

Word Count: 921 Words

*Upper Levels, Arcona Citadel
Estle City, Selen, Dajorra System*

The Onderonian rubbed his temples as he departed the room containing the Serpentine Throne. They had returned less than a day prior from forging an alliance with the Jedi of New Tython, where they had come to the Odanites' aid when their Consul had called a meeting to discuss the future of Arcona.

Celevon's ears still rang from the shouts at Atyiru's announcement. For over a decade, the Shadow Clan had a primarily Dark alignment. Now, however, it was clear that the tides of change were official: Arcona would be announcing their neutrality by shifting to the Gray Alignment.

Many changes had taken place in the meeting itself. Before the announcement of their alignment shift, Strategos had announced his resignation as the Quaestor of House Qel-Droma. A vote amongst the Arconae and Upper Summit had decided Celevon's ascension to that position.

A loud beeping distracted the Obelisk from his internal musings. With a sigh of annoyance, he pulled the device from an inner coat pocket and activated the screen. The Onderonian froze in his tracks as his brain registered the words on the screen itself.

Without waiting another moment, Celevon spun in place and set out at a full sprint. As he burst through the door, Captain Bly and the two other Summit guards brought up their weapons to bear on the *Shadicar*.

He paid no attention to them lowering their weapons. Instead, the Qel-Droman took note of the Miraluka stirring sugar into a mug of tea. "Don't drink that!" He shouted, which caused Atyiru to pause.

"What's the problem, sir?" Captain Bly asked sharply, having noticed the urgency in the Onderonian's tone.

Celevon handed the device to the Summit Guard Commander as he walked towards the confused Consul. "A hundred thousand credit contract was just put out for her death. If I'm wrong about this, I will personally bring you to purchase new tea stocks," the Obelisk spoke gently to the

Miraluka as he moved the mug of tea from her hands. Snatching a leaf from a plant the female had added when she took over the Shadow Clan, Celevon dropped it in the mug.

The Commander stepped forward, curious to see what the new Quaestor was doing. Before his eyes, the green leaf hissed and turned black the moment it touched the liquid. The smell alone reminded him of times long before the war. “Poison,” the Clone Commando spat.

“Indeed. Captain Bly, you have just witnessed an assassination attempt on the life of our Shadow Lady.”

“Yessir.”

“Activate security protocol X-13.”

“Understood, Vice-General Edraven.” The Clone snapped off a salute before walking over to a security console, speaking rapidly in Mando’a through the communications device attached to his gauntlet.

The Onderonian blinked before remembering that his elevation to Quaestor came with a subsequent promotion in the Arconan Armed Forces. He turned his attention back to the Miraluka, only to hear her muttering under her breath.

A quick call to a trusted, lower ranked member of the Summit Guardsmen had a new batch of Atyiru’s favorite tea blend being fetched from a shop in Estle City. Celevon sat across from the Archpriestess, listening to what the female was saying. After a few moments, the Quaestor gave up when he realized it was shifting rapidly between Galactic Basic and Miralukese.

When the safe tea was delivered, the *Shadicar* busied himself with brewing the calming drink. Once it was ready the exact way the Consul preferred, Celevon gently placed the steaming mug in his friend’s hands. He had seen the Miraluka prepare the tea enough that he had memorized the process without realizing it, her slim and elegant fingers just as petite as the rest of the woman.

It took a few sips before Atyiru sighed. “Thank you, my friend,” the Consul whispered, reaching out to quickly squeeze his hand before releasing it, drawing a small smile from the *Shadicar*. “I’m not aware of that particular protocol.. what, exactly, does it mean?”

“Security Protocol X-13 was created following the War of the Three Families when Wuntila was poisoned by Teroch. It can be enacted by anyone with the necessary clearance when a member of

our Summit is placed within significant danger, such as death threats. It consists of an increased protection detail, testing of any food or drink not procured and prepared by one of the Summit Guardsmen... As well as a personal escort and bodyguard chosen from the best *Shadicar*. Seeing as Marick is currently away dealing with the Combat Center situation, that task falls to me.”

“You have so many tasks to take care of with your new position.. are you sure this is truly necessary?”

“Yes, it is. And I can just as easily carry out these tasks from here until the danger has passed. I will be sending several of my members to find out who issued the contract and eliminate them... after a long period of questioning, of course.”

The Miraluka sighed. “I may not like it, but there is no question that our members are good at getting answers. Very well, I will accept you as a bodyguard until the danger has passed... and you **will** be replacing everything of mine that gets damaged during Captain Bly’s search.”

“I already intended to,” the Prelate retorted, a wry smirk crossing his lips.

“You do realize that this means you will be escorting me on any shopping trips I take until the situation has passed?”

“... Oh, hell. Not again.”

:END: