

# Inevitable

GJW XVI: Transcendence

By Alaris Jinn di Plagia

"I've been waiting for you, Jinn."

"I know."

The twi'lek climbed the final steps to where he knew the Arbiter would be in wait. The pinnacle would have been too obvious, and the ground floor too mundane. Loremi P'sum smiled deeply at his quarry. He had been looking forward to this.

"Few could have survived my puzzles, let alone solved them. I knew you would." The Arbiter's comment wasn't a compliment so much as just a statement of fact.

"I will admit," Alaris replied, "they did give me a challenge."

"Your biggest puzzle awaits, Alaris Jinn."

"You?" Alaris let himself smirk slightly. The violet anger that burst out of his hand coursed through the air, burning impurities and leaving the smell of ozone in the large chamber. The lightning skipped along an invisible surface just inches from the Arbiter's face. Instead, the forks found the walls and followed the path of least resistance through the duracrete and crystalline forms back toward the ground, far below.

"Please. We both know how this will go." P'sum began to circle around, an action Alaris mirrored.

"And therefore, neither of us know how this will go."

The twi'lek's lightsaber burst in its ignition, the sudden violence emitting a calm emerald haze along the floor. Loremi followed suit, and the two would-be combatants paused, waiting for an inkling in the Force to indicate when they should engage.

There was a relative silence in the chamber, only broken by the hum of the blades and the blaster shots and explosions of the battle below. The various computers and machines around Loremi's chamber had been shut off in anticipation, giving the mood that most suited the Arbiter of Balance: calm.

Alaris found that there was one benefit to fighting here rather than on Arx. The dark side gave him more information than usual. If he listened, he could almost make out the Force actually speaking to him. Which is why he leapt instinctively when Bogan prompted him.

The dark side swelled in the twi'lek's legs, giving him immense alacrity, and they carried him across the room in an instant. P'sum immediately was carried into defensive patterns. He had a size advantage, but that scarcely mattered when an Ataru master was crashing against his defenses from seemingly every angle.

The Adept swirled, picking up dust and debris from the ground as he danced around his quarry. Occasionally, he would grab a handful of the refuse and fling it at the Arbiter's face. If it hadn't been for the Force hinting at possible futures instants before they happened, this fight would have been long over.

P'sum knew that this pace would eventually destroy him. He knew from his studies that Alaris would scarcely relent. He needed to engage in a little trickery himself. As if on cue, Alaris spun to re-engage on the Arbiter's off hand. This gave the Arbiter the exact opening he needed. Spinning with the twi'lek in an effort to deflect the incoming blow, he let his left hand drop to his hip and in one movement, he began blasting at the azure blur that was Alaris.

Cursing to himself for his arrogance, Alaris dropped down into a Djem So pose to deflect that blasts away. Within seconds, he began to formulate specific deflections and finally got the one he was waiting for. A red bolt careened off his emerald blade and directly back at the Arbiter. P'sum instinctively deflected the bolt back, and suddenly the two men were caught in a game of Kuat Pong. The single bolt bounced back and forth at an insane speed and with increasing intensity.

Alaris began to step toward his opponent with each deflection until eventually the speed of the game within a battle was too much for Loremi. The Arbiter was forced to deflect the bolt away leaving the opening the Twi'lek was waiting for. Alaris's offhand flung out and a thin fibered net shot from his dart shooter, a memento gifted to him by Darth Nehalem. The net expanded quickly and threatened to smother the Arbiter. He quickly sliced through it with his lightsaber only to be doused in a warm liquid. His eyes shot open in recognition of the smell.

The dart shot out its sparker and the room was suddenly lit ablaze with the Arbiter at its epicenter. Loremi screamed in agony as the flames overtook his whole body. His pain killing implant did little to help, but eventually he stopped feeling the flames and he understood why. His nerve endings had been burned to a crisp. He screamed into the Force to put out the flames and it reluctantly responded in the affirmative. A brief bubble appeared around him, cutting off oxygen from the flame and it went out almost as quickly as it started.

The barrier faded away before suffocation began, but Loremi was already a mess of burnt skin and armor. He wheezed as much air as he could manage. Much of the skin on his neck had melted into his trachea so the breathing was incredibly labored. He knew he wouldn't have to deal with this discomfort much longer. The twi'lek stood above him, looking down on the pathetic being that was once the Arbiter of Balance. There would be a new Arbiter if the Truthwardens survived this war, but Loremi P'sum wouldn't see his successor.

Alaris let his blade drop into Loremi's right lung and watched as the human began to drown in his own blood.

"It appears I was wrong, Arbiter."

Loremi looked up at Alaris, the life fading from his eyes.

Alaris's face didn't show any hint of his emotion. "I did know how this would go.