

The Ethereal Realm
Fortress of the Unchained
41 ABY

Copper. The tang of it was in the air, flooding the cracks in the floor underfoot. Even this close to the front of the lines, corpses littered the floor. Badges of the clans reflected the lights above.

Kerissa wondered for a moment what technology was being used to produce the light. It was a distraction, at least, as she passed a badge, this one decorating a fallen Arconan.

The Kessurian hybrid had barely been among the clan for three months. Yet here she was. Fighting a force that had once tried to recruit her as well. A war beyond her understanding. It was only the stakes at play, the potential of the Force itself being in danger, that drew her into the fray alongside her clanmates.

They'd bled together now. Cried. Screamed. Blood stained what little skin was visible underneath the Envoy threads she'd been granted for armour, though she'd managed to avoid any major injuries. The Force had been with her more often than not and the one time it had truly failed her in this place, she'd been able to retreat from the Children. The hat that had come with the armour muffled her hearing slightly, her montrals tucked underneath it. But Kerissa was grateful for that. The Envoy glasses hadn't fared as well, the strange environment causing her to have removed them hours ago.

The ex-Sith just wished the blackened veins that crawled up her hands would fade sooner. Lightning was the surest way to end an enemy but it numbed her hands. They still shook under the strain of how much she'd already dove into the dark.

A whip cracked. Kerissa snapped to attention, eyes moving up from her hands and the moment she'd taken to recover her reserves. It was still a moment too late but one of the other Brotherhood soldiers had seen the incoming threat, their green lightsaber flaring to life.

Kerissa moved on, leaving the fight behind. She didn't follow the main crowd toward the throne room. It was the primary order but there could be information here that would be key. Any notes on the ritual itself would be key.

She had just opened another door, getting a glance around the laboratory-style room, when a lightsaber swung toward her face. Raising a hand, the Kessurian caught the lightsaber with telekinesis only just out of range of her face. The blade reflected off of the various glass implements and containers and shelves that filled the room.

The heat drew sweat to her skin.

Eventually the pressure of the Force dropped and she drew the lightsaber into her hand. It was unfamiliar. Powerful. It didn't want her presence. She kept it alight, unsure how to wield it but it was a kriffing lightsaber. Who gave up a weapon like that to an enemy who knew how to use it?

"It's a shame you didn't join us a year ago, Miss Monique."

Kerissa stepped into the room, grey gaze finding him in the darkness. The man was unfamiliar, older than her but watching carefully from the other side of the room. He had a blaster levelled toward her.

"I don't know what record you read but my reason stays the same. This? This is all *far* too cult-like for me. And I have a bad history with cults."

The Human was more powerful than her too. The Arcanist could feel his presence in the room, filling it. There was a moment of hesitation before she flung the lightsaber. He fired toward it, deflecting the blade away from himself. Then he continued firing, glass shattering across the room.

Kerissa had thrown herself behind a counter, keeping enough of the room visible to throw her presence away from herself. Even as she moved further toward the corner of the room, he fired towards noises she placed in his head.

It didn't last as long as she'd have hoped.

The containers on the counter she was behind shattered under blaster fire, the shattered pieces cascading down her.

He started rounding the corner to where she'd hidden and Kerissa slammed her hand out. Adrenaline fuelled her, anger at being cornered, *fear* filling her heart with each beat that pounded against the inside of her ribs.

Lightning sprung from her fingers. The other hand curled round the glass shards. They dug in, blood seeping from the wounds as she stumbled to her feet.

The opponent — Loremi P'sum if she had to guess from truly getting to see him now — had managed to draw a barrier. She pressed on, the numb sensation of drawing from the dark side crawling up her fingers. To her palm.

He screamed when the tendrils finally broke through, as the barrier was unable to withstand it. She stopped once he dropped to the floor.

A crack, not unlike the whip from earlier, sounded once again. Kerissa flinched, looking to her right and only having a moment to realise the trick before she was thrown backwards. Her head smacked backwards against the metal, leaving her vision flaring with lights and flickers.

“Kark.” She hissed between her teeth. Maybe going off alone had been a bad idea.

Loermi stood, grasping his chest and repairing the burns that wrought across his skin. It wasn't perfect but it would hurt less.

He raised his hand again, the Force wrapped round her and pulled her into the air. He had to raise her high above him to truly get her off of the ground but the Kessurian-mix was far from being in the intimidating position.

She was close though. The pressure moved to her throat, hanging her by it in the air. Was he trying to break her neck or suffocate her? It was hard to tell and there wasn't time to think about it.

Kerissa swung wildly with her hand, still clutching onto the glass even now it was soaked with her blood, stabbing into her nerves even through the numbed sensations in her hands.

It struck, dragging across his forehead. She had aimed for his eyes but even concentrating as deeply as he was, Loremi had drawn away. The shards sliced across his forehead, blood weeping freely from the wounds. It was enough to blind him for a few moments.

Kerissa crashed to the floor, not wasting any time in turning on heel and running. Kriff the plans, kriff this schutta. Ritual plans weren't worth her life.

Blaster bolts followed her out of the room but if he thought she was worth chasing down, he was clearly doing a poor job of it.

It was only when her calves screamed for her to stop and the cloaks of the Brotherhood once again surrounded her that Kerissa came to a stop, stumbling into a few unfamiliar faces. They were too busy progressing to pay attention to her.

That was okay.

She'd have a few minutes to pick the glass shards out before anything else came up. Probably.

The chain had broken after all and only the stars might know what was going to happen now.