He asked, he’d never heard of those before.

“A migraine is a headache that can cause severe throbbing pain or a pulsing sensation, usually on one side of the head.” Tech explained, “It is often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Migraine attacks can last for hours to days, depending on the person, and the pain can be so severe that it interferes with daily life.”

“Oh.” He looked to Hunter again, “That sucks.”

“Yep.” Hunter sighed, “Nokt gets them too.”

“Only if I get caught by a bright light without my goggles on.” Nokt explained, “So if a storm hits in the night, then I can be caught off guard by the lightning strikes, Clicker is safer if they hit during the night because he’s in his sleep pod.”

“Cross can get blindsided sometimes too!” Wrecker said, that made sense... given Crosshair’s enhancement was also his eyesight.

“What... about you?” Clicker asked.

“Me?” He blinked.

“How do you react to it? Given your enhanced colour reception, I would imagine it can get very bright for you?” Tech looked at him.

“Don’t really remember.” He shrugged, “Haven’t seen one in a while.”

“Let’s hope we don’t get a demonstration of your reaction in the meantime.” Hunter sighed, “Don’t want to be here any longer than is needed.”

“What’s going to happen to you once you get back to Coruscant?” Nokt asked after a long silence, “You can’t go back to the lower levels... well you could, but it wouldn’t be safe for you at all.”

“Dunno.” He shrugged again, “Commander Fox said he’d have a look, see if there is anywhere my skill set could be put to use.”

“If he can’t, then you’re welcome to join us.” Hunter replied easily, causing Kraken to blink and look at him.

“What?” He asked after a moment.

“Yeah! If they can’t get you work, then your skillset would make you an excellent addition to us Night Stalkers!” Nokt said happily.

“Really?” He blinked.

“We... we specialise in dark environments... we’re infiltration scouts...” Clicker explained, “So... your enhancements would be a lot of... use in our line of... work.” The younger clone looked to Mouse who nodded happily and bounced, “Mouse agrees.”

“How do you know what he says?” He asked.

“He is able to translate the vibrations of Mouse’s squeaks, even the ones we can’t hear.” Nokt replied.

“How did the other cadets take away your voice?” Kraken looked to the tiny clone, who looked down at his hands briefly before wrapping them around his neck, “They strangled you?”

“They hung him by his neck.” Nokt sounded angry but also sad, “From the top bunk of the normies’ bunkbeds.”

“Oh.” He blinked, “Did they get punished for it?”

“I don’t know, we didn’t see that specific group of cadets after that.” Nokt sighed, “So anything could have happened to them.”

That sucked... like actually sucked.

People sucked.

A talk in darkness

Chapter Notes

A lot of animals with tapetum lucidum are actually some form of colour blind.

Kraken felt someone put a blanket over him, then they walked off and he opened his eyes to see the retreating form of Nokt, the Sergeant was now staring out at the ocean and his eye shines glinted in the reflection, seemingly lost in his head and Kraken wondered what was going through his head... he slowly got up and walked over to the younger clone. Mouse and Clicker were both asleep and from what Kraken understood it was quite difficult to wake them up, "You okay?" He asked Nokt, who jumped a little.

"Kraken? I... I didn't mean to wake you up." Nokt's face changed shade, probably blushing.

"It's okay." He replied with a shrug, "You okay?" He repeated the question.

"Have a lot on my plate is all." Nokt replied, even Kraken could tell he was deflecting, so he just stared at him, "Could... could you stop staring please." Nokt sounded so small, "I don't like... it." Kraken nodded and looked away, looking out at the rolling waves and torrents of rain because if there was one thing he learned from Stitches, is to stop poking when told to do so, he doubted Nokt would get physical but given how the medic was very fond of the three... "A lot has happened in such a short amount of time." Nokt said finally, "Only last year we met the Batch, then we met Stitches... and now we've met you."

"Is meeting me bad?" He asked.

"No." Nokt said quickly as those eye shines looked at him, "It's just... 99 told us about the Batch and hoped we could meet with them but he never mentioned you."

"I'm a spy, an infiltrator, I doubt I'd be much good if everyone knew who I was." He replied with a shrug,

"So... he was protecting you?" Nokt asked softly.

"Mm." He nodded, "99 said there were others like me but Clone Force 99 had already graduated and you three were still too small."

"I wonder what things might have been like if we were all decanted together... would our lives be different?" The younger clone sighed.

"Dunno." He shrugged again.

“So... how does your vision work?” Nokt looked to him again, “Like, in this room can you see everything?”

Kraken looked back into the darkened room and nodded, “What about you?”

“Yeah.” Nokt replied and his face changed shade again, “Crosshair’s vision is limited to day time conditions I think, without his helmet anyways, so it’s really cool that I get to meet someone else who can see in the lighting conditions that I can... though I have a slightly decreased ability to see colour... don’t tell anyone else okay?”

“You can’t see colours?” Kraken blinked.

“I can!” Nokt replied quickly, “Just... slightly less than normal people.”

“Oh.” He nodded, “That sucks.”

“Yeah...” Nokt looked away shyly, “I’m not completely colorblind, I’m just designed for low-light conditions and because I can’t dilate my pupils... it limits my ability to see colours in daylight.”

“That makes sense.” Kraken nodded, “Your eye shines are two different colours.” That he could see anyway, it was hard to tell but there was a slight difference in the colour.

“I have heterochromia.” Nokt smiled, “I used to be very self-conscious about it but...”

“But?” Kraken asked, suddenly confused.

“Hunter thinks they’re cool.” Nokt’s shade changed again and went a lot darker.

“I think they’re cool also.” Kraken replied easily, they were cool he’d only seen eye shines on the rodents and tooka in the underworld, it was cool to see them on a person.

“Your eyes are pretty cool too.” Nokt replied, “I’ve never met someone with albinism before to be honest...”

“You like Hunter don’t you?” He asked.

“Is it that obvious?” Nokt fidgeted with his fingers, “What am I asking, of course it is if you can pick up on it...”

“Is liking him bad?” Kraken blinked, “Stitches and Sawbones are allowed to have a relationship... so is it wrong for you and Hunter to have one?”

“Unlike Stitches I... I am... I am gay and want to have a... physical relationship.” Nokt replied shyly, embarrassed by the admission, “And whatever about Stitches’ and Sawbones’ relationship... I don’t think physical relationships between clones are that well... received... or accepted...”

“Oh.” He replied, “That sucks.”

“Yeah... but Hunter doesn't see me in that way to begin with...” The younger clone sighed, “And... I don't think I could...”

“So soon after Coruscant?” Kraken was starting to pick up on some of the young Sergeant's thought patterns, “That makes sense.”

“Stitches says it will heal with time... but we're clones... I don't think we have that much time...” Nokt moved to sit on his bunk, “I don't even know how much of this war there is...”

Kraken stared at him, “Dunno.” He shrugged, “Could be years, could be months, could be weeks for all we know.”

“Yeah...” Nokt sighed.

“Did you mean what you said?” Kraken asked after a moment's silence, “About letting me join you if the Corries don't find me work?”

“Of course.” He smiled to Kraken, “It's like you were made for our team.”

“Or you were made for mine.” Kraken shrugged.

“Probably.” The younger clone chuckled lightly, then looked to Mouse's bunk, then Clicker's sleep pod, “I don't know what I would do without my brothers... I would be lost and I don't know...”

“I think if I had scent markers... I'd probably feel alone? Probably?” He blinked and looked to Nokt again, “I think that's what people feel when they have no one.”

“Yeah... it is.” Nokt stood again and walked to him, tentatively placing a hand on Kraken's upper arm, “You're not alone anymore ori'vod, even if you go back to Coruscant, then we're just a comm away.” It was weird, being called kid by Hunter and ori'vod by the Night Stalkers, he wasn't used to family let alone pet names.

“Mm.” He nodded, this was nice.

He liked this.

A lot.

Choices

“As of right now, there is no where planet side we can send you to permanently without putting your life in danger.” Fox’s voice said over the channel, “What you could do, is stay in the base and work jobs as they come up, with your skill set and the nature of our work here, you would be a valuable asset to our roster.”

“What kind of jobs?” Kraken asked him.

“You are designed as in infiltration scout, yes?” Fox replied.

“Yes.” He replied.

“You would be working in a similar vein as your old work but on the surface, dealing with political players and possible surface conspiracies. We of the Coruscant Guard are very noticeable, so our way of investigation would be... difficult to say the least... you, however, would have an easier time of it I imagine.” Fox sighed, “With the war escalating we cannot chance a coup happening under our noses, the Underworld has been quiet since you were found out, probably they think there are more spies down there.”

“Oh. That makes sense.” Kraken wondered how they were going to implement his ‘unique’ talents, “I would need a way to move around, if I’m doing that kind of work... I would need somewhere to hide...”

“That can be discussed if you take the offer.” Fox interjected, probably didn’t want to talk about that kind of thing over an active channel, “I will give you a day to come to a decision, speak with the members of Clone Force 99 and the Night Stalkers, I’m sure they’ve already put in offers to have you join them.”

“They have.” He confirmed, “I will think about it.”

“That is all I can ask at this point.” Fox sounded tired, slightly irritated, like his work was slowly starting to weigh him down, “Over and out.” The channel closed, leaving Kraken in the darkness of the Night Stalker’s bunkroom, he looked at the bunks... he had brothers with the two groups but he was designed for one thing and... working with them wouldn’t allow him to fully utilise his talents but he wanted to stay with them, he felt something, it was warm in his chest... he felt like he belonged with these other enhanced clones.

He stood up and walked to Medical, he would have to ask Stitches for help, he wasn’t good at this kind of thing... “Kraken?” Stitches asked as he opened his office door, “Is something wrong?”

“I need to ask for help.” He said.

“Take a seat.” The medic replied and locked the door before walking to sit in his chair, “Start from the top.”

“I got a call from Fox.” He explained, “He said there is nowhere they can send me permanently without a risk to my safety... but he offered that I stay in the base and work any job as they come up.”

“Sounds like a reasonable offer.” Stitches leaned back in his chair, “So what is the issue?”

“I... don’t want to...” He didn’t know why he was struggling with this, there was no reason to.

“You don’t want to leave your brothers?” Stitches asked gently and Kraken shook his head, “While you do not have emotional scent markers, that primitive part of your brain wants a pack, a family unit and because we clones are social creatures, we will instinctively seek out a pack.”

“So... why don’t you?” He asked before he could stop his mouth but Stitches didn’t get angry this time, he just looked incredibly sad and tired.

“That is not a story for now, we are here to talk about you.” He replied with a sigh, “You don’t feel kinship with the Coruscant Guard, probably because they’re normal clones.” Kraken opened his mouth to object but Stitches shushed him, “You aren’t doing it on purpose, it’s again down to your instinct to find a pack, you don’t see yourself as part of their family units, they’re too different but you see a kinship with the other defectives. Your lives are built around similar experiences and because you were decanted alone, as a defective, you are going to seek out others like you.”

“Oh.” He blinked, “That makes sense.”

“We are animals Kraken, just one with sentience and a higher brain function.” Stitches explained, “And humans are pack animals, we have an instinctive drive to be around others.”

“Even if I can’t feel it?” Kraken asked.

“You may not possess the ability to produce the complex cocktail of chemicals that make up human emotions but they aren’t essential for safety, for a family.” Stitches replied, “That is down to our most primal of instincts, alongside eating and reproduction.”

“Oh.” He nodded, “Is that what this warm sensation in my chest is, when I think about them?”

“Essentially yes. You just got a rush of dopamine, serotonin, endorphins and oxytocin, all the nice happy hormones, that makes you want to stay with them.” Stitches clasped his hands loosely on his abdomen, “So while your brain lacks the proper receptors to translate them, your body is still producing something, not to the extent that Mouse can smell them but they are in there.”

“Bodies are really weird.” He replied and looked down at his hands.

“Indeed they are.” Stitches huffed a laugh, “So to answer your unasked question, it’s not my place to tell you what you should do when it comes to this, I’m not your CO but as a medical

professional I can advise you to choose not what you think you should want but what you actually want.”

Kraken looked at the medic, confused by that statement, “How... is there a difference?”

“To quote the old saying, “Follow your heart”, essentially choose what makes you feel safe and loved, don’t choose based on what you think the war effort needs because that isn’t the healthy road.” The medic sighed.

“Maybe you’ll find that someday.” He said softly.

“Perhaps I will.”

“Thank you Stitches.”

“Think nothing of it Kraken.”

One of us

Chapter Notes

Short one today because my get up and go... got up and left without me.

“Kraken?” Hunter sounded confused as both he and Nokt looked to him, “Is something wrong?”

“I had a call from Commander Fox.” He replied.

“Did he find you work on Coruscant?” Nokt asked.

“They can’t find me a permanent placement, not without risking my safety.” He looked between them, “However, he can offer accommodating me in the base and sending me out as jobs come up, same job but surface side.”

“Sounds like a good offer.” Hunter nodded, “So... what’s the issue?”

“I want to do the job I was made for...” He wasn’t sure why it was becoming more difficult to talk about it, maybe it was because he was talking to other defectives, defectives he wanted to stay with.

“But?” Nokt prompted him.

“I’m not sure I want to leave you guys.” He found his words after a moment’s silence, “I talked to Stitches about this but it’s really difficult talking to you about it... he said that because clones are social creatures and that even though I can’t feel the emotions associated with the need...”

“You want a family?” Nokt smiled to him.

“Essentially.” He nodded, “That’s what Stitches said. He said that we instinctively gravitate to people and that I don’t see a place for me with the Coruscant Guard, not since I met with you guys.”

“Because we’re defectives?” Hunter asked with a soft smile.

“Mm. I think that if I hadn’t met you, I probably would have taken Commander Fox’s offer with no hesitation.” He replied.

“You don’t see yourself as a member of the Coruscant Guard because they’re normies?” Nokt asked and Kraken nodded, “But you would like to return to Coruscant because it’s where you feel useful?” He nodded again.

“Either choice would rob me of the other one.” He explained, “And I am not sure which would be better me...”

“When did Fox say he’d get back in contact?” Hunter asked.

“Twenty-four hours.” He replied, “He seems very worn out.”

“This war has been taxing on everyone but the corries have to deal with the political karkery of the seat of the Republic.” Hunter sighed.

“But it’s up to you what you want, we can’t tell you which to choose, it wouldn’t be right.” Nokt smiled warmly.

“Stitches said that too.” Kraken looked at his hands, “I’m not sure I’m able to make that decision by myself, given my emotional short comings. What if I make the wrong choice and everything is incorrect?”

“There’s not right or wrong answer ori’vod, there is only what you want, what you think is the right thing for you.” Nokt gave his shoulder a squeeze, “If you think it’s with us, we will be by your side, if you think it’s with the corries, then we will always be there to help you if you call.”

“You’re one of us kid.” Hunter gave his other shoulder a squeeze, “Regardless of it you’re with us or not.”

“Mm. Thank makes sense... thank you.”

“No problem kid.”

Personal decisions

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter, but this is because I want to round the number out

Kraken touched the frame holding 99's picture, this was what their older brother was reduced to? Ash? Sitting in the main area of medical? "He can continue helping brothers here." Stitches said from behind him, "Here he can listen to those who need him."

"Why are you carrying his teachings?" He looked to the Medic, "The others I understand, we were raised by 99... but you're older than he was."

"That is true, I'll give you that but why would my being older hinder his ability to teach me something?" Stitches asked with a raised eyebrow, he had his arms crossed but his form was open.

"It wasn't just Sawbones... was it?" He asked, watching as the medic's whole stance changed.

"No. It wasn't." Stitches replied in a tense voice, "But that isn't a conversation I wish to have."

"But... wouldn't talking about it help?" Kraken's mouth was working of its own free will.

"Don't." Stitches hissed, "Just... don't, I can't afford to do this now."

"But..." He didn't know why he was continuing when he knew it would end badly, he just wanted to try understand the medic, wanted to understand his motives for helping all the defectives.

"Boy, if you do not stop... right now... then I will kill you." The medic all but growled.

"Right. Sorry." Kraken finally stopped, he knew the medic would make good on his threat, "I just don't understand these things, I don't understand either Nokt's trauma or yours, I don't understand anything that I need to survive up here." He looked to 99 again, "I would always ask 99 these things but they never made sense to me and I just kept messing up... he was the only person I had and I just don't know what to do now that there are more people who want to help me."

"It will take time to adjust Kraken." Stitches sighed.

"Yeah..." Kraken replied.

"Have you come to a decision?" The medic asked.

“I don’t know.” He looked to Stitches, “No one gives me a solid answer as to which would be better, it isn’t an order, it’s a personal decision and I can’t make those by myself.” He didn’t know how to do that, everything he did in the Underworld was down to doing his job as ordered, he had survival as a thing on the list but he did his job as asked.

He looked to Stitches when the medic’s hand appeared on his shoulder, “Your lack of emotional scent markers won’t hinder your ability to make personal decisions but if you have never been allowed to make one before... have you been allowed?”

“Allowed?” Kraken blinked, “Like...?”

“When was the last time you made a decision on something you wanted?” Stitches raised his eyebrow.

“I bought my fish.” He replied after a moment, “On Coruscant.”

“That was a personal decision Kraken, you just have to stop thinking about it so hard.” Stitches squeezed his shoulder.

“Oh.” He nodded, “That makes sense.”

Bakery

Chapter Notes

Food makes all the happy chemicals!

Kraken primed his recording device and slid into the crevice between the flow pipes connecting the sinks, behind the wall inside one of the Senate building's refreshers, he had learned pretty quickly that people were more likely to talk in refreshers, solely because security cameras system weren't allowed due to privacy issues, "In place." He said into his comm.

"Senators Roma and Hastu are approaching and entering." Fox's voice came through the other side, "Radio silence."

"Affirmative." He replied and manoeuvred the device closer to the wall, the walls between the two refreshers were surprisingly thin, the flow pipes and other systems probably muffled the sounds between the two, luckily for Kraken it was too small for normal people, so he was alone.

"We cannot allow this to continue, regardless of who wins, we lose everything." A male voice said, sounded deep, didn't sound human.

"You may lose everything Senator Roma, with your lack of dealings." The other replied, also didn't sound human, if the first guy was Roma, then this guy must be Hastu, "We have made plans that secure our future, regardless of which side wins."

"You're... playing both sides?" Roma asked, as though shocked by the revelation.

"No, we're covering our back for every outcome." Hastu replied, "Including if neither side wins."

Must be making deals with other organisations...

"Senator Hastu, you can't be serious!" Roma was definitely shocked, maybe they had been in dealings with each other? Maybe that's why they were talking in a refresher during a break in the senate deliberations? He didn't know, "After all the money we put towards you and your company! If you go down... then... then you'll be taking me with you!" Roma wasn't trying to keep his voice down at this point, much to the apparent distain of Hastu.

"Keep your voice down or you'll do it yourself." The man hissed, at least one of them had a survival instinct, he wondered how these two kept quiet for this long, given Roma's expressiveness, "We have our exit plans should the Republic fall through, spoke to someone who can keep our planet safe should that happen."

Come on.

Say who this person is.

“Someone?” Roma asked, clearly he wanted to know also, Hastu didn’t reply, almost like he was checking everywhere for bugs, good luck finding Kraken.

“Count Dooku himself has visited us.” The man whispered, “Has given us a mighty bargain and he...”

The alarm for the restart of the debates sounded, “Curses.” Roma hissed and they both left the refresher.

“Commander Fox, I have the recording and am now returning.” He said into his comm as he manoeuvred himself out of the wall cavity, he wondered how many people failed to realise that these places had cavities?

Too many apparently.

He walked back to the base, helmet on his hip despite the brightness of Coruscant’s surface, he walked everywhere because he couldn’t drive, not that he minded though, it was nice on Coruscant... not the nice rain and storms of Kamino but he couldn’t have everything in one place, he stopped walking when a smell hit him, it smelled warm and like food but better than any food he’d ever encountered. He looked to the source of the smell and saw a building marked “Bakery”, what was a bakery? He walked over to it and looked in the window, seeing food items that looked like they were polystarch bread but these smelled a whole lot better than any polystarch he’d ever encountered, he checked his credit pouch, he had some of his wages on him... maybe he could try something? That wasn’t part of the mission though, he was supposed to go to the Senate building, do the thing, then go straight back to the base... but he wanted to try... was this the personal decisions that Stitches said he was allowed to make? He knew he’d gotten the fish before but he wasn’t on a time crunch then... “You just have to stop thinking about it so hard.” Stitches’ voice told him, this was a personal decision and he was going to make it.

He walked inside and looked at everything, “Hello there, can I help you?” A young woman asked from behind the counter, a smile on her features.

“This might sound weird but I don’t know what I’m doing, I’ve never been in one of these and I am a bit confused.” He replied.

“Oh.” She replied with a slightly confused look, then her smile came back, “Well, is there anything you thing you’d like to try? I can recommend some of our more popular items if you’d like?”

“I don’t have a lot of credits.” He replied.

“Oh that’s okay, we have samples that everyone can try!” She replied happily, “Would you like to sample some of our items?”

“Sure.” He blinked, he wasn’t sure he’d ever seen a nautolan before, he’d heard that there was a nautolan Jedi called Kit Fisto but he’d never met the man, so he wasn’t really sure of them as a species.

“Here we are.” She reappeared with a tray of small food items, bread and what he believed to be pastry? Is that what they were called? He tried a few while she explained what each of them were, he didn’t know what half of the things were but she was really enthusiastic about giving him the information, maybe she didn’t get to do it often? She seemed really nice, even to a stranger who looked like Kraken did, it was a little weird... talking to a civilian who wasn’t trying to murder him or flee from him... but it was that kind of weird that didn’t make Kraken think the woman was a threat. He tried a lot of them but found one he liked, it was a sweet bread thing with a fruit filling, “Maybe you’ll pop round again?” She asked as she bagged his items.

“Maybe.”

“I look forward to it...?”

“Kraken.”

“Lulu.”

Visiting

“Kraken?” Fox asked when he arrived, “What is that?”

Kraken looked at the small box in his hand that held his small pastries, “The lady in the bakery they’re sweet bread with muja fruit filling, want one?” He offered the box to the Commander, he’d only had enough for two but Lulu had somehow snuck two extra ones in, he’d had one on the way back to the base, so he had three to offer the older clone, who’s eyebrow practically vanished into this hairline, “They’re good.”

“Hm.” Fox frowned as he reached over and took one, did a lot of the gen one clones make that noise when they frowned? He hadn’t encountered it in the younger ones... Stitches did it a lot and he was seeing it in Fox also, so maybe it was a gen one thing, he’d ask Stitches the next time he saw him, “Clone Force 99 and the Night Stalkers will be arriving in the next hour.”

“Why?” He blinked.

“To see you I expect.” Fox shrugged before trying the pastry, he didn’t say anything but he did look like he liked it.

“To see me?” He asked and the Commander nodded, he didn’t think they’d actually do that, they’d said they would but with the war effort it had been a while since he’d seen them and he hadn’t put any weight on it, in case it didn’t happen... but they were actually coming to visit him, “Here’s the recording of the encounter.” He took the small device from a belt pouch and handed it over to Fox who had just finished his pastry, “Senator Hastu said he’s done dealings with Count Dooku... whoever that is.”

“Count Dooku? Are you sure?” Fox seemed more alert now as he took the device.

“Mm.” He nodded in reply, “I think he’s done deals with a lot of different groups, probably did some with the Hutts, given their power.”

“I see...” Fox frowned again, “You did well trooper, this will be invaluable.”

“Thank you sir.” Kraken nodded.

“You are dismissed.” Fox said and Kraken saluted and headed for the door, “Tell the lady her goods are top line.” He heard Fox just as the door opened and he looked to the Commander again before nodding.

He sat on top of one of the wings of a grounded LaaT, he’d decided to have another bread-thing, they were very good and he’d have to go back to the bakery again, he had just finished it when he saw the Marauder coming in for a hasty landing, must be Tech flying, he’d only been on two flights with the man but that was enough to know his flying style. He hopped down off the wing and started walking to the ship, he paused and blinked when the steps came down and the two groups descended... with another person, he looked weird, not just

because of what looked like cybernetic implants but he wasn't the correct colour, he wasn't the same as the Batch or the Night Stalkers or even the regular clones, "Kraken!" The three Night Stalkers ran up to him in a very similar manner to the way he'd seen them run to Stitches.

"Hey." He replied with a nod.

"Sorry we couldn't visit sooner, first we had to go to Saleucami, then we had to go straight to Yalbec Prime, then we got an emergency contact from Commander Cody..." Nokt seemed very excited to see him again, "In short it was a lot of missions on top of each other but this is Echo!"

He looked to the cybernetic man in question, who was staring at him in return as the rest of them came over to them, "Hey kid, sorry for the delay." Hunter said, "Lot happened."

"Mm." He nodded, "Same."

"This is former ARC Trooper Echo, we helped rescue him from Skako Minor, and he decided to join us." Hunter put his hand on Echo's shoulder.

"I'm CT-9933 but everyone calls me Kraken." He replied and looked to Echo again, he wondered how much of him was cybernetic, "You're an odd colour, why?"

"What?" Echo looked confused.

"You're not the same colour as any of us defectives but you're not the same colour as the regular clones either, why?" He expanded his question.

"He's got freezer burn!" Wrecker laughed, nudging Echo slightly, obviously the man wasn't back in tip-top form, otherwise he'd get a full Wrecker whack.

"Oh. That sucks." He nodded.

"Yeah. Kinda does." Echo frowned.

"How do you mean he's different in colour? You see in blues and greens, so is there a difference in depth of colour or is it just down to hue?" Tech asked quickly, "Seeing as we are closer in skin colour to Regs and the Night Stalkers are much paler... is it down to saturation or...?" The man was off on his rambling as he typed into his datapad, lost in thought and seemingly unaware of any answer Kraken could have given him.

"You see in blue and green?" Echo asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Mm." He nodded again, then shrugged "Can't see red spectrum."

"How are you dealing with being topside?" Nokt asked him.

"Is... isn't it very bright... for you?" Clicker asked.

"Kinda is, not much I can do about it though." He shrugged again.

“Tech will probably work on something once he stops rambling.” Crosshair frowned as he looked at Tech, who had stopped talking at full volume and was now muttering to himself.

“So you’re also a defective clone?” Echo asked him, “They did mention another one that was stationed on Coruscant.”

“Mm.” He replied, “Been helping the Coruscant Guard since coming topside, used to be down below but I got outed as a spy, got shot and almost blown up.”

“Sounds exciting. Why are you so monotone?” Echo raised his eyebrow again.

“Mouse says I lack emotional scent markers.” He looked at the tiny clone, who nodded.

They came back.

They visited him.

Lights

“We got you some things, since you can’t have fish here.” Nokt said with a smile as they walked to an empty meeting room, the group was too big for the Marauder or Kraken’s bunkroom, which was a bunk in what basically equated to a storage room, it was the only one they could give him seeing as the others were all full of corries.

“Why?” He blinked, he hadn’t really thought about that in a while, he just fell back into the rhythm of solo work.

“We thought you’d like some things for your bunk room, to keep you company when we’re not with you.” Nokt replied, “We all pitched in.” Kraken looked to the others, Wrecker was grinning ear to ear and Hunter looked happy also, Tech was still rambling to himself but Kraken wasn’t even sure it was about the same thing anymore. Mouse squeaked and held up a bag to him, inside was a few things but the thing that caught his attention was a plush thing... he took it out, “It’s a purrgil.” Nokt explained, “They’re deep space whales, Tech says they can jump to hyperspace!”

“They... can create simu-tunnels... naturally.” Clicker explained.

“It has a really cool feature.” Hunter said as he walked over and pressed the purrgil’s nose bump, showing off that the tentacles had lights in them that had a trickle effect, “Mimics the bioluminescence they emit before jumping to hyperspace apparently.”

“Oh. That’s cool.” He examined it closely, “Wonder what they’re like in real life?” If they were deep space creatures, then it made sense that they had some form of bioluminescence, it would be cool if that colour was the ones he could see, “What colour are the lights?”

“Blue.” Crosshair said, moving his toothpick from the right side of his mouth to the left.

“Most... natural bioluminescence is... blue and green.” Clicker replied, “It’s probably why... you only see those colours... if you...”

“Easy Click’ika.” Crosshair was suddenly behind Clicker, who had gone still and quiet.

“What’s wrong with him?” He asked, looking to Hunter, judging by their reactions, this happened a lot.

“He has brain blips.” Hunter sighed a little.

“Oh. That sucks.” He looked back to Clicker as he seemed to come back around, he was a little flustered but didn’t seem too bad. He looked to the plush again and noticed that the lights had stopped shining, so he pressed the nose bump again and watched the lights as they moved along the tentacles, he liked the lights and wondered what they would look like in the dark, it was also very huggable as he found out when he hugged it to his chest, it wasn’t Minnow soft but it was still good.

He liked it.

“What you going to name her?” Echo asked him.

“I’m not good at the naming thing.” He replied, “What do you think I should call... her? It’s a her?”

“Apparently.” Echo shrugged, “That’s what Wrecker and Mouse think anyways.”

“Oh. Cool.” He nodded and looked to the plush again, the lights had gone out again so he pressed her nose bump and watched them.

“I see you like the lights.” Echo was watching him, obviously trying to figure him out.

“Mm.” He nodded, he couldn’t explain why but he did, he liked them a lot, he’d have to ask Stitches when he saw him again or he could ask Sawbones when he got back from his mission, either would do, both medics knew a lot about these kinds of things.

“They got you some other stuff as well.” The other clone said and Kraken looked in the bag again, there were some of those candies that Mouse liked in there, some small things that would be counted as essential but there a pack of weird things also, “Those, apparently, are glitter-lits.”

“Oh.” He replied, he didn’t want to put his purrgil down, so he put the bag on the ground and sat down to look at them, “Some kids had these down below, they glow, don’t they?”

“They contain a mixture of two chemicals and glitter, they are activated by shaking and then snapping the tube.” Tech said quickly, “They produce an iridescent glow.”

“Oh. Cool.” He replied, he shook up one of them and cracked it, the light slowly bled from the crack until the whole thing was bright.

He didn’t know why he was fascinated with lights but the others seemed to pick up on it and got him things that made light, “You may be attracted to these kinds of lights because of your mutation.” Tech continued, “I believe that because of the way your eyes work and the types of lights they pick up, you are drawn to lights that mimic bioluminescence, many deep-sea fish have this hard coded into them, so it may be that the kaminoans were basing the mutation they amplified on this trait.”

“Oh.” He replied, looking to the glowing stick again, he moved it around and watched the glitter inside moving, “Our donor was a mandalorian right?” He asked.

“Yes, his name was Jango Fett.” Echo explained.

“What’s the mandalorian word for light?” He looked to the two of them.

“Nau.” Tech replied as he fixed his goggles.

“I think I will call her Nau.” He replied as he put the stick on the ground and pressed the purrgil’s nose bump again, he liked the lights.

“That’s a good name kid.” Hunter said as he came over, Clicker must have calmed down again.

“Is Clicker okay?” He looked to the older clone.

“He’s a little upset so Crosshair and Nokt have brought him out for some air.” Hunter replied, “Do you like them?”

“Mm.” He nodded in reply.

“Lula and Minnow like her, so she’ll be a good friend!” Wrecker said as he and Mouse came to stand beside Hunter.

“Oh. That’s good.” He didn’t know why that was good but he like Minnow...

So he’d take her word on it.

Important Mission

Chapter Notes

If ya'll were wondering how they found out about Palpatine:

“Kraken, report to my office asap.” Fox’s voice came over his comm.

“Yes sir.” He replied and made his way to the Commander’s office, he wondered what was of such importance that he was needed that badly, he shrugged and hit the buzzer for the Commander’s office, regulation doors were not really designed for overly tall people, he wondered what it would be like for tall species... like the kaminoans or wookiees, he’d never met a wookiee in person but he knew they were quite tall, he’d like to meet one, they seemed cool. He was about to press the buzzer again but the door opened to reveal Commander Fox but he wasn’t alone in the room, there were two other people in the room also, they weren’t clones that was clear, “You wanted me sir?”

“Get in here.” Fox said and pulled him inside, “Kraken, this is General Windu and General Kenobi.”

“My, you are rather tall aren’t you.” Kenobi said, “You are a clone?”

“Mm.” He nodded, “I’m an enhanced clone, sir.”

“Commander Fox has informed up that you are designed for infiltration and espionage.” Windu said and Kraken nodded.

“Yes sir.” He replied, “I am designed to fit into extremely tight spaces, with an ability to see in pitch black conditions.”

“Fascinating.” Kenobi looked very interested, “How is your mission success?”

“He has a one hundred percent success rate.” Fox said, “No one has reported any suspicion to us.”

“We have a mission that requires your skills.” Windu said, “This is a top-secret mission and anything that is said in this room stays in this room.”

“Who am I watching, sir?” He blinked, this was bigger than he thought it would be, “And why am I watching?”

“You will be watching Supreme Chancellor Palpatine.” Windu said, “He is under suspicion of treason, a member of our order has come forward, after the confirmation of the bio-chips in clones...”

“Mine was broken.” Kraken said, a little too quickly, “Don’t know why though.”

“You lack of emotions may have been caused by that.” Kenobi said, “But it is this trait that will be very beneficial to your mission.”

“Why?” He asked.

“The Supreme Chancellor is under suspicion of being a Sith.” Windu said in a low voice, “We don’t have enough to openly charge him with.”

“Which is where you come in.” Fox said, “You are to sneak in and get to a position where you can record any interaction between the member of the order and the Chancellor.”

“That makes sense.” He nodded, “What’s a Sith?”

“An Order of Force wielders who are devoted to the dark side of the Force.” Kenobi explained, “They are driven by their emotions and seek power above all else.”

“So... bad Jedi then?” He looked between the two Jedi.

“Essentially.” Windu didn’t sound too pleased with the phrasing.

“What’s my time frame, sirs?” He knew not to push a topic when someone sounded unhappy with something he’d said, Stitches was a good teacher on that front, would a Jedi resort to that level of violence if he pressed too many buttons?

“Our member is not in the loop, in regards to this mission, so he will not know you are there.” Windu replied, “All he knows is that we are aware of his suspicions but he would be found out very quickly if he was to bring in spy equipment.”

“That makes sense.” Kraken nodded, “So he’ll tell you when he’s meeting with the Chancellor?”

“We hope so.” Kenobi sighed, “However, the time gap between being told he’s to meet with the Chancellor and the time he’s actually meeting him, can be quite small.”

“Mm. So I would need to be ready to go quickly.” He looked to Fox.

“How long are you able to stay hidden in one place?” Fox asked.

“I bring my own ration snacks and I have a small canteen of water, so I can stay as long as they last.” He explained, “And I metabolise food slowly so I don’t need to eat as often, so I can last a while.”

“Excellent, that...” Windu started before Kenobi’s comm chirped at them.

“One moment.” Kenobi went outside but after a moment he came back inside, “Are you ready to move?”

“Yes sir.” He nodded.

“Good, he’s going to meet the Chancellor in an hour.” Kenobi looked to Windu, who nodded.

“Here.” Fox handed him the recording device, “Same as always.”

“Yes sir.” He nodded again, he didn’t know what the Jedi thought about his monotone repetitive nature, were they weirded out? Or was this just something normal for them? He didn’t know but he did know he had to move, “Where am I going?”

“Do you know where the Senate Office Building is?” Windu asked and he nodded, “You are heading to the Chancellor's office.”

He took out his datapad and looked up the schematics of the building, “There is a ventilation system just above it, I can get in there, it’s not big enough for normal people to get into, so I don’t think he’d expect anyone to get in that way.” He looked to the three, “They don’t have security there.”

“Get moving trooper and radio silence once you are in there.” Fox ordered.

“Yes sir.” He nodded.

“Good luck in there.” Kenobi smiled to him.

“A lot is hanging on this.” Windu said with a frown, “We need this evidence.”

“Yes sir.” He nodded again, then saluted and left the office. He scanned his map, looking for his entry point, the building wasn’t too far so he could get there on foot in ten minutes if he ran it, then he could get into the system and make his way through the building in five minutes if he hurried through but that would make a lot of noise, so his best bet was to take the fifteen minutes to do it safely and quietly, the Chancellor’s office was near the top...

He could do this.

Darkness

The vent wasn't as small as the schematics denoted but that might have been a miscommunication between the designer, the architect and the actual builders, these things happened more often than people thought, at least they got the structural support right, luckily they got the insulation thickness right also because it made his movement through the system that much quieter and the Senate guard hadn't noticed him... at all. He did have to change his plan slightly because the roof vent would be too high up to get a good quality for the recording, the underfloor system was better in a few ways to be honest, less noise and less chance of getting hit by a stray shot if things went weird, not that he intended them to do, that would suck.

A lot.

The other perk was the underfloor vent had an external access point, sure it was very high off the ground but in a pinch he could get out that way, "Master Skywalker, the Chancellor is waiting for you." A voice above him said, Skywalker? General Skywalker? Huh... weird.

He pulled himself forward until he could hear the Chancellor above him, "Welcome Master Skywalker." He started his recording device, "Leave us." He heard a lot of footsteps leaving the room above.

"What is it you wish of me your excellency?" That voice must be General Skywalker's, he sounded odd, his voice didn't sound the way he thought it would.

"Soon, soon this war will be over and we will be free of it." The Chancellor replied, "Soon I will be able to teach you everything, soon you will be able to save her."

Her?

Who's her?

"They're getting suspicious." Skywalker replied, "They think that you are... that you are a Sith." Wait... wasn't it Skywalker who told the Jedi his suspicions about Palpatine? Or was he playing the part? Hopefully it was the latter, otherwise this got a whole lot more complicated.

"And what do you think, Anakin?" Palpatine sounded equal parts disappointed and smug, if that was even possible.

"I don't know what I think anymore, you have become a father figure to me but... you know so much about the dark side and..." Skywalker replied and if it was an act, it was a damn good one because he sounded very confused and if Kraken could pick up on that... then it wasn't likely to be fake, "And I want to save her, I want to save her above everything!"

