

Shades of a Shade.

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Shades of a Shade.

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Summary

What happens at night when Kerillian slips out of the keep to indulge the darker parts of her craft of death.

Shades at Night

Kerillian sat quietly in the branches of one of the many trees that clung to the base of the mountain that the Keep sat upon. She was utterly unmoving as though carved from the very wood of her perch, a shadow against a backdrop of night. The Shade was waiting with the patience borne of centuries of stalking deeper and darker forests than the one she currently sat in. Much as she thrilled in the killing of Skaven and Pact-Sworn with the others it didn't give her time to draw things out as much as she'd like, to really draw out the death throes of her foes. And if the others ever did find out about her darker inclinations, especially Saltzpyre, she was sure they'd exile her at the very least or attempt to burn her at worse. And that would be a shame because for once she didn't hate this group. She wasn't fond of them and she certainly didn't like them, but she didn't hate them and wish for their immediate deaths as she did with every other mayfly or dwarf she encountered. And so here she was, sat in a tree at the base of the mountain while the rest of them slept and waiting to unleash the more grisly proclivities of a devotee of Khaine.

A noise caused her to take hold of her bow, a Hagbane shortbow she had crafted herself in between missions for Lohner, and nocked a poison tipped arrow. She smiled to herself as the Skaven patrol blundered into view below her. Sneaky as they were and as good as their night vision was, they were no match for a centuries old Asarai in the forests. They chattered to each other as they walked through the trees, clearly looking for some clue to the location of their enemies castle. Well they wouldn't find it tonight and if they did they wouldn't return alive with the information.

The first arrow flew, sinking into the arm of the lead clan rat. They stopped in their tracks and began looking around for the source of the mystery arrow, all except for the stricken Skaven who sunk to his knees as agony began to eat its way through his veins. Kerillian had purposefully hit him in a non-lethal area so that the poison would kill him instead, slowly and in immense pain. The rest of the patrol noticed and began to chatter in fear and set about looking for their attacker with increased fervour, right as another arrow took a ratman in his unprotected back and he began scrabbling to pull it out as he shrieked in pain. Kerillian silently flitted across the branches of her tree and lithely leapt to another, loosing an arrow into the leg of a third Skaven fighter and being rewarded with the shrieks of agony she craved. Another arrow and another clanrat went down, writhing as black poison set his nerves alight and slowly choked his lungs with blood. Another arrow, another writhing Skaven and Kerillian was moving across the branches to another tree. There were still a dozen clanrats left, torn between finding their attacker or fleeing. Well Kerillian wasn't going to give them any choice at all, their only option was to die. Another arrow shot from her bow to bury itself in an unprotected thigh, the screams of Skaven agony drowning out any slight noise Kerillian made as she leapt from the trees, handaxe bared and glinting slightly in the light of Morrslieb. She landed next to a small cluster of the invaders and swung the small blade in a vicious arc that cut the leg from one clanrat and thumped upwards into the guts of the one next to him. Intestines spilled to the floor and blood sprayed as the Shade split the skull of the third skaven before the first had even hit the floor. The Skaven went into full panic now as they tried to desperately catch a glimpse of their killer, scrabbling around the forest floor desperately clutching weapons and backing into each other. One clanrat went down after

bumping blindly into another who lashed out in an equally blind panic and gutted his comrade. Kerillian finally let out her first noise, a bitterly cruel laugh as her short handaxe swept upwards and cleaved a Skaven right between his legs and upwards until the blade jarred against rib bones. She drew it back out the corpse with a wet slurp and backhanded the blade across her next victims throat. It felt so good to be able to kill uninhibited and with as much cruelty as she desired. Yes she despised cruelty against innocents or those unable to defend themselves but the Skaven were neither of those and deserved every drop of pain she could give them and then more besides. It also felt good to fight and kill without being slowed by her mayfly comrades or being worried about them blundering into the path of her blades. More than once she'd had to turn aside a killing blow intended to kill some elite enemy or pack of rabble as her companions rushed in to her 'aid' and flailed about with their crude weapons. But that was why she was here, a little gentle exercise in the form of unrestrained and uninhibited killing.

There was only one clanrat left now, the rest shrieking out the last of their lives in agony or already still in death. "Run." Kerillian whispered and the terrified clanrat did just that. He sprinted as fast as he could away from the elf-thing that had so casually slaughtered his patrol. He hoped he could make it back to the safety of camp or even to another patrol. Perhaps a Stormvermin patrol was nearby. His heart raced as panic filled his mind but hope crept in as he smelt the distinct aroma of larger furry bodies in armour. He saw the glimpse of the prayed for Stormvermins and sprinted faster towards them, surely they could protect him from the deadly elf-thing. Something struck him the back and he fell to the floor, hope dying in ashes in his heart as agony burned it out and he shrieked loudly as blood filled his lungs and pain filled everything else.

Beneath her mask Kerillian was smiling a smile that would make even a Rot-helm flinch back a step or two. Let them know the death of hope as she had. Let them know pain as she had. Let them know fear as she had. She fired another poisoned arrow at the lead Stormvermin, sending it flying past his shield and into his shoulder. He looked down at it for a moment and gave a chattering laugh at the arrow before breaking it and tossing the shaft aside. Kerillian's smile stayed in place though her foes couldn't see it. The Stormvermin charged and Kerillian stayed still. The shielded Skaven suddenly stopped as the poison took delayed effect in his larger and more robust form. Blood frothed from his lips and his chattering laugh became a shriek of agony. He dropped to his knees as agony filled his brain. The remaining four Stormvermin lifted their halberds and charged, shrieking a high pitched war cry as they came to strike down this arrogant elf-thing. Kerillian moved to meet them, her handaxe flashed and an arm was sent spinning away into the night still clutching a halberd. Another flash of elvish steel and a helmet was shattered and the brain beneath split like an over ripe fruit. Kerillian pulled her magic about her and vanished from sight, leaving two very confused Skaven staring at the spot she had once occupied. The expression on one turned to stupefied puzzlement as the Shade reappeared behind them and sank her axe into his neck, leaving him to rumple into a welter of blood. The last Stormvermin gave a mighty swing of his weapon as he spun to face this deadly elf-thing. Kerillian ducked the blow and sent her axe upwards, the blade cutting through the Skaven's neck and sending his head flying the opposite direction of his body. The first Stormvermin struck down finally stopped screaming as he drowned in his own poisoned blood, leaving Kerillian to stand alone once more in the silence of the forest at night, surrounded by her bloody handy work. Her smile

remained fixed as she headed back to the keep to clean up and rest a short while before the others arose. She was sure Khaine would be pleased by tonights work.

Shades of Thought

It had been a long day down in Helmgart. Kerillian had gone down to slay the Nurglite sorcerer Burblespew Halescource along with her comrades Sienna, Markus and Victor. She had carried her hagbane bow and a paired sword and dagger this time, the speed of her attacks making up for any loss of power these blades might have against her larger weapons. She slaughtered hundreds of Skaven and Pact-Sworn despite her mayflies companions best efforts. She knew they didn't hamper her on purpose but they seemed to lack a proper discipline in battle, often rushing ahead of her or blocking her line of sight when she was trying to take down a more dangerous enemy at range. On top of that fact was Kerillian also had to defend them sometimes, especially when they went charging against a swarm without sticking close to the rest of them, and she'd have to turn aside blows that would have killed or at least badly injured her comrades. Yes she had the speed and skill for it but it wasted valuable time when she could have been slaying more of their enemies and spilling blood for Khaine. It was frustrating and at times she was tempted to just slit their throats and fight alone but she knew that even with her immense skills she wouldn't prevail alone. Besides she might actually miss Sienna if she did cut them down for getting in her way one too many times. Kerillian was not fond of any of them, not even Bardin who she grudgingly respected, fondness had been ripped from her centuries ago along with most other emotions except hatred.

As she sat under the tree that grew by the river just outside the keep Kerillian cast her thoughts over her comrades. They were useful in their own ways, mostly as blundering shields to distract their enemies so Kerillian could kill them. Victor was the worst of them, a capable enough killer for a mayfly but his accompanying screechs of zealotry were enough to grind down even an asrai's patience. Bardin was the next best killer after her, a few extra centuries on the humans ought to have taught him something, but he was still just a dwarf and a loud one at that with zero grace. Kruber was capable enough but still a simple minded mayfly thought humanity had it all sorted and ale was the best thing invented. And then there was Sienna. Kerillian almost smiled when her thoughts turned to the Pyromaniac, her love of destruction and lack of care for human life made Kerillian almost fond of her though the elf still refused any emotions stronger than a lack of disdain, mayflies were too short lived to be worth the investment anyway.

Kerillian knelt by the fast flowing river and dipped her hands into it, enjoying the cold water flowing across her skin. It was a long and strange chain of events that had led to her being in Ubersreik and throwing in her lot with the mayflies and Bardin. She had thought about striking out on her own a few times and killing them herself a few others but she always stayed and let the thought pass. No one else seemed to be doing anything about the Skaven and now Pact-Sworn that were trying to drown the Empire in filth and destruction. No one else was trying to set things to right. If she was to set the Weave back to normal she would need their help, clumsy as it was. Still, she had centuries ahead of her yet, providing the mayflies didn't get her killed, in which she could be alone once again. Alone. Exiled. The Shade sighed and stood up from the riverbank and lightly hopped across the rocks to the other side. She entered by one of the side doors and walked through the keep towards the practice courtyard where she had set up her room. Kruber and Bardin were of course drinking

ale or whatever other crudely brewed slop they'd either looted or brewed themselves. She ignored the raucous sound of their bantering and continued past them. She could hear Sienna reading some tome of lore in her room, confirmed by the faint firelight glow that came from the gaping hole in the wall she refused to have patched up. Victor was probably in his rooms doing whatever it was a man of faith did to skaven corpses. And Lohner was stood behind his little map table, frowning down at it with an intensity as though he could push the hordes out the Empire from there. Kerillian walked past them all, ignoring anything called to her or any glances thrown her way. Soon enough she wouldn't have to blank them out and she could have peace again and not have to hide out in this pile of dead and cold stone.

