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Chapter Three

*When the light goes dark with the forces of creation
Across a stormy sky
We look to reincarnation to explain our lives
As if a child could tell us why*

*That as sure as the sunrise
As sure as the sea
As sure as the wind in the trees
We rise again in the faces
of our children
We rise again in the voices of our song
We rise again in the waves out on the ocean
And then we rise again*

*We rise again in the faces
of our children
We rise again in the voices of our song
We rise again in the waves out on the ocean
And then we rise*

- Rise Again, by the Rankin Family

I had been in to see I sister briefly, but since she was asleep, I decided to head to the cafeteria to get some food. While there my friends Peter and Susan had joined me after school.

The two of them sat quietly, finally all wondering why Sophia had been brought in. I explained quietly what had happened.

“She’s going to be fine, Alexander. Calm down. She only fainted, so it’s probably not a big deal.” Peter tried to reassure me as I played with my jell-o.

I took a slow bite of my sweet, smooth dessert. “If she were fine, we wouldn’t still be here. You guys had all afternoon in class, I spent time in her room and here worrying.”

“So stop worrying” Susan says with conviction. “There’s enough worry in this world to build tons of monuments. But worry doesn’t do anything except cause more worry and more stress. So just sit back, and enjoy your jell-o. We’ll go up to your sister’s room, the doctor will tell us everything is kosher, and we’ll all go to Pizza Hut for dinner.”

My Dad had this bad habit of taking us all to Pizza Hut for dinner. It was just the place he liked the best, and since he was paying, no one could talk him out of it. It was usually on occasions after things like extracurricular activities, and the like. But it was rare since he wasn’t home that often.

After we finished out food, I lead all of us back up to the fifth floor, and to Sophia’s room.

“Ma’am, the shuttle will be on time, as scheduled.” A tall man said to a woman who looked like a twi’lek right out of *Star Wars* except for her red skin.

“Thank you.” Was the only reply she gave, and he left the room.

I heard the brief exchange. I looked to the woman at my sister’s bedside. “Who are you, and why are you sitting next to my sister?”

The woman looked up and over to the door, where I stood with Peter and Susan.

“Why you must be Alexander. You’re far more handsome than your father gives you credit for.” The woman commented.

“And you didn’t answer my question!” I replied angrily.

“I am your Aunt Lizley” was the reply.

I studied the woman for a few moments. For an older woman, she certainly was pretty. She had the looks. She looked similar to my father.

“I hate to tell you this, lady but I don’t have an Aunt Lizley.” This is true, at least not an Aunt Lizley that I’m aware of.

She motioned for me to come over to the chair next to her. She was sitting in a high-back chair on the opposite side of my sister’s hospital room bed. I just studied her, wondering what

her deal was. Why was she here? If she really was my aunt, why did she choose now to have a family reunion?

I walked over to her, but remained standing, facing her. I wanted to ensure I had her complete attention, and I didn't want her to think I was subservient just because she was my *Aunt*. Or so she claims.

"I cannot answer your questions, Alexander. That's your parents job, not mine. Your father called and asked me to come here to be with the two of you. To watch over you. They will be here soon, and they can answer all your questions." She said this calmly, with a warm yet even tone.

I just gave her a glare, and crossed my arms. That wasn't going to be good enough. I didn't bother with a reply, not wanting my breath wasted. She knew I was waiting, and what I was waiting for.

"Sulk all you want, but it's not going to change anything." She advised calmly. Peter came over next to me, and just wrapped me in a warm embrace. I returned it, resting my head on his shoulder.

"You are his boyfriend?" She asked of Peter, looking at his back.

Peter just turned to look at her, not realizing we had been caught. I suppose traumatic times do these things to people. "Ye... ye..." he stuttered.

Lizley just waved her hand. "Don't fret, I'm not going to tell anyone." She looked over at me, "But you should tell your parents. It's important, more than you realize at the moment."

My Dad and I were about the same height. That was noticed immediately by everyone when he finally walked into the room an hour later. First he walked over to me, and gave me a big hug, silently. I returned it, happy that my Dad had finally come. I felt comfortable with him around.

After the hug was over, he looked over to the 'woman.' "Hello Lizley, thank you for coming. I apologize that your first time in recent memory meeting my children is under such circumstances."

She just gave my Dad a smile. "It was no problem, Jason. These things happen. But your son has some questions. Questions I cannot answer. It's not my place." She seemed to be reminding Dad of his parental responsibilities.