"And you shall, for I will teach you, join me Anakin, join me and she will never die." Palpatine's voice sounded weird and Kraken didn't need Mouse's nose to know that he

probably smelled all kinds of wrong.

“I... I can’t.” Skywalker was trying to hold himself back, he could hear it in the General’s voice.

“Join me Anakin. And together we will conquer the galaxy.” The other man’s voice turned bad, like... he felt something go through his leg, it was humming, it was glowing like one of the Jedi’s glowing swords, they were very pretty but this one was red, was this one of the Sith blades? Were theirs red?

“Your excellency?” Skywalker’s voice was shaking.

“It must have been a rat.” Was the reply and the blade vanished in a hiss, Kraken had never been more thankful for his lack of pain responses, if he had them, then he would have given his position away by screaming.

“I... I need to go.” Skywalker said and his footsteps vanished, there was no motion for a bit before a comm chirped in the room above.

“I’ll be right there.” Palpatine said and his footsteps left the room also.

Kraken waited for a long while before shutting off the recording and moving towards the exterior vent, he just had to slide down to one of the lower ones... he pulled himself out of the vent and held onto the lip as he looked for the next vent access, it was then that he noticed the hole in his thigh, well that sucked, it wasn’t bleeding so that was a plus. He scanned the side of the building and spotted the cover a few levels below him, just like the underworld, except it was a whole lot brighter up here, he positioned himself and let go of the lip, it was a bumpy ride but he managed to guide himself to the vent cover, which he grabbed the lip of, he was sure that if his joints weren’t as flexible as they were, he’d have probably dislocated his shoulders. He popped over the coved and crawled in, he’d have to get medical attention quickly when he got back but he was good for now, he could get back to the base... he could do this. He looked out the vent cover that opened up a foot or two off the ground, then popped his head out, there was no one there, that he could see anyways, he lowered himself gently to the ground and finally got a good look at his leg, whatever those swords were made of... they went through a lot of things easily, he’d ask the generals when he got back to the base but for now he had to cover it, he took out a wad of bandages that Mouse had given him and wrapped the injury to the best of his ability.

Now he just had to make it back before his brain realised it was supposed to register the injury, so he took off running and luckily he didn’t have a limp, that would suck... a lot.

“Kraken?” He was met at the entrance by a surprise appearance of Hunter, “You okay?”

“Mm.” He nodded.

“Kraken.” He looked to the approaching form of Fox, “Mission success?”

“Yes sir.” He nodded and handed over the device, “It’s more complicated than we thought.”

“I see.” Fox frowned, “I’ll get this to the generals, good work.”

“Thank you...” He hit the floor...

Hard.

Stay Alive

Hunter had to move quickly when Kraken collapsed, he didn't stop him completely because of Kraken's height, so his helmet hit the ground with his head in it, "Kid? Kid can you hear me?" He managed to get the younger clone's helmet off, he was several shades paler and his skin was coated in a thin sheen of sweat.

"He's injured." Fox was at Kraken's other side in an instant and Hunter finally noticed the bandage around Kraken's upper thigh, "What the actual..."

"What?" He looked at the injury, "That's... that's a lightsaber injury."

"Medical team report to main entrance." Fox said into his comm, "We have an emergency."

"Don't worry vod'ika, you're going to be okay." He said to his unconscious brother, "You're in the best place possible, we'll get you patched up." He put his hand on Kraken's chest, he could feel the heat radiating off the younger clone, even through his blacks and armour, "The kark happened Commander?"

"Not here." Fox replied, "He needs treatment."

"Kraken!" Nokt called as he and his brothers ran to them, "What happened?" He asked as he knelt down beside Hunter, "Mouse, analysis?"

"Mouse... Mouse says the wound... smells... like the Jedi' lightsabers." Clicker said, "But... but it smells wrong."

"Wrong?" Hunter asked and looked to the tiny trooper, "What do you mean?"

'It.' Mouse paused, 'It doesn't smell like the Jedi swords because the singing smell is wrong.' Hunter looked to Fox but the older clone didn't say anything, he didn't need too because his face said everything, whatever this mission was about, it was huge.

"There's the medics." Nokt said as he stood up to get out of the way.

"What's the situation?" Sawbones asked.

"What looks like a lightsaber injury, through and through, cauterized so no blood loss." Fox explained as he and Hunter moved out of the way of the medics, Hunter couldn't help be notice Kraken's fast and shallow breathing.

"Fast breathing and heart rate, bluish grey tinge to his lips, enlarged pupils... he's going into shock." Sawbones said as he checked Kraken's reactions, "Get him on the gurney, we need to move quickly, straight into surgery."

"Sergeants, with me." Fox said to him and Nokt.

"Yes sir." They both said.

“Mouse, Clicker, go find the rest of the Batch.” Nokt said to his brothers and both of them nodded before taking off to find the others, “He’s going to be okay... right?” Nokt looked to him as they followed Fox.

“He’s in good hands and Stitches trusts Sawbones, so we can too.” Hunter smiled to him, he hoped so, Stitches trusted Sawbones with his life, he was the grumpy medic’s cyar’ika, “So don’t worry.” He gave Nokt’s shoulder a gentle squeeze.

“General Kenobi, Kraken has returned from mission, it was a success but he has sustained injury.” Fox said into his comm.

“We’ll be right with you Commander.” Kenobi’s voice replied.

“That cubicle will be Kraken’s.” A medic said when they arrived on the ward, “You can wait in there.”

“Alert me when the Generals get here.” Fox said to the medic who nodded.

“What the actual kark is going on Commander?” Hunter asked as they entered, “Why does Kraken have a lightsaber injury?”

“Was... was he spying on a bad Jedi? Like... Krell?” Nokt was panicking slightly.

“I can’t say anything until the Generals get here.” Fox replied, “But I can say that his mission may have saved a lot of lives.”

“Commander Fox, the Generals are here.” A medic arrived at the door.

“Good, show them in.” Fox’s whole form was tense, he wasn’t any happier with the development that Nokt and Hunter and they looked to the door as both Generals, Kenobi and Windu, entered the small cubicle, “General’s I’m sure you know Sergeants Hunter and Nokt.” Fox said quickly.

“You are here because of Kraken?” Kenobi asked.

“Yes sir.” Hunter nodded, “He is a CT-99 like we are, so we are the closest he has to batchmates.”

“It is good to hear he has brothers.” Kenobi smiled but Windu didn’t look pleased by their presence.

“Did he get what was asked of him?” The older man asked Fox, Hunter wondered what it was like for Nokt, being in a room full of men... two of them he had feelings for, he looked to Nokt with a raised eyebrow and the younger Sergeant nodded slightly.

“Yes sir.” Fox nodded and held out the recording device, “He managed to give this over before he collapsed, he sustained an injury from, what we believe to be, a lightsaber.”

“A lightsaber?” Was the reply, “Are you sure?”

“Yes sir, Mouse says it smells like one but that it smells incorrect.” Nokt explained, “That the singing smell is wrong, so that leads me to believe that it isn’t a Jedi blade because even General Krell’s blades didn’t carry that smell... was it a blade of one of those... Sith?”

Windu opened his mouth to reply but they were interrupted by the PA system, “Code Blue, available personnel report to Surgery Room One.” The voice said, “Repeat: Code Blue, available personnel report to Surgery Room One.”

“That’s... Hunter that’s Kraken.” Nokt said quickly, “Code blue means... someone is experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency, like cardiac arrest.” Hunter watched as three medics ran past the door, then moved out into the hall and watched them enter the surgery.

“Get the crash cart!” He heard someone yell.

Hunter felt the cold talons of fear grip his heart and stomach as he moved to the room, to look in through the viewing window, Kraken was in trouble, his brother was in trouble and there was nothing he could do to help, he swallowed thickly and put his hand on the window, “Come on vod...” He whispered.

“He’ll be okay.” Nokt said gently, taking hold of Hunter’s free hand in his small one, “He’s one of us and we’re tough.”

“I... you’re right.” Hunter nodded, Kraken would be alright...

Stay alive.

Please

Treatment

Stitches hadn't expected to be called to Coruscant on such short notice but he had received a call from Echo, who was calling for Nokt, saying they needed him because Kraken was hurt, so he called Sawbones to get the details but even Sawbones didn't have all the details, the only thing they knew was that Kraken had a lightsaber injury to his leg, the trauma of which sent Kraken into medical shock and that made his heart stop beating but that was enough to get him on the next transport to Coruscant, he couldn't delay on this, not when the boys were so distraught about the thought about losing their brother.

"Stitches!" He was enveloped by the three young clones the second he entered the base from the airfield.

"Easy boys." He said gently, he could only wrap his arms around Nokt and Clicker because Mouse was too short for it, "I know my brothers have done the best for Kraken and that he is in great hands."

"But..." Nokt's voice was muffled by Stitches' uniform.

"Do you trust me?" He asked.

"Yes!" Both Nokt and Clicker said, Mouse giving a loud confirmation squeak.

"I trust Sawbones and all my medic brothers here, so I want you to trust my trust for them, yeah?" He smiled when Nokt looked up to him, Clicker kept his head buried in Stitches' chest and Stitches was afraid his voice would hurt the young clone, "So, how about I go see how Kraken's treatment is going?"

"O... okay." Nokt said with a slow nod, "Can... can we come with you?"

"Of course you can ad'ika." He nodded, "You won't be allowed into the room until I can assess the situation but you should be able to visit soon, okay?"

"Okay." Nokt nodded a little more enthusiastically.

"Let's get going." He smiled to them and let Nokt take hold of his hand and Clicker take hold of his upper arm, Mouse was holding Nokt's other hand, at least he didn't have to try and walk with Mouse wrapped around him this time, "Here we are, is Sawbones on?" He asked one of the medics.

"He just clocked off shift, he's been working hard to help Kraken, as well as other injured clones." The younger clone replied.

"What's the situation with Kraken?" He asked, taking the datapad from the other man.

"He's stable and we managed to treat his leg injury, luckily we got him into surgery just in time, if he had waited even ten more minutes, he would have lost the leg." Was the reply.

Stitches frowned as he read the file, a through and through injury, cauterized by the lightsaber so little actual blood loss, body went into shock because of the trauma from the injury, septic shock from foreign bodies entering through the open wound... missed the femoral artery... it was probably down to Kraken's lack of pain receptors that he even made it back to the base in time but why did he have an injury from a lightsaber? "Is he still being administered antibiotics?" He looked up from the datapad and the man nodded, "How often are you checking in on him?"

"Every ten minutes, he hasn't woken up and isn't reacting to external stimuli." He replied.

"Okay, would you mind if I went to check on him?" Stitches didn't know a lot of the medics on Coruscant.

"Of course not sir." The younger medic nodded.

"What's your name?" He smiled a little.

"Uh... String sir." The younger medic replied with a small blush.

"You are doing good work, keep it up." He replied.

"Y... yes sir. Thank you sir." String replied, then left to talk to the other medics.

"Mouse says he's... happy but also... embarrassed." Clicker said.

"I get that a lot when I encourage younger medics." Stitches chuckled, "Let's go check on your brother." The sound of medical beeping was the first thing to greet him when he entered, followed by the dripping of the I.V. fluid and the faint whistle of an oxygen flow, "Wait out here." He said to the three, who nodded and he entered the cubicle letting the door close behind him. He sighed and walked up to the cot and started his checks, I.V. bag and drip was good, oxygen mix was okay and there were no clogs in the tubing. He looked to Kraken proper and clicked his fingers in front of the boy's face but got no reaction to the stimuli, "Hm." He frowned. He moved and lifted the cover up to check the leg injury, he smiled softly because he knew that bandage wrapping anywhere, he checked for any staining that would indicate bleeding or infection but found none, "Well Kraken, despite the glaringly obvious, everything seems to be in order." He said as he put the cover back, then he spotted a plush on the bed beside Kraken... it was a purrgil. When did he get a plush purrgil? "I see you have a friend to keep you company." He said gently, moved Kraken's arm carefully and put the plush under his arm, "There... better?" He smiled before walking over to the door, "You may..." He blinked when he spotted both Hunter and Commander Fox.

"Stitches? You're here!" Hunter sounded really happy and before Stitches knew what was happening the young Sergeant had wrapped his arms around him, his face in his shoulder.

"Uh... yes." He replied, he hesitated in returning the embrace but carefully wrapped his arms around Hunter, he was stockier than the boys but not as stocky as regular clones, it was odd to say the least.

"Any improvements?" Fox asked him.

“He hasn’t shown improvements in consciousness according to String and I haven’t gotten a reaction from him but he is responding well to the treatments.” He replied once Hunter had let him go, “Someone want to tell me why he has a lightsaber wound?”

“It’s... a long story.”

“I’m listening.”

Stimming

Chapter Notes

Hands up who still has their childhood safe object! 🧒

The sounds of beeping and a dull throbbing sensation in his leg greeted Kraken when he finally dragged himself up from the warm embrace of unconsciousness, he opened his eyes and looked to the side where he saw the figure of Stitches, the medic was checking an I.V. bag which Kraken found out was attached to his arm, under which was Nau, surprisingly. “She decided to keep you company.” Stitches said, not even looking to him, Kraken wondered how the medic knew he was awake, “Welcome back to the land of the living.” The older clone finally looked to him, “Gave your brothers quite the scare.”

“Oh.” He blinked, “I seemed to have passed out.”

“You did more than pass out young man, you stopped being alive for two minutes.” Stitches replied with a raised eyebrow.

“Oh. That sucks.” He replied, “Was the mission a success?”

“Indeed it was, your audio recording made it to the generals, as did the information about your leg injury.” Stitches motioned to Kraken’s leg, which was still throbbing dully, “I imagine the only reason you weren’t found out by your observation subject was your lack of pain receptors?”

“Mm.” He nodded and picked up Nau, pressing her nose bump and watched the lights, “I don’t know why I like lights but Tech said it was because of my mutation.”

“It makes sense, given your enhancements are very similar to many deep sea and deep space creatures.” Stitches replied with a shrug.

“Why are you helping us? Defectives I mean.” He looked away from Nau, to the medic, who’s eyebrow was practically in his hairline, “You suffer from insomnia and an eating disorder according to Mouse, so I figured you are a defective clone... without being one.” He returned his gaze to Nau and pressed her nose bump again, he hoped he hadn’t pushed his luck with that statement.

“An interesting observation.” Stitches replied after a moment of silence, that was filled with only the beeps of medical equipment, “I suppose if one was to look at it that way, then yes, I would be a defective clone but that isn’t why I help.”

“It isn’t?” He blinked and looked to the older clone, “Oh... that was what made the most sense to me but I’m finding that the things I think make sense don’t really make sense.”

“Welcome to the chaos that is sentient life.” Stitches huffed, “Enough of that, how is your leg feeling to you?”

“It’s weird, like it’s throbbing.” He looked to the offending limb, “I can’t feel the pain but it’s... weird.”

“The lightsaber sliced through your leg like a hot knife through butter, luckily it cauterized the wound so you didn’t bleed out instantly, which you would have done had it not missed your femoral artery by a mere inch.” Stitches replied as he moved the covers out of the way, “Missed the bulk of your thigh bone also, you were very lucky Kraken, it could have been much worse, if your body wasn’t the way it is then it would have been worse.”

“Because I can’t feel it?” He asked before pressing Nau’s nose bump again, he didn’t know why he was pressing it so much.

“Exactly.” The medic nodded, “As to why you keep pressing her nose bump, you are engaging in stimming.”

“What?” He looked to Stitches.

“Stimming, short for self-stimulatory behaviour, it has been observed in people as a way to manage emotions like anxiety, anger, fear and excitement.” Stitches explained, “Similar to Clicker’s need to hold his noise-cancellers or Tech’s leg bouncing, so even though you don’t “feel” the emotions or overstimulation that would create the need for stimming, your body is engaging in it regardless.”

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded, “Why did it only show up when I got Nau?”

“Possibly because she was given to you by family and that lets your brain know she’s a safe object. Similar to how you associate water with comfort, your brain is starting to associate your brothers with safety.” The older clone replied, “In short, you feel safe with her and that allows you to engage in behaviours that would help you feel safer, because you can associate her with your family and the safety they give you.”

“I didn’t know a plush could do that.” Kraken looked to Nau and pressed her nose bump again, watching the lights.

“Safe objects don’t just include plushies, they can be anything from blankets to books, I met a nice young woman whose safe object was a spoon she’d gotten from her mother.” He looked to the soft smile on the medic’s features, “They are any object you can always associate with safety and comfort, like Minnow and Lula, and from what I hear, you experienced something along the lines of this when you hugged Minnow, yes?”

“Mm. Mouse said her name was Minnow and I... just wanted to hold her.” He nodded.

“That was probably the first indicator that you felt safe with your brothers.” Stitches sighed softly.

“Do you have something?” Kraken knew that probably wasn’t a safe question to ask the medic, given his defensive nature.

“I did... once upon a time.” Stitches sighed through his nose, “A very long time ago.” He checked the I.V. drip again.

“Oh.” He replied, maybe he would talk to Hunter and the others, maybe see about getting their buir something along those lines? “Do you like pastry?” He knew to change the subject when the medic went silent, “There’s a bakery near here that is run by a nautolan, Lulu, they do very nice things.”

“Sawbones has brought me to her store a few times.” Stitches smiled gently, “I like the sweet breads she has.”

“I like the one with the fruit filling.” He pressed Nau's nose bump again as Stitches checked his leg, “Commander Fox does too I think.”

“He does have a sweet tooth.” The medic chuckled.

He felt safe with Stitches.

Warm.

Safety

Chapter Notes

Correcting a mistake I made a few chapters back, when I said "it was glowing like one of the Jedi's glowing swords, they were very pretty but this one was red, was this one of the Sith blades? Were theirs red?" because I blatantly remembered that Kraken can't see red! 😂

Oopsie poopsie. 🙄

"Hey kid, how're you feeling?" Hunter asked as he appeared in the room, the older clone sat down on the end of the bed.

"The weird sensation is gone from my leg, Stitches said it's healing well and Sawbones is optimistic about my full recovery." He replied.

"That's great to hear." Hunter smiled to him, "But how are you feeling? You went through a massive trauma."

"I don't feel anything but I understand that what happened was really bad." He nodded and looked to Nau, pressing her nose bump, "The only reason I got out with the injury I sustained was because of my lack of pain response, if I had given away my position... I would be dead." He watched Nau's lights, "Stitches said I keep pressing her nose because I am engaging in stimming, that she's my safe object, like Minnow and Lula are to Mouse and Wrecker."

"Glad she's helping you so much." Hunter smiled warmly.

"Stitches said he used to have a safe object a long time ago but he doesn't have one now." He looked to Nau again, "So... I was thinking we could get him something so he could have one again, I think he needs something." He didn't even know what the medic would accept as a safe object, he said they came in a variety of forms... "Do you have one Hunter?"

"Indeed I do." Hunter chuckled, "So do Crosshair and Tech."

"Oh. Cool." He nodded, "I didn't think I needed something like Nau, given I don't feel anything but Stitches said it's okay that I don't feel, my brain is still going to want it."

