

# The Death of Appius Wight

An entry for the Fiction Competition: [GJW XIV Phase I] Fiction - In Opposition

Written and submitted by Mystic Appius Wight of Clan Taldryan

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*Tell me who you are, so that I know your very soul.*

*Tell me what you love, so that I may meet it with death.*

*Tell me of your power, so that I know how best to defeat you.*

*Tell me how best to destroy you, so that I may rebuild you as my own.*

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## War Room

### Wrath Resurgent-class Star Destroyer

#### Arx System

"Status report." The blue-hued image of the Grand Master spoke out from above the centre console.

To say Justinios Drake was having a bad day would be the understatement of the galaxy. He'd barely been in office as FIST for a few months and already he was dealing with an invasion in their own damn territory under the watchful eye of the leader of the entire Brotherhood.

As expected, the planetary shields protecting the Nesolat Platform held strong for now. But from his experience, nothing lasts forever, and it would only be a matter of time before sheer force broke through.

"The TIE Squadrons defending the Shadow Academy have fallen and Collective boarding parties have landed," Justinios replied, scanning yet another console providing him with valuable data.

"Anything else?" The Grand Master inquired.

"I've received reports that a Collective strike force has separated from the main group attacking the Nesolat Platform and have assaulted the ACE shipyard. I assume with the intention to destroy it." The Aleena paused to allow the Grand Master to react, though the giant image of the man above the console remained silent and stoic, allowing him to continue.

"The Godless Matron is under assault. The Collective has sent a force to either capture or destroy it. Their intention is unclear."

Justinios finished and turned to face the Grand Master. Telaris simply remained motionless for a moment, absorbing the information the small Fist provided to him.

"The attack on Arx Capital Exchange is concerning. It is our prime source of ship construction and will deal a heavy blow to our militia if they take it. The Godless Matron should be defended. Our newfound relationship with the Revenants depends on it." The Grand Master said tactfully. "Have we received any word from the seven Clans?"

"No, I... oh, wait," Justinios suddenly started with a spring in his steps. He leapt over and retrieved a datapad before furiously tapping away on the screen. A crooked smile graced his features as his head shot up to meet the Human's.

"Most have arrived; Arcona; Taldryan; Vizsla and Odan Urr. The rest aren't too far behind." The Fist explained.

"Excellent. Contact the Consuls and direct them to these three locations. Inform them their Clan's will be rewarded," responded the Grand Master. "And Justinios?"

The small Aleena paused in his action like ice froze his body solid.

"Keep me informed of everything that occurs aboard the Nesolat Platform. There is an artifact within the Shadow Academy that is of the utmost importance." He said commandingly to the Dark Council member.

"Yes, my lord." Replied the Fist, bowing lightly as the image of Telaris Cantor - Grand Master of the Brotherhood - faded from the room.

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**Nesolat Platform**  
**Shadow Academy**  
**Arx System**

He pulled himself out of the Nesolat Platform's main vault and wrapped his right hand around the doorway. Truthfully, he'd overexerted himself in his recent battle against the Collective forces that were invading. They were Hive Mind Marines, four of them, mechanically enhanced super-soldiers designed with one purpose in mind. Killing Force users. He'd barely managed to defeat them but there were undoubtedly more of them on the platform, and there was no bleeding chance he could take them all. Not in the state he was in.

He inspected his armour. Singed, full of scratches, dents, and half of the visor covering his face was destroyed; revealing just a single blue eye behind it. His jetpack, whilst it had taken a few nasty bumps, seemed to still be functional.

The alarm still blared down the platform hallways like an annoying ringing in his ears that wouldn't go away. He grabbed the small holoprojector at his side, the circular disk fit comfortably in the palm of his hand. He pressed a few small buttons on the side, trying desperately to get a hold of any of the Summit members of Clan Taldryan.

He started with Vodo Biask Taldrya, the House Ektrosis Quaestor. But after a few seconds of trying, he got nothing. He then tried Zxyl Taldrya, the newest Son of Taldryan and fellow Mandalorian. But alas, nothing once again. He tried the Taldryan Consul, Seraine Erinyes Tenama and once again received absolutely nothing but pure static. He even tried to get hold of Bale Andros, as long of a shot it was, maybe the leader of independent Battleteam Tavros would respond? Yet again, he drew blanks.

Frustration began to set in as he kept trying to patch into random members of the Clan in the vain hope that someone might answer. Rian Taldrya, General Zentru'la, his new apprentice, Dasha.

Nothing.

*"Fracking piece of junk!"* he yelled, ready to launch the device as hard as he could down the hallway. As he began to pivot his arm and pitch the holoprojector towards the wall, it began to vibrate.

