

Blinded.

This is an entry for the Competition: **[GJW XIII Phase II] Fiction - Combat Writing**

Written by Padawan Appius Wight

You would never know it was there unless you knew what to look for.

That was the simple truth about the Orderu Aspectu Temple hidden within the Lyra 3K-A System. What once were majestic columns and structures amidst the vast forests of Eorilia's Moon are now ruins lost amidst a small modern colony of people. Lyra Colony as it was called to be exact.

This is where Appius found himself now, surrounded by the ever existing hum of the dangerous wildlife within the forest of the moon itself which served as a constant reminder of the danger he was about to walk into. He seriously wished it was under better circumstances that he was visiting the temple. He would have loved to have visited the ruins in peace as he had such a fascination with ancient artifacts and couldn't help but wonder what might still be lying inside waiting to be discovered? What secrets left to be told? What power left buried?

But alas, that was not the reason he was here on this day. The Inquisitorius has located several targets of interest across the Lyra System. Targets that had high priority for elimination and targets that gained the interest of Clan Vizsla in particular for the sizable prices above their heads.

First, there was M'eero "Trip" Trippani, a Zygerrian infiltrator and demolitions expert believed to be responsible for the explosions in the mines of Thillon's Moon and the loss of many innocent lives. Then there was Captain Chelsie Crimson. A Human woman located at the Thuvis Shipyards and has been seen overlooking Collective agents moving in to secure the Assembly Plant 7X-TYR.

And lastly there was the woman Appius was here to **deal with** in a manner of speaking. Sencara A'theri. An Umbaran female, Collective agent, renowned Sniper and weapons specialist that had been making entry into the ancient ruins practically impossible for anyone not a member of the Collective or the Liberation front because anyone who tried ended up dead at her hands.

Then left for food to the scavengers and predators of the forests.

Appius took a deep breath to calm himself and pulled out his datapad. His Master and teacher, the former headmaster of the Shadow Academy himself, Farrin Xies Tarantae, had volunteered him for this mission as a test of Appius' abilities, much to the Jedi Padawan's protests. Farrin had prepared him for this personally. Instructing him to exercise extreme

caution. Never head into battle unprepared and lastly, always know more about your opponent than your opponent knows about you.

Appius wiped the several drops of sweat from his forehead with the left sleeve of his black Jedi Robes. He could feel his nerves creep into the very core of his body. He hates fighting, conflict and even arguments among his peers. He understood they were sometimes necessary in life and in times of war such as now but that didn't mean he had to like it.

Besides, against this opponent he could safely assume peaceful negotiations were off the table.

He went over the datapad meticulously, making sure to memorize every important bit of information he could. What he learnt was she was proficient in not only sniper weaponry of any size and shape but she was also proficient in hand to hand combat, specialising in Mandalorian Core.

'Ok, so close combat isn't an option.'

The Jedi's thought entered his mind though he preferred it that way. He specialised as a Sorcerer, using the Force as his greatest ally and weapon from a distance is what he preferred. Plus his skill in close combat was appalling and in a one on one battle in close combat with her he knew he would most likely end up in an early grave.

'Best to avoid that at all costs.'

He sheathed the datapad back into his robes and continued on to the last recorded location of the temple itself, all the while carefully traversing the loose branches and foliage around him which crackled and snapped under his feet. After a few minutes of thinking he had taken a wrong turn or had gotten lost he finally came across a cave entrance in the distance that had clearly been the interest of several others before him. Excavations of the surrounding area were apparent as several manmade shafts and tunnels were created to dig around and underneath the temple as well as the deforestation that had cleared the way for those who wished to enter. It looked like an intricate abandoned operation though one glaring sight caught Appius' immediate attention. Several dead bodies were strewn across the cave entrance floor. Drenched in pools of their own dry blood and some had pieces of flesh missing from wild beasts that had taken their chance for free pickings. Intestines and bones hung out where the predators had taken their meal of choice. Some of the bodies looked utterly mutilated as a result and the resulting stench was atrocious and assaulted his nostrils. Rotting flesh always was a terrible smell. Obviously these men and women of various races and backgrounds had tried to enter the temple unaware of Collective presence and had paid the price of life for it.

