

## Peace is a lie.

A submission for the fiction competition: **[Unsteady Ground Phase 2] Clash of Champions**

Written and submitted by Knight Appius Wight of Clan Vizsla.

### Prologue

*Such is the curse of being in a Mercenary style Clan of the Brotherhood, I suppose.*

That was Appius' first thought as once again he entered Taldryan owned territory. He had become very familiar with this particular sector of the galaxy as of late and if he was truly honest with himself, he was slightly fond of it. So when Clan Taldryan let it be known they would pay a very handsome reward for the deaths of two particular individuals, naturally he was Clan Vizsla's first choice.

Appius retrieved his Brotherhood-issued Inquisitorius Datapad and from within the Battleteam Deathwatch Kom'rk Class Fighter he inspected the details of the mission carefully once more. There were two individual targets...

The first was Rodsu Ijaaz. A Zabracki loyalist and Weapons Specialist. He was infamous for his skills with a blaster and was personally responsible for the deaths of many Brotherhood forces during the last Great Jedi War in the Lyra system. He was notoriously ruthless and the utmost caution was exercised when dealing with him.

The second, however, was the one Appius had an invested interest in. A Weequay by the name of Lon Osul. Much like Rodsu he was a Loyalist Weapon Specialist that specialised in his use of blasters. Unfortunately, that was where the similarities both started and ended. From what Appius could gather from the information Taldryan had gathered, Lon Osu had a particular sadistic streak when it came to users of the Force. Tales of the man's violence and torture of Jedi, Sith and everything in-between radiated throughout the Brotherhood and considering Clan Taldryan was comprised mostly of Force Users it was no surprise the Collective sent him as one of the leads into their military expanses. The man's men were rumoured to have already landed on Chyron.

Clan Vizsla was only paid enough for Appius to take on only one of the two. As Roark put it, they were being cheapskates. After all, Appius wasn't cheap. He was Vizsla's first Knight and a Battleteam Leader to boot but having met the Taldryan leaders the Sorcerer assumed the reason they couldn't pay for him to take on both was because most of their credits were diverted for the Proconsul's booze budget. Seriously, the entire time he was in their presence he never saw her without a drink in her hand.

The Vizsla summit let him decide who he went after. After all, as long as the deed was done Vizsla cared not for how the business was conducted.

He chose to take on Lon Osul. Out of the two, Appius deduced he was the most dangerous. His bloodlust for the lives of those who were Force sensitive was notorious and that, quite frankly, concerned him more than anything else. The Sorcerer wasn't normally much of a worrier, but he was at Lyra Colony during the last war. He saw first hand what those in power within the Collective were capable off...

Suddenly, the Kom'rk Appius was in was disturbed by what felt like a violent turbulence.

"Master, we've entered Chyron's atmosphere."

Appius' apprentice, a Kel Dor and Defender by the name of Trenkyp Zkig informed him of the cause of the shake.

"Good, how long until we arrive?"

"Should just be a few minutes."

"Excellent, Inform me once we are about to land. I need to prepare."

Appius issued his order and retreated to a small, isolated room at the back of the fighter. He sat on the cold steel ground and closed his eyes, allowing himself to be connected to the Living Force as his lightsaber hovered in front of him. Nevertheless, he couldn't shake a foreboding feeling forming in the pit of his heart.

## **Chapter 1**

Chyron was a lot like Coruscant and Nar Shaddaa. It was a budding metropolis filled with an extravagant variety of life sprawled all across the planet. However, unlike Coruscant and Nar Shaddaa, Chyron's construction was far from complete. Swamplands still covered the sprawling metropolis and represented a different age of Chyron. It was also in one of these very swamps where in one Appius committed the act which got him onto the Caelus system news. Despite being new, several structures remained abandoned, such as the building they were approaching just on the edge of both the Taldryan and Imperial sectors.

"Master, we've found signs of life at the below supply depot. It's meant to be abandoned."

It appeared the coordinates they were provided were correct.

