**Changing of the Guard**

**Shadow’s Personal Quarters**

**IMS Tipoca II**

Life is said to be full of surprises, and those surprises could be received in many ways. The sudden resignation of Emperor Xen’Mordin had caught many by surprise. Many had received it with sorrow for their beloved Emperor’s decision, while others saw it as a chance for new change in the clan. For Shadow Nighthunter, the news had brought her both relief and concern. The Battlelord had been with the clan since the beginning of Xen’s reign as Emperor, and overtime, his behavior and questionable decisions had kept the half-Sephi on her toes when it came to changes in the clan. He was a man who was hard to read, and though his dedication and concern for Scholae Palatinae was evident after he had saved everyone from Pravus’ madness, she felt that the man hid more than he ever let out. Then again, she knew that he had plenty of reason to be that way for the security of Scholae as well as his own.

Then there was the concern. He had resigned during a time when the Imperial clan was trying to establish itself in the Caperion System. More than anything, Scholae Palatinae needed a leader, and the Sith could only hope that whoever took the throne would grant the stability that the clan needed. What bothered her more was the chance of the new emperor having a personal agenda that hurt the clan more than benefitted it. Memories of Excidium’s former Quaestor caused the Shadow’s blood to burn with anger. Blade had used Excidium to try and de-stabilize the clan as a result of her hatred for the Sith. Before she could be discovered, she had left and gone to Odan-Urr, and her betrayal led to the destruction of CSP’s home and fleet. The fact Shadow had become a pawn to the Zeltron as Battle Team leader caused the Battlelord to question any new leader until they had proven themselves to be true. It was that experience that she also hoped wouldn’t be repeated. For very good reason too.

The sound of a door sliding open dragged Shadow away from her deep thoughts on the matter, and she found her husband enter the room with both anooba and Loth-wolf trailing behind. “You’re late.”

The Mandalorian merc chuckled and joined her at the table where she had two glasses of Corellian wine ready. “My apologies, Mrs. Tarsus. Your canine companions led me on quite the chase.”

“Sure they did.” The Sith shook her head in amusement, only her smile faded away as she then looked out the window into the darkness of space. “Quite unexpected…Xen resigning.”

Brandon Tarsus nodded and took a sip of the wine. “Perhaps, but maybe it’s a good thing. Change has to happen eventually. It’s how things progress. A new leader may be what the clan needs in these dark times.”

“True, but only if it’s a good leader…someone who will keep the clan safe as well as make it strong again.”

The woman looked over at her bed where their six month old twins slept soundly. Her husband caught on, and reach out and placed his hand on her shoulder. “Have faith, Shad. We’ll be alright. Even if we get an incompetent emperor, things will be okay. You and I will keep our sons safe. As they say, if you want something done right, better to do it yourself. We will keep this family safe.”

Shadow sighed and looked back at him. “You’re right. You know how I worry.”

Brandon rolled his eyes. “You worry way too much, my love. Just trust in the Force, and always remember that when hell descends, I’ll be right by your side. We got this.”

“I don’t know if having you by my side is a good thing,” the Battlelord said as she took a sip from her glass. “You are still a klutz just like you were when you were my apprentice. You might just get me killed.”

“Oh how dare you!”

Before Shadow could get away, the giant of a man lunged and grabbed her, tickling her as he laughed. His wife squealed, and tried to get free, only causing him to hold her even tighter. The half-sephi ended up laughing with him, feeling her worry dissipate into nothing. “Mercy!”

The Mandalorian grinned and stopped the tickling as he kissed the top of her head affectionately. “Besides, you are my beautiful and deadly empress, Shadow. I’ll follow you no matter what.”

Her husband’s words turned her pale cheeks pink as she rested her head against his chest, comforted by the large man’s embrace. “There you go again.”

“What? I’m just telling you the truth,” he insisted as he sat down on the edge of the bed with her on his lap. “I love you after all, and it would be foolish to lie to a woman who could quickly take my head off.”

Shadow’s golden eyes flashed in amusement as she chuckled. “Well, you’re lucky that I love you too much then, my Emperor.”

Brandon smiled and rubbed her back comfortingly. “No matter what happens, and no matter who becomes the next emperor, we will still have each other. Never forget that.”

Shadow sighed contently and closed her eyes, listening to her husband’s heartbeat. “I won’t. I promise.”