"As for getting Stitches something, we should ask Sawbones about it, he knows Stitches better than anyone in the galaxy but yeah, I think it would be something we could do." The older clone said gently, "First you need to get better, we almost lost you."

“Oh. Yeah. Stitches did say I died for two minutes.” He nodded, “Well, he said I stopped being alive for two minutes.”

“Scared the kark out of us, we thought we were going to lose you.” Hunter replied as he moved further up to put his hand on Kraken’s shoulder, which confused Kraken but then again... a lot of social interactions confused Kraken, “I’m so glad we didn’t.”

“I imagine I would have felt afraid when I was stabbed.” He nodded, “The light was red, when the glowing sword showed up, I didn’t know those glowing swords came in red.” He looked to Nau again and pressed her nose bump, watching the lights.

“I thought you couldn’t see red?” Hunter looked confused.

“I can’t but it made my eyes go weird, I think it might have hurt if I could feel, the glowing swords are very bright but the Jedi ones don’t do that, so I think it was red judging by that reaction.” He replied, the light had been blinding, like it was outside on a sunny day but because it was in the vent it was so much brighter than anything else, “I also think it was red because I read that the people my target was being accused of belonging to had that colour blade.”

“Fox didn’t give a lot of details on the mission, nor did the Jedi, so I take it that this was a high-profile mission involving a Sith?” Hunter frowned a little.

“Mm.” He nodded, “They figured I would be good for the mission because of how I work but General Kenobi said that my lack of emotions would work in my favour also.”

“Guess he was right I suppose.” Hunter nodded, “Speaking of the good Commander, he said he wanted to talk with you once you were able for visitors, said the Generals would be there also.”

“Really?” He blinked.

“They didn’t really get a chance to debrief you.” His older brother chuckled, he was getting used to the idea of having brothers, even if they weren’t decanted together, that didn’t mean they weren’t brothers.

“Mm. That makes sense.” He nodded in reply, “Hunter?”

“Yeah?” Hunter looked to him with a slightly raised eyebrow.

“Can I call you ori’vod?” He watched the older clone’s whole form soften.

“Of course you can vod’ika.” He smiled to Kraken, “You didn’t have to ask.”

“Stitches doesn’t like being called buir, so I didn’t know how you felt about being called ori’vod.” He pressed Nau’s nose bump again, he wasn’t sure about anything to do with social interactions.

“Stitches doesn’t like it because it makes him sound old.” Hunter chuckled, “He’s a Gen One, so he’s older but not that old, is what he told me.”

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded, “I probably should talk to Commander Fox.”

“You sure you’re up for it?” Hunter gave his shoulder a gentle squeeze.

“Mm.” He nodded, “He probably wants a full briefing sooner rather than later.”

“Do you want me to be in the room with you?” His ori’vod asked, that word seemed right for Hunter, like he was made for the word.

“Fox probably wants the debriefing to be private, like the initial meeting, just him and the Generals and me.” He looked to Hunter again, “You can go talk to Sawbones about the safe object for Stitches.”

“That I can do, you sure you’re okay?” Hunter asked gently.

“Mm.” He nodded.

“Okay, I’ll go let Fox know he can come in.” Hunter stood up and with one final pat on Kraken’s shoulder he walked to the door.

“Thanks... ori’vod.” Kraken said, causing Hunter to look at him briefly with a gentle smile.

“No problem vod’ika.” The older clone replied and vanished out the door.

“That was the right thing... wasn’t it Nau?” He looked to his purrgil, “I think he liked being called that, he said he did, so I think he’s okay with that.” He pressed her nose bump again and watched the lights, hopefully they could find Stitches some safety.

Everyone needed safety.

Meeting

“Kraken.” Commander Fox greeted him upon entry to the room, “Good to see you on the mend.” The man sounded relieved but before Kraken could say anything he spotted the two General’s entering behind the Commander, so he sat up a little straighter, “Sawbones and Stitches have informed me that you should be out of here soon?”

“Mm.” He nodded, “They said my leg is healing well and I should be able to put weight on it and walk around soon.”

“That is good to hear.” General Kenobi said with a kind smile.

“Was the mission a success sir?” He asked, looking between the three, “I had to change my plan slightly, the roof ventilation system was too high off the ground and I wouldn’t have been able to get a clear recording. I think that if I had been in the roof, I would have suffered a bigger injury but the recording should have been clear enough, they weren’t talking quietly.” He hadn’t taken a bad recording before, he hoped this wasn’t his first bad one and all that effort was for nothing because that would suck...

A lot.

“The recording is perfect, don’t worry about that.” Kenobi replied.

“I doubt I would be able to get a second go at it if it had been bad.” Kraken continued, “I think he knew something was there but I didn’t react so he thought it was something smaller, like a rat or something... even though I thought the Senate building had designated pest controllers.” He looked to Nau and pressed her nose bump, he couldn’t feel but it was clear he would be stressed if he could, “Also, wasn’t General Skywalker the one to tip you guys off about the Chancellor?”

“He was.” General Windu said with a sigh, “But what happened on Anaxes has driven him further down a dark path, which is putting his loyalties into conflict.”

“What happened on Anaxes?” He blinked.

“I am surprised your brothers didn’t tell you.” Kenobi replied.

“We don’t really talk missions.” He replied, “And I’m not great at reading body language.”

Both Generals looked to each other, “General Skywalker attacked the Night Stalkers, he fell briefly to the dark side and they were caught in that fall.” Kenobi replied.

“Oh.” He replied, that was probably why Nokt was nervous, “That sucks.”

“Indeed it does.” Windu sighed, “But now we have enough evidence to bring it to the Senate.”

“Are Jedi allowed in the Senate?” He asked, he didn’t think they were...

“No but we have two senators willing to aid us in this matter.” Windu replied.

“Oh. That makes sense.” He looked to Nau again and pressed her nose bump, would this be a counted as a coup? He didn’t know a lot of things about politics, so maybe it was? “So... what’s next for me?” He looked to the three again, “My next mission?”

“You should heal completely before being sent back out.” Kenobi said, “Isn’t that right Commander?”

“Yes sir.” Fox nodded then looked to Kraken again, “You mightn’t be able to feel it but you can’t take any chance with a wound of that severity. Leg injuries can be detrimental to a soldier because it’s so easy to think you’re okay.”

“Oh.” He nodded, “That makes sense.”

“Indeed.” Windu said, he had a weird facial expression, did that mean he was starting to get weirded out by Kraken’s repetitive monotone phrases?

“Are Sith light swords red?” He asked as he pressed Nau’s nose bump again, “I can’t tell properly because of my eyesight but I think it was red.”

“You’re sure?” Windu asked quickly.

“Probably, the colour wasn’t but the reaction my eyes had meant it was probably red spectrum.” He explained, “Light swords can go through anything can’t they?”

“There are a few things that they can’t, but yes, they can go through most things.” Kenobi chuckled.

“Mouse says they sing?” He looked to them again.

“We have yet to understand what your brother is smelling when he says that.” Windu explained.

“Though Master Yoda seems to think he’s smelling the Force.” Kenobi continued.

“Oh.” He nodded, “Cool.”

“We should let you get some more rest trooper.” Fox said, “Don’t want the medics giving us hardship.”

“Agreed. Good work trooper, we are glad you made it.” Kenobi smiled before the two Generals left.

He looked to Fox, who hadn’t left, “Something wrong Commander?” He asked.

“I didn’t want to believe them when they brought their suspicions to me and asked for help.” The older clone sighed and massaged his forehead, “But after listening to the recording and

seeing your injury, I guess I put my trust in the wrong person.”

“Stitches says to be careful who you trust.” He replied.

“He’s an incredibly paranoid person, so take what he says with a grain of salt... but he isn’t wrong this time.” Fox replied.

“What does paranoid mean exactly?” He blinked, it wasn’t a word he’d heard very often, maybe once or twice.

“It means someone with unjustified suspicion and mistrust of other people.” Fox looked to him, “But I’m not going to tango with him when it comes to the health of the men, so until one of the medic’s clears you for active duty, don’t return to it because it won’t end well if Stitches finds out.”

Kraken blinked, were a lot of people afraid of Stitches, “Does he make a lot of people afraid?”

“It’s less that we’re afraid of him and more he’s not afraid of anyone, so he’s not afraid to jump into action at the drop of a hat.” Fox grumbled, “He’s gone up against high-ranking troopers and put them in their place.”

“Oh.” He replied, looking to Nau and pressing her nose bump, “Do you have a safe object Commander?”

“Pardon?” Fox looked confused, “Why do you ask?”

“Stitches said it was something that a lot of people have.” Kraken was learning a lot from Stitches.

“I do actually.”

“Oh. Cool.”

Hug?

“You okay ori’vod?” Nokt asked him as they walked through the base from Medical, the three of them had elected to meet him upon release, “You’re limping a lot.”

“Mm.” He nodded, he was confused by Mouse, who was holding Kraken’s hand in his small one, it was odd but the small clone was happy enough with the gesture, even though his shorter legs were having a little difficulty keeping up with Kraken’s long ones, despite his limp. He hadn’t failed to notice the small clone was sporting a pair of glasses, “Where’d you get those? He asked.

Mouse bounced happily, “Tech and Echo made him some corrective glasses.” Nokt explained, “So he can see a lot better now!”

“Oh. Cool.” He nodded.

“Stitches... says you’re not... back in active duty... so what are your... plans?” Clicker asked from his other side, holding his upper arm loosely.

“Don’t know.” He shrugged, not much he could do without drawing down the might of angry medics, “They don’t want me doing anything that could make my leg worse.”

“That makes sense.” Nokt nodded, “Oh! Tech said he has something for you!”

“For me?” He blinked.

“Y... yeah!” Clicker said happily, “He... and Echo spent a... lot of down time... working on it!”

“Oh.” He replied, “What is it?”

“It’s a surprise!” Nokt bounced in a very Mouse way, “But I’m very confident that you’ll like it!”

“Oh. Okay.” He nodded and let himself be guided by the three, he blinked at the very suddenly bright light that hit him as they walked out onto the sun-drenched strip.

“Hey kid, you okay?” Hunter smiled to him as they arrived at the Marauder.

“Mm.” He nodded.

“Just the limp left?” Hunter asked and he nodded again, “Well, come on up, Tech wants to talk to you.” Kraken didn’t know what to expect from the clone designed for his intelligence, what could he and Echo have come up with that he might like? Or need?

He didn’t know but he followed the others up the boarding steps, swallowed by the darker interior of the ship and looked around, “Kraken? Good, just in time.” Tech said quickly, “I had started to think you wouldn’t arrive before we were to ship out to Kaller.”

“Oh.” He blinked and looked to the others, “Is something wrong?”

“Not at all.” Tech replied, “These are merely prototypes, so they may not work as desired upon first attempt.”

“What won’t?” He asked but before giving an answer Tech placed something on his face, a pair of goggles.

“Now, one moment.” Tech said and Kraken saw him typing away at his wrist terminal, “There, what can you see?”

“Like what?” He blinked.

“Look outside and tell me what colours you see in broad daylight.” Tech pointed out the door at the strip.

“You know what colours I can...” He blinked again because when he looked outside the colours were a little weird, for one thing there were a few more, ones he’d never seen before, not a lot but enough to be noticeable, for another his brain felt odd as he tried to focus on the new colours, “Oh... what did you do?”

“Created an artificial receptor for red colour spectrum.” Tech replied, “Echo and myself have been working on them for a small amount of time but we had no way of perfecting them without you to test run them.”

“Oh. Cool.” He replied, “This is weird.”

“I would imagine so, seeing as the image receptors in your brain have no concept of what the red colour spectrum is, it has no way of identifying the colours produced by that spectrum.” Tech typed at his wrist terminal, “It will take your brain a while to get used to it once we tweak them enough to be wearable for long periods of time.”

“It shouldn’t take away from your ability to see in low light conditions.” Echo explained, “But we designed them to be worn in mostly daytime, to help mitigate the brightness up top, so if you don’t want to wear them in dark environments that’s up to you.”

“That makes sense.” He nodded.

“How’re we looking ori’vod.” Nokt asked with a smile.

“Odd.” He replied and fixed the goggles that slid a little bit down his nose.

“You should acclimatize to them quickly.” Tech replied, “It’s just...” He stopped talking as he read something on his wrist terminal.

“Tech?” Hunter asked carefully.

“General Grievous has been defeated and killed on Utapau.” The man replied, “General Kenobi has defeated General Grievous.”

“If... if both he and the head of the snake have been taken out of the playing field... that means the structure of the Separatist army will crumble.” Nokt said quickly, “They don’t have either Count Dooku, or Grievous or the head honcho, we’ve effectively won!”

“That is up in the air at this current moment.” Tech explained, “There are still many players on the Separatist side that may step up.”

“Not likely, the Trade Federation bows to the stronger force, the Techno Union is out for profit, the problem might be the Separatist Senate.” Nokt replied, he looked a little... upset? Annoyed? Something, whatever it was it was directed at Tech, “They won’t bow easily but they won’t be the threat they have been without the backing of Dooku or Grievous, who were basically Heads of State.”

“You know a lot about politics.” Kraken said to the younger clone.

“It’s his area of expertise!” Wrecker laughed, “Ain’t that right Nokt’ika!”

“Y... yes.” Nokt replied, his cheeks went a weird colour, it was a different shade but not the one he was used to.

“Oh. Cool.” He nodded.

“Permission to come aboard?” A voice said from the bottom of the steps.

“Stitches!” The three Night Stalkers practically vanished from the ship, the three had glued themselves to the medic.

“You can go hug him too if you want.” Hunter smiled.

“Oh. Okay. I think I will.”

“Good to hear vod’ika.”

Wrong

“Kraken!” He heard a reg call happily, “Get in here vod and celebrate!” He was pulled into the mess, it was full of people celebrating the end of the war, there was much left to do, pockets of separatists that refused to back down, the Batch and Night Stalkers were pulled to Kaller to help with clean up there, leaving him on Coruscant again but...

They won.

They made it out the other side and because of a few medics, they came out of it themselves... “You get pulled in also?” He looked to Stitches and Fox sitting in the corner, both wearing a similar expression and both drinking a mug of caf, “Take a seat, they won’t really pay attention to you once you’re in here, besides, don’t want you dancing or roughhousing on that leg.”

“I was going back to my bunk room.” He explained as he sat down, “How long do I have to stay here?”

“Until they forget they dragged you in, we’ve been here...” The Commander looked at his chronometer, “Ten minutes.”

“I think we may be able to slip out soon.” Stitches sighed, “I am not looking forward to dealing with all these drunk people, they always vomit and they always miss the allocated receptacle.”

“Where is Sawbones and his...?” Kraken started but Stitches pointed to the other side of the mess, where Sawbones was with his batch, Speedy and Madcap were already on their way to being drunk, if the dancing on the table was anything to go by, “Oh.”

“How are the goggles working for you?” Stitches asked after he sipped his caf.

“It’s weird, I don’t know what each colour is and it makes my brain weird when I try to focus on them.” He fixed his newly acquired eyewear.

“Hm. It will take time for your brain to adjust and acclimatize to the new visual information.” The medic replied and leaned back against the wall, “I do hope you are taking it easy on that leg of yours.”

“Mm.” He nodded and looked at the celebrating troopers, he wondered what it was like, being able to feel and express something, anything, but that was something none of his brothers could fix...

“There’s our opening, come on.” Fox said as a clear line for the door opened up in the mass of people.

“Affirmative.” Stitches said and the three of them managed to get to the door, “I’m going to get medical set up for the drunks.”

“I’m going to go sit down in my office.” Fox massaged the bridge of his nose, “You should make a bee line for your bunkroom Kraken and try not to get dragged into anymore celebrations, they aren’t fun if you don’t drink or don’t enjoy celebrations.”

“Yes sir.” He nodded.

“Dismissed, both of you.” Fox looked between them and both of them nodded.

Kraken managed to make it back to his bunkroom with little issue, most of the celebrations were being held in the mess and some of the common rooms, “I’m back Nau.” He said and picked up his purrgil, pressing her nose bump to watch the lights, “Sorry I’m late.” He hugged her to his chest and stayed still for a moment before cracking a few of the glitter-lits, hanging them up and after turning off the lights he lay down on his bunk. He took off his goggles and stared up at the glowing lights, “What do you think we should do now? I don’t know what work there will be for someone like me, maybe we could stay here and see if Commander Fox has work, he’ll probably stay on, he seems like that kind of guy.” He pressed Nau’s nose and watched the lights, “Wonder what the others will do, I don’t think Nokt will stay on, or Mouse, or Clicker, I don’t know why I think that but they don’t seem happy in this environment.” He also didn’t know why he talked to Nau, she was a plush, it wasn’t like she was going to answer him... but he liked doing it, “I don’t think Stitches will either, he’s been hurt badly by the war, so I think he’d take the chance to leave the military.”

Maybe they’d let him visit?

He’d either have to learn to pilot a ship or find a transport going to wherever they had gone, he didn’t enjoy the idea of learning to drive or pilot a ship... he’d think about that later, right now he wanted to get some sleep, so he sat up and removed his armour and boots, then crawled under the blanket and sighed slightly, “Goodnight Nau, we can talk when it’s morning.” He hugged her tight and closed his eyes, finding sleep easily. He awoke sometime later to something in his stomach feeling weird, it wasn’t the usual feelings, he wasn’t hungry, he didn’t need to use the refresher, it was just a weird feeling that wouldn’t go away, “Something’s wrong Nau.” He said to his plush as he sat up, he could feel his heart going weird, beating faster and harder in his chest, he’d never had this reaction before... he didn’t like it...

At all.

He blinked, “I think my body is reacting to the wrongness, I think if I could feel this would be fear... or panic... I don’t know.” He didn’t know if he should stand up or just stay seated in his bunk, something was making him react weird but he didn’t know what it was or why it was happening. He decided to stand up and put on his armour, once he was armoured he picked Nau up again and pressed her nose bump as he stared at the door, he heard someone come to a stop at his door and it was a long moment of silence before something happened but what happened caught him off guard because something came through the still closed door, it was bright and humming.

Lightsaber.

Dark anger

Chapter Notes

I don't hate Rex, but I do hate Anakin.

“I know you’re in here traitor, show yourself!” General Skywalker hissed, his lightsaber glowing and humming as the man entered Kraken’s bunkroom, Kraken watched him from the vent cover in the roof and wondered if the General was working under his own choice, he looked weird in the glow of the blade, “Show yourself!” The General barked as he turned in circles as he tried to find him, maybe this was what General Kenobi meant about his lack of emotional scent markers being useful. He blinked as he realised something... how was the General here? He was supposed to be back under arrest and being kept in the prison block awaiting trial... wasn’t he?

Suddenly the base alarms started blaring, “Alert, alert. Level five prisoner has escaped, all personnel report to your commanding officers and detain subject on sight. Repeat: level five prisoner has escaped, all personnel report to your commanding officers and detain subject on sight. Subject is armed and should be seen as dangerous, proceed with caution. Repeat: Subject is armed.”