It was like salvation existed within the press of a button. He had no idea who it was, and quite frankly he didn't care. He hurriedly activated the holoprojector as a Human-Zabrak hybrid with a smooth complexion completely devoid of wrinkles. Upon his head were several evenly placed spikes and he possessed a beard that was angular and neatly trimmed.

"Zxyl!" he exclaimed with relief evident in his voice.

"Appius," the Taldryan Proconsul responded, glancing up and down at the poor state of his fellow Mandalorian's armour, "What the hell happened to you? I'm getting sick of these disappearing acts you keep doing."

The klaxons above Appius' head continued to blare down the platform's walkways, making it difficult to understand what the other man was saying. The area shook each time a Collective ship unleashed fire upon them, barraging into the shields.

"I'm at the Shadow Academy's Nesolat Platform. I went ahead of everyone else. I request immediate assistance." replied the pure Human.

"No."

Zxyl's response was like blaster fire had hit the Sorcerer straight in his heart. He stared dumbfounded for a few moments before he composed himself again.

"No? What do you mean no?! The platform is under attack by the Collective. There are so many already dead..."

"And none of this is my concern." Zxyl interrupted, his tone as cold as stone, "We have received our orders from the Grand Master and our Consul has decided to focus our efforts on defending the ACE shipyard."

The gravity of the situation suddenly became very clear to Appius. It wasn't just the Shadow Academy that was under attack, but so was the ACE shipyard and only the Force knew what else.

"You left without saying anything, *again*. You are the Ektrosis Aedile. You got yourself into this mess on your own, so you can pull yourself out of it on your own," the Corsair said calmly with a slight smirk plastered upon his face.

"After all, *Spoonbender*," Zxyl said, glancing slightly further into the projector, right into the one blue eye of Appius he could see through the Visor, "***This is the way.***"

The communication dropped dead instantly before the Ektrosis Aedile could respond. He stared wide-eyed at the device in his hand before his breaths became an anger-fuelled cry.

He lobbed the holoprojector as hard as he could down the hallway like it was a small stone. He wanted nothing more to do with the device. He was all alone, and truthfully, he was beginning to wish he had stayed out of the Brotherhood when he initially left. Something pulled him back, like a nagging itch at the back of his mind. He had to wonder if it was worth it all, potentially worth his own life.

He shook the thought from his mind. He could deal with all that later. Right now, there were those that needed his help. He tapped into the power of the Force, feeling small sparks of life around him being snuffed out like fleeting candles. It hurt his heart, but his suspicions were confirmed about there being more than just the four marines he defeated back in the main vault. People were dying. Force users, academy docents, professors and teachers alike. Very few would have a chance against this Collective ambush.

He stumbled his way over to a nearby panel close to the wall. With all the fighting he had done recently, he'd completely lost track of which side of the platform he was on. Scanning the data before him he realised he wasn't too far from the restricted artifact room in the upper levels of the platform. If there was anywhere that he could potentially find something to turn around the dire situation they were in, it would be there. He also discovered that the Headmistress and Deputy Grand Master had already detached the administration section of the platform and set a course straight for the Shadow Academy down on Arx.

*Of course they have. Desperate times call for desperate measures.*

Appius was so caught up with the console in front of him that he failed to realise the presence of a small cylindrical object until it pressed against his feet. He glanced down, just in time for the object to burst open in front of him.

Smoke, it was an all too familiar sight, though this one was man-made and quickly filled the hallway, making the air thick and his vision unclear. Blaster fire rang out through it, most of it accurately placed and designed to catch their target completely off guard.

"*Krif!*" Appius exclaimed loudly, cursing in the language of his homeworld. He wanted to fight back, to repel the invaders and take vengeance for those they had killed. But he couldn't take that chance, he was in no condition to fight and if these were Hive Mind Marines like the ones he just fought he would be in serious trouble.

Through the smoke he ignited *Redeemer*, the lightsaber attached to his hip. He depended on his precognitive reflexes as he deflected a few stray shots away from his body. He called upon the Force to augment his physical ability, and almost instantly he felt it course through his veins with every beat of his heart. It made his muscles stronger and faster, which was what he needed to escape.

He ran in the opposite direction, bumping into the sides of walls as he did so before he reached the end of the smoke. He knew where he had to go, he just hoped that they weren't able to follow him.

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**Nesolat Platform**  
**Shadow Academy**  
**Arx System**

Under normal circumstances, reaching the restricted artifact room would have been nothing more than a simple walk. Unfortunately, these were not normal circumstances.