He was about to enter the cave when something felt off in his surroundings. He focused his attention on what he could hear and the sound of faint mechanical whirring entered his ear. He turned around to gaze back into the forest but nothing could be seen.

He was perplexed for a moment until he heard the sound directly above him. He looked up and a scout Droid, more specifically a DRK-1 Probe Droid lingered in the air above him, glaring at him with no other intention than to reveal his location to its master. Without a second thought, Appius harnessed the will of the Force itself, calling upon his vast array of emotions to harness the power he needed as sparks of electricity jettied from the tips of his fingers, zapping the droid and causing it to collapse into a fireball onto the ground in front of him. He quickly inspected the damage to ensure it really was destroyed.

It was. Anything remotely salvageable was burning to cinders as the smell of metal ashes filled the air.

'Well, so much for the element of surprise.'

It had to be Sencara's Droid. Who else could it possibly belong to in a place like this? It was far too convenient.

He sighed and took a moment to collect himself, his thoughts and his feelings for the upcoming fight. Now that she likely knew he was here there was no turning back now.

Appius entered the cave through a small foyer. Dust was ever present on the surrounding surfaces and were kicked up by the breeze as he passed which made it somewhat difficult for him to breathe. Long forgotten torches that stood the test of time remain unignited and remained a stoic reminder of the abandonment of the temple itself. It was Dark and ominous, yet not silent. He came across the presence of two powerful generators that echoed throughout the passageway that gave way into the main chamber. They had been placed here to provide a source of light and power to any expedition that ventured into the temple.

He passed through the massive stone entryway and entered into the main chamber and the sight he was greeted with took his breath away. Nine stone pillars were scattered about the main chamber that was only illuminated by the dim lights and shards of Kyber Crystals surrounding the walls. A glorious spherical pattern seemed to fill the floor and enveloped the majority of the chamber filled with all manner of mysterious and mystical symbols.

'A ritual pattern?' Appius thought. It was an interesting idea but he would need a better look at it to get a better clue.

Though once again, the site of a dead body in the middle of the large room drew away most of Appius' attention away. A male Zabrak in his early forties laid face down, once again in a pool of his own blood. Though one thing separated him from the bodies outside...

Appius approached the body and knelt next to it. Now, he was no detective but even he could tell the blood was still fresh. This body had not been here for very long as it failed to collect a spec of dust on it nor had it degraded in the slightest. Not to mention blood was still pouring out of his open wound.

'Poor guy...'

His emotions and thoughts were solemn as he contemplated this new development. This woman... she had to be stopped. A fire lit up in Appius' soul as grim determination came over him to do what must be done. If she couldn't be reasoned with then for the greater good she had to be eliminated. His previous nerves had all but dissipated in the heat of the moment. He believed he was ready. Farrin had prepared him for this, he just had to find her.

He would get his wish sooner than he had expected. For he had failed to notice the red laser marking that had been tracing him all the way up his body, right onto his face until it was primed at his skull.

Suddenly, he jumped as the Force alarmed him of the sudden danger and acting on instinct he leaped to the side as he heard the click of a BlasTech A280-CFE Sniper Rifle. The resulting shot was so fast it had managed to clip a part of Appius' robes and the bolt impacted on the ground beneath him, kicking up layers of dust that had previously been undisturbed for years and formed a thin layer on top of the Jedi.

He moved on pure survival instinct alone and ran to take cover behind the closest stone pillar possible to him, as he ran another shot echoed throughout the chamber as another sniper bolt sped past him, this time clipping his left cheek just under his eye before impacting into the ground again, kicking up more undisturbed dust into the air. Once again the Force had warned him just fast enough to slow down his movements before he was in line for the headshot. He took cover quickly behind the pillar and placed his right hand on the graze he had just received. It stung and burned as the sensation of pain entered his cut but thankfully it didn't appear to be permanent damage. It did serve as a reminder, however, of just what he had gotten himself into. He could feel his heart pounding out of his chest and he had to take a moment to catch his breath from the shock.

