Mass Effect: Eurydice

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Kapitel 1: Weaving the Tragedy

The Illusive Man had said he was stationed on Horizon. Nevertheless Eurydice Shepard had not seen him anywhere yet. Anxious she clenched her fists and searched the place with her eyes. He was ought to be there somewhere.

They had defeated the enemies including the Praetorian. But the Collectors had already taken so many of the colonists with them. It couldn't be…? The thought of him being taken away horrified her to no measure. She was on the verge of following the Collector ship.

"No! Don't let them get away!", one of the survivors shouted at the departing Collectors. He was a mechanic.

Eurydice swallowed before answering. "There's nothing we can do. They're gone."

"But half the colony's in there! They took them. You've got to do something!", the mechaninc flourished his hands angrily.

"Do you think I wanted it to end this way, for fuck's sake? I died what I could", she replied angrily. She was exhausted and agonized by the possibility that they had taken Kaidan with them, as well. They had defeated those monsters and yet that damn mechanic was reproaching her.

"More than most, Shepard", Garrus tossed in. He must have noticed her anger.

"Shepard?", the mechanic turned to her. "I know that name. I know who you are. You're some type of big Alliance hero."

"Commander Shepard.", he said emerging from behind some crates. "Captain of the Normandy. The first human Spectre. Savior of the Citadel." There he was. Unharmed. Dressed in the black Alliance armor. Looking good as ever. Eurydice felt incredibly relieved. She felt her heart pounding and some kind of dizziness at his sight. She was fighting to suppress the urge of running up to him and fling her arms around his neck. Not in front of her squad. She was the Commander. She was ought to keep her countenance. And perhaps he didn't even feel like she did anymore.

"You're in the presence of a legend, Delan.", he said to the mechaning. "And a ghost…"

Delan clicked his tongue and crossed his arms. "Figures. All the good people we lost and you got left behind."

Eurydice thanked god he got left behind. It was selfish. But she would abandon anyone for his sake. She had first realized this back on Virmire. "Screw this. I'm done with you Alliance types", the mechanic gestured contemptuously in her direction and left.

Kaidan approached her and looked into her eyes for some moments. She could not control her body from trembling. Then he embraced her. Suddenly all the weight fell off her shoulders when she too put her arms around him. She pressed him against her body and took in a deep breath. His smell. This was real. For the first time since she was awakened she felt alive again.

"I thought you were dead, Shepard.", hearing his voice right beside her ear gave her goosebumps. She wished this moment to never end. "We all did."

After a while he freed himself from the embrace which Eurydice pitied.

"It's been too long, Kaidan", she said trying to stay focused. It was hard not to palm his face and press her lips against his. "How've you been?"

"Is that all you have to say? *How've you been?*", he said huffing scornfully. "Two years. Two years I've lived with the feeling I was responsible for your death. Since then I've

been blaming myself each day and I've been asking myself how could I let you go? Can you imagine how it is to live like that? And now you show up and act like nothing happened. I thought we had something, Shepard. Something real." His look was angry and taunting. Sure he must had hell of a lot of questions. Yet she felt irritated. "I loved you", he continued.

He said he loved her. Her mind went blank for a moment. Nobody had ever told her that he loved her. But he had used a past form of the verb. "The certainty of your death tore me apart. And now you're here. Alive. How could you do this to me? How could you not contact me during all this time? I don't know who you are. I'm not even sure you're Shepard."

Of course he was angry, she thought. It was comprehensible. Still his tone hurt her. She did not know how to soothe him. How could she have contacted him anyway. Just calling him and saying *Hey, Kaidan. It's me Shepard. I know it's been two years and everybody thought I was dead. But, hey, here I am. Alive and kicking. Fighting those goddamn collectors. Wanna join?*

"I *was* dead, Kaidan", she looked at him angry, as well. "It's not like I spent two years screwing around. I'm back again for a few months. I spent the last two years in some kind of coma while Cerberus rebuilt me."

Kaidan's eyes began filling with disdain. What did she say wrong? He stepped away from her.

"You're with Cerberus now." It was not a question. It was like a sudden realization. His face was incredulous. "Garrus, too. I can't believe the reports were right."

"Reports? You mean you already knew?", Garrus replied. Yes, Garrus was right. Kaidan could have contacted her, too. But he hadn't.

"Alliance intel thought Cerberus might be behind the missing colonies. I got a tip this colony might be the next one to get hit. Anderson stone-walled me. There were rumours that you weren't dead. That you were working for the enemy."

""I'm not *with* them. It was not my choice that they rebuilt me. Cerberus and I want the same thing. To *save* our colonies. " Goddamn it. She and her squad had just cleaned the place from those goddamn collectors and here he was accusing her of working with the enemy? "That doesn't mean I answer to them."

"Do you really believe that? Do you really want *me* to believe that?" He spat out and fiercely approached her again. Yet she realized he was beyond reach. "Or is that what Ceberus wants you to think? When the rumours of you being alive emerged I was filled with hope again. I wanted to believe that you were alive. That Shepard is back. But I never expected anything like this. You turned your back on everything we believed in. You betrayed the Alliance. You betrayed me."

"Kaidan, you know me", how could he actually say that? Calling her a traitor. She could not believe it. "You know I'd only do this for the right reason. You saw it yourself. The collectors are targeting human colonies and they're working with the reapers."

"I wanna believe you, Shepard. But I don't trust Cerberus."

'*Then trust me*', she thought but didn't speak it out loud. *'After all we've been through. How could you not trust me? Have you forgotten?'*

"They could be using the threat of a reaper to manipulate you. What if they're behind it. What if they're working with the collectors?"

"Typical alliance attitude.", Jacob threw in into the conversation initially. "You're so hung up on Cerberus that you can't see the real threat"

'No, Jacob. Stop. You're making it worse. Shut up', she thought. Jacob had a point though.

"Your feelings for Cerberus are hindering you to look at the facts soberly", she tried to be logical. To calm him down. To make him reconsider.

"Maybe", he replied. She started hoping again. "Or maybe you feel like you owe Cerberus something because they saved you." Didn't he feel happy they saved her, at all? Did he wish for her to be dead? "Maybe you're the one who's not thinking straight. You've changed."

"Yes. You did too", she whispered.

"Unlike you I still know where my loyalties lie," he had lost all respect for her. She could see it in his eyes. They were looking at her with mere disregard and loathing. "I'm an Alliance soldier. Always will be. I've got to report back to the Citadel. They can decide if they believe your story or not."

No. No, no, no. That's not how it's supposed to be. No. Kaidan. I was so eager to finally see you again.'

"I could use someone like you on my crew, Kaidan.", She knew it was utterly in vain. But she was so desperate when he turned his back on her. Softly she smiled at him, creasing the brows with despair. "It'd be just like old times…"

"No it won't. I'll never work for Cerberus", The corners of his mouth twisted down. He paused a moment and his face went blank again. "Goodbye, Shepard. And be careful." She felt sick to her stomach. Almost nauseated. Her ears started ringing and she felt tears dwelling in her eyes. "Joker. Send down a shuttle to pick us up. I've had enough of this colony." She needed to leave. Immediately. She didn't want her squad seeing her devastation. She was furious. Shattered. She wished she had never been brought back to life. Fuck Cerberus. Fuck the collectors. Fuck the reapers. Fuck Kaidan. Fuck.

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Back on the shuttle she still couldn't realize what just had happened. The person she thought she loved had abandoned her. He just had turned his back on her like they were nothing. Like everything they had experienced was nothing. Saren. Sovereign. Hell, she let Ashley die for his sake. Did he even deserve being rescued back then? She cringed at her own thought. That was a terrible thing to think. Even now she would have chosen him. She still loved him. Although he hurt her that much. In fact it had been the reason his words had hurt her. Because of the feelings she was bearing for him. But now he's gone. Turned her back on her. Called her a traitor. And threatened to report to the council. Was she really a traitor? She could not stop feeling like he was the actual traitor here.

"You bastard…", she mumbled.

"I guess he is", Garrus replied.

Eurydice winced. "Did I just say that out loud?", she hoped at least Jacob did not hear. But he seemed rather distracted with his datapad.

"Nevermind, Shepard. He's an idiot to call us traitors. Especially you. And he's an idiot to let someone like you go."

What did he mean by that? She guessed he was just comforting her. "I wish Liara was here. Or maybe Tali. I feel so… lost. Kinda hard to admit but I guess I need some friends around me to talk. Thank you, Garrus. For being here with me. For trusting me. For being my friend."

Garrus looked away. "Yeah. Now stop sulking. Maybe you could focus on that anger in order to kick the collector's ass even better."

She chuckled.

When they entered the Normandy several of the crew members would ask her questions concerning Kaidan. Joker, Kelly Chambers. Eurydice wanted to shout at them. She tried to be calm though and answer nonchalantly. It was not their fault. Her anger, her despair, her sadness. She did not want to talk about him. About the rejection she experienced. She did though. Nobody should see her weakness. She was the Commander. Strong and determined. Who would follow a whining lovelorn Commander into a suicide mission?

She went uo to her cabin to be alone and be herself. To indulge herself in her feelings. Or maybe she could distract herself with some work or some reading.

Upon her desk Kaidan's holo was smiling at her. She clenched her teeth and put the frame down. Tears of anger filled her eyes. She took a glass and threw it against the wall while emitting a cry of wrath and despair. Shards of glass scattering around the place. She sobbed and started picking up the shards again. When she was finished she looked at the frame lying down. She sighed and put it up again. "Damn you, Kaidan...", she said stroking his holo with her fingertips. "It was good to see you, though. Good to know you're alive. And even if you're not with me, at least I know you're well."

She decided to take a shower. The hot water eased her tense body. Still she could not erase the image of Kaidan looking at her disdainfully. Calling her a traitor. Telling her he loved her. Seeing the pain. Seeing the anger. He had said he did not know who she was. She did not know either. Was she Eurydice Shepard or was she just a clone? These thoughts were accompanying her all along but she had tried to shut them out. She had tried to be the Commander she used to be. But now Kaidan had questioned herself and she felt numb to the core. She could not withhold the feeling she was an empty shell created by Cerberus. That she was just an object with a fake body and a false soul. She only existed because they needed her. But why did she have all those memories? Why was she feeling the way she felt for Kaidan or her crew? Tali, Garrus, Joker, Chakwas they all had recognized her. Except Tali they were all by her side. They trusted her, they talked to her, they did not question her. Was it real? What was fake and what was not? Was this all an illusion? She felt the nausea creeping up with all these thoughts in her mind. She had to abandon them or else she would lose her sanity ultimately. As if she was sane, at all. She snorted. But in order to finish off the Collector's she had to continue like before. The galaxy was counting on her. How ironic. The galaxy was counting on an undead. She rubbed her face with her hands. "I need to focus..."