Appius had managed to get away and create some distance from whatever fate the Collective had planned for him. Most likely death. Yet no matter where he turned, the echoes of torture and destruction attacked his ears. He used the Force to try and keep tabs on who still lived, only for them to become one with that mystical energy shortly after as their lives were cut short like a flimsy piece of string.

The Collective had successfully breached the upper levels, and were killing everything and everyone in sight that wasn't one of them. This wasn't an act of war, this was an absolute massacre and no matter how much Appius wanted to stop them, no matter how much it tore him up inside to feel his fellow Force users die, he knew if he charged in without a plan it was ultimately going to get him killed.

Thankfully, Collective progress was being halted along the way by various blast doors and ray shields that sealed off passageways and corridors, thus locking them inside. They always broke through thanks to the plasma cutters they commonly carried, but at the very least it slowed them down and delayed the inevitable.

The Ektrosis Aedile had to thank his luck that his own Master once served as the Headmaster of the Shadow Academy. Farrin Xies Tarentae showed him every inch of the Nesolat Platform, including the network of secret passageways that connected one side of the Academy to the other, top to bottom. It was an intricate network, maze-like in organisation and only the Shadow Academy's elite even knew it existed.

Coming across an unassuming durasteel wall, Appius came to a grinding halt. Heavily out of breath and panting, he pressed a hand against the wall to keep him upright. He took a few moments to allow the lactic acid in his muscles to ebb before he placed his other hand in the wall. He moved his hands around, trying to find something that to the naked eye that didn't appear to be there.

"Come on, where is it?" he mumbled to himself, feeling frustration creep up on him as he felt the foes he escaped earlier began to close the distance between them.

Then he felt it. He pressed over a flimsy part of the wall. He removed the steel and haphazardly through it behind him, revealing a secret number panel in Aurebesh from one to nine. He input five numbers, and a doorway slid open from the side. He slipped in through the narrow archway and ducked his head under, reaching out with his hand, he tapped into the Force to close the sliding door behind him so that he could not be followed. Or at least, not easily. They required the code to get the door open so the chances of them getting through were slim at best, and even then, this particular passageway only led to one location.

Appius navigated the dark corridor carefully, the twist and turns as well as the ups and downs felt neverending in the almost black abyss. Even in here, he could hear the cries and screams of death and agony coming from above, below, and all around him. Explosions rang in his ears, and it made him wonder just what would be waiting for him on the other side?

Eventually, he reached the end of the line, yet another blank unassuming wall, and on the other side laid the entrance to the restricted artefact room. On the other side, he could hear muffled voices talking over each other and it brought about a terrible sense of foreboding.

The Collective were already there. He could tell they weren't Academy personnel through the Force, they held a disdain for Force users and were trying desperately to break through the blast door holding them back.

At this point, Appius was getting sick and tired of all this running. It was just never-ending. Was this what Order 66 was like for the Jedi? Constantly running? Fearing every second would be your last as your friends and colleagues were gunned down in front of you.

He remembered an experience, one he preferred to forget. An Imperial sect that blamed Jedi for the fall of the Galactic Empire found him and his father on Mandalore. They were attacked without so much as a shred of mercy and his father died protecting him so he could escape. He left the planet and they followed him for years through the Outer Rim and his torment only ended once he joined the Brotherhood. But those feelings never left him. He always had eyes over his shoulders. The sleepless nights not knowing if he would wake up, not knowing where his next meal would come from, when he would next find a bed. He was isolated, all alone in a vast universe filled with hate and misery.

He couldn't take it anymore, the feelings kept welling up inside him. He was done running, and he was done being afraid. He *hated* vile creatures like that more than anything, and it was time to get *revenge*.

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**Nesolat Platform**  
**Shadow Academy**  
**Arx System**

"How long until it's open?" ordered the Captain to his subordinate.

"Should only take a few minutes, sir." the Chiss woman and engineer responded, not taking her eyes off the plasma cutters that sparked with an intense heat against the sealed blast door.

Captain Prichard was looking forward to this, evident to his small handful of troops by the gleeful, toothy smile plastered on his face. On the other side of that door laid the restricted artifact room, a prized treasury to this forsaken haven of knowledge for Force using scum.

He was like a predator that smelt his prey in fear, and separated from the main assault group to deal with this personally. He was more than happy to let the AI-enhanced super soldiers go about killing the small fry like insects whilst he took the glory of securing the secrets the platform hid from them. The Zabrak stroked his aged, grey, and chiselled beard with anticipation. He could almost taste promotion. He handpicked his team from the Liberation Fronts most eager, young soldiers desperate to prove themselves, to make a name for themselves and together, they would create history by bringing the downfall of the Brotherhood. Together...