“Tsk.” Skywalker hissed, then suddenly the blade was dangerously close to Kraken’s face, the General had started his attack, luckily he’d only glanced Kraken’s face but there was a faint smell of singed skin... next thing he knew he was on the ground because the General had sliced the vent, causing it to collapse and sending him tumbling to the ground, “There you are traitor.”

“I think you’re mistaken.” He replied, “Supreme Chancellor...”

“You’re just like those brats, are all of you traitors!?” Kraken managed to roll out of the way of the lightsaber, which sliced through the ground like a hot knife through butter, he didn’t get much time to orientate himself before the next attack and he could smell burned hair as it clipped his hair as he rolled again, soon he was clear to make a break for the door but was sent tumbling when his leg stopped being useful, he looked at the limb and saw the scorch mark on the back of his leg, “Show something you monster!”

Ah.

General Skywalker didn’t like that Kraken didn’t have scent markers.

“General Skywalker! Lower your weapon and come quietly!” He looked to see Commander Fox and several other troopers standing with their blasters trained on the General.

“You! You wrongfully held Ashoka Tano!” Skywalker yelled at Fox.

“General, put down your weapon!” Fox repeated the order.

“You won’t hold another Jedi…” Skywalker started.

“Hey Skywalker, the doctor will see you now.” He looked to Stitches who had suddenly appeared behind General Skywalker and there was a hiss of a stim, but before the General fell there was a massive explosion of force that sent everyone flying, including Kraken, who skidded along the ground before he hit the wall behind him…

Hard.

“Kr…” A voice entered his hearing, “Kraken!” He finally managed to grab onto consciousness and opened his eyes to the face of Fox, “Trooper, can you hear me?”

“What happened?” He asked as he looked around, his brain felt weird, soggy, he looked down and saw that he was still holding Nau, so he pressed her nose bump.

“You were knocked out.” Fox replied, “Are you injured?”

“I think he caught my leg, same one… just further down.” He looked at the burned plastoid, it didn’t look like a stab wound, probably a shallow slashing injury.

“Doesn’t look that deep.” Fox said, checking the wound, “Looks like he barely clipped you.”

“Mm.” He nodded, then pointed to the mark on his face and to his singed hair, “He did a lot of that.”

“We’ll get a medic to check you over proper.” The Commander sighed and sat back on his heels, “What happened?”

“I think he was angry that I outed the Chancellor.” He blinked, “He got this far because everyone was getting drunk?”

“He…” Fox sighed, “He took out the guards in the prison block, no one survived, but yeah, he managed to get here by virtue of half the staff being drunk.”

“Oh. That sucks.” He replied, “What about Stitches? And the other troopers?”

“We were far enough away that we didn’t sustain any major damage, but Stitches is in medical with broken ribs and a brain bleed.” Fox sighed again, “We should get you to medical too, just because you can’t feel anything doesn’t mean something isn’t wrong.”

“Mm.” He nodded, “That makes sense… can Nau come with me?”

“Of course she can.” Fox smiled a little.

“What is your safe object Commander?” He looked to Nau and pressed her nose bump again, watching the lights.

Fox looked around to check if anyone was close, then leaned in and whispered, "I have a little plushie fox that Thorn gave me."

"Oh. Cool." Kraken was surprised the older clone actually told him, "Do they have a name?"

"He's called Caf." Fox replied, "I didn't name him, Thorn and Hound did."

"That make sense." He nodded.

"Ah, here's the medic." They looked to the approaching form of Sawbones, obviously the older clone hadn't been drinking.

"Kraken? Oh dear, are you alright?" The medic knelt down beside him.

"He was thrown against the wall pretty hard but he was on the ground when it happened." Fox explained.

"Do you feel nauseous? Light headed? Any tunnel vision?" Sawbones asked as he and Fox helped Kraken finally sit up.

"No. My brain feels soggy though." He looked to Sawbones.

"Hm, follow my finger." He followed the medic's finger as it moved across his vision, "I don't think you have a concussion but your brain was jostled, we will keep you under ops for the night just to be safe."

"Excellent." Fox sighed.

"Got my leg also." He pointed to the limb, "Can still move my foot, just can't put weight on it."

"We'll get that seen to, we just need to get you to medical first." Sawbones smiled to him.

"That makes sense." He nodded as he pressed Nau's nose bump.

He liked the lights.

Apologising

“Kraken!” He blinked when the cubicle door opened to reveal Nokt and his two brothers, he didn’t get a chance to say anything before the three were wrapped around him, “We... we heard what happened!” Nokt’s voice was muffled by Kraken’s shirt.

“General... Skywalker hurt you too?” Clicked asked quickly, “And Stitches?”

“Mm. I’m okay, they’re keeping me here for observation just in case.” He nodded, “I thought you guys were on Kaller.”

“We were a jump away when Tech picked up the emergency broadcast.” Nokt explained as he and Clicker released him from their hugs but Mouse kept his hold on Kraken, the tiny clone really did like his hugs apparently, not that Kraken was going to complain, Mouse gave great hugs.

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded again, “The Generals said he hurt you guys.”

“He...” Nokt hugged himself tight.

“He attacked us... on Admiral Trench’s dreadnaught... we saw something he... he didn’t want anyone to see.” Clicker replied gently, “He...”

They were interrupted by a knock at the door, which opened to reveal a blond trooper in blue accented armour, “Kraken I presume? I am...” The man started but spotted the three Night Stalkers, Nokt instantly started to panic, his two brothers moving quickly to defend him, Mouse letting out an angry noise as he got between Nokt and the older clone.

“Why... why are you here?” Clicker sounded angry also, he was protecting Nokt’s back, wasn’t Nokt able to protect himself... oh, the man down below made him scared of men, bigger men it would seem, so why were they comfortable with the Batch? Stitches? Him? He didn’t know but even though Mouse was way smaller than any adult trooper, that didn’t stop him from facing down adult troopers in order to protect his brothers, “You... won’t hurt him because... because Kraken is our brother...”

“Boys?” Sawbones appeared behind the blond clone, “Come out here for a moment, Kraken will be fine, the Captain just wants to talk with him. Captain, you have five minutes before Stitches finds out.” Even the medic didn’t sound happy with the appearance of the, now confirmed, Captain.

“Don’t you dare touch him.” Nokt hissed at the older clone as they exited the room, Kraken was so confused, what was going on? Who was this man and why were Nokt and his brothers so angry? They were also scared, that much even Kraken could tell, but he didn’t know why, what did this guy do?

“Not how I wanted this first meeting to go but...” The man sighed, “I am Captain Rex, of the 501st Clone Battalion, formally under General Skywalker.”

Oh.

That would explain it, even just a little bit, “Oh. Why are they so angry at you?” He asked.

“I...” Rex sighed, “I haven’t been good to them, in fact I’ve been down right horrible and cruel to them. I hate myself for that but... I can’t make excuses anymore, Umbara was a disaster but we made it worse for them, I made Anaxes and Skako Minor bad for them... I just had to protect my men but that just didn’t include them.”

“Oh.” He replied, “What do you want to talk with me about?” Rex’s face went weird for a moment, clearly he didn’t like Kraken’s monotone voice and lack of scent markers.

“I can’t apologise to the Night Stalkers for what I and my General did to them because they won’t listen to me... but I can apologise to you for what he did to you.” Rex sighed again.

“Oh. But why are you apologising? He’s not you so why are you apologising for something he did?” Kraken blinked in confusion.

“Because I feel responsible!” Rex barked back, “He’s my General! And... I feel like I let him become this... this person I don’t recognise anymore...”

“Oh. That makes sense but you are a clone soldier under him, I don’t think it’s our job to keep the General’s from doing these types of things. That’s what the other Generals do.” Kraken looked to Nau and pressed her nose bump.

“What would you know about that!? You don’t have emotions! You don’t know what this is like!” Rex hissed.

“Mm, I don’t but I don’t think that makes a difference.” He replied, “He got himself into trouble, I don’t think you should take blame for that, I don’t know or understand a lot of things about the up top but I know when something isn’t someone’s fault, I think, sometimes it’s harder to tell and that makes it a little confusing. I think if it was the men under you then you could take some of the blame because you are in charge but you aren’t above Skywalker, he’s a General, you’re a Captain, he should know better.”

“You...” Rex started but was cut off by a raspy voice.

“He’s in where!?” The voice was angry.

“Stitches, you are in no condition to be on your feet, get back to bed!” Another voice called but the door opened to reveal the medic and he looked murderous.

“You.” Stitches growled, he was holding his side and there was a bald spot with a bacta patch just behind his ear but he didn’t hold himself like an injured man, a man at a physical disadvantage, “What the kark are you doing here CT-7567?” Why was the medic referring to Rex by his number?

“I was...” Rex started but Stitches cut him off.

“Get out.” Stitches hissed, as far as Kraken knew, Stitches wasn’t an officer of rank, so how was he getting away with talking to a Captain like this?

“Stitches, I am here to apologise to...” Rex tried again.

“You’ll be apologising to my boot if you don’t get the kark out of here.” Kraken could barely make out the thin sheen of sweat on the medic’s brow but he wasn’t backing down, would he get violent against an officer of rank?

Maybe.

Probably.

This was Stitches after all.

Talking with brothers

“You okay Kraken?” Stitches asked him once Rex had left, now that his opponent was gone he could show his weakened state and was now leaning heavily on the door frame.

“Mm.” He nodded, he didn’t know why Stitches was so willing to throw hands when he could barely stay upright, against an officer of rank, for a defective clone... “Are you?” He knew the medic wasn’t, he was barely staying upright, he was sweating profusely and was breathing heavily but he might as well ask.

“No he isn’t and is going straight back to bed.” Sawbones said as he appeared behind Stitches, “Don’t make me get Wrecker, cyar’ika.”

“Okay... I’m going...” Stitches sighed but only got two steps before collapsing.

“Stitches!” Sawbones barely managed to catch him before he hit the ground, “Wrecker! I need assistance!”

“Coming!” Wrecker appeared quickly.

“Is he going to be okay?” Kraken asked as he hobbled over to the three, “Fox said he his injuries were pretty bad.”

“He’ll be okay, he just needs to stop being an idiot.” Sawbones replied with a sigh, “Pick him up carefully Wrecker, we can’t afford to cause more damage to him.”

“You okay kid?” Hunter appeared and Kraken watched as the three Night Stalkers followed after Wrecker and Sawbones.

“Mm. Why is Stitches so angry at Captain Rex? Why is everyone so angry at him?” He looked to his ori’vod, it was still a weird thing to think about, that he actually had brothers now.

Hunter sighed through his nose, “He has not been a pleasant person to deal with, to put it mildly.” Tech said with a frown.

“Come on, we’ll talk in here.” Hunter guided Kraken back into his cubicle and to his cot, where he sat down with Hunter sitting beside him, Crosshair and Tech took the seats beside the cot, “I’m putting this out right now, I don’t hate Captain Rex, he’s a good and honourable man, he has done so much for his men and his General. He, however, is a very reactive man and I think that might be down to his General.”

“Oh. How so?” He asked as he picked up Nau again, pressing her nose bump.

“As you may have observed in General Skywalker, he isn’t... a stable man.” Tech explained.

“Mm. He isn’t like the other Generals I met.” He nodded.

“No, he isn’t. He attacked the Night Stalkers on our mission on Anaxes... but the reason we’re angry with Rex being here, is because of how he reacted to the situation.” Hunter sighed again, “Mouse had jumped onto Skywalker’s back in order to get him off of Nokt, Rex saw this and thought Mouse was attacking Skywalker so he hit him with a stun shot but because Mouse is so small, stun shots designed for full grown troopers... can be bad for him.”

“Oh.” He blinked, “That makes sense.”

“I refused them passage back to Anaxes on our ship because of it, Skywalker was taken aside by the Generals the second they touched down, don’t know how they got back to base but they did, Rex found out we were in medical and made a beeline straight there, looking for a fight.” Hunter explained, “He was gunning for me, going to pull rank, but Stitches got between us and him and refused him access to us...”

“It ended up with Stitches beating the tar out of Rex.” Crosshair said, moving his tooth pick from the right side of his mouth to the left.

“Yeah. Luckily he had given Rex ample warnings and Rex started the physical fight, so he could not be brought up for disciplinary.” Tech continued, “Rex, however, was brought up for one.”

“Oh. Where’s Echo?” He looked to Hunter.

“He’s... gone to talk to Rex, he used to be Echo’s CO, the galaxy has changed a lot in the year Echo’s been in cryostasis.” Hunter replied, “Especially those people he used to know, like Rex and General Skywalker.”

“I think General Skywalker didn’t like that I don’t have scent markers, he called me a monster, so I think I unnerved him.” He pressed Nau’s nose bump again and watched the lights, “I think I unnerved Rex too but he didn’t call me names.” He looked up when there was no answer to his statement, the three of them looked odd, like they were angry but they were trying to hide it, “Fox said he killed the prison block guards, did he kill all of them?”

“Yeah.” Hunter replied after a moment, “But one of them managed to stay alive long enough to sound the alarm, he died in Fox’s arms, I don’t know how a Jedi could do that.”

“I don’t think General Skywalker is a complete Jedi anymore.” Kraken replied.

“What do you mean?” Tech asked with a raised eyebrow.

“My mission was to confirm a suspected Sith, you know, the bad Jedi.” He explained, “And General Skywalker was the person that told the Jedi about this person, when I went to spy on him, General Skywalker wasn’t completely confident in his ability to reject the person’s offer of becoming a bad Jedi.” He pressed Nau’s nose bump again, “I don’t think he was under his own control when he attacked me because his eyes were the wrong colour and I didn’t need Mouse’s sense of smell to know he probably smelled wrong also. I wonder how he found out it was me, or where my bunkroom was, General Kenobi said my lack of scent markers make it hard for Jedi and bad Jedi to figure out what I am.”

“Did the other General’s tell him?” Hunter asked.

“I don’t think so, they were dead set on keeping my mission a secret from everyone, General Skywalker included.” He replied, “Did you know that Commander Fox has a safe object? Like Nau is for me?”

“Everyone has something safe they come back too.” Hunter replied.

“Stitches doesn’t.”

“We’re going to fix that.”

“Mm. Okay.”

First time at the beach

“So... where are we going?” Kraken asked the other people in the ship, they had nabbed him the second he'd left medical and whisked him away in their ship, “And why am I here too?”

“We're going on an adventure!” Nokt replied happily, “And we asked Commander Fox if we could bring you along too!”

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded, then after a moment he continued his questions, “Is this a mission? I don't know how well I'll work with all of you.”

“No kid, this isn't a mission.” Hunter chuckled, “We've been granted shore leave and we decided to take it somewhere else.”

“Oh.” He replied as he looked down to Nau, pressed her nose bump and fixed his goggles, he didn't know if he would enjoy whatever this was, maybe he would? The others knew how these things worked and he trusted them... they were his brothers after all, “Did any of you find out Stitches' condition before we left?”

“Sawbones said he'll be fine, as long as he isn't going to be an idiot and move around when he's not able to.” Hunter sighed, then huffed a laugh, “That man deals with so much bantha crap.”

“Coming up in our destination.” Tech called from the cockpit.

“Should... should be smooth sailing in...” Clicker continued, “We're hitting the... hemisphere of the planet that... is in its summer season.”

“Excellent.” Hunter said and walked to the cockpit.

“Don't worry, I think you'll like where we're going.” Nokt said with a smile as Mouse and Crosshair went to the cockpit, “Even Echo's looking forward to it.”

“He seems to be working great with you guys.” He looked to the cybernetic man as he appeared in the door to the cockpit.

“Yeah, he's like me, he has nightmares too but we both suffer from them differently.” Nokt sighed, “We gave him the spare bunk, the one we gave you, I hope you don't mind.”

“Why would I mind?” He blinked, it was their bunk after all, it was in the barracks and it wasn't actually his officially, “I was only there for a few nights.”

“I know but it seems rude of us, I mean... what if you came to visit and we didn't have a bunk free?” Nokt replied quickly.

“I could sleep on the floor.” He replied, “I did it for nearly three years, I had a sleeping bag and a pillow, that was enough for me.” He wasn't sure if he entirely missed the time he spent

alone in a place that hated him, he missed the simplicity of the time, he only had to worry about staying alive and keeping his ear to the ground, up top he had so much more to think and worry about... the war, the politics, social interactions, having people who actually showed some type of care and concern for him... there was a whole lot just piled onto him in the space of a few months.

He was about to continue but the shuddering of the ship touching down distracted both of them, "You ready ori'vod?" Nokt smiled and stood up, offering his hand to Kraken.

Kraken wondered how Nokt could give his trust to some people but not others, he had been very clearly terrified of Captain Rex but he could still engage with his family, with Stitches and Sawbones and now him, "How come you can trust some people but not others?" He asked.

"Captain Rex hurt me and my brothers, even if what happened on Coruscant didn't happen... I wouldn't trust him." Nokt replied, his hand shaking in Kraken's, "He hurt us on Umbara and he hurt us on the Dreadnaught."

"Oh. That makes sense." He nodded and followed the younger clone to the boarding steps and paused when his gaze landed on the ocean, it was nothing like Kamino, it was bright and sunny and very, very blue, even to him, he didn't even stop to talk to the others, he just walked across the sand and went straight to the water before crouching down and just... stared at it because it was so blue and the sounds of the crashing waves was making his heart do strange things, maybe his body was trying to tell him he was happy? Was that a thing?

He didn't know but he just wanted to sit in the water, "I would recommend not being in your blacks for swimming." Hunter appeared behind him.

"What?" He asked with a blink of confusion.

"Blacks and armour aren't great for swimming in." Hunter smiled, "Unless you have the ones they made for the SCUBA troopers."

"Oh. That makes sense." He nodded and returned his gaze to the water.

"We'll be here for a few days, you have all the time to enjoy this, okay vod'ika?" Hunter gave his shoulder a gentle squeeze.

"Mm." He nodded, he heard splashing and realised Wrecker and Mouse were already in their briefs and in the water, "Did Mouse always have a prosthesis?" He blinked at the fact that Mouse didn't have the two arms that Kraken thought he did.

"He lost his arm on Ryloth." Hunter explained, "No idea how he's going to swim with only one and a bit arms but no doubt, he'll show me."

"Mm." He nodded again, "I should also take my armour off."

"I'm not sure of if we should plaster you in sunblock or not, Mouse and Clicker are pale but you're only little bits pale." Hunter chuckled, "Probably do it just to be safe and all that."

“Okay.” He stood up and followed Hunter back to the others, where Clicker was talking to Tech and Crosshair was cleaning a pair of weird looking goggles.

“Diving goggles.” Hunter explained, “Tech, do we have any sunblock left after you plastered Mouse and Clicker?”

“Of course. Why?” Tech looked to them, “Ah, given his pale patches that would make sense.” He didn’t know why... but he liked this.

This was good.

Home.

