A beeping noise infiltrated the silence like that of a horn next to an ear. Telona glared at her companion as he rushed to stop it. Three undead horrors lumbered around a corner. The Tarentum Elder quickly rushed them. Three heads dropped to the ground as black blood sprayed from bodies that slumped slowly. The red haired woman returned to the broken building entryway they were huddling in, wiping off an emerald bladed dagger. Fenn was a younger man from Scholae Palatinae and had never seen any woman kill as fast as she did with a dagger.

He looked up from his data pad. The two had not passed many words between them since they were paired up two days ago when the Grey Wolf team arrived to help with clean up. At first, he was hesitant to be paired up with a female human as small as she was. He had never heard of her until now but his leader was confident she would do just fine.

“There’s some kind of energy coming from up the mountain. It was not there before. We have instructions to scout and engage if necessary.”

The red haired woman growled in the back of her throat. Fenn had become use to her odd growls and hisses. If he were a betting man, he would place everything he had on her being brought up neither by humans nor on a human world. He watched as she turned to look at the slope, her eyes narrowed and her nose flared. He swore he could feel the Force in the air as she continued to gaze unmoving.

Another undead citizen of the city lumbered around a corner and started for them. Fenn stood to charge at the creature when the woman, still assessing the mountain slope, flung out a hand. Bluish black energy slithered through the air and struck the undead. It stopped and convulsed for a half minute before crumpling to the ground in a smoking heap. A spike of fear ran through Fenn like the lightning he had just witnessed. He wondered at the potency of this smaller woman. He had seen enough of her skill to know he did not want to face her on the battlefield.

“We will not be scouting. You will show the way and we will destroy it. If I am not behind you keep going. I will hunt them, find you.”

Fenn hesitated. Tactically, he wanted more eyes and blades with him to perform a full assault on a potential enemy base. Scouting, he was confident they could do with minimal risk. What he had though was a Tarentum Elder he knew nothing about and she wanted to be at his back and she wanted to assault this signal without backup. Though the tactician in him screamed no his gut said they could handle it. He took a quick assessment of the supplies they had.

“Alright let’s go.”

She simply answered him with a grunt and a head bob before dashing around a corner. Fenn marched forward towards the mountain slope. He held his blaster at the ready as he cleared the city buildings and crossed a cold shallow stream. The terrain after that was steep, overgrown, and wooded. The signal was coming from a spot two kilometers up. He was certain there were going to be enemies in the brush but his blaster would be useless. He swapped his blaster for his blade and hacked his way into the undergrowth.

As he pressed onwards and upwards, Fenn had no way of tracking his companion. He would hear a rustle here than there but nothing more. Even the birds that sang in the trees every day were silent. The hush was deafening. The man was painfully aware of each crunching step he took and the hum of the vibroblade he kept at the ready.

It seemed to take hours to get to the outskirts of the power source. Fenn changed directions and started scouting around the area. That was when he found the bodies. Heads removed, they looked different from the undead in the city. He bent to investigate. He took a quick mental note of what he saw. These had symbols burned on their bodies, their eyes burnt out, and looked more decomposed. He moved on before the stench could turn his stomach.

A little ways beyond is when he finally met up with Telona. Another undead was at her feet. She beckoned him over. Fenn did a quick sweep of the area before coming within speaking range. He glanced down at the body. It was the same as the other ones he had passed.

“They are all like this. We need rest and to think. We go up. They can’t follow.”

Fenn agreed they needed to rest a bit but he did not catch on to where they would not follow. A spike in the Force was his only warning his companion was doing something. Her arms snaked around him as she pressed into his back. Then they went soaring into the air as she leapt like a spring. Air and branches whipped at their faces for a brief moment of exhilaration. They landed on a large branch in one of the giant trees that grew on the mountain. Fenn grabbed onto the trunk to steady himself.

Telona plopped down right where she landed and stared at the ground. Fenn eventually looked down. Eight of the undead corpses were roaming around where they had been minutes ago. Telona waved at him to be still. It was an hour before they moved on down the mountain. Fenn stiffly sank to a much more comfortable position in the nook between branch and tree.

“These are different than what’s in the city. We need back up if we are going to go any farther.”

“No. They come from a cave. We need rest. Time to think. We will stop it.”

Fenn was not convinced a little rest would help them. He was taking out his data pad when the red haired woman waved at him. The word sleep thrummed into his mind and tempted him with the sweet embrace of tranquility. The tactician within screamed curses as his body slipped into slumbers darkness. Satisfied with her work, Telona rested in a more meditative way as she searched her mind for the symbols she had seen upon the bodies.

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The rushing sound of air woke Fenn from his sleep. The ground followed in waking his body up fully. Night had fallen and as his mind became aware of his surroundings, he realized just how long he had slept and that he was now out of the tree. In spite of himself, he opened his mouth to protest. A hand quickly went over it.

“No talk now. I’ll lead. Keep hold of my hand. I’ll go first into the cave. You back me up with your blaster but stay out of sight. Fire when it feels right.”

If the day was silent, the night sucked all sound into itself. Their steps were quick but over ground that did not give them away. Fenn could see nothing but dark shadows. He knew Force users could enhance their senses if they trained for such things but as he was lead along it felt as though this woman knew the terrain by heart and needed no such augmentation. When they stopped as suddenly as they started, he got his answer.

“They sense the Force. I made this path while it was light. Keep yourself down. Let the Force flow through you instead. Come.”

The maw of a cave loomed even in the dark of night. They approached cautiously so as to not attract any attention. When the woman froze, Fenn froze. An undead lumbered out of the cave with so much noise it would have attracted attention in the city. Out here, there was nothing else around to hear but the two Force users. It awkwardly shuffled past them and into the forest, heading for the city. Fenn instantly understood where these things kept coming from.

They quickly slipped into the cave. Here they were blind to their surroundings so they had to feel their way along all while keeping quiet. It was slow going but as they turned a corner, a light deeper down into the mountain weakly allowed them to see. They plastered against the wall as another undead shuffled by. Once it had passed, they could hear a voice echoing. Fenn wondered if they had really rooted out all the conquerors that had plagued the system.

The closer they got the louder the voice was and the brighter the light. Fenn took one side of the tunnel while Telona took the other side. He positioned himself behind a boulder and took out his blaster. The scope on it allowed him to see inside the chamber they had come upon. If he had a weaker stomach, he would have been sick on the spot. In the middle of this chamber was a single table surrounded by surgical instruments, buckets of gangrene internal organs, limbs, and a lot of black blood.

“You will go into the city and get me more parts. Not live parts, dead parts. Live parts mean you don’t come back. Dead parts mean you return to me. You can then feast on whatever is in the bucket.”

With a gurgle, the undead left the chamber and banged past them as it went down the tunnel. Telona looked at Fenn and motioned for him to stay put. The living human within the chamber started talking again. As he spoke, mostly to himself, Fenn knew that they had succeeded in their original mission. This fanatic was stitching these creatures back together and using some serious juice to reanimate the corpses. With an air of confidence, the woman strode into the chamber.

“Well well looks like I have company. What great timing! I’ll have another one ready to feast upon your flesh.”

Telona just looked around the chamber silently. Aside from the gore, she took in the focusing crystals, bloody symbols, and machinery. This reminded her of things she had learned while being the Krath High Priestess. These techniques had been forbidden before the time of Bane but small circles of Krath followers had kept the knowledge alive. She did not know how this person had gotten a hold of such knowledge but she knew he had to be put down.

“Your technique is sloppy at best. Your symbols look as though a child wrote them while having a seizure. Your crystals have inclusions. Your workspace is contaminated. Your machinery spews too much energy. You rely on tissues already dead twice and do not offer your creations fresh meat to revitalize their blood. Thus your end product is so inferior it did not so much as try to stop my approach.”

The lanky man chuckled as he turned to face the red haired woman. He took off a pair of goggles and smiled at her. Anyone could tell he was psychotic by the way he held himself. He looked around his makeshift lab as if assessing her critique, picked up a severed head, and started talking to it.

“She calls me sloppy. Me, Jona! Can you believe it? It is all set up as instructed. They are perfect. She doesn’t know I knew she was coming. She couldn’t hide from all of my puppets. They could see her in the dark but my orders were clear and they did not attack. She was wily though. The ones I sent after her traced her Force signature to a spot in the woods where she disappeared. They are coming though for they sense her yet again. My masters will be pleased with my work.”

“Your masters are dead. Were you my student I would have hung you by your entrails for not only using forbidden powers but for also being so damn messy. However, for you I think I will just burn them out slowly enough that you die in horrific pain. I hide myself no more. You will feel my anger.”

Fenn watched as the Elder finally took up her lightsaber. The torrent of Force energy coming from her was laced with pent up rage he did not figure a gray follower would have. To his surprise, the lanky man named Jona took up a lightsaber of his own. His Force signature was weaker but still formidable. If what he had said was true though, their time to clash was limited. Those undead that could track the Force would be coming around before long. He kept his weapon trained on the man. He was good with his weapon but to a trained soldier Fenn knew he would not stand against the woman for long.

The two clanked around the small space. Body parts flew in all directions. Organs made a stain upon the rock as they popped under boots. The crystals crumbled in the Elders wake. Telona effectively made her way around the room erasing all the symbols as she pushed the upstart undead conjurer before her blade. The Jona’s frustrations grew until he left himself so wide-open Fenn had half a mind to shoot him right then. Telona’s hand and a huge pull in the Force stopped him.

The lanky man, now covered in black blood, stopped moving. His hilt clattered to the stone chamber floor. His mouth opened as his eyes rolled up. His own blood foamed out from his mouth as he started to convulse. The Force started to urge Fenn to fire at this man now. He did not understand why but the urge was so strong he could not ignore it. He placed a well-aimed blaster shot right between his eyes.

“You listened to the Force. Good.”

It was then, as the body fell and Telona moved away, that Fenn saw the blade in Jona’s boot that would have given him a final blow before death. Before he could ask how she knew what was going to happen, the echo of dozens of pairs of feet reached his ears. Those undead Jona had spoken of were now in the tunnel. Fenn smirked. Nothing he could not handle.

“Fenn. Burn this place. Nothing must remain.”

Fenn was disappointed he was left with clean up duty. Rigging all the machinery in the chamber to explode would be easy. He had an itchy trigger finger he had not been able to begin to scratch until now. Sighing, he went about his work as he imagined the report he would be making to his superiors. It was going to be one hell of a report.