*They would all die.*

Seemingly out of nowhere, a part of the steel wall beside him careened at him from the side. It slammed him into the opposite side of the narrow hallway, sandwiching him and crushing him with enough force to stop a wampa dead in its tracks. The part of the wall, plus the Captain, dropped down to the ground in an instant.

"What the hell!?"

"What happened!?"

"Where did that come from!?"

Various Human members of the unit cried out in unison at the sudden fall of their team leader. Only to watch as out from the hole from which had now formed stepped a man in slightly broken and ruined Mandalorian armour.

All weapons pointed directly at him, and instantly he pulled the door he used to slam the Captain in front of him with the Force to shield himself from the smorgasbord of blaster fire that erupted towards him. It clanged against it, shielding him from harm, then, with a flick of his wrist he sent the piece of hard metal careening towards the group of soldiers. It crashed into, and knocked the first two in front off their feet, denting their skulls and killing them instantly.

Perplexed by the sudden action, the remaining three soldiers stepped backwards, trying to get some distance from the advancing enigma before them. With only one dilated eye visible behind a broken visor, he looked more monster than man, a caricature of what Force users all looked like to the Collective.

He only added to the look further, when jets of electricity lanced out of his hands from out of nowhere. They darted towards the group like horrifying tendrils of pain. It ricocheted off the steel wall beside them and crashed directly into the chest of one of the soldiers. He shrieked like a mynock, his eyes rolled into the back of his head and he collapsed to the ground seconds later a burning, charred corpse.

The remaining two returned their blaster fire upon the Mandalorian, realising if they stayed idle they would likely die. Unfortunately, they didn't realize just how futile it was.

The Sorcerer quickly ducked under the stream of blaster fire and stretched out with both hands, pulling the deadly weapons out of the soldiers' hands as they slid across the ground towards him. A soldier without a weapon was, after all, a lot less deadly.

He didn't even have to think. It was completely instinctive as he wrapped his power around one of their throats. The soldier gasped at it, trying desperately to release the invisible hand from his windpipes. His vision darkened, the sound became fuzzy and the grip only got tighter and tighter until the distinct *crunch* of his oesophagus ripping ended his torture permanently.

Before the final soldier could exclaim his startlement he felt a pressure wrap itself around his neck. His eyes widened in horror but before he could do anything else his world faded to black as his neck broke with a sickening *snap*.

The Mandalorian paused where he stood. His breathing was heavy, shoulders hunched as he took deep breaths to regain his composure. From behind him, at the other side of the hall



pressed against the blast door slumped down on the floor, was engineer and slicer Nataka Singot. Horrified at the display of brutality before her, the Chiss woman grabbed hold of the small firearm at her side. She was not trained as a soldier, merely as a hacker and engineer, but she deduced if she could shoot him before he noticed her presence, she could make a clean getaway.

She pointed the blaster pistol at the middle of his back, just under the jetpack and pulled the trigger. When her finger pressed the trigger, the Force user spun on the spot and held out his right hand as the deadly projectile stopped inches in front of him and dissipated into nothing.

He flicked his wrist and her weapon flew out of her hand and out of her reach. He slowly approached her, red eyes never left light blue as he towered above her.

"Please," she whimpered pathetically.

It was the last thing she would ever say as bolts of lightning wrapped around her like a cocoon of torture. She screamed over the stream of lightning yet no-one would come to her rescue. To the Mandalorian, anyone associated with the Collective deserved a swift and painful death, and he was more than happy to deliver.

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**Nesolat Platform**  
**Shadow Academy**  
**Arx System**

This room was restricted for a reason. No-one except the Grand Master, Headmistress, her Praetor, her Magistrates, and former Headmasters were normally allowed in. This was Appius' second time in this room despite the fact he had never been on the Headmistress' staff. Once again, Farrin had shown him, given him the code, and warned him never to use anything in this room unless it was absolutely necessary. Their power was far too great, far too destructive and far too uncontrollable. To be honest, it sounded perfect for the situation he was in.

*Desperate times call for desperate measures.*

He kept telling himself that. It was the only thing that kept his reasoning together as he advanced into the room: holocrons, knives, blades, crystals, helmets, scrolls, urns. The room was literally built from either side out of cabinets of these items that Appius had no idea what their purpose was for. Dark, foreboding and almost devoid of light, the room was a literal sanctuary for the dark side of the Force and every step he took he felt more and more uneasy.

He passed by several shelves and cabinets, looking and searching desperately for something, *anything* that might help.

That was when he saw *it*.