Beach thoughts

Kraken wasn't sure of much in his life but he was sure on the fact that lying in the water, with the warm sun shining down on him, as the waves rolled around him, was one of the best feelings he'd ever had in his life, it wasn't an emotional one, he knew that but his body was relaxed and weightless, the water around him supporting him with ease, he didn't know how long he'd been floating in the water but he could feel the sun moving though, so it was probably a while. He opened his eyes when a hand appeared on his arm and he looked to see Mouse, the younger clone must be very hydrodynamic, given his lack of body hair, "Something wrong?" He asked but noticed Mouse didn't have his prosthesis on, so probably couldn't reply, the young clone pointed to the shoreline and motioned for Kraken to follow him, "Oh. Time to get out?" Mouse nodded and Kraken stood up, much to Mouse's apparent displeasure, given the pout on his face.

"Food time ori'vod!" Nokt called as they approached the shoreline, he had joined the others in the water earlier but it had taken him a while to work up the courage apparently, as they got closer to the young Sergeant Kraken noticed the scars but he knew better than to comment on it, Stitches was a great teacher on that front "You've been out there for a while now, let me check you for sun burn."

"Okay." He nodded and Nokt nodded in return before checking him over, he wasn't sure what sunburn was exactly but it sounded like it would hurt.

Nokt's finger tips lingered a little longer when he went around to Kraken's back, "Your skin patterns are really pretty and interesting."

"Full body vitiligo is quite rare." Tech said.

"Mm. Stitches said that too." He nodded then looked to Mouse, he wondered if that was something rare also.

"In a similar way, Mouse's alopecia being full body is quite rare." Tech explained.

"Oh." He nodded again.

"I can't find any sign of sunburn." Nokt reappeared from behind Kraken, he'd honestly forgotten the young Sergeant was behind him, he didn't miss the blush on Nokt's cheeks though, "Luckily the sunblock we have is industrial grade and everyone was plastered in it."

"Did ya enjoy yourself Kraken?" Wrecker asked as he and Hunter arrived back from the ship with food, ration packs and a bowl of something that looked like porridge, "Honestly thought you'd fallen asleep out there!"

"Hunter was convinced you'd died to be honest." Crosshair said from his seat, "Only reason he calmed down was because of Mouse."

“He... can smell when someone... becomes past tense.” Clicker said as he fiddled with a shell, “And you... didn’t. I think... you don’t like that he... doesn’t move a lot.” They looked to Hunter, who had an unimpressed look on his face, “Same as you... don’t like that I don’t... make a lot of noise.”

“He’s being a worry wort!” Wrecker laughed and nudged Hunter.

“Some one has to be the adult here.” Hunter frowned.

“That’s my job.” Echo said as he appeared from the ship, he’d gone inside at some point, probably because he overheated or something, Kraken wasn’t sure the effects of being in cryostasis had on a person, maybe he had issues with body temperature? He’d have to ask someone later, “Sit down and eat, it’s been a very energetic day.” He looked at the suddenly in his hands ration pack, he wondered if Stitches was okay now, would he enjoy being at the beach with them? He had a lot of things to think about since coming topside, he wasn’t good at a lot of the things that most people did naturally, like social interacting, he was getting there though, between the Batch, the Nights Stalkers, Stitches and Sawbones, he was slowly learning how things worked but since things were changing again he was a little lost again.

He blinked when the sound of a ship approaching caught his attention, Hunter and his brothers were starting to get to their feet as the ship touched down but Mouse started bouncing happily and pointed to the ship excitedly, “Stitches!” The Nokt and Clicker said happily and the three were off like a shot the second the ramp touched the sand.

“Easy boys, he’s still on the mend.” Sawbones appeared beside the other medic, who had the three young clones wrapped around him, the medic’s brothers appearing beside them, Kraken watched the interaction, did his thoughts summon Stitches? Or were they coming anyways?

Stitches didn’t look as bad as he had back on Coruscant but he wasn’t looking one hundred percent just yet, “How does he keep finding us?” Crosshair asked, his toothpick moving from the right side of his mouth to the left.

“That’s like asking how the Force works.” Wrecker laughed, “Just accept it!” Kraken didn’t know how Stitches found them either but he was sure if he had scent markers he would probably be... happy? Was that the correct output?

“Room for five more Sergeant?” Sawbones asked once they finally managed to walk over to the group.

“Always.” Hunter smiled and stood up, Kraken was the last to stand up, he was a little confused by everything that was happening, so he got up and went to the water to sort through his head, he wasn’t sure if he was being rude but it didn’t make him feel at ease being with such a large group, he just wanted to sit down and stare at the water again, he picked up a shell that was beside him and examined it, it had a weird texture but it had pretty patterns, he wasn’t sure of their actual colours but the ones he could see were nice.

He wondered what his life would be like if he was... like the others, had feelings...

If he was anyone but himself.

Normal.

Choices are never easy

He didn't look to the person who came to sit beside him, they made no attempt to talk but Kraken could hear the person struggle a little with the process of sitting down, he heard the sand move and the person sighed a little once they were fully seated, neither of them said anything, he could hear the others back at the camp set up but the person beside him didn't say anything to him... it was nice, just having someone sit beside him and not force him into a conversation he wasn't sure he was able for. He didn't know why he had a weird feeling in his chest, he didn't know what that feeling was but it made him feel a little nauseous... he wanted Nau... he blinked as the plush suddenly appeared in his vision, begin held by the person beside him, he took her and finally looked to the person, "She thought you could use her brand of comfort." Stitches said to him.

"Why are you over here and not with the others?" He asked the medic.

"I could ask you the same question, you left in rather a hurry." Stitches frowned, "Too many people?"

"I don't know." He replied and pressed Nau's nose bump, "I have a weird feeling in my chest, I don't know if it's because of too many people or if it's because I..."

"You don't have a batch? So this many actual batches makes you feel lonely?" Stitches asked.

"I don't know." He replied, "I don't have this reaction on Coruscant."

"Well, I believe the difference between Coruscant and here, is that you want to belong to these brothers and you don't want that with the Coruscant Guard." Stitches shrugged, "It's down to that primal urge to have a pack and you see them as your pack, regardless of your emotional shortcomings. Many brothers who have lost their brothers will look for others who will take them in and help them, Script for example, his brothers up and abandoned him because he wanted to be a medic, so when they left for off world training, they stopped returning for him, oh they came back to Kamino, just not for him, then after the first campaign... they just stopped coming back full stop, we know they're alive still but he never sees them."

"What did he do?" Kraken asked, "About being abandoned?"

"Well... myself and three other medics became his unofficial batch." Stitches replied, "We survived the first campaign on Geonosis together, the only medics out of thirty to come back alive from the Front-Line Field Hospital."

"You were on the front-lines?" Kraken looked to him again.

"Yes, our field hospital was the one to follow the line, the first port of call for the injured and we stabilised them for transport to other field hospitals." The medic sighed, "Only five of us survived, lost more brothers that first day than we could have ever imagined..."

“Oh.” He pressed Nau’s nose bump again, “Who were the other three medics?”

“Cane, he went on to serve under Jedi General Anai Cutar, Buttons is working under General Kenobi and Needles is back on Kamino.” Stitches smiled a little, then it vanished and he sighed, “The twenty-five medics that died are now just names on a stone, they had to be left on the sands of Geonosis, we couldn’t bring them home... and that haunts all of us to this day.”

“Are they you’re unofficial batch too?” He didn’t know if he was pushing his luck with this.

“My loss is different to Script’s, a different type of pain and I am a different person to Script... he loves and trusts people easily, I don’t.” Stitches massaged his forehead, “They will never hold the place in my heart I have for brothers, because they aren’t my batch... but I do hold them very close.”

“Oh... is that why you haven’t gone looking for a pack?” He blinked and pressed Nau’s nose bump again, he wondered how long her power source lasted.

“I won’t find one.” Stitches replied in a tight voice, “I have friends... I lost my only family.”

“Oh.” He paused, “Do you want to hold her?” He said and held out Nau to the older clone, “She’s my safe object but I think she might help you right now.”

“Thank you Kraken.” Stitches smiled a little as he accepted the purrgil.

“Mm. That’s okay.” He nodded in return, he noticed Hunter looking at them, then the Sergeant looked to Sawbones and said some things, he didn’t know what was being said or why it was being said, he looked back to the water again, then he looked at his shell, he wondered what lived in it at one point, did it live alone? Or was it part of a group? He wasn’t sure of what he would do now that the war was over, when the final pockets of separatists were gone... what would he do? Would he stay on with the Coruscant Guard? Or would he go with the other defective clones wherever they went? He didn’t know and he wasn’t sure he liked that thought because he’d just gotten comfortable in his new routine topside and now he was being shunted off into a new, new routine... he had enough trouble the last time when choosing between what he was designed for and his want of a pack, now he had to do it again... “I don’t know what to do.”

“What do you mean?” Stitches asked.

“Should I stay on Coruscant with the Guard who stay on... or should I go with the other defectives, wherever they choose to go?” He fiddled with the shell, “I’m not sure I like having to make that decision again, so soon after the first one.”

“You have time to choose Kraken, we’re not in a hurry this time.” Stitches’ hand appeared on his shoulder and he looked to the medic, “Okay?”

“Mm... okay.”

Choice

Kraken lay out on the sand and stared up at the stars, he could see them here, they were very pretty and he had been correct in his assessment that Nokt's eye shines were like stars, they twinkled and some of them moved around the sky, following a path new to them... he wondered what they were, were they stars? He wondered if purrgil made lights like that in space, he pressed Nau's nose bump and hugged her to his chest, he would like to see a purrgil at some point in his life but they were deep space creatures and went where they pleased, "Hey kid, you okay?" He looked to Hunter as the older clone appeared from the ship.

"Mm." He nodded, "I don't know what I'm going to do now that the war is over, I don't like that I have to make another choice or adjustment to a new way of life, so soon after the last one." He held Nau up so she looked like she was sailing through the night sky, "Do I stay on Coruscant with the clones that choose to stay on? Do I go with all of you and find a new life... again...? Or do I just wander through the galaxy?" He wasn't sure he'd like that last one, he'd gotten used to having people like him or at least other clones, he didn't want to be on his own again, no matter how confusing it was being top-side.

"This new galaxy is a confusing mess for all of us, we're soldiers, decanted and bred... what are we supposed to do if we don't want to be that?" Hunter sighed, "I'm not sure of what I want to do either but I know Nokt, Mouse and Clicker won't be staying on, this war has done too much damage to them."

"Mm." He nodded again, "I don't think Stitches will stay on either."

"No, probably not." Hunter replied.

"I've never seen the stars before." He looked to the stars again, "I imagined what they looked like when I saw Nokt's eye shines and I think I was correct." He couldn't see them in the underworld, and Kamino was constantly covered in rain clouds, even topside Coruscant was too brightly lit for the stars to shine through, "They're very pretty."

"Yeah, they are." Hunter's voice carried his smile, "The first navigators would plot their courses based on the stars, back before we knew about hyperspace, before there was even space travel, people would look to the stars and find their way home, like a light shining in a window to bring a sailor home."

"Shining in a window?" Kraken looked to him in confusion.

"Yeah, according to Mouse, one of the long-haulers he'd met said his wife would always keep a light on in the window when he went on long journeys, to guide him back to safe harbour." Hunter looked to him with a gentle expression.

"Oh." He replied and looked back to the sky, he was kind of glad it was Hunter explaining this because Tech would be too technical... Hunter made it sound better, like a story not a lecture.

“You going to stay out here tonight?” Hunter asked.

“It’s very crowded in the ships.” He replied, “I’m not sure I like that many bodies around me.”

“I understand, I’ll go grab you one of the sleeping bags and a heat lamp, it’s cold out here.” Hunter smiled as he stood up, “Don’t want you to freeze to death because you can’t feel it.”

“Oh... okay.” He hadn’t noticed but not that he was aware of it, he saw his breath coming out in puffs.

The Sergeant was only gone briefly before he came back with a sleeping bag and a heat lamp, “This is one of Wrecker’s, because you won’t fit in any of ours.” The older clone sounded tired, “Get some sleep vod’ika, lots more to do tomorrow.”

“Okay. What’s tomorrow?” He sat up and took the objects.

“You’ll have to find out tomorrow.” Hunter grinned, “Now, I’m going to bed, you sure you’ll be okay out here?”

“Mm.” He nodded in reply, “I like it out here.”

“Okay. Come in at any point if you need us, yeah?” Hunter gave Kraken’s shoulder a squeeze.

“Mm.” He nodded again.

“Night kid.” Hunter patted his shoulder.

“Night.” He replied and watched Hunter return to the ship, after a moment he placed the sleeping bag on the ground and shook the sand off his blacks before crawling into the bag which was huge around him, though it was designed to hold Wrecker, who was a whole lot bigger than Kraken was, so it made sense. He turned on the heat lamp and rolled on his side, hugging Nau tight against his chest, he didn’t like not knowing what the future was holding before him, he didn’t like having to make his own decisions... he felt the bag move and a small body appeared in the sleeping bag behind him, the person snuggled up against his back and a small arm wrapped around him...

Mouse.

He was going to ask why the small clone was out here and not with his brothers but he heard the soft snores leaving Mouse, which meant he wouldn’t answer Kraken’s question, he’d just have to accept that he wasn’t bunking alone tonight, which was confusing but it wasn’t a bad thing... it was nice actually, he zipped up the remainder of the sleeping bag so Mouse wouldn’t get cold in the night, the heat lamp was on and there was two of them in the bag, so he shouldn’t get too cold, probably. He sighed a little, this wasn’t making his decision easier, he wanted to continue being useful and to be able to do what he was designed for... but he also wanted to stay with his newly found brothers...

He hated choices.

He liked his brothers though.

They were warm.

And safe.

Shared decanting day?

Kraken had never seen so many different types of creatures in his entire life but Tech was introducing him to a lot of the things that lived in the rockpools, they even found a small squid thing, “This is what your namesake is based off of, well, not this one specifically, there are much more gigantic species that better illustrate the image of a kraken.” Tech explained as Kraken looked at it.

“Its eyes are more like a human’s... mine don’t look like that.” He said.

“No, I imagine yours are based on the design of an octopodes.” Tech replied and Kraken looked at him a little confused, “Octopodes, plural of octopus, are another member of the Cephalopod class of marine molluscs.”

“I understood none of that.” He replied.

“It’s a relative of the squid.” Tech replied with a frown, then typed away on his wrist terminal, “Here, this is an octopus.”

“Oh. Cool.” He blinked at the image suddenly in his face, then looked back at the small squid in the rockpool, “I think I prefer squids though.” He said before moving to find more things in different pools, there were a lot of small things moving around as he did, he didn’t know what a lot of them were but they were cool to look at, he liked this, seeing what lived in water, what other fish there were.

“I wouldn’t recommend picking that...” Tech tried to say but Kraken had already picked up the weird leggy shelled thing with pincers, “That is a crab.”

“Don’t people eat these things?” He asked as he watched the crab thing move slowly as it tried to grab any part of Kraken’s body in those pincers.

“They are a popular dish on many worlds.” Tech explained, “Though this species might be too small for any beneficial consumption.”

“Oh, you are cool crab friend.” He said to the thing before putting it back in the water and watching it vanish under some rocks, “What are those things?” He pointed to one of the dark coloured things attached to the rocks, the ones above water were all squished in on themselves but the ones under the water had tentacles out.

“Those are sea anemone.” Tech replied as he crouched down beside Kraken, “When they are exposed above the water line, they retreat in like that in order to preserve moisture and to protect their insides from direct sunlight but when they are under the waterline, they put out their tendrils as a method of acquiring food from the surrounding water.”

“Oh.” He replied, “Cool.”

“The tide is coming in, we should head back to the others.” Tech stood up.

“Okay.” He stood up also and followed after the older clone, until something grabbed his attention, “What’s that?” He pointed to the semi-translucent thing sort of floating, sort of swimming in the water of a rock pool, he crouched down to look at it, it had tentacles too but it looked odd, like jelly.

“That is a jellyfish.” Tech explained, “I wouldn’t recommend picking it up, they have stinging cells in their tentacles, which can cause a variety of negative symptoms depending on the species.”

“Oh.” He nodded, looking back to the thing, he wanted to touch it, to see if it actually felt like jelly but his lack of pain receptors would mean he wouldn’t feel it if he was tagged by it, so he refrained from the action, “Do a lot of things get trapped in the rockpools when the tide goes out?”

“Yes. Though many of them have evolved to adapt to the changing scenery of the coast due to the tides.” He looked to Tech again and nodded, standing up to follow after Tech as they made their way back to shore and the others.

Sharing his sleeping bag with Mouse had been nice, strange, not something he’d experienced before... but nice, “Why did Mouse bunk with me last night?” He asked, “He was bunking with his brothers and then suddenly he was with me... I don’t get it.”

“Because he didn’t want you to bunk alone.” Hunter said as he met them at the shore, “Was just coming to get you, the boys made lunch.”

“Made lunch?” Tech asked, “I would not have imagined that ration packs need to be made.”

“That’s what I thought but they wanted to make something for all of us.” Hunter replied with a shrug, then looked to Kraken again, “You okay vod’ika?”

“Mm.” He nodded, “Tech was teaching me stuff.”

“Right. How much of it stuck?” The older clone chuckled.

“A lot of it.” He replied, confused, “I think it’s interesting.”

“It may be hardcoded into your genetics, maybe they originally designed you to be a SCUBA trooper but your adaptations made you a better spy.” Tech said, he started typing at his wrist terminal again, “It may be interesting to see if you can adapt to underwater work as well as you have to land.”

“We’ll see if we have an extra pair of diving goggles in the ship, you could go out with Crosshair if you wanted?” Hunter looked to him.

“Maybe.” He nodded.

“Let’s get back to the others, I can smell the food and I am starving.” Hunter chuckled and grabbed Tech’s arm to pull him along the shoreline to the others.

He blinked when he saw what the three had made, there was a lot of cooked seafood, “Help yourself ori’vod!” Nokt said happily, “We made enough to feed the whole GAR!”

“How did you know what was edible?” He asked.

“Clicker’s trusty datapad and Mouse’s nose!” Nokt grinned, “We made sure everything is edible and won’t kill us.”

“It smells amazing.” Wrecker said loudly and they all sat around, everyone was taking part, Stitches included.

“We have two things to celebrate today!” Nokt said, “Two decanting days!” Suddenly there was a package in his hands and in Stitches’ ones.

They shared a decanting day?

That was cool.

A sunken mystery

Being completely submerged in water was a weird sensation, having to hold his breath was even weirder, everything was weirder but there was so much to see under the surface, especially at night time when he could see everything clearer, he had Crosshair's spare goggles and flippers, and was fascinated by everything he could see, sure it was cool during the day but there were so many different creatures that only appeared once the sun went down and the moons came up. He could make it into tight spaces to follow little squids and fish that tried to get away, he even found an octopus, it was bigger than the squids and looked a lot bulkier but they too could fit into cramped spaces with little issue, it was so cool and weird that he sometimes forgot he had to breathe, it wasn't until his chest felt weird that he realised it and he surfaced to breathe again. He looked around the area, both the interior and exterior lights of the ships had been switched off, leaving the entire beach bathed in the light from the moons, it was nice, he could see so much in an area lit up by natural lighting, not the artificial lighting of Coruscant and Kamino, it didn't make his head feel weird, it was... he blinked when something caught his attention in the water, it glinted like metal when the moonlight hit it, "Huh. Wonder what that is?" He said to himself and took in a deep breath, submerged and swam to see what the thing was. It was lying between two large rocks, the creatures using them as hiding spots hugged the sides as he approached, he reached out and swept away the sand that was partially covering it, he grabbed it and surfaced again, it looked like a lightsaber hilt but what was one of those doing here? This planet wasn't involved in the conflict, there had been no battles here... so how did it end up here? He checked it over but couldn't find any erosion damage from its time in the water, "Should probably ask the others." He clipped it onto his belt and was about to start swimming back to shore when something else caught his attention a little further out, it was also glinting like metal in the moonlight but it was a lot bigger, he took a deep breath and submerged, swimming towards the thing but he stopped and surfaced when he realised what it was...

