

The cool winter breeze whistled across the balcony of the Citadel. The sounds of the nearby celebration could be heard throughout the entire Citadel, likely reaching down into the streets of Estle. The Aedile of Galeres stood leaning out over the balcony, embracing the chill of the air rushing past him. Inside, he could hear what sounded to be another round of caroling beginning, and through the nearby window he saw a woman bearing familiar, fiery red hair, arm in arm with the Consul of the Clan, the two leading a room full of the most deadly and powerful members of the First Clan in another Sithmas Carol.

“Plannin on staying out here all night, Mate?” The Rollmaster of Arcona walked out to join him, the Ryn’s jacket pulled tight to ward off the evening chill. Uji couldn’t help but smile as the two of them raised identical flasks, each of them taking a long drink.

“Thiz iz not uncommon, for ze former Captain, Bleu.” Zakath’s bulk took up most of the doorway as he hastily retreated from the celebration, joining his shipmates as a round of what appeared to be a congo-line broke out.

“Yea, he likes ta mope a bit don’t he?” Kordath passed the flask to the former Security Chief with a smile. They had received word of his immediate transfer to the new Battleteam within Qel-Droma.

“Sadly for him, he doesn’t have a choice with all of us around does he?” Celahir came out, practically carrying the familiar form of the Galeres Quaestor, that, by all accounts, had imbibed a bit more of the punch than most.

“Oooh... “ the Quaestor hiccuped as he spoke “Our new Arconae still has time to help an... an old man.” Braecen smiled as he winked at the Kiffar, who proceeded to blush, the news having broke out shortly before the beginning of the party. Setting the Elder down, the leader of Soulfire gladly accepted a drink to cover his excitement.

“You all know Atyiru will have your hides if she finds you all avoiding her celebration.” The cold tone ensured each man shivered. Arcia and the Captain of the Nighthawk approached, walking the balcony together.

“Says the woman avoiding the celebration she helped plan,” Uji remarked as he caught the cold glare of the ice queen's gaze.

The seven stood silent for a moment, each of them owning a part of Galeres, the leaders who had helped rebuild the House after the Great War earlier in the year. Some of them had moved on to new responsibilities, but each of them were bound by the desire to ensure Galeres, and by extension, Arcona, continued to succeed. All were weary of what was to come with the coming conflict with Perdition, and the rumors of the Council preparing to drag all of the Clans into another conflict.

Uji looked down for a moment, smiling despite himself. He had sought to remove himself from the excitement only to find himself surrounded by many of those he respected above all others.

“So he remembers how ta smile, eh? Was beginnin ta wonder there for a while.” Kordath’s casual grin spread as the others chuckled to themselves.

Uji shook his head as he joined them in their laughter, raising his flask for a moment as the group quieted.

“I consider each of you my friends. This year has been difficult, the Clan has faced upheaval time and again...It-”

“It makes him proud to serve with each and every one of you.” Atyiru’s cheerful tone broke in, cutting off the Aedile’s poor attempt at a speech. “As it makes all of us proud to have each of you contribute to the success of the Clan. However, should any of you attempt to sneak away from my party again. I’ll have each of you hung from the ceilings to be used as pinatas.” The Consul’s sweet smile failed to convey the seriousness of her threat.

“Perhapz... We should go back insize, my friendz.” Zakath’s comment earned a smile and a curtsy from the Consul as he made his way back inside.

“She wouldn’t?” Rulvak began to ask before being silenced by Arcia who walked briskly past Atyiru.

Kordath stepped up to help collect Braecen alongside Celahir, the three stumbling back in as Braecen caught sound of the music and began his attempt as a dance while the two men held him up.

“She’s waiting for you — I promised to collect you before she made a scene.”

“Thanks Atty...” Uji hesitated, collecting his thoughts for a moment before finishing. “Thank you for everything.”

Atyiru motioned him forward, placing her arm in his for a moment as they walked back in. The two stopped as they found Satsi and a raven-haired woman who had accompanied the Odan-Urr delegation putting on an entirely different kind of show in the middle of the room, entertaining enough that they could hear the sounds of Sashar gagging in the nearby corner.

“Did... you have to invite them as well?”