After she finished showering she lay down on her bed. Only now she felt how exhausted she really was. Her limbs aching. Her head feeling like exploding any moment. She stared at the ceiling and thought of that night before Ilos. The night when she slept with Kaidan for the first time. How excited she was because she knew it was wrong sleeping with a lieutenant. Yet she did not care back then. They both did not know how long they would manage to survive. So they gave in to the mutual attraction. She had wished for this night to happen ever since Eden Prime. And when finally that night had come she was not disappointed. She felt fulfilled. She felt it was right. Finally something felt right. And after defeating Saren everything was perfect. The whole crew knew what was going on between the two but nobody seemed to judge. It was good. Until the SR-1 was blown up by the Collectors. Until she had died. Before realizing she had fallen asleep.

The private message terminal woke her up. She was startled when she looked at the clock. She had slept for nearly four hours. When she logged in to the terminal her stomach dropped. The message was titled *About Horizon...* It was from Kaidan.

Shepard,

I'm sorry for what I said back on Horizon. I spent two years pulling myself back together after you went down with the Normandy. It took me a long time to get over my guilt for surviving and move on. I'd finally let my friends talk me into going out for drinks with a doctor on the Citadel. Nothing
serious, but trying to let myself have a life again, you know?

Then I saw you, and everything pulled hard to port. You were standing in front of me, but you were with Cerberus. I guess I really don't know who either of us is anymore. Do you even remember that night before Ilos? That night meant everything to me... maybe it meant as much to you. But a lot has changed in the last two years and I can't just put that aside.

But please be careful. I've watched too many people close to me die -- on Eden Prime, on Virmire, on Horizon, on the Normandy. I couldn't bear it if I lost you again. If you're still the woman I remember I know you'll find a way to stop these Collector attacks. But Cerberus is too dangerous to be trusted. Watch yourself.

When things settle down a little... maybe... I don't know. Just take care.

--Kaidan

After finishing the email Eurydice could not help but feeling utterly jealous of that doctor. It seemed it was the only line she had actually read. She felt betrayed. Infuriated she decided to visit the main battery. She wanted consoloation. Distraction. Comfort. And she felt like Garrus was the one who could give her that. After all he was the only true friend she had left. Maybe Joker, but she was in no mood for his buoyancy. There was Miranda but she did not trust her. She barely knew her and Miranda did not even know of Kaidan or their history. Or so she figured. Come to think of it Miranda most likely knew the whole story. Still she did not want to talk to her.
Garrus was cool-headed. He was loyal, trustworthy. He would not betray her, she thought. Lately she also felt kind of attracted to him in a weird way. When they went to recruit Archangel back on Omega and she had realized it was Garrus all along she felt extremely happy and when he came back with her on the Normandy she was grateful. He never doubted her. He never abandoned her. Yes. He was good.
"Shepard", Garrus greeted her rather surprised when she entered through the door to the main battery. "Need me for something?"
"Have you got a minute, Garrus?", she tried to sound nonchalantly hoping he would not sense the tension inside of her.

"Sure," he shrugged. "Just killing time anyway. How do you feel?"

She sighed and sat down a few feet away from him. "Could be better, I guess. But thanks. I just got a mail from Kaidan bragging about some doctor he's dating."

Garrus eyed her for a moment. It seemed he had raised his brows. If he had brows. "I see. And now you came here to distract yourself with the hot badass turian."

Eurydice chuckled. "Yeah. That was pretty much my plan," He laughed at her words. "Thank you, Garrus. For going through all this with me. I couldn't do this job without you."

His mandibles flared. "Sure you could. Not as stylishly, of course."

They started chatting about prior missions and he was talking to her about turian ships. He was just telling her about a recon scout while Eurydice tried to picture herself with Garrus. Was it actually possible for turians and humans to have intercourse?

"Actually, she and I were the top-ranked hand-to-hand specialists on the ship. I had the reach and she had the flexibility", Garrus carried on but Eurydice wasn't paying much attention as she was weighing the pros and cons on trying to hit on him.

"We, ah, ended up holding a tiebreaker in her quarters. I had reach, but she had flexibility. More than one way to work of stress, I guess."

Was he talking about sex? Perhaps this was her chance to make a move on Garrus. "It sounds like you're carrying some tension. Maybe I could help you get rid of it."

"I didn't think you'd feel like sparring, Commander.", Commander. All of a sudden Garrus tried to be impersonal. He seemed nervous.

"What if we skipped right to the tiebreaker? We could test your reach... and my flexibility.", Eurydice continued smirking.

"Oh! I didn't... Huh." Garrus stuttered. He was obviously startled by her move. "Never knew you had a weakness for men with scars. Well, why the hell not? There's nobody in this galaxy I respect more than you. And if we can figure out a way to make it work, then... Yeah. Definitely."

Suddenly she felt bad. This was not right. She was using him. And she could not pull that on someone. Not on him.

"I... I'm sorry, Garrus. This is not fair. I'm a mess right now and I shouldn't play games with you."

Garrus kept quiet. The humming of the main battery filled the room and increased the tension inside Eurydice. Then Garrus sighed with relief.

"For a moment there I was quite irritated, Shepard. I didn't know if you were joking or not."

"Yeah. I don't know. It's just, I'm jealous. And you were always there for me. I kind of have some feelings for you, I guess, which I can't really interpret right now. I don't want to mess up though. You're important to me. And I don't want to hurt anyone."

She realized she felt not physically attracted to Garrus. She could not actually imagine getting intimate with someone at this point. To her it did not feel like two years from the last time she had slept with Kaidan. She wanted distraction, that was all. She was not proud of her move.

"You don't make any sense actually. But I think I get what you mean. Anyway. We should keep it friendly. But I'm here for you. And Kaidan's an asshole. He doesn't know what he's missing."

She was relieved that Garrus handled her imbecile behaviour so well. She hoped that conversation would not stand between them in the future. "Doesn't make me feel better."

"You will eventually. But for now, we should focus on the mission," he winked at her. She could not help but laugh. This was clearly a gesture he had learned from humans. "You're right, Garrus. Thanks. I should get going", she stood up and stretched her arms.
"Have a good night, Shepard."

She was staring at her ceiling again. Gazing into the star ocean. It was utterly stupid of her to hit on Garrus. She felt attracted to him because she felt lonely and thought she could find approval and consolation inside his arms. It was not fair. Neither for him, nor for Kaidan, nor for herself. She sighed. Who was she to blame Kaidan anyway? It has been two years after all. For her it might have felt like a few months. But in reality two entire years had passed. How could she actually expect Kaidan to mourn for her his whole life. Truth be told she would have wished for him to carry on with his life and be happy. Be it without her in his life. *When things settle down a little... maybe... I don't know.* The last sentence of his mail. Was there hope inside this line? Some kind of hint? Perhaps she just had to be patient. Perhaps he could forgive her. Perhaps he just needed to come to terms with the whole situation. But for now a war was going on. And she should concentrate on the Collectors and the suicide mission. A suicide mission. "Let's hope this term is not meant literally"

Kapitel 2: The sorrow of losing the one you want

His work on Horizon was done and he had headed back to the Citadel right after his encounter with Shepard. Angry and confused. While still on his way back he had decided to write her an email. Apologizing. Maybe to redeem himself from the accusations he had made. Maybe to rekindle what they once had. Maybe because he still loved her. He did not know exactly. Whatever it was he felt guilty. Still he could not get over the fact that she was with Cerberus which made him mad and feeling betrayed.

He had told her about Elizabeth, the doctor he was seeing. This might have been a mistake but keeping it a secret was not fair to either of them. He was not entirely honest though. He had written that he and Elizabeth just went out for a few drinks. He did not mention how far they were involved. He thought it would do no good telling Shepard that he was sleeping with someone else.

Why not actually? These past two years he thought she was dead. In fact he had seen her dying. His world had crumbled down when it had happened. He had mourned and hated every day he was allowed to live and she did not. He had decided to carry on with his life. To distract himself. It was not wrong to be with another woman. Why did he feel so guilty then?

He was not even sure who exactly he had encountered today. Was it really his Shepard? The person that was staying in front of him several hours earlier sure did look like her. It was the perfect duplicate. Almost. Old scars were gone, replaced with new scars that seemed her face was stitched together. She seemed stitched together. He could not quite understand what Cerberus had done. He asked himself wether she had really been dead at all or had only been hiding all this time. Or perhaps she was some kind of clone frabricated from her actual DNA. The thought of the desecration of her corpse made him almost vomit. It could not possibly be Shepard. The righteous Commander he knew would never team up with Cerberus. Never. He wondered how come he felt so familiar at her sight. When he had embraced her she felt warm. Her smell was the one he was acquainted with. The expression of her face was the one he had known. The sound of her voice was the one he was missing for so long.

It was already evening when Kaidan arrived. He lived in a small appartment near the Presidium Commons. As Staff Commander he would earn enough to afford a bigger one but he was rather satisfied with the one-room flat he lived in. It had a bathroom, a kitchen and a living place where he was also sleeping. It was enough. He would gladly replace his appartment for a simple bed in the crew quarters of the Normandy SR-1. But that would never happen. And he could not picture himself as some kind of Cerberus guerilla fighter on the new Normandy SR-2.

Kaidan checked his messages. She had not replied. His head was aching. That goddamn migraine again. He rubbed his eyes and tried to ignore the vertigo. He leaned on the silver kitchen counter and breathed heavily when his door bell rang. He guessed it was Elizabeth. He had notified her that he would return today, however he was in no mood to see her. He considered ignoring her but when the bell rang again he went to the door and let her in.

"Kaidan", she raised on her tiptoes kissing him on the mouth. He barely returned it. "You're alright. I was worried. I'm happy to see you.", she smiled cheekily at him. She

was still wearing her work clothes. She had probably went straight from the hospital to see him.

"Yeah, I'm alright. Hell of a headache though", Kaidan rubbed his neck and squinted his eyes. He damned himself for letting her in. He felt annoyed and irritated by her presence.

"Figured. Brought some pills with me", she reached into her bag while Kaidan was eyeing her. She had auburn hair and cornflower blue eyes, slender and much smaller than him. She was a zealous and determined woman, always dedicated to her work. "Here. This should work."

"Thanks, Elizabeth."

"So? How'd you been?", she was from London thus having a British accent. "I've missed you." She caressed his cheek and kissed him.

Kaidan tried to think how good of a woman she was. Nice, pretty, affectionate. Nevertheless he felt uncomfortable. Why so, he could not explain. When she reached under his shirt trying to take it off he pushed her away.

"What's it? You don't feel well, alright. Want me to make you some tea? Have you eaten yet?"

"No. Just stop it", he turned away and headed to the fridge to fetch a soft drink.

She frowned. "Kaidan? Is something wrong?"

He had not realized how big of an impact seeing Shepard again had on him. He felt repelled by Elizabeth' physical attempts. Almost disgusted. He sighed. "Perhaps you should leave. I'd rather like to be alone."