"Good, override the code and land the ship. Be ready, I doubt they'll be willing to talk peacefully."

Battleteam Deathwatch was not just made out of warriors and mercenaries. Some that joined the ranks of the team were of a more technological inclination which was what proved to be useful here. Hackers from the Deathwatch special forces unit sent jamming signals and electrical impulses through the facility's security system and forced open the hatch to the main hanger. Thus allowing the Kom'rk to slowly descend to the main durasteel floor. True to fashion, the moment the ship hit the ground they were very quickly surrounded by Collective forces and there was no doubt left in anyone's mind that this was going to be anything but pleasant.

The ramp to the Kom'rk lowered and immediately the heat within the fighter was sucked out into the cold, colourless hangar, creating a faint mist that penetrated the vision of those close by.

"You have exactly five seconds to come down that ramp before we blow you all back to the hell in which you came from."

A loud males voice perforated through the chamber.

"One."

The countdown had begun.

"Two."

The forces inside the Kom'rk prepared themselves for the fight that was to come.

"Three."

Blaster rifles click and clacked, breathing was hard and heavy across the fighter. This is what they were trained to do. The very best of the best.

"Four."

Suddenly, small objects, cylindrical in nature dropped quickly down the ramp right in front of the surrounding troops. A loud bang echoed throughout the main hangar only to be replaced by the cries and screams of pain granted to them by the flash grenades that exploded near them.

"Attack!"

"Move, move, move!"

The special forces units poured out of the Kom'rk, blaster rifles in hand, they began to conduct their slaughter of the enemy around them. Blaster bolts rang out, echoed and hit numerous durasteel walls and pillars. But these were a Special Missions Company. Experts

in their field and their light repeating blasters made short work of the welcoming party that arrived to greet them.

Trenkyp Zkig inspected the hangar and the death around him before his master and Battleteam Leader descended down the ramp.

"The hangar is secure, Master," the Kel Dor stated bluntly to the Sorcerer.

"Excellent, good work everyone." Appius responded, making sure to praise the effectiveness of his men. "Do we know where Lon Osul is?"

One of the Special mission forces soldiers approached him with a datapad. Within it lay the exact layout of the depot in all its glory as well as the current location of certain VIP's, including the makeshift office of Lon Osul some one hundred and twenty seven feet above them. Funnily enough, they passed it on the way down. Having intelligence and hacking specialists within the Battleteam was certainly proving more than useful.

"Stay here and guard the ship. I shouldn't be too long and no doubt there's more of them on the way," commanded Appius, handing the datapad over to his apprentice and prepared to launch himself into the air. "Keep the hangar secure and make sure they all stay safe."

"I'm coming with you," stated Trenkyp with determination.

"No."

His master's sudden defiance startled him. After all, it wasn't like his master to refuse his help when it was offered.

"Why not?" He asked with a slight inflection in his voice which failed to hide his curiosity of the situation.

"This ship is our only way in and out of this place. I need you to help the rest of the forces to protect it."

"But..."

"That's an order, Trenkyp."

The sudden confrontational tone in Appius' voice caused Trenkyp to tense his body. He folded his arms and clenched his fists, doing his best to hide it under his Jedi Robes.

"Fine," the Kel Dor was stubborn, but even he knew butting heads at a time like this was not the smartest idea. Plus, he knew better. Appius wasn't just his Master, but his Battleteam Leader too and undermining him in front of everyone was only going to get him an earful later.

Appius stood into a clearing away from the Deathwatch forces.

"Master."

The Mandalorian Force User glanced back to his apprentice.

"May the Force be with you."

Trenkyp's voice was a lot softer than it had been moments prior though his arms remained crossed in front of his chest in a defensive position. Appius glanced back, Trenkyp couldn't see his Master's face through his T-shaped Mandalorian visor but if he could, he would have been greeted to the blue eyed human smiling back at him.

"And you."

