

The Wrong Assignments

The Shattered Plains

Nearing The Fortress of the Unchained

The Ethereal Realm

Selika moved across the battlefield that was the Shattered Plains with a purposeful stride. The Brotherhood needed to cross the plain to reach their goal of the Fortress of the Unchained, the huge tower rising up from the horizon against the red, glowing sky.

Kill. Betray. Abandon. Rise. Ascend.

"I'd give real money if he'd shut up," Selika grumbled to herself.

Then, just out of the corner of her eye, Selika saw a subtle shimmer in the shadows between two boulders. It was barely perceptible, even with her heightened Force sense, and if she hadn't been watching so intently she might have missed it.

"All right, whoever you are," Selika said, staring directly into the shadow where she had seen the slight disturbance. "I know you're there."

The sound of a sigh came from the darkened place between the stones before the air distorted to reveal a human male dressed in the black armor of the Nightfallers. A lightsaber was held in his hand while a blaster rode low on his hip in a holster.

"Sarai Andromeda," he said coldly, an icy smile on his face. "I am your death."

"Want to try that again, chief?" Selika asked, holding up a hand. "Your target is Hunter Andromeda?"

"Uh, yes," the man answered, his confidence flagging as the response he got did not match that which he expected.

"You might want to check your assignment again," Selika said, amused.

Holding up his hand as if to place a pause on their encounter, the Nightfaller stalker pulled out his datapad and began scrolling. "Female humanoid, average height, lightly built, conventionally attractive."

"Human?" Selika asked with some bemusement.

"No, Anzat," he answered offhandedly before a pause. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh honey, I know she doesn't get out all that much, but you think you'd have at least tried to get a holo image," Selika said, a quiet laugh escaping after the last.

"So you're not... Andromeda?" the now completely confused enemy assassin asked, already knowing what the answer was.

"Uh, that would be a negative," Selika answered mockingly.

"And so who are you?" he asked hesitantly.

"Really? You don't know?" Selika asked, realizing that the question was self-evident given the man's confusion. "You really got handed the wrong assignment today, didn't you?"

Before the man could answer, Selika extended a hand towards him as tendrils of Force energy leapt out to cross the space between them. Lashing around the young Nightfaller almost like chains, they bound his arms to his sides as he struggled impotently against their grip. Selika lifted him a full meter off the ground as the man tried to scream for help, but the

Force grip that held him left even his jaw immobilized. Instead of a scream, only muffled sounds could escape his firmly closed mouth.

With a steely focus, Selika slammed him into the boulder on his left with bone rattling force. Then, without stopping, she jerked him back the direction he had come and smashed him into the boulder on his right. And then back again to his left, and then right again. Bones in his arms fractured under the force of each impact, soon joined by his ribs as each collision inflicted more and more damage. Finally, as consciousness began to leave him as his eyes rolled back in his head, Selika relaxed her grip slightly. The next blow sent a mix of blood and teeth spraying out onto the rock as his mouth now was able to move, his jaw slackly open.

Fully releasing her Force grip on her adversary, Selika watched as he dropped to the ground in a limp heap, the life draining out of him fully. A dark smile curled the lips of the Dread Lord for a moment, before a realization hit her like a thunderclap.

"If this one is here, that means..." Selika trailed off, before springing into a headlong run.

Elsewhere on the battlefield...

Sarai Andromeda's face went white as the cloaked figure dressed in armor stood before her, lightsaber held at the ready.

"Master Selika Roh di Plagia, I am Loremi P'sum. And your death."

Sarai could only back away slowly as reason left her, her mind capable of only one thought over and over again that found its way to her voice.

"Kark me, kark me, *kark me...*"