

## Thinking of Ghosts

“So lass,” Kordath intoned as they reclined in their seats, “whatcha think of your new kiddos?”

Looking at the orange hues of the sky as the sun fell toward the horizon, Qyreia pursed her lips before silently taking a long pull of her drink.

In the wake of the Consul’s inspections, and perhaps in an effort to find some friendly companionship, the title-begrudging Shadow Lord invited the Zeltron to drinks at the Citadel. With all his apparent woman troubles, she was one of the few who didn’t seem to have some deep-seated issue with him. It also helped that Citadel was the place that the merc still called “home” for the time being. While Galeres itself had moved its headquarters to Fort Blindshot, Qyreia wasn’t ready to pick up and plant her roots at a relatively isolated military installation. She was too used to the conveniences of the city. For the time being, sitting in reclining chairs overlooking Estle City and the surrounding territory was a comfortable conversational setting.

“They’re okay. Same folks, just a new name and less cloak-and-dagger.”

“Grot’s seemin’ to do some good work though.” The comment seemed nonchalant as the Ryn picked up his own beer — one of many bottles laid out on the stone floor of the promenade — but Qyreia knew him well enough to catch the underpinned meaning.

“You got a problem with how I’m doing things?” she punctuated with another swig, continuing their talk-drink-listen tempo.

“I dinnae say that.”

A growl reverberated in her throat. “He’s got a team that does what it has to, when it has to. Not too fond of having the redhead around, but at least Grot makes a good buffer.”

“Man that big, I’d bloody hope so.”

“*Right?!*” she half-chuckled. “I’ll take him in a shooting match, but I doubt I’d last long against him in a knock-down brawl.” She flexed an arm. “Been doing more push-ups lately, though.”

The Ryn chuckled and offered a conciliatory whistle before returning his gaze to the scenery.

“Really though,” she continued, “I like where they’re going. I get a little twitchy whenever I hear them calling themselves ‘elite troops’ or ‘special forces’.”

The soft *clink* of glass interrupted her train of thought momentarily as Kordath set down his empty bottle amongst the others before grabbing a fresh one. “Why’s that? Nae many around like ‘em.”

“Oh, don’t get me wrong, they’re special alright. They’re special in the same way as when a bunch of well-established mercs or pirates get together and make a power-team of sorts. But remember that, for the most part, this is the same team that lost the old *Nighthawk* and has never actually done anything as a *team*.” She sighed. “I think Grot’s a big enough threat to the hotheads, though, that they’ll listen to him when the time comes to actually work together.”

“They’ve got the lady Tameiki,” Kord pointed out, though he somewhat regretted it when he saw Qyreia’s reaction.

“You mean the one that did little and less to get Arcona out of this bloodbath? Not only did she *not* nip the Collective in the bud, but she’s been *strengthening* the criminal element on Selen. And,” she added before Kordath could throw in his two-creds, “don’t try to play it off. It’s got Satsi’s name written all over it. You of *all* people should know how she has a knack for getting people in trouble.”

Kord’s eyes narrowed sadly as he looked away into the sunset. “Tha’ was a low blow.”

“You kriffed her, not me. Multiple times, as I understand it. And since Zuji doesn’t like Rrogon, I’m apparently not allowed to see Shay’lra on top of everything.” She emptied the rest of her bottle and picked up a fresh brew. “I’m not particularly happy about that, by the way.”

“I know,” he replied through a heavy sigh.

Qyreia watched him momentarily, taking note of the worried lines in his face, and finally broke the silence. “Come on,” she said with a friendly nudge on his shoulder, “I don’t mean to be a *total* schutta here. Can’t be easy being the *Shadow Lord*.”

The Force user grumbled at the title, swirling the amber liquid in his bottle thoughtfully. “S’rough. Ye wanna trade jobs?”

That got them both chuckling. “Not if I have to work with Terran.” Her voice pacified, almost thoughtful, “Maybe one day though.”

“Force help us when *that* happens.”

Playfully, she flicked a finger at the Ryn’s tail. “If you ever need any help, I’m here for ya.”

“I know,” he said for the second time in their conversation, though this time more pleasantly. “Can’t ye jes’ shoot me an’ put me out of me misery?”

“Now where’s the fun in that?” She chuckled, coming down from the burst of mirth. “Back to Spectre Cell though. I’m thinking of getting them out of their hole. Maybe work some peacekeeping business and nix these Collective frackers that landed. I’m assuming the DIA has some intel on remaining locations?”

“Some. I’ll get more for yeh. Peacekeeping though?”

“Between Grot, Maaz, and the Force users, I think we could do a lot of good. Besides, think of how long the criminal element will last when they see Satsi *arresting* them.” Her muted laughter was almost maniacal.

“I think ye’ve got a helluva chip on yer shoulder fer that woman.” He grinned subtly as he drank. “Fer a merc, yeh sure act like a straight-laced loyalist.”

“He said to the smuggler.” She picked up two beers and handed one to her fuzzy counterpart. “I tell ya Kordy: sometimes the best solutions are the simplest ones.”