My Dad just nodded silently, putting an arm around my shoulders. "I know." He looked over to me, "We'll have a talk soon. When your sister is awake to hear it too. It's important."

A man of about 6' walked into the room. He wore this tight-fitting uniform that showed off his well-formed abs. On his shoulders was a leathery fabric, with his rank insignia, on his left breast was his military insignia. On his feet were a pair of leather woven boots. The weave

was quite noticeable, and quite beautiful. The uniform was unique, he was a member of the royal guard.

The royal guard is a division of the military, but you don't have to be in the military to be in the royal guard. They protect the royal family. My question was why was the royal guard here?

Susan was being quite obvious in checking him out. He was about 20 or 22 years old. She was shameless. "I don't suppose you'd like to go on a date sometime, would you?"

The young guard looked back over to Susan. He wasn't human, but I hadn't seen his race before. It was close enough, the only visible difference was the colour of his skin. It was a sky blue. "I'm sorry ma'am, it's against regulations."

Susan had been shot down. Very few people have the nerve to turn her down, but this guard somehow managed to say no. Susan was very pretty. If I were straight, we'd be having sex every night. She managed to stay single because she didn't like that 2/3 of the guys were only wanting to date her for her looks. She had the potential to be a supermodel.

Finally the doctor came in. It was the same one I had seen earlier today when I was waiting in here before going to the cafeteria. He looked to my Dad. "You must be her Dad. Mr. Bezner, I'm Dr. Phillips. Your daughter passed out at school. Blood tests revealed that she has been poisoned. We managed to get it all out of her system, and she'll be okay to go home tomorrow. We want to watch her overnight for any lingering issues it may have caused."

My Dad studied the doctor for a few moments. It's this thing he seems to do. He studies everyone new he meets. As if he's sizing them up to see if they're good enough to be around us. Yes, it's always to protect Sophia and me, or so he says. "Do we know what the poison was?"

The doctor opened Sophia's chart, looking at the laboratory report. "It was Agent K49i. We had to get more information about it from Imperial Health before we could fully diagnose her. I checked the medical database, but there hasn't been a reported poisoning with this here on Earth before your daughter. Imperial Health told us it originates on a planet called..." he paused while he looked up the name, I assumed. "called Clarion."

Dad just gave a nod, as if he knew something about that planet. Something no one else knew, perhaps? I had only heard of it once, to know it was in an unruly part of Imperial space. It wasn't unlike *Tatooine* on *Star Wars* from what I heard, but a lot less desert and a lot more jungle and forest.

But why would someone from Clarion want to poison my sister?

My Dad looked to the guard. "I want two of you stationed outside her door during her stay." He looked at me, Susan, Peter and Aunt Lizley. "Let's head home. She won't be awake until the morning?" he asked the doctor.

"That's correct." He said. "I need to get back to my rounds. I'll see you folks tomorrow."

“Dad, I don't understand something” I said after taking a bite of vegetarian pizza. We ended up at Pizza Hut after all.

He looked over to me, having sat across from me on purpose. “What don't you understand?”

“Why would someone from Clarion want to poison Sophia?” I took a long drink of my Pepsi. It was cold and refreshing, just what I needed after spending hours in that vile hospital.

My Dad looked to my Aunt, then to Peter, then to Susan, and finally back to me. He took a bite of his pizza, and just continued to look at me, as if he was considering what to say, choosing his words carefully.

“And why are those men outside Sophia's room dressed like the Royal Guard?”

My Dad blinked. “What?” He took a sip of his own drink, also Pepsi. We had similar tastes. Despite not being genetically related, we had a lot of things in common. Of course he's the one of my parents I was closest to. Sophia was more closer to our Father. “Where did you learn about the Royal Guard?”

“In History and Government class.” I replied, with an annoyed tone to my voice. He'd been to see my all my teachers earlier, so he didn't know I was in that class. It made no sense.

“I didn't realize that was part of your curriculum.” He took a bite of his pizza. He still hadn't answered my question. I was getting tired of his avoiding it.

I narrowed my eyes, and made eye contact. “You're being evasive and rude. I would appreciate an answer, please.”

My Dad lowered his voice, “Alexander, this neither the time or place for this discussion. It's too public. Eat your pizza, and we'll take Peter and Susan home, and then go home ourselves.”

I just nodded. At least answers were coming, or so he said. He usually kept his promises, it's probably why I loved him so much, but right now I felt so distant. So far apart that time itself had placed us in different centuries.

He was creating that distance with his evasion.

It made me feel uncomfortable, and I didn't like it. Both the discomfort, and the distance.