Elizabeth joined him in the kitchen. "You're acting quite weird. Did something happen on Horizon?"

"Well, yeah. I just witnessed almost a whole colony being kidnapped by the Collectors", Kaidan replied annoyed. "Or whatever the hell they did to them. I didn't manage to save anyone except of my own sorry ass. "

She smiled sympathetically, running her fingers through his hair. He felt her too soft, too petite hand on him. "You worry too much, you know? It is not your fault. You're doing your best. You really are an admirable man, Kaidan Alenko." When she reached to kiss him he rolled his eyes and stopped her again. Elizabeth stared at him puzzled.

"I'm sorry, Elizabeth. I can't do this right now."

She creased her brows and pouted her lips making her look like a little girl. "Did I do something wrong?"

"No", he barked at her a little too loud. "You're perfectly fine. But this just doesn't feel right. Not anymore."

She made an irritated sound. "Excuse me?"

"You should go," his voice was strict and commanding.

"I don't understand. Are you breaking up with me?", he noticed she tried to express it nonchalantly.

"I met Shepard."

Elizabeth exhaled and shook her head in disbelief. Her eyes widening in shock. "She's alive then." Kaidan nodded. "And after two years you still want her?", he remained silent and could not even manage to meet her eyes. "She was absent for two years. You thought she was dead for *two* bloody years. And all of a sudden she's walking in and you're running after her again?", she was almost screaming, her voice a jarring sound hurting his ears.

"You don't know what happened. You don't know her, at all", he wondered at himself for defending her almost automatically.

"Were you just playing with me, Kaidan?"

"No!", he objected. "Listen. I don't want this to end dirty." He could see her eyes tearing up. "I never intended to hurt you. But after meeting her on Horizon I understood that I'm not ready for a committed relationship. I'll probably never see her again, but still…"

"I could wait for you to be ready," he looked at the woman and pitied her. She looked forlorn and yet hopeful, tears running down her cheecks, her bottom lip trembling.

"No. I can't be with you. I'm sorry. You're a good girl, but…", he did not manage to finish the sentence when Elizabeth had taken her bag rushing out of his appartment without saying any goodbye.

"Great, Alenko", he said to himself. "Damn, you Shepard. Damn you to hell."

He felt sorry for the other girl. Nevertheless he knew she was better off that way. He remembered how he came to meet Elizabeth in the first place.

After Shepard's death something inside of him had died as well. The only reason for him to get up in the mornings was merely for his duties. Apart from that he had considered his life as pointless. It had taken months for him to even realize that Shepard was indeed gone. Dead. Somewhere in space. Above Alchera. He would never been able to hold her again. His lips would never meet hers ever again. He would never hear her reprimanding, commanding, delicate voice again.

By the time he had come to terms with her being gone, the whole galaxy seemed dull to him. Each person he met, each mission he was on, each food he ate. Everything seemed awfully empty. For the time being he was controlled by anger, unleashing his wrath on his foes, intimidating his colleagues, eventually leading to his promotion. After a while though he had just resignated. Living for the day without any thought of tomorrow. Existing only for his work. It had been around this time when some of his co-workers had pushed him into getting to know Elizabeth.

"You know, Alenko", one of his workmates who viewed him as friend came up to him one day. "I know that smoking hot Doc. You really should go on a date with her."

Kaidan had declined the offer several times until one day he had allowed himself being persuaded into some drinks with her.

They had went to Purgatory that night. He remembered upon first seeing her immediately comparing her to Shepard. Elizabeth was petite, feminine, almost fragile. Laughing sheepishly at any of his sentences. He could have considered her pretty once. Before he had known Shepard. Before everything was infiltrated by that Commander. He was searching for her in Elizabeth. But he could not find her. He damned himself for doing this. He realized that he was only tormenting himself. So he forced himself into further dates. Forcing himself to like the doctor. Trying to eradicate the image of Shepard haunting him.

When they first kissed he had not felt anything. When they first had slept together neither. Aside from lust accompanied by loathing after he was sexually stimulated. He then began picturing Shepard again when sleeping with Elizabeth. Imagining it was his dead former lover he had sex with and not this plain good – and more particularly alive - doctor girl. Kaidan had never been fair to Elizabeth he realized. The whole thing they had was but a lie. As much as he tried to force feelings for this other girl, they never appeared.

After seeing Shepard that day he had realized he was not over her. He had never been, not even for one single day. He remembered how horrified he was upon hearing the rumours that Cerberus had brought her back to life and that she worked for them now. Instead of feeling happy, he was scared, terrified, torn. He remembered how he

was sitting on his couch sobbing manically. The outburst of his own feelings had scared him. What good was it losing his love just for her to resurrect again as some enemy minion? Most likely being obliged to fight her eventually.

But then he had seen her on Horizon and his first reaction was embracing her. Feeling her warmth, her heartbeat, her breath. Yet, terrified as he was by the idea her being a foe, he had unleashed accusations at her before even actually listening to her. Listening to what had happened. Why she was alive. Breathing and not dead. Why she was with Cerberus. Or if it was really Shepard at all. Perhaps he was scared of the answers. Of the truth. And when she had asked him to join him, it was even worse.

The real Shepard, *his* Shepard would have never suggested for him to abandon his career. Giving up everything he had fought to accomplish to join with a terrorist group. This was not Shepard. Or was she?

Soon after they had parted again his chest was filled with an ache. He regretted what he had said leading to Kaidan writing that email.

Seeing her alive. Seeing her standing right in front of him again. The pain showing almost imperceptible in her dark eyes when he was humilitating her. He had felt relieved. Relieved that she was alive, that she was capable of feeling emotional pain. He wondered if they could work it out somehow again. Someday. Maybe what she had said about the Collectors and Cerberus was right. Maybe she was a human. Maybe she was Shepard. Maybe he should have joined them. Fighting the Collectors. No. Not with Cerberus. Every part of him rejected Cerberus. He did not know what to believe anymore. He only understood that he was aching to see her again.

"How could you call her a traitor, you idiot?", him being scared did not gave him any right to hurt her. The pain crept up to his head again, making him feel nauseated. The image of Shepard slowly fainting to give place to the pulsating pain. He tried to concentrate on the face he saw that day. Scarred. Hurt. *'Shepard'*, he thought. *'Please be careful. I want to see you again.'*

Kapitel 3: The Infidel

"Man, that's a huge storm", Lieutenant Vega muttered nervously, his voice fuzzy due to his helmet. "Looks a lot bigger from up close."

"Pretty average for Mars actually", Kaidan replied rather unimpressed. He still could not quite believe that he was on a mission with Commander Shepard. A few weeks ago he was stationed in Vancouver, where Shepard was under arrest for working with Cerberus. Right before the Reapers started attacking earth they had bumped into each other. More than half a year had passed since he had last seen her. He had never visited her when incarcerated. He had never dared. Upon seeing her again he had not felt as awkward as he might have thought. He had felt delighted. She was looking good. Her scars were gone. And she was actually talking to him. Nevertheless both him and her had had seemed uneasy when chatting up briefly. Then the Reapers attacked and husks were all over the place. It was never peaceful for long when around Shepard. And a few hours later he found himself in the Normandy SR-2's Cargo Bay preparing for their mission on Mars.

Vega snorted. "At least one of us is optimistic".

"You're chickening out, Vega?", Kaidan replied as the two men followed Shepard. It *was* average for spring on Mars. There were plenty of duststorms during the perihelion. The one they were facing now was rather unimpressing. "With the reapers invading earth and the station here offline, a little duststorm should be the least of our worries."

Kaidan heard Vega mumbling something into the comm. The Lieutenant had been Shepard's guard for the last six months. Kaidan was not sure how he should feel towards the Lieutenant. Shepard seemed to trust him. When they had left earth for Mars he had even contradicted her. He was young, too young for Shepard. Still Kaidan could not get rid of the slight jealousy he felt because of Lieutenant Vega.

Since entering the Normandy Kaidan and Shepard had not communicated much except of a few mission related sentences. But being here on Mars again with her reminded him of the past. Of their missions together back on the SR-1. Albeit him being still suspicious of Shepard he felt good. Almost at home.

Shepard was running ahead of them not paying attention to Vega's and Kaidan's conversation. Was she avoiding him? He was looking at her figure as they were rushing through the stony red landscape. The woman in front of him, a woman he once had loved, a woman he had doubted, had actually managed to blow up the Collector basis, afterwards turning herself to the Alliance. '*Perhaps doubting her had been a mistake'*, he thought to himself. Suddenly there were gunshots. As they passed some crates they could make out a dozen Cerberus soldiers shooting kneeling Alliance soldiers. Anger started spreading inside Kaidan.

"Holy shit", Vega spoke out aghast. "They're executing them". Shepard immediately dashed forward shooting at the Cerberus troops using her M-3 Predator pistol with Vega and Kaidan backing her up.

"Those guys were Cerberus, weren't they?", Vega asked after they had eliminated the last of the hostile troopers.

"Seems so", Shepard responded. Making Kaidan even angrier.

"What is Cerberus doing here on Mars?", he asked the question directed to Shepard.

"I don't know," she said without turning around, instead she continued heading

towards the station. Kaidan ran after her.

"You don't know?", there was a reproach in his undertone.

"I'm not with Cerberus anymore, Kaidan, if it's that what you mean," she sounded annoyed.

"It seems suspicious at least."

She did not bother responding further to that. Kaidan knew he should probably stop questioning her. It would not benefit the mission and the team's morale. Nevertheless he was angry and wanted to talk to her. She must have known at least something. After all she had been for months with Cerberus.

As they continued into the station, shooting several more of the Cerberus troopers, he walked up to her while she was operating the elevator. "Shepard, I need a straight answer."

"Kaidan…", she turned away obviously annoyed, pressing one hand into her hip the other on her face.

"Don't "Kaidan" me. I'm serious", she turned around again. "Do you have any information on why Cerberus is here? You must at least know something."

"And why exactly do you think I would know that?", she sounded both angry and hurt. Upon hearing the slight pain in her voice he turned away before continuing. "Damn it, Shepard! You worked for them. You were flying around the galaxy on their ship, with a Cerberus crew, fulfilling Cerberus missions. It's reasonable to think you'd know something."

"Reasonable, huh? Well fuck that. I never worked *for* them!", Kaidan winced at her furious tone. "They rebuilt me, they gave me a ship, they gave me resources, I brought down the Collectors, afterwards turning myself in to the Alliance. What more do you want to hear?" she came to lean next to him on the elevator railing. He could not face her. "Listen. I've had no contact with Cerberus since destroying the Collector base. I have no fucking idea why they're here or what they want. Understood?"

Kaidan bit the inside of his cheek. She was probably telling the truth. Still it confused him. There had to be more to it.

"Commander Shepard has been under constant surveillance since coming back to earth. No way they've communicated since," Lieutenant Vega threw in supporting Shepard. It annoyed Kaidan that Vega interfered. He had a point there though.

"Sorry, Shepard. It's just that…", he did not know how to finish the sentence.

They took off their helmets when the elevator arrived. She looked at him with creased brows and a disappointed expression. "You of all people should know me better, Kaidan."

Okay. *Now* he felt bad. Until now Shepard had never counterpunched. She had only tried to explain herself. But now she had criticised him. Plus the sorrow in her voice made him regret his interrogation.

James was observing the argument clearly confused. Perhaps something began dawning on him.

"Please trust me", she added when they walked inside the station.

"I do. I'm sorry…", but they were interrupted by noises and shooting coming from the ventilation shaft. Instantly the three of them drew their guns taking cover when a figure kicked through the shaft's grating and jumped down. It was Liara T'Soni. Kaidan had not seen her for years. She was looking good. Although three years were nothing for an Asari she seemed to have grown fairly more mature. He saw Shepard smiling sincerely when she got out of cover. She reassured James that Liara was no foe and walked up to the asari to reunite.

Kapitel 4: The Battle of Humanity

Seeing Liara again felt great. She was a good and welcome friend. Especially after having Kaidan questioning Eurydice's every step. It was tiresome. Yet she had sent James back to the shuttle and not Kaidan. After all it was him she prefered to have by her side.

She had tried to get over him. Even attempted to distract herself by flirting with others, but she never managed to get intimate with someone else. In fact the last time she had slept or even kissed someone was with Kaidan the night before the SR-1 got shut down. That happened almost three years ago. Three years without intimacy. Well, it did not feel exactly like three years for Eurydice since being in stasis after her death, but still, it felt so long. She was almost yearning to be touched again. By him. But she could not think of that now. Not in the middle of a mission. She shook her head as if she could get rid of her thoughts by the gesture. Kaidan would not want her anyway.

They had made it to the labs, passing several scientists' bodies. It was a gruesome sight. Suffocated scientists, agony and shock across their dead faces, cramped hands at their throats. Did her body look like that when she had died? It was no wonder Kaidan was acting so frustrated surrounded by all this death. It upsetted her, as well. Cerberus had begun acting extremely brutal. To think she was working with them some months ago made her feel nauseated although she knew she was not to blame for any of the crimes Cerberus was committing now. Liara pressurized the room in order to make the labs that led to the tram station accessible.

"Hey," Kaidan said approaching the surveillance screens. "There's a recording of what happened here."

The footage showed the now dead guards mentioning an odd activity when the woman Liara had refered to as Dr. Eva Coré appeared in the background suddenly drawing a gun and assassinating the two. Liara drew the air in sharply at the realization.

"Guess we know how Cerberus got in", Eurydice stated soberly.

"I should've realized it when I met her", Liara leaned on a table. Her voice filled with self-reproach. "I was so focused on finding a way to stop the Reapers. I did not pay attention to her at all."

"Stopping the Reapers is the only thing we should be focused on, Liara. It's not your fault."

Liara started shaking. She clutched onto the desk as if not to faint. "What if we're wrong, Shepard? What if there's no way to stop them? If anything's futile? What if these are our last days and we waste them screwing around trying to solve a problem we can't fix?"

This was weird. Liara seldom lost her temper. Eurydice did not like what Liara was saying. She felt a pain in her chest caused by Liara's statement. They were not fighting in vain. Every sacrifice they had made, every life they had lost. It could not have been all for nothing. She was thinking of the civilians she saw dying on earth. That little boy... What good was it bringing her back from the dead when everything was futile? They could have let her rest in peace. In truth she almost wished she would have stayed dead. But this was not the case. She was alive. And she had to fight. *They* had to fight.

"What are you saying, Liara?", she saw Liara pressing her lips together, a hint of resignation across her face. "You can't be serious. All we've accomplished so far... We can't give up. Not *now*!"

"I know. I'm sorry, Shepard. I should not think that way. I cannot give into despair, for it is no good", Liara sighed, burying the face in her hands. "I've just lost track. And... And I'm scared. But you. You are so determined. You give us strength. I don't know how you do it. You've always stayed focused, even in the worst situations. I admire you so much."

With a longing in her eyes Eurydice looked at Kaidan who was standing at the room's entrance with his back to them. "I think about what I'd lose if I fail", Kaidan turned his head and Shepard immediately looked back to Liara who was folding her arms. Eurydice could swear there was a subtle hint of jealousy in Liara's eyes. "Anyway. We've not lost yet. I try to imagine the future we could live in. And this idea keeps me determined. We will stop them", she smiled, resting a hand gently on Liara's shoulder. "Together."

"Yes, Shepard. As I said. I admire you. Let's head to the tram station now."

***

Upon entering the room that was leading to the tram station a turret hanging from the ceiling started shooting at them. Immediately Kaidan pressed forward to back them. They took cover from crate to crate in order to get to the other side of the room behind the turret. Kaidan was doing a remarkable job. The three of them were a good team. Just like old times. It delighted Eurydice and distracted her from the occuring thoughts caused by the earlier conversation with Liara. What was she fighting for? Did she have anything to fight for? She was doing it for the galaxy. For all the others. But what was *her* purpose in this battle?

They cleared the room but they were facing another problem. Cerberus had already made it to the Archives while Eurydice and her squad were locked out. Kaidan suggested to deceive the Cerberus troops through a communicator. While Eurydice was just praising the Major's performance together with Liara, he called her. Kaidan had found a dead trooper with a transmittor in his helmet. He opened the dead's visor and revealed his abnormal face.

"My god", he muttered stepping away. "He looks like a husk."

Shepard bent over to examine the trooper further. His flesh seemed decayed, emitting a sickening stench of death. "He is not a husk. But they've done something to him."

"And by 'they' you mean Cerberus?", she nodded. "They did this to their own guy?", Kaidan faltered before he continued. "Is this what they did to you?"

Eurydice opened her eyes wide in dismay. "What!?", she could not believe what he had just asked her. A genuinely pain striking her. "How can you compare *me* to *him*?"

Was it this what she was looking like? She could feel the doubts returning of which she had thought she had already banished from her mind. What was she? An object created by humans? Hardly organic. A creation with no soul. She felt the doubts whisper to her as they had done all those months after she had woken up from her death. '*Who am I?*', she thought. '*What am I?*'.

"Shepard, I don't know what you are or who. Not since Cerberus rebuilt you", he answered as if he had read her thoughts. "You could be their puppet. Controlled by the Illusive Man himself."

She was at a loss for words. He was expressing what she was fearing all along. Her body started trembling, a coldness spreading to her limbs. "Kaidan…", was he right? Was she a puppet? "I am I…", she said to herself, whispering.

"Don't try to explain it. I don't think I'd understand it anyway. I just want to know… if it is you. Wether the person that I'm looking at right now, is the person I once knew? Is it the person that I followed to hell and back, the person that I loved. Are you still in there?"

She looked down to the ground. "I am myself. I am the vessel of my memories, my feelings, my thoughts. This object is me", then she looked up again. Facing him. "They didn't change who I am, Kaidan. They didn't change how I feel about you. I am myself. But my words won't convince you, will they?"

He looked evidently confused. "I don't know. I don't think it's enough."

She smiled and dared to nudge him. "Yes. You were always stubborn."

Then he laughed. The tension inside her eased a little. "Come on. Let's see what's Cerberus is up to. Maybe we'll both get some answers."

***

The Cerberus troops had bought Eurydice's deception and the tram filled with Cerberus arrived. They eliminated the hostile soldiers until their ride to the Archives was finally ready only to meet even more Cerberus troopers. They were awfully lot. Apparently Cerberus really did not want them there. Eventually they arrived at their destination. Liara started operating the control panel when the Illusive Man's holo appeared.

"Illusive Man!", Liara growled.

"Fascinating race, the Protheans, aren't they?", he merely stated.

"What do you want?", just seeing him infuriated Eurydice.

"What I've always wanted, Shepard. This artefact holds the key for solving the Reaper threat," he took a pull on his cigarette and looked at her with his cold, glowing blue eyes.

"I've seen your solution. You're turning them into monsters", Eurydice's voice was filled with disdain.

"Hardly. They're being improved. This is what seperates us, Shepard. Whereas you see destruction as solution, I see a way to control. Imagine how strong humanity would be if we could control the Reaper's power."

"You're deluded!", Eurydice tried to appeal to his conscience. "Work with me. I will manage to destroy the Reapers."

"Shepard. The odds aren't in your favour. And I don't want the Reapers destroyed. We can dominate them."

Cerberus and thus The Illusive Man were a pro human organisation. At the beginning they were acting as rogues. Then they spent four billion credits on bringing her back, managing the impossible. Working with them the short time they were allies was okay for Eurydice since they were together after the Collectors, whereas the Alliance did not seem to care. Although The Illusive Man had wished not to destroy the Collector base. But now he seemed he went mad. Controlling the Reapers? Just the thought of that disgusted Eurydice. She asked herself if he might have been indoctrinated already.

"The Reapers will kill us all if we don't stop fighting each other."

"Yes", he nodded in contempt. "I don't expect you to understand. And I don't look for

your approval. You are merely a tool. An agent with a single purpose. You succeeded. But this is not your fight anymore. Don't interfere with my actions.“

Eurydice grimaced. A tool he said.

“Shepard!“, Liara exclaimed. “The data! It's not here. It's being erased”, Liara was typing hectically.

“It's local. Someone's uploading the information.“

They could hear The Illusive Man laughing confidently.

“Hey!“, she could hear Kaidan shout from behind. “Step away from the console!“ The energy of the monitors cut off. “She's got the data!“

Dr. Eva Coré sprinted out the room with an incredible velocity. Instantly Eurydice was chasing after her, but it was impossible to reach Coré. When Coré started jumping through walls she knew she could not be human. Still Eurydice ran although she was out of breath and her sides stitched. They reached outside when she saw a Cerberus shuttle approaching. “James, you read me?“, she gasped into her comm.

“I read you“, James replied through static.

“Cerberus has the data. Radio the Normandy. Get them down here. Now!“

Quickly she climbed a ladder to another top but it was too late. Coré had already jumped into the shuttle.

“Damn it. James!“, Eurydice yelled. “Normandy! Anybody! Do something!“

Then she saw the shuttle James was riding approaching only to collide with the Cerberus shuttle leading to a crush on the roof just next to Shepard, Liara and Kaidan almost killing them all.

Angrily Eurydice stood up and gestured him to land.

“Normandy is en route. They'll be here soon“, James said nonchalantly exiting the shuttle.