That was the Sorcerer's response. His Imperial Super Commando Jetpack roared to life as the flames burst out of its thrusters. It propelled him up off the ground as the distance between himself and the ground increased quickly. In moments he was at sixty feet elevation, then seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred.

It didn't take long to reach the desired one hundred and twenty seven he needed. A railing to a blast door presented itself to him. He landed and the mobility augment in his Armor caused a loud clunk when he landed. His jetpack deactivated and using the power of the Living Force he waved his right hand to the side and forced the door open. He slipped through carefully, doing his best not to be seen by any potential Collective forces on his way to Lon Osul.

## **Chapter 2**

The Sorcerer carefully made his way down the hallways towards Lon Osul's makeshift office. It was relatively quiet which was a good thing considering the Mobility Augment in his personalized Mandalorian armor made sneaking a near impossibility and it provided him some comfort against the frigid cold that surrounded him. Thankfully, it appeared what forces were here were too busy formulating a plan of attack to deal with the chaos in the hangar when he and his Battleteam arrived.

Appius arrived at a large blast door and pressed his hand against the control panel. It opened three layers of protection into a vast open room, dimly lit and cold to feel even through the protection to such elements granted by his armor. He stepped in and all of a sudden, the sinking feeling he had in his gut returned, only this time it was due to the sight of a Taldryan padawan tied to a durasteel chair. She was Chiss in nature, with torn, ripped and bloody Jedi robes. It appeared she barely clung to life, Her breathing shallow and raspy like a fish out of water. As he approached her the bruising on her blue coloured skin was apparent and judging from the swelling around her cheeks and jawline it could be assumed she was now missing some teeth. Likely the work of blunt force trauma.

"Are you ok?" Appius said as he knelt beside her. He didn't receive a verbal response, but one black eye opened to look to him before a message resonated in his mind.

*Please... help*

The message was simple and fractured, but it was clear enough for him to understand. This was clearly Lon Osul's work and he tried to repress the hot feeling building within him at the outrageous acts the man was capable of. He was about to begin untying her when he heard a loud footstep from within the darkness of the room.

Appius reached out with the Force and sure enough, he detected a man here alongside them, his heart filled with malicious intent and even from a non Force user the Sorcerer could feel the ill intent within this beings heart. All of a sudden, the darkness surrounding them was destroyed as a pulled switch illuminated everything brightly like sunlight through clear windows. The suddenness of which blinded him for a short moment.

That was until the Force whispered it's alarm to him in the back of his mind. Sensing no other option in the small window of time he had, he turned a thrust forward an open palm, sending the injured padawan careening several feet to the other side of the room and hopefully out of the way of any harm. Then as a deadly boom penetrated his ears he jumped out of the firing line of a Golan Arms CR-1 Blaster Cannon which barely skimmed past him and just over the hurt Chiss' head. Upon landing on his feet, Appius quickly reacted as he drew upon the darkness within him. Anger, fury and fear formed a fire within him that sparked instantaneously in his very soul. He drove that feeling through his body to the palms of his hands and inevitably, his fingertips. Electricity sparked like a storm in full force and without a moment's hesitation lightning jettied an impressive distance towards the man that was trying to kill him like streaking torture threads.

Unfortunately for Appius, the distance was such that his enemy was able to roll out of the way in the nick of time. The man once again aimed his Golan Arms CR-1 Blaster Cannon at the Sorcerer whilst the Force User in question unholstered his WESTAR 35 blaster pistol, *oppression*. Each man's weapon pointed at the other in a standoff that neither of them was willing to back down from. But from this angle, the Mystic was able to get a good look at his attacker. Battered Mandalorian style Armor was the first thing that caught his eye. The paint was worn thin, scratch marks were strewn all over it and it appeared several spots had very peculiar dents in it. Nothing that would stop it's effectiveness however. The man was as tall as he was broad and It was exactly as the datapad described him, but behind the faded blue vizor he couldn't see his face. But he didn't need too.

The Weequay known as Lon Osul. He knew it was him.