"Tsk, you got lucky, Jedi. I rarely miss."

A slightly higher pitched woman's voice echoed throughout the chamber and sounded honestly disappointed in herself. Clearly she was the type of soldier that took pride in her ability as a marksman.

"Sencara A'theri, I presume?" Appius retorted having regained his composure though he retained just a hint of sarcasm in his words.

"In the flesh, alive and kicking, which is more than will be said about you in a few minutes."

She spoke bluntly, yet her words radiated malice and confidence in her abilities, something that unnerved Appius somewhat.

"Well, your a barrel of laughs, aren't you?" Appius responded sarcastically. Not intending for that comment to be taken seriously at all though Sencara had clearly heard him.

"Well, your a barrel of laughs, aren't you..." she repeated back to him, it sounded like she was committing what Appius said to memory.

"I'll be sure to put that on your grave." Her tone of voice went very dark as Sencara's intention to kill filled the massive chamber. But from what Appius saw from outside the temple and indeed just a few feet away from him lying in a pool of blood, she didn't seem the type to care to bury who she killed.

"On my grave? Seriously?" Appius replied in shock at her comment.

"Yes, I'm going to make a grave just for you. Just so I can dance and spit all over it." Sencara's spoke with as much venom in her voice as she could muster, visibly displaying the Collective's hatred of Force wielders which only served to make Appius frustrated. Clearly there was going to be no talking to her.

Appius tried to peek around the column he was hiding behind to get a better look at her but the moment he did a laser bolt impacted on the pillar itself, causing pieces of it to fall apart, age as well as the power of the rifle both having an impact on the old structure. What he had managed to see however, was the silhouette of a woman wearing black assassin gear kneeling atop the nearest pillar to him.

That is definitely her.

"You can't hide forever, Jedi. I can do this all day." She jeered at him. Taunting him and daring him to reveal himself.

He knew not to. Running out into her sights was more his idea of suicide than anything else and what annoyed him the most was that she was right. In a battle of attrition she was likely going to win. Appius' abilities in the force, whilst they provided him his power, also came at the price of energy and stamina. Not only that but it was more likely that Collective reinforcements would come to back her up if this confrontation dragged on for too long.

Appius scoured his immediate surroundings and noticed a singular piece of concrete that was a part of the pillar Sencara shot only moments ago. He closed his eyes and focused himself, giving himself into the Force. He reached out and felt an invisible grip wrap around the piece of rubble like a vice, he then used all his might to fling it away from the pillar as it landed on the floor it echoed throughout the chamber, grabbing the immediate attention of the Umbaran Weapons expert who retaliated by firing directly at the noise. Appius had used her advanced reflexes against her and it had worked though unbeknownst to Appius she had used all four clips in the cartridge of her weapon and was forced to reload. This gave Appius the time he desperately needed, he appeared from behind the pillar and called upon the Force to aid him once again, forming the quickest bolt of electricity he could muster. It wasn't very powerful, packing about the voltage of a stun gun but it did what was required and forced Sencara off the pillar before it hit her, but not before the lightning collided with her weapon, sending it spiraling down to the floor below a dozen feet away from them. Sencara

was somewhat athletic and could make cat like manoeuvres when required. And just like a cat, she also landed on her feet but not with her weapon in her sights.

Now they were on the same level, Sencara no longer had the high ground and Appius could finally get a good look at her. She wasn't very tall, standing at five foot six compared to Appius' six foot four. She was incredibly slim and pulled her raven hair back to reveal pale skin and a scar positioned over her right eye and whilst her face also revealed high cheekbones, thin lips and a small nose, what caught the Jedi's attention the most were her violet eyes that portrayed a beauty that he had never seen before. She was honestly quite young and beautiful.

But that didn't mean the Jedi was safe.

Far from it.

