

An unusual gift

Xantros

11518

39 ABY, Imperial Palace, Seraph's moon, Caperion System

Constant, loud buzzing coming from a rarely used internal patio of the Imperial Palace was something strange. It was strange enough that despite the fact that people seldomly appeared in that area, as very few people had enough free time to go there and even fewer people saw sense in spending time in the patio constantly covered in shadows, numerous reports about these sounds alarmed Warlord Shadow Nighthunter, the Empress of the Empire and the Consul of Clan Scholae Palatinae herself.

The reports were vague and not conclusive at best. They mentioned buzzing like a swarm of bees and flashes of purple light. However, when witnesses attempted to check what was happening and who was behind these strange phenomena, they could see no one around. The only trace left were large bushes in the patio, but they changed their appearance in each report. Balls, discs, pyramids, cubes, animal and plant species of all kinds, strange symbols of unknown meaning and origin.

After almost two weeks of receiving reports about mysterious events, Shadow decided to investigate the matter herself, because even the Pretorian Guard could not solve the riddle of eerie flashes and noises. She could not let the peculiar situation continue as the rumours that some parts of the Imperial Palace were haunted. The case had to be closed and explained so that overall morale would not be damaged by false assumptions based on real reports. The only person allowed to haunt the Imperial Palace was her.

Shadow slowly approached the abandoned surroundings of the internal patio. It had previously been a rarely visited place, but now it was completely empty as even the Pretorian Guard preferred to take different routes on their patrol duties. The Empress focused and used her powers to hide her presence, both physically and in the Force. She hoped that it would be enough to get to the culprit close enough to reveal his or her identity without getting noticed too early.

As the Consul got close to the patio, she noticed flashes of light and heard buzzing sounds mentioned in the reports about the bizarre phenomenon. She instantly recognized them. Someone was using a lightsaber to cut parts of the bushes off. She entered the patio and saw a Duros with his purple lightsaber standing in front of a bush...which clearly resembled her.

„Xantros, what on the Force are you doing here?” asked Shadow Nighthunter.

„BANZAI!” screamed the Duros.

„I think you mean bonsai” replied the half-Sephi looking at the Augur in a bit confused way.

„I meant banzai...Well actually, I meant both banzai and bonsai,” spoke Xantros.

„Why? I thought you planned to spend your two weeks long vacations somewhere else,” said the Empress.

„Banzai means happiness in ancient Durese,” explained the Duros. „I am happy, because I finished sculpturing my last bonsai tree.”

„Why does it depict me?” questioned him the Consul.

„I have decided to make bonsai tree sculptures of all current members of our Clan, who have earned the title of Palpatine,” answered Xantros. „It took me whole two weeks, because of all these curious idiots that kept disturbing me in my work.”

„You should have told us,” complained Shadow grumpily. „Everyone thought this place was haunted.”

„It was meant to be a surprise, so I could not tell you or anyone else,” replied the Augur and sighed. „You know what people are. Everyone would have known instantly, if anyone had learned the truth. I had to fool unwelcome passer-by somehow, so that my work here remained secret as long as it was necessary.”

„You did an amazing job,” said the Empress and smiled. „I will order to put the tree sculptures you made in the throne room so that everyone can see what a talented artist you are.”

She looked around and added, „As soon as you tell me, where are other sculptures.”