Sat now in her room Kerillian slowly began to sharpen her spear, deciding to use it tomorrow when they went back through the Bridge of Shadows to where ever it was that Lohner needed them to go. She sighed, all this effort to save a mayfly kingdom built on rot but she knew if it wasn't stopped here then it would swallow the rest of the world in madness and not even Athel Loren would be safe. Athel Loren, the home that had rejected her and that she still yearned for even though she knew that even if she was welcomed back she would be the only one touched by Khaine so markedly in her community and she'd still be an outsider. Still, there were worse things than spilling blood for her god. The thought of the bloodshed to come tomorrow lightened her mood and the Shade settled down to sleep for a few hours before the reaping of souls on the next sunrise.

The Song of Kerillian

Chapter Summary

Kerillian makes her own ballad because the others would just mess it up.

Kerillian sat cross legged in her makeshift quarters under the tree in the practice courtyard, her glaive across her lap as she ran a cloth over the summer steel blade. Another mission for Lohner and another day of slaughter to please Khaine and another verse to add to her ballad.

From out the wilding woods
Came striding the exile hero
The sender of far death
And cleaver of foes too near

From the forests cast
To the man city came
With stout companion of no choice
Hacker of stones and drowner of ale

Along rushing river's flow
The exile hero met the upright rats
And with the stout one
Hewed and pierced and hacked them to ruin

In man city the Skaven warred
Cutting short already short lives
The exiled one heard the Weave
It screamed for balance and justice

And so with mayflies three
The exiled hero with her stout companion
Took the fight to ratmen foul
And bathed in blood fit to make Khaine smile

And so the misfit heroes fought and bled
Ratmen died by the horde
With bright blades and keen arrows
The defilers were purged from the mayfly nest

Until at last our exile hero with the stout companion
The caster of greedy flames and the champion of shields

With the god calling zealot came to find their nemesis
The rat of grey, caller of defiled lightning and schemer of woes

And so battle was joined in the earth's belly
The exile hero and the lumberfoots four
Fought the hordes of the Grey Seer in their camps
Until at last they cast him down with his tolling bell of doom

But in the moment of triumph
One last trick of foulness from the grey foe
Tore our heroic band from freedom
And cast them into cages and bondage

The Grey Seer reemerged and brought with him
Allies of his own, plague drinkers and health ruiners
The men of the North with dark eyes over them
And stains upon their souls blacker than night

And once more ruination was spread
A new mayfly settlement brought low
A new toll of souls sent screaming to a simple god
A new wound in the side of the Weave

Our exile hero sat not idle in bondage
But gathering wits and strength she broke forth
And gathering once more her followers of before
Left the warrens of gloom for sun touched soils

Once more with bow and glaive in hand
The exile hero strode a road of blood and pain
Knowing she may not return from her origin
But must carve out a new haven and settle the Weave once more

From the tumbles of a mountain fastness
She led the lumberfoots, stout and mayfly both
To correct the wrongs wrought by the upright rats
And lay low for certain those that led the desecration of life

And so the exile hero of burning steel and snarling wood
Gave death to desecrators all and spilled blood for Khaine
The lord of plague magics fell beneath her glaive
Hewn from his perch of sorcery and disease and corruption

To arrows swifter than hawks and deadlier than arrows
Fell the tyrant of cringing rat warriors
Pierced and struck by shafts of vengeful timbers
And cast to the dirt that bore his foul form to the light

Then fell the tyrant of the diseased mayflies

Clad in clanking plates of crude metal from head to toe
Still he fell to a blade of summer steel wielded by elven arms
And fell to death besides the heaped corpses of his armies

At last beneath the earth once more and before technology foul

The exile hero came face to face with her grey furred rival once more
And though he rode a beast of foul growth and foul machines
He was struck down and pierced arrows and blades finding his flesh

The exile hero claimed his horned head with a final swing of blazing steel

Ending once and finally the threat of the sorcerous rat and his machine
And escaping once more the collapse of tunnels delved to the sun above
The exile hero restored the Weave to calm and awaited the next call to blood.

Kerillian smiled to herself under her mask as she sang the song to herself. Perhaps she was taking a few liberties but quite frankly the mayflies were almost more hindrance than help during these dark days and she was sure she wouldn't even feature in any songs or stories they told about this. Not that she really wanted to feature in such clumsy literature but it was good to be recognised. Ah well, the mayflies would pass soon enough and even Bardin would likely pass before she did so being remembered by such creatures was next to worthless. She thought back to her song, she would have to give them a better mention in it she supposed, they had their uses after all. She was also going to have to make longer songs about the death of each champion they had brought down, especially Rasknitt.

Standing up Kerillian set her gleaming glaive aside and stepped past the curtain of her room to look into the courtyard, watching Kruber practice his swings against one of the armoured dummies. Champion of the shield indeed. Kerillian smiled to herself again, perhaps she could perform this song to her people one day and let them know there were some lumberfooted mayflies of use in the world.

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