The moment he was in her sight she had pulled the BlasTech X-8 Night Sniper sidearm from her waist and was prepared to fire upon him. But Appius had been preparing something special, just for her. So, how do you best hinder a sniper?

Simple, you take away their sight of you.

He outstretched his right arm almost like he was pushing something invisible towards her and clenched down on his fist hard. A sudden, blinding flash of light emanated between them and the pain from its bright light penetrated the retinas of both combatants directly like a flashback, causing pain to resonate in the eyes of both Appius and Sencara.

Appius may have used the Force to create this blinding flash of light, but that didn't mean he was a master of the technique. He hadn't worked out all the mechanics of it and as such he too was vulnerable to the intensity of the flash he had created. Though at least he was aware of it and could cover most of the damage with his sleeve, however, the intensity was still too much for him to do little more than protect himself. Sencara on the other hand had no such luck but despite the pain she was incredibly devoted or perhaps stubborn and began firing her pistol in random directions in front of her.

Perhaps she refused to be beaten or maybe it was out of desperation, but either way she hadn't expected to be temporarily blinded like she had been and her third stray shot had soared past Appius and hit a laser mine on one of the different stone pillars behind him. She had planted it there as a failsafe in the event that her marksman skills weren't enough to kill an enemy, but on this occasion it hadn't worked. It had detonated the deadly explosive, the fiery roar echoed throughout the chamber as pieces of stone and concrete were launched across the massive chamber from the momentum of the blast that was created. The supports have the pillar had been obliterated and the massive structure began to lean and collapse above them, threatening to crush both the Jedi and the Sniper under its massive weight.

Luckily, the Force was still with Appius and despite his vision being slightly impaired, with the warning he received he managed to jump out of the way before the structure fell on him and ended his life prematurely. The same could not be said of the Umbaran sniper, as with her vision impaired she had failed to see the toppling structure until it was on top of her. It crashed down and debris and dust covered the chamber caused by the massive weight of the chamber, Appius had to quickly retrieve his breathing mask from within his robes to ensure he didn't inhale an unhealthy amount of it.

When the dust settled and his vision returned all the chaos moments prior had ceased. The chamber was in a terrible state from where the pillar crashed. Rock and debris was everywhere and did no justice for the old majestic chamber.

This is going to take some clearing up.

Appius removed his breathing mask, feeling it was safe to be without it and returned it to within his robes. He wandered over to the crash site so to speak and the sight that greeted him honestly made him sick to his stomach.

Sencara was pressed underneath the stone pillar, completely flattened, blood poured from either side of her, still trickling out of her flesh that had been torn from the impact, her organs and bones leaked out of her, penetrating through her muscle and skin. Her face was lifeless and stuck in a position that looked like it was trying to scream but no noise would come out. Her violet eyes were now devoid of the life that once existed within them.

There was nothing more that could be done. She was gone. She died fighting the very thing she hated most. Force wielders.

It was quite fitting when you think of it that way.

Appius sighed deeply, releasing the tension that was locked into his body from the battle and glanced around the main chamber. He hated that it had come to all this carnage and bloodshed. He hated fighting. But he was alive and in one piece, plus he had completed his mission without actually killing her with his own two hands. She technically had done this herself so his conscience was clear for the most part.

He left the temple and returned to the outside, the putrid smell of the bodies from before still lingered in the air but one sight managed to catch his attention. A Delta-class JV-7 Escort Shuttle aptly named "Irena" flew overhead. It belonged to his Master, Farrin Xies Tarantae, who know doubt was here to check on Appius' progress with his assignment.

Appius knew what to do. He reached his right hand into his robe and retrieved the last piece of equipment he had brought with him, a flare gun. He pointed into the air and fired it, a stream of red smoke erupted out of it which alerted his master to his whereabouts.

All he could do now was wait to be found. He had managed to best the enemy so the Clan could collect the bounty but he had managed to secure the temple ruins at the same time. It was just a matter of what Master Farrin would think of his efforts.

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Snapshot:

<https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/15685/snapshots/1837/3447>