"So, you're one of them, are you?" The Weapon Specialists voice, deep and protruding boomed across the room. Vizsla's Mystic was about to retort when once again the Force rang a warning through his subconscious. The blast of Lon's Golan Arms CR-1 Blaster Cannon echoed throughout the room. This time, Appius fueled himself with the Power of the Force and using his newfound speed quickly leapt over the deadly lasers to the other side of

his Mandalorian armor wearing enemy. With both hands still on his blaster, he aimed directly at Osul's chest as the experienced Weequay dropped his weapon and charged headfirst towards him with little regard for his own safety.

The Laser sights on Appius' pistols helped him lineup the shot directly to Lon's chestplate. But Lon's risk had paid off and he quickly closed the gap between them. Before Vizsla's first Knight even had the chance to shoot, his bulkier opponent grabbed his wrists and immediately applied pressure to the sensitive area in his flesh. Pain wracked the joint as the Sorcerer was forced to let go of his weapon. It dropped to the floor with a loud clang in-between the two men. Lon immediately went on the offensive as he pulled his knee back to throw his full weight crashing into Appius' solar plexus in a devastating and brutal attack. The Sorcerer responded by meeting it with one of his own knees as the two crashed into each other, sending shockwaves throbbing through both men's, causing them to go slightly numb though Lon just had the edge in pure strength, causing Appius to be slightly worse off in that exchange. Even so, this act of self defense surprised the weequay for the briefest of moments which caused him to change tactics. From the position he held over the Force User he quickly slid his left arm under the humans right and grabbed hold of the joint between the neck and his shoulders. He began to apply pressure in an attempt to overpower and dominate him. The Sorcerer struggled in his grasp and formed a tight fist with his free right hand and tried to punch Lon repeatedly in the Solar Plexus, but the man's armor kept him well protected from his strikes.

Thankfully, Appius remembered one of the first rules of self defense he was taught whilst he was a young boy on Mandalore. He promptly with all his might, swung his knee as hard as he could into the weequay's privates.

The first rule; if in doubt, go for the groin. With most races in the galaxy, it's always a guaranteed sweet spot.

You couldn't see it through Lon's visor, but you could certainly hear the pained groan that quietly came out of the Weequay's mouth. His grip on Appius was eliminated as he hunched over, trying to fight the pain as best he could but ultimately failing.

Sensing his opportunity, Appius extended out with the Force like an extension of himself. It wrapped around the Weequay and like a strong tether. The Sorcerer flung his arm up towards the ceiling and Lon followed suite in that very direction. He seemingly defied gravity and crashed into the ceiling with a hard sixteen feet up with crack in his spine. Gravity once more took effect after Appius released his influence over him and Lon dropped back to the steel floor. His landing was far from soft as he landed directly on his chest.

The moment he was on the floor, Appius acted like a predator that smelled blood. His jetpack roared to life and flames burst out of the thrusters as it propelled him ten feet in the air above the downed Weequay. The power to the thrusters then stopped and Appius fell feet first towards the downed Weapons Specialist.

Lon Osul wasn't leader of a Collective assault force for no reason, he instinctively rolled out of the way just as the Force Users feet crashed into the floor where he was only moments prior. He rose quickly to his feet and grabbed his tonfa shaped Z6 Riot Control Baton. Its shock tip sparked to life, he raised it above his head, ready to crack it down at the Force User.

This gesture would ultimately prove to be his undoing. Appius reached out with the Force and called his lightsaber to his right hand from his waist. An emerald blade committed a fluid, vertical slice through Durasteel Mandalorian armor as Lon raised his weapon, severing his right arm from the elbow and the rest of his body. The sudden tremble in the weequay's body would have been a telltale signs to most of the sudden horror of having a missing appendage, yet Vizsla's Mystic wasn't done. After the strike he spun and opened the palm of his hand towards the Collective soldier who felt what could only be described to him as a powerful gust of air rush past his body, sending him hurling several feet to the edge of the room. As he landed, he skidded and rolled across the floor which loosened his helmet and caused it to be removed from his head in the tumble.