“James, are you out of your stupid mind!?“

He shrugged, seeming confused at her reproach. “What, Shepard? I took care of them, didn't I?“

Kaidan helped Liara back to her feet. She was limping. “We need the data!“

Inside the crashed Cerberus shuttle a dull sound clanged. The shuttle's entrance door was blown away and out of the flames Coré emerged. Her human appearance molten away by the fire leaving behind a silver female shaped android. She was a mech. Kaidan pushed Liara away and drew his gun shooting at the mech which came racing towards him. The bullets glanced off of the mech's body. It striked away Kaidan's gun, gripped him by his helmet and lifted the man with one hand.

“Kaidan!“, Eurydice screamed terrified leveling her Shotgun at the mech. “Let him go!“

The mech looked at her, still holding Kaidan in the air. Eurydice was scared. Losing his helmet would mean his death.

“Orders?“, the mech spoke into its comm.

“*No*!“, Eurydice could imagine the answer to the mech's question. The mech turned around and smashed Kaidan's head against the burning shuttle's wall. “No!“, Eurydice yelled again but the mech continued with the procedure. Around Eurydice everything went silent except the defeaning ringing in her ear. She felt her knees weaken and panic spreading throughout her body.

After threwing away Kaidan's body the mech turned around now running towards Eurydice. Screaming Eurydice shot several times at the mech when it finally went down just in front of her.

“Grab that thing. Bring it with us“, she ordered James to take the mech inside the ship running to a lifeless Kaidan. He was still breathing. “Don't die on me, Kaidan!“, she

begged heaving him to her shoulders.

"Shepard…", Liara said behind her. "There's Reaper activity…"

"Quick! We need to bring him to the medbay," Eurydice interrupted her not caring at all for any Reapers at that particular moment.

Eurydice entered the Normandy and hurried as fast as she could to the medbay. She laid Kaidan down on a stretcher taking of his helmet. "Please, don't die on me", carefully she stroked his cheek with the back of her hand. Tears rolling down her face. "Don't leave me."

Behind them James carried the mech inside. Puzzled he watched his Commander's outburst of emotion.

"Kaidan needs medical attention", Liara snapped at Eurydice bringing her back into reality. "We have to get him out of the Sol System. The Citadel is our best chance."

"Get us to the Citadel, Joker!", Eurydice called out to Joker. Only now she had realized that she had completely lost her self-control. She squared her shoulders trying to be Commander Shepard again.

"*Roger that*," Joker replied to the comm.

"Liara. See what you and EDI can learn from that thing", Eurydice gestured to the mech and left to the Comm Room to speak with Admiral Hackett.

***

Admiral Steven Hackett had requested to speak to Shepard about their mission on Mars. She updated him about the Archives and Cerberus' interfering. As she was telling him about the data they had managed to recover, Liara appeared to explain what EDI and her had learned.

"Commander", Liara approached Eurydice after the call had ended. "EDI is extracting data from the Cerberus machine."

"Okay", Eurydice replied indifferently not in the condition to talk business. But Liara continued anyway.

"By the time we will arrive at the Citadel we will have details that we can present to the council."

"And Kaidan?"

Liara shut her eyes and sighed. "I've done what I can for him. But we need to bring him to a medical facility soon."

Eurydice passed Liara without giving her another answer.

"The Admiral is right, isn't he? It's going to get worse."

"Unless we stop the Reapers, yes", Eurydice stated without turning around.

"I've looked at the data. This weapon could be the answer. Provided that we can build it."

As important as it was, Eurydice could not pay attention to Liara's words. Her mind wandered off. When she saw Kaidan lying on the stretcher she had felt some kind of hopelessness. The only thing she wanted right now was being at his side and hoping he would pull through.

"You don't believe it, Shepard?"

"You didn't see what they did to earth. How is one weapon supposed to stop them?", Eurydice knew she was being cynical. It was unusual for her, also contraproductive for the entire mission. She could not stop thinking of Kaidan. Of the possibility of losing him. His body was lying downstairs in the medbay. Perhaps he was taking his last breaths right now and she was here wasting time.

"Shepard, we have no other options. This is no ordinary war and you know it."

Eurydice knew of the importance of what Liara was talking about. She understood how urgent it was to build this weapon. How they were running out of time. But could they not just allow her to be human once? Just once having a little time for herself. She had the feeling her body did not belong to herself but to everyone else. To the council, to the civilians, to the galaxy. Maybe she was a tool. She looked away from Liara with a painful expression. She was about to tear up again.

"Commander? Isn't it worth trying?"

"I'm gonna go check on Kaidan." Liara sighed at Eurydice's respond. "Make sure we're ready to present our findings to the council."

The asari nodded. "I'm sure the council will see the need to help."

"It will be a hell of a short war if they don't."

Eurydice sat next to the stretcher Kaidan was lying on, firmly holding his hand. She knew it was not right. The crew would probably talk. It could lessen her authority. But she did not really care at that moment.

"I guess you would not want me to hold your hand right now," she stroked the skin of his hand with her thumb. "Since you're thinking of me as of some kind of abomination, right? You know what? I don't give a fuck if you want it or not", she felt tears running down her cheeks again. "But please fight. You need to get through this. I don't think I could win this war without you. I don't even know if I would want to try."

She felt ashamed that she was losing her self-control again. She could not recognize herself. She felt it was very wrong of her to talk to Liara the way she had talked to her earlier in the war room. She should have paid more attention to the Doctor's informations and most importantly focus on their mission. It was wrong of her to have her mind occupied with Kaidan. And it was wrong of her to lose hope. Not when so much was at stake. Not when so many were depending on her. Still, when the mech had Kaidan in its powers back on Mars she had felt so weak. Weak and powerless. She took a deep breath. "I need to be Commander Shepard", she said to herself. Forcing a determined smile to her face. "I am in debt of those who died, I am in debt of those who are still fighting. And I am in debt of you."

***

They had finally arrived at the Citadel. To Eurydice it had felt like an eternity. They had informed medics of Kaidan's condition and as soon as they had entered the docking bay the medics were rushing him to Huerta Memorial leaving Eurydice, Liara and James behind. They needed to see the council first.

"Commander Shepard. We had word you were arriving", Eurydice heard a familiar voice saying.

"Captain Bailey. Good to see you again."

"Yeah, good to see you, too. Though it's *Commander* now", he rolled his eyes.

"Congratulations? I guess?"

He gave her a brief update of his new tasks and that the council was awaiting them but were busy at the moment. It meant she had time to visit Huerta Memorial first.

"You go on ahead", Liara said smiling. "I'll go to Udina's office."

When they all head departed she proceeded to the hospital.

***

"Shepard! There you are!", Karin Chakwas greeted her in the patient lounge. She was standing next to Dr. Michel. She remembered her firct encounter with the red-haired doctor three years ago. Now she was the human medical in-charge of the hospital. Shepard was happy to see both women but anxious to get to Kaidan as soon as possible.

"Dr. Chakwas. You're here?"

"Yes, I'm working with the Alliance. I heard that one of your crew was injured. I came as quickly as I could," Back on the Normandy SR-1 Dr. Chakwas had been one of the first who got wind of what was going on between the Commander and Kaidan. On this account she was looking sympathetically at Eurydice. Not that her restlessness would not betray her anyway.

"Kaidan was hurt on Mars, yes. Cerberus interfered with our mission. How is he?"

Dr. Chakwas smiled softly. "He is alright, Shepard. Under the circumstances at least. Chloe did a great job. He is her patient by the way. I wish I could have joined you on Mars."

Eurydice felt so relieved she wanted to hug the doctor, but refrained to do so. Instead she reacted to the the doctor's hint. They were missing a doctor on the Normandy and she could not think of someone better than Dr. Chakwas. A woman she not only trusted entirely but who has also grown on her heart after all this time. "You belong to the Normandy, Karin. I would be pleased to have you joining us again."

"Say the word and I am with you." There was a spark in Karin Chakwas' eyes which made Eurydice laugh.

"Get your things. Docking Bay D24."

"Thank you, Commander. Now go see him," she cocked her head at the door at the end of the patient lounge. "He's stationed on this floor. Just through this corridor."

"After you've visited him we can talk about his condition", Dr. Michel tossed in. "He is unconscious now but he will recover."

Grateful Eurydice shook the hand of both women before leaving for his room.

***

"Excuse me?", another doctor approached Eurydice in front of Kaidan's room. "You want to visit Major Alenko?"

"Yes. I am Commander Shepard. The Major was injured while we were on a mission together."

"Shepard?", the doctor raised her brows. "Pleased to meet you. I am Dr. Elizabeth Drake. Kaidan is an acquintance of mine. I have to inform you, he is unconscious though."

Eurydice realized who the women was. She immediately felt jealous again. She wondered if the doctor knew of Kaidan's and her past. "I've been informed already. Nevertheless I feel obliged to visit the Major. It happened on my watch."

"I see. Of course you feel obliged if the soldiers you're responsible for are hurt or worse. I'd be, too. Well, have a good day, *Commander*."

'*What a bitch*', Eurydice thought. She had to admit the doctor was not ugly though. She was probably the opposite of Eurydice with her feminine posture, her clear skin and the narrow nose adorned with tiny freckles.

"I'm sorry. I thought Dr. Chloe Michel was in charge of the Major. How come you control his visitors?", Eurydice lifted her head, failing not to give her a smug look. In

response the doctor cocked an eyebrow and smirked.

"As I said. He is an acquintance of mine. It happens that I also am a doctor so I'm checking in on him."

Eurydice's lips twitched. She would gladly insult the woman. For a second time that day she could not recognize herself. "How nice of you. It happens that I have not much spare time so I should probably go inside now. Have a good day, *Doctor*."

Dr. Elizabeth Drake turned away and Eurydice finally entered.

***

Eurydice watched him lying on the bed topless. He was badly bruised. The sounds of the ECG reminding her that his heart was beating. She felt bad. That doctor had implied it was her fault Kaidan was here and it made her feel even worse. It felt as if an invisible power was squashing her heart.

"Hey Kaidan", she said faltering. "I don't know if you can hear me. I guess not. But you can't tell me to get the hell out either so I'll take my chances", she smiled faintly, softly caressing his arm with her fingertips. "Seeing you like this feels bad, you know? Seeing you get hurt like this... On my watch. It made me crazy. Just the thought of losing you...", her voice faltered and she pressed her hands against her face, inhaling slowly. "I would be lost without you. This war wouldn't be the same. Don't die. You've got to fight. Please return to me."

Another doctor holding a datapad got in. It was probably time to go.

"Oh, and the doctor you are dating – or were, I don't know – I can't stand her", she sighed. "Kaidan, you're a hell of a soldier. The Alliance could sure use you. *I* could use you. Come on Major. Fight. And that's an order."

She left. Ready to meet up with the council to discuss the potential annihilation of the galaxy.

Kapitel 5: Worries unsettled, Heartache unresolved

Sighing Liara exited the elevator that had brought her to the Embassies. Instead of walking directly to Udina's office she took a left and sat down on a bench where she could look down at the Citadel. Shepard would not arrive soon anyway since she went to visit Kaidan.

Liara had felt frustrated at Shepard's behaviour after the Mars mission. It was understandable that Shepard was scared for Kaidan but her panicking upsetted Liara. It was obvious to everybody how Shepard was feeling for Kaidan and it made Liara feel miserable. When they were on Mars Shepard would only have eyes for Kaidan. Liara had hoped that after the way the Major had treated Shepard on Horizon she would have stopped feeling for him. Shepard would not talk about the incident. It was Garrus who had told her about Kaidan's reaction to the reunion with the Commander. It had disgusted Liara. How could he not be utterly happy that Shepard had returned? How could he claim that he had loved her when he clearly did not care for her. Kaidan did not deserve the devotion Shepard had for him. Not at all. What had Kaidan ever done for Shepard? Nothing but abandoning and hurting her. It was true that Kaidan had grown as a soldier. He had become capable. But still. Why him? Why not her? After all it was Liara who had found Shepard's body and turned her over to Cerberus. It was her who could not imagine a life without Shepard. Not even death sufficed to make her stop caring. She would do anything for Shepard. What would Kaidan do? Nothing. No. He did not deserve Shepard. Not a bit.

Liara remembered how she started falling in love with the Commander. Never had she met such an intriguing person. Determined, affectionate, salient. Seeing inside her mind was the greatest experience Liara had ever lived until then.

When Shepard had turned her down because she was interested in the Lieutenant Liara had been very disappointed. Nevertheless she had tried to be happy for her. And when she saw their love blooming, how happy Shepard had been, it was easy for her to be happy, as well. But when Liara learned that Kaidan had let her down, she had lost all respect for the man and hoped that Shepard would, too. But she never did. Shepard had stayed loyal to Kaidan. All along. And whatever Liara had attempted had never been noticed by Shepard. By now Liara almost felt hatred for the man. Hatred and envy because it was him the Commander wanted.

Liara felt ashamed because of these negative emotions she felt towards Kaidan. When he was lying in the medbay and Shepard was suffering agony for his well-being a small part of Liara wished he would not make it. She was scared by herself. She knew his death would hurt Shepard beyond measure. Maybe even break her. So she tried to banish these wicked thoughts from her mind. Primarily she was wishing for his recovery. For Shepard's sake, for the war's sake and even for his own sake. But as much as Liara struggled the jealousy would not leave.

Liara saw the elevator's doors open and a both relieved and melancholic looking Shepard walking out. Kaidan would recover.

"Ready to face the council?", Shepard smiled at her.

The asari nodded in a serious manner. "Let's go."

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The council had been another disappointment. 'A fool's errand' Tevos had called Liara's work on the blueprint and Shepard's plan. Everything was going south and the council was only concerned for their own world's well-being. At least the turian councillor Sparatus had tried to accommodate them. So Palaven was their next destination.
Liara sat in her office on the Normandy analyzing the data EDI and her had gathered again and again without new results. Sighing she buried her face in her hands.
"You seem troubled, Dr. T'Soni", Liara's VI Glyph interrupted her thoughts.
"Yes, Glyph. It's the blueprint. I don't seem to make any progress and it bothers me. I forwarded the information to the Turian Councillor. We will need his support."
"Maybe you should take a rest, Dr. T'Soni."
Liara smiled wearily. "I shall visit the Commander in her cabin. I need to talk to her."

Shepard's cabin was on the first floor of the ship. She had the floor for herself and the cabin was the size of a small apartment. The new Normandy was bigger in general. Compared to the first one the ship was like a station. Liara's office was of noticeable size as well, but it was Shepard's ceiling Liara envied a little. Shepard could gaze out at the galaxy while lying in her bed. Liara imagined herself lying next to Shepard on the bed, watching the stars in joint silence. She smiled at the idea. What wouldn't she give to make it reality?
"Liara, can I help you?", Shepard greeted her with a weak voice as Liara entered the cabin. Shepard kept an open door policy and since her cabin door wasn't locked Liara thought she was free to talk. Shepard looked pale and exhausted. Her brown hair was tangled, her eyes were weary, dark circles had formed around them. It concerned Liara seeing the Commander so worried. She wondered if it was because of Kaidan or because of all the circumstances.
"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to intrude, Shepard. Were you sleeping?"
Shepard stretched her back and gestured Liara to sit down at the couch in the living room part of her cabin. "It's okay, you didn't wake me. I couldn't sleep anyway."
Liara seated herself and watched the Commander before she started speaking. "I've been forwarding the information on the Prothean device to the Turian Councillor. We would need his support but he's not acting until the Turian Primarch is safe."
"I know", Shepard's eyes were almost lifeless. She looked so tired it alarmed Liara.
"Are you alright, Shepard?"
"Yes. A little restless, that's all. I'm not sleeping good lately."
Liara wished to embrace the Commander and give her some comfort but she did not dare to be so impudent. "What else is bothering you, Shepard?"
Shepard closed her eyes and sighed. It took a while before she finally replied. "Kaidan... He almost died on Mars", her voice faltered. "People around me have a tendency to get hurt. Or worse", she looked at her feet and fidgeted with her fingers.
"Shepard... Kaidan's a soldier. He knows the risks. So do you", it ached Liara seeing Shepard hurting so much. She remembered how her jealousy made her wish Kaidan would not survive so she can have Shepard for herself. She felt ashamed again, better say disgusted at herself. "Kaidan is strong. He will pull through. You don't have to worry. If it wasn't for you we would all probably been dead by now."
Shepard looked up again. A little spark in her deep hazel eyes. "You're right, Liara.

Thank you.“

”You really care deeply about him, don't you?“, Liara said with a longing almost hurting smile.

Shepard nodded slowly.

„Do you still love him, Shepard?“

There was a long dreadful silence. Liara felt it was hard to breathe. She could feel her heart pounding against her chest. She feared Shepard's answer, wishing she would say that her love for Kaidan had ceased.

„I do“, then Shepard stated disillusioning Liara. „Even if he has moved on and doesn't feel the same anymore. But for me nothing's changed. It doesn't feel like almost three years have passed, you know? When I woke up at the Cerberus base all I could think of was him.“

Liara made a painful expression. Of course. What a fool she was. How could she hope Shepard's feelings would change? The Commander was not volatile concerning her feelings. She would probably love Kaidan forever. Just as Liara would love Shepard.

„Well, love is not a victory march.“ Shepard gave her a questioning look. It was not Shepard and Kaidan's love Liara was talking about. She got up off the sofa and stepped up to Shepard. Smiling she gently place her hands on Shepard's upper arms.

„I'm sure he will be okay, Shepard. He will make it. And he will see what you really are and what strong love you bear for him. Don't be afraid.“

Liara saw the warmth returning to Shepards eyes. Her full but pale and chapped lips forming into a frail smile. „That is very kind, Liara.“

As much as Liara was pining away with sorrow she knew it was hopeless and she had to surrender. This was not a farewell, yet it felt like it. „I guess I should let go.“

„Let go?“ Shepard stared at her in confusion? „Of what?“

When Liara formed her lips to answer Specialist Traynor walked in. „Commander Shepard. I'm specialist... Oh, I beg you pardon. I... um...“

„I was just leaving“, Liara said a little relieved and walked away.

She wanted for Shepard to be happy. She really did. Still she could not suppress the tears that were forming in her eyes. Shepard's confession was no surprise however hearing her expressing the words had hurt Liara. After all these years a small hope had remained within Liara and she felt the illusion now shattering. A cold and a darkness surrounding her. She could not let it overwhelm her. If she loved Shepard she should let her go but stay by her side as her loyal friend. For now she had to concentrate on the Reapers. And on the little project she was working on for the Commander. Thinking of the project made Liara smile.

Kapitel 6: After Escaping the Rain

When Kaidan opened his eyes the dazzling light stung into his pupils immediately releasing a pain to his temples. He felt a pressure on his whole body and a hammering ache beneath his skullcap. His neck was stiff and his spine felt like hell. When he tried to raise his upper body the nausea overwhelmed him pressing him back into his bed. He covered his eyes with his hand took in a deep breath and exhaled calmly. Carefully he started another attempt. He stared at the unknown ceiling before his eyes started scanning his environment. He was in a hospital. Then he remembered what had happened. He had survived.

The door to his room opened with an awfully loud sound making him squint his eyes again.

"Ah!", he heard a cheerful female voice. "Major Alenko! You're awake."

He slowly turned his head to the right to recognize a familiar face. "Dr. Michel…", his voice was hoarse, his mouth dry and his throat was burning. "I need… water."

Dr. Michel nodded vigorously before leaving to bring him a glass of the desired liquid. "You must drink slowly, Major."

He reached for the glass with a trembling hand. "Where am I?", he said, his voice but a whisper.

"Huerta Memorial. On the Citadel. You were out for three days. Can you remember what happened?", Dr. Michel cocked her head sympathetically.

Kaidan downed the water in one and started coughing. He felt his dizzyness increasing. It took him a while before he could answer. Slowly breathing in and out he found his voice again.

"I remember. I was with Shepard and Dr. T'Soni. On Mars", Dr. Michel nodded typing something inside a datapad she was holding. "Some kind of cyborg messed me up. I thought I was dead."

The red-haired doctor smiled softly. "No, but you were unconscious for several days. Actually it was a close call. Good they brought you here instantly."

"The Normandy?", Kaidan's eyes slightly widened.

"Yes. They docked on the Citadel and handed you over to our medics. Shepard visited you a few hours later after we had treated you. She was very worried. But I assured her you would survive. You really took heavy damage, Major. I can give you the medical report. In addition to lacerations, contusions and a severe concussion your implant was…"

"Shepard was here?", he interrupted the doctor, his voice betraying his excitement.

"Yes, yes. The Commander was overanxious. She was afraid you wouldn't make it", Dr. Michel formed yet another compassionate smile. "I can message her that you regained consciousness and are soon ready to welcome visitors if you're willing to."

"No. I will text her. Thank you, Doc", he did not know why but he wanted to write and invite her personally. "When can I leave?"

Dr. Michel chuckled shaking her head. She sighed and her face turned stern again. She lifted her index finger for a reprimanding gesture. "Don't rash things, Major. You just woke up. You still need to recover before we can release you. You're not even to leave this bed. And after your release it will take some *more* time before you can go into duty again."

He scowled at the doctor. Definitely not the answer he was waiting for.

"As I was explaining earlier", she continued not minding his mute objection. "You arrived in a serious state. Your implant was rattled. But it's the cerebral edema that concerns me the most", Dr. Michel made a worried expression, genuine concern in her green eyes. "I don't want to upset you, Major, but I need to observe your brain under all circumstances. The swelling has decreased slightly. It might take weeks for you to recover."

