

ATAULTA



IMPERIAL
DESTINY

ASCENT

Sketch by Alexandra Steelman

ATALIA: Imperial Destiny- Ascent

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Version 1.8

Characters of Note:

- || Regent Emily Elizabeth Skyhawk, Human Female
- || Prince Gareth Mark Scutarie, Human Male
- || Priestess Jaydan Kaelia Scutarie, Human Female

<Dear Sister, my offer still stands to take you in. Now that your son is grown and has assumed the throne there is nothing binding you to Beta Centauri.>

<I am bound to these people; I must stay.>

<If that is how you feel... I must warn you though: I had a dream the other night; your son died because of the woman he marries. Emily, if you then take the regency for your grandson, you will die.>

<Then I die, but I cannot leave my people.>

– *Netmail messages between Fellige Scott Skyhawk and Emily Elizabeth Skyhawk*

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-Friday, February 13, 144 AW-

Deep in the heart of power of a mighty empire sat a graceful woman who held the fragile pieces of a prideful nation together. Her regal posture stood as a testimony to the increased gravity in which she lived, revealing a strength beyond what could naturally be contained by her small frame. She was a beacon of light in the dark throne room, fully aware of the shadow that had entered.

That darkness was nestled in the heart of Gareth Mark Scutarie. Hatred radiated from his narrow eyes as he attempted to stare down his powerful grandmother. He had never seen the claimed “greatest ruler” sit on the throne when she was the regent for her son, Kale Jacob Scutarie II. It was offensive, a woman sitting in his rightful chair. This light was the one obstacle to his rule, and he would remove it.

Her sorrow-filled eyes probed him as if seeing every dark intention of his heart. And yet, there were no guards, no witnesses to deter him. She only sat there, in the way, as if to show him that his empty soul could never fill that seat.

“You sent away everyone in the court, Grandmother. Why?”

“Because I knew what you were coming to do. I am sorry that I have failed you so miserably.” The soft breeze of her voice stoked his flames.

“I want what is rightfully mine,” Gareth demanded harshly. “Now.”

Pain crept into her voice. “Do you not wish to hear the parting words of mine, as is customary for the transition between rulers?”

He gave her a dark, prideful smile. “Traditions are welcome, but make it quick.”

“Gareth Mark Scutarie,” the soft power of her voice echoed in the vast hall as she rose from the throne. “I have no words of wisdom for you, nor advice, as both you would dismiss without a second thought. But what I do have is a prophecy of what your reign will entail.” Her even steps brought her slowly toward his towering frame, and yet, Gareth realized just how small he was in her presence. “You will begin your reign in blood, but ride on the success of your ancestors for several years. You will build the brightest and most extravagant city the galaxy has ever known, as is your desire; but its heart will be black as night. The foundations of this city will be soaked in the blood of the saints you murder. Then your empire will decline, taken from you by the One from whom your power ultimately rests. Finally, after your city overflows with the blood of the innocent, it will be stolen from you in a single heartbeat, this great empire never to rise again.

“Be warned, if you follow this course, which you will, it will only lead to your destruction. Your city will barely be a footnote in even the most detailed history books, and then only to state the ultimate ruin of the Centauri Empire.”

Gareth laughed darkly. “You are correct, for it will involve much blood. But you are wrong to say it will be only a footnote. My empire shall endure for many decades, and for centuries after I have passed the children of this day forward will fear the name of the Centauri Empire.” He irreverently spat an inch from her face.

“We shall see,” she replied gravely as she walked back to the seat of power. Instead of resting upon it she merely stood at its feet. The glue that held the empire together began to weep.

“Take your last look at the throne; you will never see it again.”

Emily whirled. “You think I care about the throne? I only care about my family and my people. The power means nothing to me, so long as those who wield it are righteous. But you, my grandson, are far from that mark. You have given in to the teachings of that *witch* who has led you astray, and in turn, you will lead these people astray....” She trailed off, looking to the ground. “Though they already are heading that way.” She looked back to the throne. “You came here to accomplish a task. Do it already! Take your precious throne.”

Gareth slowly proceeded toward the stately woman, the tool of his heart extruded into his hand from its concealed place within his vambrace. Resolve rose with each step, overtaking more and more of his will, trampling on every joyous memory that arose from his childhood of this loving woman. He now approached her only as an obstacle to be removed with haste. With a hate-filled thrust, his blade found its mark in her spine. Twisting invoked a pitiful groan instead of the desired screams, the one who reflected light responded with her last breath, “I forgive you.”

Applause issued from the grand doors, “Bravo, bravo. Well done, well done.”

As the embodiment of his will came alongside, Gareth replied, “Thank you, Mother.”

“I knew you would be strong enough to wrest control of the throne, and now you may take your rightful place upon it.”

“With you by my side.”

“Shall I undergo the rituals?”

“Do with her body whatever you please.” Gareth turned and sat down with a flourish. “I will wait here until it is complete.”

“Remember, do nothing until I am done. These things are necessary to assure your success.”

“Of course, Mother.”

~Epilogue~

Billions watched in silence at their screens, awaiting the first official words of their new Emperor. Mychael Joshuah Smith was one of those people, sitting at home on the planet of New Mars.

The reporter announced the first being to approach the mic, Jayden Kaelia Scutarie, mother of the Emperor.

“Greetings, gentle beings. I have the honor of proclaiming and introducing our new leader, my son. No longer shall anyone call him by the name of his birth, but our greatest Emperor shall only go by his rightful title. So now I present to you, the Lord Emperor.”

Those surrounding the podium who had surrendered their will applauded, but all Mychael could do was gulp. When the so-called “Lord Emperor” took his place at the mike, the news station rushed to remove his birth name to put on his singular title.

The rest of the proceedings grew worse, with the Emperor claiming to be a child of the gods. Mychael did not believe in anything divine or supernatural, but he preferred monotheists to polytheists. Now the government’s religion was officially changing, and there were so many people registered with the "Christian Church of Centauri.” Those who refused to convert would easily be tracked down and killed.

Mychael had warned people that if religion was being mediated by the government, then only sorrow would result. He was not happy that he was right, not happy at all. Now they would believe him when it was too late.