His heartbeat was strong and hard in his chest, but thankfully the fight seemed to be over. The Sorcerer approached the loser of their fight and stood over him, his emerald blade just inches from the Weequay's horrifically scarred and leathery face.

"Its over, I win," the Mystic declared.

"No. No you do not and do you know why?" Lon responded between gritted teeth, trying to hide both his pain and disgust. Both of which were caused by the Force User in front of him.

"I dream of a universe without your kind and your Sorcerer's ways. My wife and children were butchered by the red blade of one of your own. Left limbless and lifeless on the desert of Tatoonie. One day, the Collective will win, the Force will die and all of you along with it. So go ahead and kill me. In the end it doesn't even matter."

His words were spoken with as much venom as the man could muster, his eyes had become watery and his body tensed as he spat at Appius with as much hatred as he could muster. Vizsla's first Knight didn't say anything at first, but his grip tightened around his lightsaber and his gaze became harder.

"Do you know what I believe in? I believe in a universe at peace. Where everyone, Force sensitive or not live in harmony with each other. Without fear and full of acceptance of one another. I'm sorry about what happened to your family, but one individual does not define an entire people."

Lon barely had any reaction apart from the stares of death he was trying to give the Sorcerer. But what Appius hadn't realised was that with his remaining left hand, the Weapon Specialist had wrapped his fingers around Appius' WESTAR 35 which was dropped earlier in the fight.



"I should kill you, they want me too. But I won't. I'm not like you, Lon. Instead, I'll take you to Taldryan and they can decide what to do with you from there. May the Living Force have mercy on your soul, Lon. They won't be as forgiving as I am."

A knot formed in the pit of Appius' stomach like a hard punch when he suddenly heard the high pitched sound of *Oppression* firing next to him. He noticed the flash of light out of the corner of his eye but the weapon wasn't aimed at him.

He slowly turned his gaze in the direction the blast was shot and his entire core shook at the sight of the Chiss padawan. Her mouth agape and body lifeless. The deadly shot hit her square in the chest and her soul left the land of the living to become one with the Living Force.

Appius quickly snapped back to Lon Osul, who's lips had curved into a satisfied smirk.

"Peace is a lie."

The Force User's pupils dilated and his hands shook slightly on the grip of his lightsaber. His jaw tensed as he clenched his teeth together. His body felt hot as it poured through him from the centre of his body like boiling water. He acted on pure emotional instinct as he ended the life of the scum below him by thrusting his emerald blade directly through his leathery skull. A small amount of blood trickled out of the gaping hole in his head as the weequay took his last breath and joined his family in the afterlife.

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*A few minutes later.*

Appius' jetpack lowered him to the ground gently in front the Deathwatch Kom'rk Class Fighter. The sight that greeted him was that of dead bodies from the Collective scattered amongst the hangar bay floor in the cold and unforgiving atmosphere.

Several Deathwatch special forces personnel were tending to the wounded. Among those helping was his apprentice who was healing the injured as best he could with the Force.

Upon seeing his master the Kel Dor quickly went to greet him.

"What happened?" The Mandalorian asked with a quieter tone to him than per usual.

"A couple of attacks. A few were injured but nothing we couldn't handle. They are well trained."

Appius was oddly quiet for a moment. Trenkyp knew the man could be quite the introvert but even so this was unusual considering the state of the hangar.

"Let's get out of here. The contract is complete, Lon Osul is dead," the Sorcerer stated bluntly as he made his way up the ramp of the Kom'rk.

"What happened?" Trenkyp asked which caused Appius to halt in place for the moment.

"I don't want to talk about it."

That was all that was said as everyone, injured or not, shuffled back into the fighter. The ramp slowly closed and the ceiling opened once again to reveal the daylight.

Appius retreated to his chamber, needing to be alone and pondered if his vision for a perfect universe could ever be a reality.

**---END---**