A ship.

A Jedi fighter to be exact.

It looked as though the pilot had tried to eject but something went wrong, judging by the humanoid bones scattered around the place, "Huh." He said before submerging again to check out the wreck, looking for emblems that would show what battalion the Jedi was in charge of but there was nothing, it was a generic Jedi fighter, he decided to swim back to the others and get their opinions on the matter.

"Kraken?" Hunter asked groggily when he shook him, "What's wrong?"

"I found a Jedi fighter in the water and a lightsaber." He explained, this woke Hunter quickly.

"What?" The older clone asked, sitting up sharply.

"What's happening?" He heard Nokt in the workshop before the young Sergeant appeared wiping his eyes.

“I don’t think the Jedi who was in it is still alive, the eject didn’t go well from what I can see and there are humanoid bones in the area around it.” He explained, “I think this is their lightsaber but I can’t be sure, it mightn’t even be a Jedi, could be one of the bad ones.”

“This planet isn’t anywhere near any active battle zones.” Nokt said, his eye shines glinting in the moonlight as the three of them exited the ship so they wouldn’t wake the others up, “What’s a Jedi doing here?”

“Could have been chased here, did you see any clankers?” Hunter looked to him again.

“I wasn’t looking for them, I can go check if you want.” He pointed back to the sea.

“We’ll wait till morning, lets see the lightsaber.” Hunter sighed, “See if it was a Jedi and not one of the bad ones.” He unclipped it from his belt and handed it over to Hunter, who activated it, causing Nokt to flinch at the sudden bright light, “Sorry Nokt’ika!” Their older brother said quickly.

“It’s okay.” Nokt rubbed his eyes as Hunter deactivated the blade, “It’s yellow, so that means the wielder was either a Jedi or someone like Krell, who hadn’t made their blade go red and smell wrong.”

“Skywalker’s blade hadn’t gone a different colour... that I could tell anyways.” He looked between the two of them, “Normally red artificial lights make my head feel weird but his didn’t, so I don’t think it was red.”

“It wasn’t.” They all looked to the approaching form of Stitches, “His was still blue.”

“Sorry we woke you ori’vod.” Nokt said as he fidgeted with his fingers.

“Think nothing about it, I wasn’t sleeping anyways.” The medic shrugged, “So what do we know?”

“I was swimming around, saw something metallic glinting in the moonlight, found that, then saw another shiny thing and went to see what that was, found out it’s a Jedi fighter, it looks like the pilot tried to eject but that messed up.” Kraken looked back out to the sea, to where he’d found the fighter, “I think the pilot died on impact and the sea creatures ate them.”

“Hm.” Was all he got from Stitches, “Well Sergeants, what do you think we should do with this information?” Both Nokt and Hunter looked to each other, “Well?”

“Kraken, did you see any emblems on the ship?” Nokt looked to him.

“No.” He shook his head.

“We... should contact the Generals in the morning, see what they think and give them the coordinates should they ask for them.” Hunter said.

“Good plan. Go back to bed.”

“Yes sir.”

“Hm.”

Dark news

Chapter Notes

So this references one of my REALLY old characters, I made him up way back in 2014!

Kraken surfaced just in time to see the Jedi arrive in their ship, it looked like it was General Windu and Grand Master Yoda, why was it the top brass? Was this important? Did they do this for every downed Jedi ship? He wasn't sure so with a shrug he returned to searching for droid parts, there were a good few vulture droid parts, so maybe the Jedi was being chased? He stopped short when he rounded a corner to deeper water, there was a ship, a small one but it was a carrier of some kind, he surfaced to breathe and went straight back down. The ship was broken in two, looked like the explosion happened from the inside... why was there a slab of carbonite? It looked as though someone or something had been in it but it was empty now, there was clone armour and droid parts on the sea floor, was there a battle on board? He swam back up and surfaced, this was a bit bigger than he thought it was, "Kraken. Come back to shore." He looked at his waterproof comm unit, it was Hunter who spoke.

"Yes sir." He replied and started swimming back to shore.

"Find something you did, eager to learn, I am." Grand Master Yoda said as Kraken walked to them, removing his goggles and flippers.

"A carrier of some kind." He replied, "Sir."

Yoda looked weird, "Anything inside, did you find?"

"Destroyed droids, clone armour and an empty slab of carbonite." He shook the water out of his hair but when he looked at the two Jedi again, they really didn't look happy, "The ship is broken in two and it looks like the ship exploded from the inside."

He blinked when Grand Master walked to the shore line and held out his hand, closed his eyes and looked like he was really concentrating, "Woah." Nokt said from beside Hunter as the water moved and both the Jedi fighter and the slab of carbonite broke through the water's surface, pulled by something unseen.

Mouse made a small, upset noise and grabbed Wrecker's leg, "Easy Mouse." The older clone said as the two objects were gently deposited on the shoreline and the two Jedi walked to them.

Kraken looked to Hunter, who shrugged in confusion, "Trooper Mouse, in need of your ability, we are." Yoda said, turning to look at Mouse, who was suddenly looking very shy and embarrassed but he did as he was told and walked over to the two Jedi, "Smell when

something dies, you can?" Yoda asked and Mouse nodded, Kraken blinked in confusion because he thought the Jedi could do that? Use the force to see if someone had become past tense? Unless they couldn't do it with very bad Jedi?

He watched as Mouse went to the slab and leaned in to smell it, how did Mouse experience the galaxy, he could kind of understand how Nokt and Clicker could but he didn't really pay attention to his nose day to day, he'd have to ask later, "M... Mouse says it... the person inside was alive when... released from the... carbonite, they survived the... defrosting but..." Clicker explained, "He's unsure... of if they... survived the crash landing." Kraken would continue to be confused on how Clicker could understand what Mouse meant when he didn't even make audible noises, he'd have to ask later.

"Dark news this is..." Yoda sighed, "Very dark, indeed."

Suddenly Stitches appeared at the slab, alongside Sawbones, "According to the slab's internal system, the person inside was alive... how did they survive?" Stitches sounded confused as he looked at the Jedi.

"Uh... can the rest of us be brought up to speed?" Hunter asked as Sawbones' Sergeant join the other two Sergeants.

"This system says they've been in carbon freeze for over seven hundred years." Sawbones sounded shocked, even General Windu looked shocked, obviously the Grand Master hadn't given anyone information, even his colleagues, "How is that possible? The chances of surviving even a few decades is low but this is medically impossible!"

"Mouse, does this smell off?" Stitches looked to the small clone.

"He... he says it's... not like either the Jedi... or bad Jedi singing smell..." Clicker explained for Mouse, "It smells... sick and... empty."

"Off world, he could not have gotten, still here on this world, he must be." Yoda didn't sound confident and Kraken was very confused on who or what this 'he' was, "But feel him... I do not."

"Is... this person a... what's the term..." Nokt frowned and tapped his forehead, after a moment he seemed to find what he was looking for, "A... a wound in the Force? Is that correct? It probably would explain their ability to survive as long as they did, yes?" They all looked at him and his face went an odd shade, "I... I read it in... doc... documents! I... like reading."

"Of importance to others, this is not, of Jedi concern, it is." Yoda said after a moment.

"Okay but what about the Jedi? The one in the ship?" Kraken asked, "Mouse says it doesn't smell like a bad Jedi, or even like Krell's one, so it was a Jedi."

"Speak no more of this, will we." Yoda tapped his cane.

“We will bring this to the council and decide on our course of action from there, this conversation doesn’t leave those in attendance, this is a Jedi matter, not a clone matter.” Windu sounded annoyed but Kraken wasn’t sure if it was directed at them, probably at Yoda for being so secretive, was this a big thing to keep from the other Jedi? Probably, given the serious look on both Jedi, “This is like the Shrine, a Jedi matter, understood troopers?”

“Yes sir.” They replied and Mouse squeaked in confirmation, Kraken didn’t like not knowing things but he knew better than to push questioning when told to stop.

Stitches was a really good teacher on that front.

Bad Jedi

“Tech, did you find anything?” Hunter said as they all looked to the man, the Jedi had loaded the carbonite slab on to their ship and had just broken atmosphere.

“The data collected from the slab’s internal monitoring system doesn’t have much in terms of who this “him” is but it does give me an estimated date, it also narrows down the place the process happened, there were only a few select places that actually had the facilities to process carbonite, so, based on gender, the year of his freeze and the locations available, I have found four possible candidates.”

“Mouse says... Grand Master Yoda... smelled scared and... really, really sad.” Clicker said.

“Wonder why.” Wrecker said.

“The Grand Master is really old.” Nokt said, “It could be that he was there when this person was frozen.”

“Would explain why he’s scared of this “him”, if he’s one of those... what’d you call them?” Grim looked to Nokt.

“A wound in the Force.” Kraken thought it was cool that Nokt knew so much about politics and he even knew things about the Jedi, he probably read a lot, “It’s... uh... I think it’s when a really bad thing happens, like a huge loss of life in a short period of time, like Malachor V during the Mandalorian Wars, a little under four thousand years ago.”

“You sure do know a lot.” Wrecker grinned.

“I... like reading.” Nokt said, his face going a different shade, “But, I don’t know if one singular person can be one, so this man might just be a very powerful Sith.”

“The bad Jedi?” Kraken asked.

“Yeah.” Nokt replied.

“Medically speaking he shouldn’t even be alive.” Stitches said with a frown, “The lack of fluid and sustenance should have killed him.”

“Not to mention hibernation sickness, I’m surprised he didn’t develop carbonite poisoning.” Sawbones frowned also, “If he survived the unfreezing process, he might not have survived the crash, seeing as he probably couldn’t even move.”

“They Grand Master might be correct in assuming he hasn’t made it off world.” Tech said, his nose in his datapad, “There is not enough traffic through the area to produce enough evidence to contradict that.”

“What did the carrier look like Kraken?” Hunter looked to him, “Was it Republic or Separatist?”

“It was small, so it could have been a personal carrier but I don’t think it was Republic.” He replied.

“It could be that the Separatists were transporting his slab for... some reason.” Echo said as he crossed his arms, “Which means they could have come to pick him up.”

“Which begs the question of when they picked him up.” Hunter sighed, “As they said, it’s not our issue, so let’s not worry too much about it.”

“Yeah!” Wrecker, Speedy and Madcap all said together.

“We’re still on holiday!” Wrecker laughed, earning a happy squeak from Mouse, “We still have a few more hours of daylight!”

Soon it was just him, Hunter, Grim, Stitches and Echo left on the section of beach with the ships, “I’m going to go diving with Crosshair.” He pointed to the sniper who was prepping his goggles.

“A word before you go.” Hunter said and started back to the Marauder, leaving Kraken wondering what there was to talk about, he’d said everything to the Jedi but he followed anyways.

The inside of the Marauder was so much cooler than the outside temperature, “What did you want to talk about?” He asked the older clone.

“They Jedi didn’t take this with them, I don’t know why, seeing as it’s important to them but since you are the one who found it, I think you should keep a hold of it for the time being.” He looked at the suddenly in his hands Lightsaber hilt.

“Oh. Why?” He looked to Hunter again, “Shouldn’t it stay with you? Or Nokt?”

“We didn’t find it, you did, normally it would only be counted as yours if you won it in battle.” Hunter replied, “You found it, tried to return it to its people but seeing as its people didn’t take it with them, it should stay with you.”

“Oh.” He nodded and looked at the hilt, it was a really cool looking thing, he didn’t know what he was going to do with a Jedi saber, he didn’t intend to use it but it could be useful in a pinch, “I’ll put it in my pack, Nau will keep it safe.” He seemed to attract a lot of glowing things, between Nau, the glitter-lits and now a glowing sword, “I like lights.”

“All the more reason to keep it with you.” Hunter chuckled, “Come on, let’s go back and join in the fun.”

“Mm.” He nodded and after putting the hilt in his pack, he went to Crosshair and joined his older brother in his adventures in the deep blue sea, the day was long but the night soon came in, blanketing the beach in moonlight, the moons were like beings staring down at them, watching them, almost watching over them. He had weird thoughts, they weren’t sentient

things but his time with the others had made him think in odd ways, he wasn't sure why but he did and there wasn't a lot he could do about it. He was awoken from sleep by someone climbing into his sleeping bag and curling up against his back... but it wasn't Mouse, the person was bigger than the tiny trooper but wasn't full clone trooper sized, he felt the person sigh and they pressed their face into his shoulder, he caught grey hair out of the corner of his eye...

Nokt.

Why was Nokt in his bag?

The young Sergeant's arm was draped over Kraken's chest, his hand loosely gripping Kraken's tunic, he felt soft breaths on the back of his neck and heard the soft snores leaving his younger brother, so there wasn't any point in trying to ask Nokt his motive.

He'd ask in the morning.

Jerks!

Kraken awoke to the sound of someone taking a photo, he wasn't sure of what but it was of something important given the hushed voices, he moved slightly and opened his eyes with a yawn, only to be met by the grey hair of Nokt, his brother was half lying on him, his face half buried in Kraken's hair and his hand loosely gripping the front on his tunic... he blinked and looked to the source of the camera sounds.

Wrecker and Mouse.

They seemed to notice him looking at them and quickly hid the datapad from view, "Uh... mornin' Kraken." Wrecker said, "We... uh... didn't mean to wake ya." Mouse squeaked in confirmation to the statement.

"W... what?" Nokt asked as he slowly woke up and wiped his eyes, then froze when he realised the position he was in, "O... oh... I... I do apologise..."

"It's okay." He replied, "Though I think those two were taking pictures."

"They were what!?" Nokt instantly fully awake and on his feet, "Get back here!" He chased after the two, who were laughing despite the angry Sergeant chasing them, "Give it to me! Mouse! Stop this instant! That's an order!"

Kraken sat up, somehow the zipper on the sleeping bag was still functional, despite the quick exit of the other occupant, "What the kark is going on out here?" Stitches appeared from the reg ship.

"They're being jerks!" Nokt yelled as he tried to catch the datapad that was being tossed between Wrecker and Mouse, "Mouse! Stop being a jerk!"

"Give me..." Stitches sighed, stalked over to the three and caught the datapad mid-air, "What is going on?"

"They took pictures of us!" Nokt was blushing madly, "I bunked with Kraken and they took pictures!"

Stitches looked to him as he walked up, "They only stopped when they saw I was awake." He explained.

"Hm." Stitches frowned, "Boys, do either of you want to explain?"

"We..." Wrecker and Mouse looked to each other, "We've been taking pictures the whole holiday and wanted to make memories of it..."

'I thought it was nice that Nokt was finally making steps and bunking with someone who wasn't us.' Mouse explained, 'So.' He paused, 'So I suggested we take a picture.'

“I see.” Stitches replied, then held the datapad out to Wrecker, “Show me.”

“What?” Wrecker asked, taking the datapad as he and Mouse looked at each other.

“If it is harmless, then show me.” Stitches wasn’t leaving room for argument apparently, Kraken wondered how often he pulled a non-existent rank on someone, was he of rank or did he just present himself as such?

“What’s going on?” Hunter and the others appeared at the top of the Marauder’s steps, “It’s too early for this horsing around.”

“I agree.” Sawbones appeared, wiping his eyes, “What is going on?”

“These two were digging themselves out of a hole.” Stitches replied, “I’m still waiting by the way.”

“Oh... yeah...” Wrecker scrolled through the datapad.

“I will know if you try to delete something.” Stitches folded his arms.

“Yes... yes sir.” Wrecker nodded and after a moment he handed the datapad back, which Stitches took and looked at.

Nokt went to him and looked at the datapad also, so he went over to look at it too and true to their word, it was just a picture of the two of them asleep in the sleeping bag, “It’s a good picture.” Kraken said, which made Nokt blush even more.

“Hm.” Stitches frowned, then sighed, “Very well, you’re dismissed.”

“W... what...? I mean... yes sir!” The two of them saluted and scurried off.

“Are you of rank Stitches?” He asked the medic.

“No but on this beach... I am the oldest, so even though I’m not a superior officer, I am a senior officer.” He replied, “So, no, I’m not pulling a non-existent rank out of my sheb.”

“That makes sense.” He nodded.

“You should see him go against troopers of actual rank.” Nokt said softly, “Even they back down.”

“Oh... do you do it a lot?” He asked in confusion, was he scary to even the Commanders?

“Contrary to what absolutely everyone seems to think, I do not use physical discipline all the time.” Stitches grumbled.

“It would be kinder if you did cyar’ika.” Sawbones chuckled as he walked over to them, “Given how sharp that tongue of yours is, Cody and Fox are still annoyed that you spoiled their fun as cadets.”

“If they didn’t insist on breaking curfew, then I wouldn’t have to give out to them.” Stitches huffed, earning another chuckle from Sawbones.

“Did you know a lot of the Commanders?” Kraken asked.

“I trained with them on occasion.” He replied, then sighed again, “But... I would rather not talk about those days... if that’s alright?”

“Of course ori’vod.” Nokt said gently and Kraken nodded, he didn’t chance opening his mouth in case the wrong thing came out and made the situation a whole lot worse.

“It’s our last day here, we’d better make the absolute best of it!” Speedy said excitedly, “Party!!”

“Are you okay?” He asked the medic when everyone moved away.

“I’m fine.” Stitches replied, “Have you made a decision on your future?”

“I... I’m not sure.” He looked to the others, “I want to stay with them but... but I have an overwhelming need to do my job, the thing I’m bred to do and I don’t like it.”

“Understandable.” The medic nodded, “Have you talked with your brothers about it?” He shook his head, “It would be beneficial to do so, it might make your decision a tad bit easier.”

“Why... why is my need to do what I was bred for... so much stronger than everyone else’s?” He didn’t know but he did know that he didn’t like it.

“Design I imagine.” Stitches shrugged, “They made you as you are, so it stands that they could have made your drive for duty stronger.”

“It... makes my chest weird.”

“That’s called hurt.”

Wedding?!

“Your brothers have sent a message while you were out.” He looked to Fox as the Commander met him in the base entrance, “Hunter has asked that you clean and polish your armour, hop on the next transport to Naboo and get there as fast as you can.”

“What?” He blinked in confusion, “Did something happen?”

“No idea but I imagine it’s important if he asked you to clean and polish your armour.” The Commander replied with a shrug, “Go get your pack and I’ll organise a transport for you.”