Kaidan rubbed his hands over his face. Hearing Dr. Michel's medical report devastated him. It meant he had to lay in this sterile hospital room while the galaxy was going down. It meant he could not fight alongside Shepard and the Normandy. It meant... the occurring thought horrified him. "My...", he swallowed. "My biotics?"

Dr. Michel took a moment to think before she replied to him. For Kaidan it felt like an eternity. The anxiety seemed to overwhelm him. "At this point I can't give you a certain information yet. But I have already discussed the topic with other doctors. Your implant was not harmed, only rattled. The other doctors and I predict there will be no noticeable change concerning your biotics. But only time can tell."

Relieved he leaned back into his pillow letting out a long breath he was holding in. "Thank you, Doc. You can't imagine what this means to me."

Dr. Michel smiled softly. She appeared almost proud Kaidan thought. "Alright, Major. I will arrange for your meal and then we have to take some scans. Don't bother calling our personnel if you wish for something. See you later!" With that said she turned on her heels and left him to his thoughts.

The last thing he remembered was being held by the mech on Mars and hearing Shepard screaming in exasperation. But he felt he also remembered hearing her voice later without being actually aware of it. A silent, urging beg for him to return. This voice... Warm, familiar, strong yet so fragile. He wondered if he had actually heard her or if it had been his imagination only.

"Shepard...", he whispered placing his right hand on his chest above his heart. When he was on the verge of death it was her face he was seeing. Her image along with the image of the future. Things that might become reality one day. A galaxy at peace. He remembered how he thought he was dying desperately clutching to the mental image he was creating. How he tried to deny death when there was so much left he wanted to say, to feel, to accomplish. He had survived. The possibility of all this was still existing.

He thought about Shepard. All this time he had rejected her. Telling himself she was not the person he used to know. Merely a copy of the person he once had loved. Flesh without a spirit. A vessel without a soul. He was hurting her so he would not be hurt again. He grimaced at his own imbecility. Only now he realized how wrong he had been. How much time he had lost by neglecting her.

He felt it was her voice that had led him out of the darkness of unconsciouscness. He thought it would also be her voice that could make him leave the darkness he had surrounded himself with after she had died. Dead and yet alive. If only he could accept the fact that he had not lost it all and instead had been granted a second chance. The lost time he could have been by her side was irrecoverable but perhaps there was something left to rebuild. Perhaps he could grasp this chance now and make up for his mistakes.

"Shepard", he said more firmly now. He tried to get up but failed. The pain still prevailing. Hastily he searched for his omnitool with his eyes. Then he found it on a

table together with his other belongings. Out of his reach. He sighed exasperated. She would be probably busy anyway. Nevertheless he wanted to message her as fast as he could. To finally start mending things. He was toying with the idea of calling a nurse when his door opened. A relieved smile lightened up his face.

"Wow. Didn't expect you being so pleased to see me", the woman grinned at him.

His smile vanished only to be replaced by an irritated expression. "Elizabeth?", his jaw dropped when he watched her entering his room casually. "What are *you* doing here?" Elizabeth rolled her eyes. "I work here? Heard you woke up so I rushed over", she shrugged. "How are you feeling, Kaidan? You arrived rather battered."

"Great, thanks. Would you mind passing me my omnitool?", he answered sardonically. She cocked an eyebrow and reached for his omnitool to hand it over. "Were you expecting somebody or why were you beaming?"

"No, I wasn't. Just needed my omnitool. I'm still a little... limited", Kaidan did not bother to look at her instead he scrolled through his omnitool. It bugged him that Elizabeth had turned up. He still felt uncomfortable having her around after the way the two had seperated. Elizabeth did not seem to feel as awkward though.

"So, not happy to see me?", she smirked approaching his bed. "It's been quite a while, Kaidan."

Kaidan did not fail to pick out the seducing tone in her voice. He put his omnitool down to look at her. The last time he had spoken with her had been shortly after meeting Shepard on Horizon. It had roughly been a year. Elizabeth had not change much. She still had her medium-length auburn hair falling down her back and an everlasting glitter in her blue eyes. She was pretty and she seemed more self-confident. But to Kaidan she still appeared dull and lacklustre. Nothing inside him moved when looking at her. "Yeah... I hope you're doing good."

Smiling she patted his hairline. He frowned. "I do. As you can see I'm still working at this place. I'm quite happy although we have a lot of work lately. No wonder with all that shit going on. When you were brought in I was really upset. The thought of you dying scared me like hell. I was so furious with your Commander."

"Shepard", Elizabeth nodded when he mentioned the name. "Why would you be angry with Commander Shepard?"

"She almost let you die, Kaidan", she expressed it as if she was stating the obvious.

"What are you talking about? We were on a *mission*. I'm a *soldier*. Me getting injured is a regular hazard. Part of the job", her words had infuriated Kaidan and he made no attempt to hide it.

"Oh, please...", Elizabeth rolled her eyes and made a derogatory gesture.

"No, Elizabeth", he hissed. "It's *not* her fault."

"You're still defending her, aren't you?", she folded her arms. When Kaidan did not respond she continued. "I'm not surprised. You know, Kaidan, I've always been aware of the fact that you never desired me. You were looking through me. You were always searching for her when you looked at me. You never felt anything for me. I always knew. But I was so desperate, so pathetic. I was wishing so much for you to change. I was wishing you'd get over her. I hoped you'd somehow just stop feeling for her and start feeling for me," she paused, letting her words sink in. "But I was wrong. You were obsessed with her. And when she returned I knew I had lost you."

Involuntarily Kaidan felt ashamed. He looked down at his hands. In his mind he tried to form sentences to console Elizabeth. After a while he broke the silence. "I'm sorry, Elizabeth. I'm sorry for the way I've treated you," he rubbed his eyes with his fingertips. Sighing he continued. "I never got over Shepard, that's true. I've spent two

years of my life living with the guilt of letting the person I loved down. I felt guilty for surviving when she was dead. I thought I didn't deserve just one more day in this fucked up galaxy when she was missing. In all objectivity things were going well for me. I got promoted, I met a nice girl who liked me," he saw her smiling sadly her arms still crossed at her midsection. "But inside of me there was a void I could not fill. I felt numb. I felt dead. I was nothing. I was a ghost controlled by anger, hate and despair. Only the thought of doing the right thing because she would expect me to do it, kept me going. So I tried to move on. I tried to be happy", he paused for a moment. "Then I saw her again. On Horizon. I didn't want to believe it was her. I was so pissed. But I also realized how much I'd missed her. I realized there would never be a substitute for what she had been to me. Shepard was my missing part. She still is."

Only the sound of the machines disturbed the silence that fell over the room. Kaidan saw the glistening in Elizabeth' tear-filled eyes.

"She was here", she whispered hoarsely.

"So I was told."

"She loves you."

Kaidan stared at Elizabeth. "What?"

"It's visible to every fool. The way her eyes were restlessly searching for your frame. The way her voice sounded when speaking out your name. The way she looked at me with disgust, after she realized who I was", she chuckled. "Never thought you'd tell her about me. I feel honoured."

"I had to. I didn't want to lie to her. You didn't say anything to her, did you?", he frowned. Suddenly fearing Elizabeth could have ruined the last chances to reconcile with Shepard. *If* there were some left in the first place. He would strangle Elizabeth if she had done so.

"No, I did not," she grinned mischievously. "But she was quite pissed when I said that I'd been checking in on you occasionally."

Kaidan laughed at the image of a pissed off Shepard. "I guess you misinterpreted her reaction. She was worried because I am her soldier."

Elizabeth raised a brow. She turned away to fumble around with a machine he was attached to. "You do know that you are breaking fraternization rules? I could report you two."

Kaidan contorted his face repulsed by her outrageous comment. "When did you become so jaded, Elizabeth? Nothing happened between Shepard and I. Well... At least not after she disappeared."

"I'm not jaded. I'm just sayin'," she shrugged. "I don't care if you're screwing her or not but you should be careful. In any case, it's not bothering me anymore. To say being scorned by you didn't hurt me would be a lie, but I never harboured a grudge against you. Or her. I merely gave up on you. I have pride and dignity, you know. I can see how much you eat your heart out at her. And she does, too. Although I don't get what you see in her I wish you best of luck, Kaidan. And I shall not interfere", she cracked a smile, kissed him on the cheek and left a stunned Kaidan behind as she walked off.

Still perplexed by the conversation he just had with Elizabeth, Kaidan took his omnitool to finally message Shepard. *'Hey, Shepard'*, he started typing but deleted the words again. *'Commander Shepard'*, he typed but that seemed too formal. He continued pondering how to start the message when his omnitool rang. Kaidan rolled his eyes. He would never finish that message. He winced when he saw who was calling him through a video communication. It was Councillor Udina.

"Councillor Udina, Sir", he muttered obviously confused.

"Major Alenko", Udina nodded with a stern face. "If you could spare a moment."

"Of course, Councillor," he shifted inside his bed, wondering what the human councillor could possibly want from him. "I can spare several moments. According to Dr. Michel I'm not leaving this hospital anytime soon anyway."

Udina forced a smile that did not reach his eyes. "I am pleased to see you're recovering, Major", Udina folded his hands on the table he was seating at. "Otherwise it would have meant the loss of an exceptionally valuable soldier."

Kaidan could not help himself. Udina's compliment seemed rather dishonest. Possibly because of the councillor's conceited face or his monotonous, languid voice. Nevertheless he managed to fake a smile. "Thank you, Councillor."

Udina merely nodded. "I shall come to the point. The council has decided to offer you a status as the second human Spectre."

"A Spectre?", Kaidan was startled. The information had taken him by surprise. "Me?"

"Indeed. A Spectre is chosen out of the best. In my assessment you are one of the best, Major." Udina watched Kaidan expectantly. Kaidan was at a loss for words. A Spectre. The second human Spectre. He needed a few moments to comprehend what was happening.

"I most certainly understand if you need some time to consider", Udina saved Kaidan the answer. "Especially at your current condition. Nervertheless I expect an answer soon, Major."

Kaidan cleared his throat. "You caught me a little off-guard. I'm honoured, Councillor. But, yeah... I need to think."

Udina nodded. "Please consider the offer. I will come back to you, Major Alenko. Have a good day."

Kaidan nodded and hung up.

He stared at the wall trying to digest the offer he had just been made. A spectre. He felt overwhelmed, honoured and also anxious. He was not able to decide wether he would accept or turn down the offer. He would ask for Shepard's opinion. He smiled. Finally he was free to proceed messaging her.

***

"Am I good to go, Doc?", Eurydice looked up at Dr. Chakwas who was performing a thorough scan on the Commander. "You're too eager since you came onboard the Normandy again."

Karin Chakwas chuckled."That's what I do, Shepard. I don't even want to imagine how much you let yourself slide when I was absent."

Eurydice mimicked a serious face. "What would I do without you, Doc?"

Chakwas pursed her lips and shook her head. "Okay, everything's fine. You're dismissed."

