

The dark was oppressive. It draped across her like a blanket, comforting her, steadying her arm. She inhaled slowly, deeply, the smell of ancient dust dancing across her senses as she slowly exhaled, eye drying ever so slowly through the lens of the scope. Sencara counted heartbeats until she could count bootfalls, the heavy treads of her target echoing down the narrow corridor, his body muting the hum of the generators slightly as he paused in at the entrance to the main hall. She could see the shards start to glow as he approached, but not him. Her post from on top of the pillar kept her from view, but gave her a clear shot once her target would step across the threshold.

Sencara held her breath, factoring in where the man's head would stand as he stepped across, mentally reminding herself to put multiple blasts in, per the dossier. She normally was opposed to that, as she knew firsthand how easy it was to track anyone firing more than once, but the money was too good to turn down.

The crystals continued to glow, but the footsteps stopped. She narrowed her eyes, mind racing. *Just step in*, she thought to herself. *Step even halfway in so I can get off of this cold and creepy rock and go somewhere warm and sunny.* But he didn't. She could hear another voice in the foyer, something almost Kaminoan. *Come on, step in.* She watched, her lungs starting to burn as she held the breath.

The crystals dimmed. She didn't understand the ancient ones' craft, but the little shards in the walls shone whenever a person was near them, and they were dimming. She cursed her luck, trying to let the breath out as silently as possible.

She heard the telltale sound of lightsabers igniting, and her mind sang possibilities. She shifted her weight, trying to get an angle on the doorway a little bit better, wondering what exactly was happening in there when she saw it.

They shone in golden fire, swirling like an angry storm, seething into the room in arcs of cauterizing flame. She drew a bead on one of them immediately, hesitation marring her conscious as she debated blasting it out of the air and giving away her position. She watched as they spun through the room, spirals of golden light before swinging back toward the opening. She let the breath out, then took another one, cool and measured. They hadn't come for her, she had made the right choice. *Good. They don't know that I'm here.*

But they did. Three of them spilled from the opening, black and violet, silver and steel. Two of them opened fire on her pillar, the heavy blasts from an old clone's M5 pummeling the stone just below her spot, pistol fire screeching overhead. She rose too quickly, squeezing off a flurry of blasts as she leapt to another pillar, the sloppy shots meant more to distract them than to do much else. She couldn't see which was her target anyway. Four shots for three targets was not a problem when she had time, but not like this. She sneered to herself as she slid half down the crumbled side of a column. *How did they know? There was no way.* She cursed as she threw herself up into the dust, slamming a fresh magazine into the rifle. "You dead yet?" Her words

bounced around the chamber, seeming to come from a dozen different places at once. She half smiled, proud of her choice of grounds.

"This one seems to think that she can kill us." The metallic voice came out crisp and clear as the HK droid pushed back their hood, revealing its plated head so it could line up its next salvo better.

"Hekate, you think you're people." Doc was likely sneering beneath his commando helmet. "We've all got problems."

Muz looked at them, the silent command settling in quickly. There was work to be done. He filled his hands with his sabers, the golden blades spinning around them before screaming forward, a maelstrom of destruction in the direction he looked as he leapt to the pillar after the sniper.

Sencara rolled to her back, swinging the blaster across her body, bracing the barrel with a knee as she lined up the shot and slowly released her breath, squeezing the trigger.

Purple chased that bolt from the air, altering its trajectory off to the wall beyond, the blast catching one of the tiny kyber shards and causing it to erupt in blue fire. The next blast crashed into his red blade, this one sent back at her, scoring the stone at her side with charred carbon. She felt her heartbeat pounding in her chest as she squeezed again, sending another blast at the man, this one bouncing off of the purple blade and sent toward her head. She winced, feeling the heat come for her face, breath caught in her throat.

She watched the blaster bolt freeze an inch from her face, close enough that her eyes started to water and she could smell nothing but burning air. The light flushed her irises open, making it hard to see the man, save for the sunset tones of his weapons as he approached.

Sencara let a tear drop down her cheek as she steeled herself for what had to happen next. She knew the risks when she took the puck. She knew why the fee on this one was so high. It was better this way. It had to be this way.

Sencara A'theri sat up.