“Yes sir.” He nodded, he wondered what was so important that he had to get to Naboo quickly, no one had said anything in their calls so he was very confused, he did know Nokt had a boyfriend... so maybe it was something to do with that? Or was it Clicker? His younger brother had been suffering with something for a while now but that probably wouldn’t explain the need to polish his armour... “I’m very confused Nau.” He said to his plush as he walked back to the strip, pack over his shoulder, he spotted Fox standing beside and talking to a pilot.

“Good timing trooper.” The Commander said as he arrived beside the two, “This is your ride and this...” He was handed a small case, “Is for Stitches, he asked for it personally.”

“Oh. Okay.” He nodded and looked at it, “What is it?”

“If I told you, then Stitches would beat both our shebs.” Fox huffed a laugh, “Go on, say hello to them for me?”

“Yes sir.” He nodded again and stepped into the transport, following the pilot up to the cockpit.

“Ready to go?” What he thought was the co-pilot as asked they arrived and the ramp went up.

“Yes sir.” He replied as he took a seat, he wasn’t sure what to expect really, he’d never been to Naboo but he heard it was nice, lots of lakes near Theed, maybe he could visit one of them?

He was enveloped by Mouse the instant he exited the transport but he noticed that Clicker was slower to move and was using a cane, “Hey... Kraken.” The younger clone wrapped his arms around him when Mouse let go.

“Hey.” He returned the hug, “Where’s Nokt?”

“He’s at home, having a tizzy.” Hunter said as he approached the three, “Good, you polished your armour.”

“What’s happening?” He asked, he was confused, all of them had polished their armours and had cleaned up, even Hunter’s persistent five o’clock shadow was cleaned up.

“Come on.” Hunter chuckled and motioned for him to follow.

“We... we’re scared you wouldn’t get... here in time.” Clicker said as they walked, the younger clone was loosely holding Kraken’s upper arm.

“In time? In time for what?” Kraken was really confused.

“Ah, good. There you are.” Stitches met them outside a reasonably sized home by the river, “Hm.”

“What?” He was confused by the medic’s unhappy frown as he raked his stern gaze across him.

“Bend down.” Stitches said and when Kraken did, the medic started doing his hair, tying it up into a bun out of the way, “There, now you look presentable.”

“Um... what...?” Kraken looked to Hunter who huffed a laugh.

“Mouse, bring Clicker inside to his seat.” Stitches said to the tiny clone who nodded and helped his brother inside.

“Is... is someone going to tell me what’s happening?” He looked at both of the older clones.

“Our brother is getting married.” Hunter said with a smile.

“What?” He blinked, that wasn’t even something he’d considered, “To his boyfriend?”

“Yep, he’s gotten the family seal of approval!” Hunter laughed, “Even Stitches likes him, seeing as he’s going to walk Nokt down the aisle.”

“That’s what I get for adopting you lot.” Stitches sighed, “Everyone asks what I got from the war and all I can tell them is that I got trauma and eight kids!”

“You love us really.” Hunter chuckled.

“Oh. Commander Fox said to give this to you, said you asked for it personally.” He took the small case out of his pack, “Didn’t say what’s in it.”

“I asked for no...” Stitches frowned then opened the case, then smiled softly, “Oh, okay.”

“What?” He asked.

“Later. Nokt wants to talk before the ceremony.” The medic replied.

“I thought Mandalorian weddings were small.” He said as he was dragged inside, “And private.”

“They are, they said their vows last night, this is more for Shae and his family.” Hunter replied, “Then there is going to be a big party, drinks and food and festivities!”

“Oh. Right.” He wasn’t sure he would enjoy that to be honest, he didn’t like the last party he was dragged into.

“Uncle Hunter!” A small form ran straight to Hunter, who laughed and scooped them up.

“There’s my little monster!” Hunter grinned, “You keeping everyone in line?”

“Yeah!” He noticed it was a little girl, who kinda looked like a twi’lek... but at the same time didn’t, “Who’s this?”

“This is our brother Kraken.” Hunter replied, “Kraken, this is Mimi, she’s Nokt’s and Shae’s daughter.”

“Daughter?” He blinked.

“Yep, they adopted her last year.” Hunter smiled, “And you’ve been terrorising us all since then!” He started tickling the young girl.

“Uncle Hunter stop!” She laughed and tried to fight him off.

“Are you fully twi’lek?” He asked after a moment.

“She’s part human too.” Hunter explained after he stopped tickling the young girl.

“Uncle Kraken you have pretty hair.” Mimi said, “And your skin is like mine!”

He blinked and realised she had patches of skin that were different colours, green with blue splotches... at least that’s what he thought they were, they could be different because he wasn’t wearing his goggles, “Mm.” He nodded, it was odd meeting someone with skin like his, he wasn’t sure of being called “Uncle Kraken” but then again... he was still getting used to being called brother... but this was nice.

Made him feel warm.

At a wedding

“Kraken!” Nokt said as he walked into the room and he was suddenly enveloped by his brother’s arms, “I’m so happy you could come!”

“Mm.” He returned the hug, “I only found out what I was attending just now.”

“Really?” Nokt asked and took a step back, “Well that just won’t do! I’ll give out to them later!”

“It’s okay.” He replied, “Nice outfit.”

“Do you think so?” Nokt smiled happily and twirled a little, it was a dress... maybe... it wasn’t one he normally saw anyways, “Stitches said this belonged to his brother, he modified it slightly to fit me... but he was so happy his family could be involved in this, even if it was something small.”

“His brother wore women’s clothes?” He asked, was that something that happened a lot? Was that a thing that men could do?

“Not all the time but Stitches said he was just so comfortable in himself that he wore whatever he wanted!” Nokt smiled, “And now... now I get to do it! I can be comfortable in myself! I don’t know why men think they can’t wear women’s clothes, they’re so much roomier and lighter! I feel like the Queen of Naboo!” He twirled again.

“I met your daughter.” He said.

“You did? I hope she liked you.” Nokt smiled softly.

“Mm. She’s happy my skin looks like hers.” He replied, “And thinks my hair is pretty.”

“She is self-conscious about her skin, she hasn’t met anyone with skin like hers but I should introduce her to Jek and Shaeeah too, at least she could meet other half human, half twi’lek kids.” His brother sighed a little.

“I think her skin is cool.” He replied, “Is she actually blue and green or is it something else?”

“I believe her base colour is green with blue splotches, like yours is tan with white splotches.” Nokt replied.

“Mm.” He nodded, “That makes sense.”

“I’m really glad you’re here.” Nokt hugged him again and he returned it.

There was a knock at the door, “Ad’ika, you ready?” Stitches asked as he opened the door, then paused when he saw Nokt in the outfit.

“Oh, please don’t cry.” Nokt went over to Stitches.

“Sorry ad’ika, it’s just...” Stitches sighed a little, “It’s like looking at him again.”

“I probably don’t look half as good as he did in this!” Nokt said, trying to lighten the mood again, “It makes my butt look a bit big.”

“You should have seen his.” Stitches replied with a small laugh, then looked to Kraken, “Go on, grab a seat with the others, we’re about to begin.”

“Mm.” He nodded and went to join the others, everyone seemed so much better since moving away from the life of a soldier... happier.

“There you are.” Hunter said when he met up with them, it was probably the first time he’d ever seen the others look anything other than rough around the edges, it was weird.

“Love the hair.” Wrecker laughed, patting his bun.

“Stitches tied it up.” He replied.

“He tied mine up also.” Hunter replied, “And yet, his is still free flowing.”

“In all the time I’ve known him, he has never tied his hair up.” Sawbones chuckled.

“He lets me plait it!” Mimi said happily and they all looked at her.

“Guess who he likes the most.” Crosshair drawled.

“Who’s that?” Kraken asked, pointed to the fancy looking, blue skinned twi’lek, who was talking with a group of people.

“That’s Shae.” Hunter replied, “Nokt’s husband.”

“Oh. He looks different to how you all described him.” He blinked, “Is that his family?”

“Yep, four generations of family to be exact, came all the way from Ryloth.” Hunter replied, “They gifted the two of them the family kalikori, after the ceremony they’ll add their charms to it.”

“Kalikori?” He asked, “What’s one of those?”

“Kalikoris were traditional totems belonging to Twi’lek families.” Tech explained, “They are revered Twi’lek heirloom passed from parent to child through generations. According to traditions, each parent of a certain Twi’lek lineage made additions to the family artwork, to include themselves in the family legacy.”

“Think of it like mandalorian chain code in family armours.” Hunter explained.

“Oh. That makes sense.” He nodded, “You all seem so much happier since moving here.” He looked to Hunter, then to Mouse and Clicker, they looked really happy and excited but despite that Clicker looked very tired... and in pain.

“Excuse me for a moment.” Sawbones said and went over to the two, he could see the medic talking to them.

“He’s okay.” Hunter said.

“He’s struggling.” Kraken replied, even he could see that.

“Yeah, Stitches thinks he won’t be able to walk much longer, soon he won’t be able to get up and do the things he loves... he’s hanging on but it’s moved from his bones now, we don’t think he has long left...” Hunter sounded so sad and this made Mouse look at them, the small clone shook his head in disapproval, “Sorry Mouse.” Hunter smiled, “He’s right, we can’t be sad today!”

“Mm.” He nodded, Nokt was the first of them to find love and get married, this was a big thing, “I’ve never been to a wedding before.”

“Neither have we but like Nokt and Shae, we’re just going to wing it.” Hunter chuckled, “Like every mission we’ve ever had!”

“Yeah. Stitches seems really happy.” He had never seen the medic express that kind of emotion before, he didn’t know anything about Stitches original batch, only that they were close enough that Stitches carried them in his heart and they left little room for others to fill that role.

“Yep, he and Sawbones suddenly have eight kids, so he’s happy that he gets to be there for some of the milestones.” Hunter replied, “Shockingly he allows Mimi to call him ba’buir!”

“Ba’buir?” He blinked and looked at Hunter again.

“It means grandparent.” Hunter smiled, “And he’s her favourite one.”

“Oh... that’s nice.”

It was warm.

Clicker

There was a lot of talking and celebrating once the ceremony was done, everyone was mingling and talking, this was a... “I don’t think we introduced you, this is my brother Kraken.” He looked up from his drink to see Nokt with his new husband approaching, “I was telling you about him, remember?”

“Woah.” Shae asked as Kraken stood up, he towered over the man that wasn’t that much taller than Nokt, probably around Hunter’s height.

“Nice to meet you.” He said and held out his hand.

“Nice to meet you also.” Shae replied and shook his hand, then smiled a little, “I had heard Mimi telling her ba’buir that her uncle had the same skin as her.”

“Mm.” He nodded, “She likes mine and I like hers.”

“That’s good to hear.” Shae sighed gently, “You’ve come all the way from Coruscant?”

“Yeah. I’ve been helping the Coruscant Guard, I tried to do the civilian life but I couldn’t do it and returned to active duty.” He explained, he had tried to be a civilian, try it out before coming to Naboo to commit to it but he couldn’t fight his breeding, he wanted to be with his brothers, to join the Batch in their long haul work but that wasn’t what he was designed for so he decided to stay on Coruscant and help the Guard, keeping in close contact with his brothers... but he apparently missed out on a whole load of stuff, Nokt’s engagement to Shae, their adoption of their daughter, Clicker’s disease getting really bad...

“Well, I’ve heard a lot about you, Nokt informed me of your...” He looked to his husband.

“Emotional shortcomings.” Nokt smiled.

“Thank you ma sareen.” Shae kissed Nokt’s cheek, earning a blush from Nokt, it was nice to see Nokt actually happy, not terrified of each and every man they encountered, he wondered if the young Sergeant had gotten over his affections for Hunter?

“You should return to talking to people.” He said, he didn’t know a lot about weddings but he did know that the married couple did a lot of mingling and stuff like that.

“We’ll talk later ori’vod.” Nokt said and hugged Kraken.

“Mm.” He nodded and hugged him back, he was getting better at this kind of interaction, he didn’t hesitate as much or as long.

He waved to Nokt and Shae as they walked off, then looked around the area, spotting Clicker sitting on a bench beside a flower bed, “Hey.” He said as he sat down beside his brother.

“Hello...” Clicker replied with a smile.

“You okay?” He asked, looking to his younger brother.

“Sawbones gave me something... but I’m tired...” Clicker sighed, looking out at the large gathering of people, at the happiness and fun that was going on, “I can’t do what I want to... anymore... it hurts and I get tired... really easily.”

“Oh...” He didn’t know what to say to that, “The garden looks nice, did you do it yourself?”

“Yeah.” Clicker smiled, “It was... hard to source all the plants... I wanted to plant... but Hunter and the Batch managed to get them while... off world!”

“That was nice of them.” He nodded and looked around at the flowers that were all in bloom, “I think I like the ones with little flowers.”

“They’re my favourite too.” Clicker rested his head on Kraken’s shoulder, it was only then that Kraken realised that Clicker wasn’t wearing his giant noise cancellers but a small pair of in-ear buds, “You should... mingle...”

“I think I’m okay sitting here.” He replied, he didn’t like engaging with people that much, which made his choice to stay with Clicker that much easier, “Sorry I couldn’t stay with you all, I just couldn’t adapt to civilian life, I want to stay but I can’t fight it.”

“That’s okay, we know you’re with us... even when you can’t be with us physically...” He looked to Clicker, who had a soft smile on his features, “I... can hear the ducks from here... have you ever seen ducks?”

“They don’t have them on Coruscant, no bees either that I’ve seen.” He said as a bee landed on his knee, “How do they fly, they’re so fat and their wings are small.”

“No idea.” Clicker chuckled, “Magic... probably.”

“Mm. Probably.” He didn’t know a lot of things, so for all he knew... it could well be magic.

“I think... I think food is going to be served soon.” He looked to his brother, who had his eyes closed.

“You up for that?” He asked.

“Mm.” Was the soft reply.

“I’ll stay with you.” He looked back at the mass of people, there were so many people, he spotted Mimi with Stitches and Sawbones, the older clone was holding the girl up on his hip, it was nice... seeing the older clone being happy, engaging in a social environment.

“She calls him ba’buir... she also calls Sawbones ba’buir but it’s nice... that Stitches lets her call... him that.” Clicker said gently, “He was so... against us calling him... buir... but here he is...”

“I think it’s because she kind of is his grandchild.” Kraken replied, “He admitted that he’d basically adopted us, so it makes sense that he accepts her as his grandchild.”

“Hm. That makes... sense.” He looked to Clicker again, “I’m tired.”

“You can sleep on me if you want.” He replied, “I’ll wake you up when food is being served.”

“Thanks ori’vod.” Clicker sighed and rested his head on Kraken’s lap, the younger clone had lost a lot of weight in the time since Kraken had last seen him in person, he didn’t have a lot of weight to begin with but he’d lost most of it, he was so light now, so small and weakened, that made Kraken’s chest feel weird, made his heart feel weird, this was his brother... he couldn’t do anything... but be there for him...

That was the last time he saw Clicker alive.

Finally Home

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The mood upon his arrival to Naboo this time was muted and empty, the street was quiet and still, even the ducks were quiet... they hadn't made noise when Clicker was put to rest in his garden, when his ashes were placed amongst the beauty of his pride and joy, his beautiful garden... Kraken wanted to keep it beautiful, to keep Clicker's memory alive for as long as he was able to... it had been raining the morning of his funeral, watering his plants, making them shine brighter in the warm sun that bathed them when he was placed at the base of his favourite tree, there was a bench there because he would get very tired and need to sit down... Kraken missed Clicker. He wasn't sure that was a thing that was possible for him but Stitches told him that that was something that happened to everyone, emotions or not, Clicker had been a constant, even when they hadn't been in physical contact for a while... he was always there to pick up a call but now he wasn't and there was a void when he had been that couldn't be filled again. The medic had been devastated by the death of Clicker, that he couldn't do anything to help him, that he'd let another brother die because he couldn't do his job but from what Kraken could tell... there wasn't much that could be done to help him, by the time they caught anything it was too late, it was in every bone and was getting worse. All they could do was make his remaining time as painless as they could, to let him do what he could up until he couldn't and then help make his passing painless and gentle, they had taken him to the lakes, they let him experience the peace of the nature he loved one last time before he went to sleep for the last time...

He knew what he had to do, it wasn't that hard of a decision to make, he knew what he was doing here, what he wanted to do... he knocked on the door and looked at the garden as he waited, it wasn't as well maintained as it had been when he'd last been here for the funeral but that was going to change. He looked to the door as it opened, revealing the small form of Mouse, 'Kraken?' The small clone looked incredibly confused, more so by Kraken's luggage, he still didn't have a lot of stuff, just two packs worth of things apparently, 'What are you doing here?'

"I was wondering if you have room for a brother?" He asked, he'd made the decision when he heard that Mouse would be spending long periods of time alone in the house, because the Batch had to leave on long-haul journeys and Nokt had his own life to live, a family and a job, which meant that Mouse was alone because he didn't have anyone since Clicker left to follow their brother 99... he hadn't told anyone except Fox, who had all but ordered to choose this answer.

'Yes.' Mouse paused, 'I mean, of course, come in.' He followed Mouse into the house, into the living room that smelled warm, 'Are you visiting Nokt as well?'

"Actually, I was thinking of moving here." He said, which earned a very confused look and noise from his tiny brother, "Since Clicker died, you've been living alone basically and I

thought you could do with company, I'm not sure of the quality of company I'm going to be but... yeah... if you have somewhere for me to sleep that is."

'You.' Mouse paused, looking as though he was trying really hard to figure out what was being said, 'What about Coruscant and the Guard?'

"Commander Fox basically ordered me to choose this one." He shrugged, "Told me to get to Naboo and live with my brothers or he'll have me up for disciplinary."

'Yes. I mean, sure.' Mouse replied, 'If that.'

He was cut off by the door opening, "Mouse!" He looked to the door as the members of Nokt appeared, "Kraken? What... are you doing here?"

'He said he wants to move in.' Mouse replied, still very confused.

"If that's allowed." He replied.

"Uncle Kraken!" His legs were suddenly enveloped by two small arms and he looked down at Mimi, the young girl was grinning up at him, "Are you coming to live here!?"

"I mean... if I'm allowed." He replied, looking to his brothers again, who looked to each other in confusion but Kraken could sort of make out that they were kind of talking to each other, he knew Clicker could understand what Mouse was saying without making any audible noise but he wasn't sure if the two could do that also, maybe they could, that would be pretty cool actually, "I heard that Mouse would be spending a lot of time alone since Clicker died, so I asked Fox if it would be a good idea to see about coming to live here and he said yes, as I said to Mouse, Fox told me to get to Naboo and live with my brothers or he'll have me up for disciplinary. So, here I am."

There was a moment of silence before his two brothers smiled and he was enveloped by three sets of arms, "Kraken!" Nokt said happily, Mouse squeaked in excitement, "Welcome home!" He didn't know what the sensation in his chest was... but it was nice, it was warm and it was something he didn't know he needed until this moment, Stitches had told him so many times but he couldn't fight his programming... until this moment because he had a pack... a home... he was welcomed there... a place he could spend his life until they all followed Clicker.

He liked this... he liked this a lot... "Yeah... I'm home." He hugged them both a little tighter.

He was finally home.

Chapter End Notes

Fin.

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