The commander laughed throatily at the reversal of roles. "Ah, Karin. It's so good to have you back. And Garrus, too."

Karin Chakwas smiled and sat at her desk leaning back in her swivel chair. "Just like one happy family."

Eurydice bid the doctor good bye and exited the med bay. In the mess hall she saw the members of her squad engaged in a conversation.

"It's good to have you back, Garrus", Liara stood outside her office with folded arms

but with a content look on her face.

"It's definitely good to be back. Now just add Tali and Wrex and we're complete", Garrus answered nostalgically who leaned against the wall opposite to Liara.

"Almost complete", Eurydice added as she walked up to them. She was thinking of Kaidan. She knew Garrus was out of sorts with Kaidan after what had happened on Horizon. However she felt her squad was not complete without Kaidan. Perhaps he would rejoin after his release. Truth be told, she was hoping for it. "So, Garrus, do you think you will adjust?"

Garrus made an expression which Eurydice rated as amused. "Definitely, Shepard. I will move in into my old place again. What would this ship be without my calibrations?"

"There we go with calibrations again", Joker's voice sounded through the comms.

"I see, nothing's changed. Joker's still spying in on everybody", the turian's mandibles flared.

"You scared I'll watch you shower, Vakarian? Gotta disappoint you, though. You're not my type."

Everyone present laughed. It definitely felt good having these people around her, Eurydice thought. With them at her side the future did not seem as dark as she had guessed. With them and with Kaidan.

"Yo, since we're happy family again, let's drink something. Tequila's on me! Need to get to know you guys better", Vega who was leaning on the mess hall's counter shouted.

"Lieutenant Vega, we're not on shore leave. We're heading to the Citadel, since we're on a *mission*." Eurydice folded her arms and shifted the wait to her other foot. "I don't remember allowing you to have drinks just like that anyway."

"Ah, come on, Lola!", Vega lifted his palms up with an exaggerated face of disappointment. "What else do we have that bar for?"

"Lola?", Eurydice frowned in confusion. Then she rolled her eyes and resignated. "I'm in a good mood today. I'm allowing you all one drink, not more. I'll join you in a bit. Just finishing off some duties which you lot apparently don't have."

Vega cheered. "Woohoo! Qué bacano! Lola, you're the best. Vakarian, you in for a poker match?"

Eurydice grimaced at her lighthearted team and walked over to the elevator in order to check in on the Primarch Victus.

"Commander, you have new messages on your private terminal", Eurydice heard Traynor saying when she exited the elevator to the CIC.

"Thank you, Traynor", she walked to her terminal and logged in scrolling through her messages. There was one from Thane Krios which said he was at Huerta Memorial. It delighted Eurydice. She would visit him later when she had spare time. Then she spotted the email she was anticipating.

Hey Shepard,
Through some combination of a medical miracle and dumb luck, I survived the beating I took on Mars. I'm still not ready to be released, but I'd really like to see you if you can spare the time.
Councillor Udina offered to make me a Spectre. Still thinking about wether or not I should accept. Stop by my rooms at the hospital when you're on the Citadel. I'd like your advice.
Thanks, Kaidan.

Eurydice fought hard to supress a squeal. So many thoughts flashed across her mind. He was well. He wanted to see her. He will be a Spectre. She felt relieved, happy, excited, proud. With a big grin she rushed over to the cockpit, not minding Traynor's confused look. "Joker! ETA?"
Joker gave her a startled look from his shoulder. "Commander, what's the matter? Am I missing out on some big party on the Citadel, or what?", Joker typed into a control panel. "Six hours. Want me to speed up?"

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After several meetings and purchases were done, Eurydice had two hours left before the Normandy would take off to Sur'Kesh. When the elevator's doors to Huerta Memorial opened she was immediately repelled by the stench of antiseptics and blood. The hospital was filled with injured turian that were brought from Palaven. Nurses were running around frantically. She heard people sobbing. On the left of the patient lounge she spotted Thane in front of the window exercising.
"Siha," he said turning around. She wondered how he had noticed her. "I was worried for you."
"Thane," she smiled softly. "Good to see you staying in shape. How are you?"
"My disease kills slowly but I'm feeling well. I try to maintain a healthy lifestyle so death can be delayed." Although Thane's disease was no news to Shepard his words saddened her. During the time of their suicide mission the drell had grown dear on her heart. "Ah, Siha. Don't grieve for me. What are you doing here?"
She looked to the direction of Kaidan's room. "I'm visiting a friend. Kaidan. He got hurt protecting me."
Thane nodded. "The human biotic. We have spoken. He seems an honourable man. I see you are caring for him. I will look out for him while he's here."
Moved by his concern Eurydice gently touched the drell's arm and smiled at him thankfully. They continued talking about Thane's disease and about Shepard's mission.
When they had finished Eurydice stopped at a store called Sirta Supplies. She thought it would be nice getting something for Kaidan. Browsing through the store she spotted a Peruvian Whiskey. "Perfect", she spoke to herself grinning.

Nervous she entered the door to his room and found Udina speaking to Kaidan. Instinctively she wanted to turn around and leave them be, but apparently Udina was already on his way out. The councillor greeted her and she followed suit. Then she turned around to a tentatively smiling Kaidan.
"Hey you," she said trying to sound casual. He was still badly bruised and seeing him like that ached her. Then again, the mission on Mars happened no more than a week ago, so he was doing rather good.
"Hey, Shepard. I was hoping you would come around."
She thought of the day he was attacked. How anxious she had felt when he was rushed in here. How bummed out she had been when she saw him lying here unconscious. Now his amber eyes were looking at her and his low, husky voice was audible again. It made her feel at peace.
She wanted to tell him that his condition had been constantly on her mind and receiving his mail had made her so happy. She brushed it off though and seated

herself on the chair next to his bed. "So, what did Udina want? Did you accept his offer?"

Kaidan averted his eyes from her. "He wants me to decide already. But I'm not sure. I don't know if I am the right person to be a Spectre."

"Of course you are!", Shepard's voice pitched a little higher. "I can't imagine anybody who'd be more fitting than you are, Kaidan Alenko."

He looked at her in surprise. "You really think so?"

She smiled gingerly and nodded. Then she remembered the bottle and reached into her bag. "Here. I got you something", she said and offered him the bottle of whiskey.

Kaidan's eyes widened and a big smile extended across his face. "Thank you, Shepard. You're... That's great. When I'm out we'll crack it open and celebrate," he snorted. "Damn, I really want to get out of here already."

Eurydice chuckled. "I've been talking to Dr. Michel. She gave me your medical report. No way in hell are you going to leave so soon."

Kaidan rolled his eyes. "Great. Now you're in bed with her, too."

"Speaking of which," Eurydice raised an eyebrow. "I've met the charming Dr. Drake," she saw Kaidan's face reddening immediately. He began stuttering. "Your girlfriend?"

"No!", he exclaimed. His face a mixture of embarrassment and dismay. "No, Shepard. She isn't... I mean..."

Eurydice swallowed. She regretted her question. She was curious but she was also afraid of his answer. And seeing him stumbling around like that was confirming that there was more to it than *'drinks on the Citadel'*. "It's alright, Kaidan. What we once had, lies in the past. I can perfectly understand. I died, you moved on. After all you think I'm a husk," she chuckled bitterly.

Kaidan gripped her hand and her face froze. He glared at her, his angry look confusing her. "Listen, Shepard. Where should I start? I had broken off contact with Elizabeth after what had happened on Horizon. Plain-spoken after seeing you, I realized I had not moved on. She is working here, that's all. We're neither together nor friends," Eurydice tried to pull herself together not to show her relieve. "I never called you a husk by the way."

She felt the jealousy that had been accompanying her fading. Whatever had happened between him and other women should not be of her concern, nevertheless she was glad there was nothing going on between him and that arrogant bitch anymore. She felt his warmth through the embrace of their hands. It felt good. Then she pulled her hand away. "You did. On Mars."

"Then I clearly lost my memory over there", she could not help but laugh. As a result he also smiled at her. "I wonder, Shepard. Will we ever be able to get over this? I mean after Mars, after Horizon. The horrible things I've said to you back then, I can't apologize enough for what I've said. Instead of being happy that you were brought back and I was given a second chance, I rejected you. I'm sorry. I hate myself for that. But mostly I hate myself for the time I've lost because I was busy being a jerk."

She looked into his grief-stricken eyes. Eyes that were supposed to be filled with warmth and content. She studied his features. Time, he said. Time had changed them both. She saw the little grey streaks in his black hair, the faint wrinkles on his forehead. She knew what he meant. She also regretted every day she could not have spent near him. Two years he lived on, growing older, where she was not even existing. Missing out on him. Time. There is nothing crueler than time.

"Don't blame yourself, Kaidan", her voice was silent. Hesitantly she touched his bruised cheekbones with her fingertips. She felt her skin burning where she touched

his. "You've been through so much. As am I."

"Do you even understand what *you died* means, Shepard?", she frowned at his still angry tone. "On Horizon, I was full of hate and anger. I had spent the two years grieving and strolling around through life as an empty shell. I had lost the person I loved. She died. There was a funeral service. They buried an empty coffin. On that day when the Normandy went down I died, as well. When I saw you on Horizon nothing made sense to me anymore. Everything I had established in order to move on, in order to live again, was crumbling down the moment I'd seen you again," he gritted his teeth. It took him a while to continue. "I wanted to believe it was you but I was also scared of you. Scared of losing you again, scared of being hurt again. But now I know I handled it all wrong."

She had failed to choke back the tears that were running down her cheeks. What he was saying made sense. She felt guilty for everything he had to endure. After Mars she had caught a glimpse of what he must have experienced.

"Hey, Shepard. What's going on?", he gently wiped away the tears from her face. "Don't cry."

"I'm so sorry...", she whispered.

He smiled and took her hand again. At first squeezing it firmly, then carefully stroking the back of her hand with his thumb. Her heart skipped a beat. "Don't be. I just want to know if we're good. If you can ever forgive me."

She wiped her eyes with her sleeve, suddenly embarrassed he was seeing her this way. "I've already done so, Kaidan. Don't worry anymore. Just focus on getting well."

"I want you to know... I want you to know that I still care." Upon hearing his words she fought back the urge to bend over him and kiss him. She was afraid she would be too demanding. Everything felt so surreal. She cupped his cheek with one hand and formed an inaudible 'me too' with her lips.

She had some time left before she had to return to the Normandy. They had changed the topic and he was telling her about his spec ops program - the Biotics Division -, his family, his time in the hospital. They also began to flirt again reminding her of the time back on the first Normandy. When she left the hospital she felt light-hearted. She thought it weird. So much was going on around this galaxy and having a chit-chat with Kaidan made her feel optimistic again. In any case the time with him had lifted a huge weight off of her. It felt like she had finally escaped the rain.