It looked like a cocoon, red as blood with silver dotted across the surface. All light and heat seemed to be drawn to it like it was a black hole. The dark side surrounded it, made the air thick and heavy and yet, Appius was fascinated by it like he was in a trance. He slowly approached it until he was only a footstep away. He didn't remember it from the last time he was here, but then it had been about a year.

***"I've been waiting for you."***

Immediately startled, Appius grabbed his lightsaber and summoned forth the emerald blade within it. He placed his dominant foot behind him, held the blade back in a one-handed grip and angled it forward. His other arm held out in a challenge position.

"Who are you!?" Appius demanded, alarmed at the sudden voice that came from the strange anomaly in front of him.

***"The question isn't who am I, my friend, but what am I?"*** the voice responded. Its deep tone was distinct from any other Appius had ever heard. It was almost primal and animalistic in nature, yet there was no physical form to be seen.

"I am having a *very* bad day, so do me a favour and spare me the cryptic messages before I plunge my lightsaber through whatever the hell this is!" The Sorcerer was by far not the most threatening person, but his patience was about to break after all the day's events.

***"I wouldn't do that if I were you. Deactivate your weapon, I mean you no harm."***

Appius didn't budge for a moment, but he didn't receive any warning from the Force that he was in any imminent danger and deactivated his lightsaber. He placed it back on his waist but kept his hand close, just in case.

"Ok, so *what* are you and what do you mean you've been waiting for me?" The Ektrosis Aedile asked.

***"I am a manifestation of an ancient Sith ritual, a weapon to be used against their enemies. As for how I know? I've felt you through the Force, your darkness guided you to me,"*** the voice responded confidently, in a matter of fact kind of tone.

Appius had no intention of giving in to his darkness the way he did. Though given the day's events, he told himself anyone would have resorted to it if they had to.

***"I feel you are justifying your actions. Of course you are, it's only natural for one afraid of the power that they wield at their fingertips."***

"I'm not afraid!" Appius replied strongly. "I didn't have a choice!"

***"There is always a choice, just as you chose to use the dark side, so will you choose to activate this weapon."***

"What is it?" Appius questioned, trying to ignore the manipulations this being was trying to commit.

***"It is a Thought Bomb. It is a weapon so powerful it guarantees victory to those who use it at the cost of their own lives. It annihilates everything in its path, trapping Force users in an unending torment and destroying everything else. I am but one of the many lost souls attached to it, yearning for release. Yearning to feast."***

The Sorcerer hung his head low and slapped his hands against his thighs defeatedly.

"Then what good are you to me? What is the point of a weapon that kills the enemy if it kills everyone else at the same time?"

***"Because what other choice do you have?" the lost soul replied calmly, "can you see anything else in this room powerful enough to destroy the Collective right here, right now?"***

Appius turned around to look, frantically, he hoped against everything that the Force would provide an alternative to what the *Thought Bomb* would do. Alas, all he saw were a bunch of old times, scrolls and artefacts that he had no idea what the purpose of which was. This weapon provided everything he had been asking for since the Collective attacked.

"No. No, no, no, no, NO!" the Mandalorian screamed, pacing on the spot. "I'm not sacrificing hundreds of Brotherhood personnel just to hit the Collective. There has to be another way!"

***"Enlighten me if you think of it,"*** the lost soul answered back.

He knew it was right, deep down in his gut he knew the lives of a few hundred Shadow Academy personnel was not worth the entire security of the Arx System itself. The Thought Bomb presented a solution to all his problems. A way to end this madness now.

"Is there any way I can avoid the blast?" Appius asked, his tone quiet and melancholy.

***"My magic will keep you safe, you will be the only one unaffected, the sole survivor. All you have to do is give in to your darkness, to the dark side of the Force and the knowledge to do what must be done will be yours. You will be spared, you have my word."***

He didn't know if it was lying to him, it was impossible to tell but honestly? Appius didn't care, he knew now what he had to do. He removed his broken and battered helmet off and threw it to the side, it clanged against the floor and bounced into the darkness out of sight. Appius

removed his jetpack and placed it casually on the floor beside him. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. His heart thumped and beat loudly in his ears, his fingers twitched at his side and sweat dripped down his face.

"I'm ready."

***"I know you are."***

Appius held out his arms to the side.

"We are one. We are the dark side. The dark side is us. Feel the power of the dark side. Surrender to it. Surrender to the unified whole. Let us become one." He chanted the words as they flooded his mind like a datapad being poured into his brain.

He then slammed his hands together into a resounding *CLAP*.

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## **Nesolat Platform Arx System**

It was like the heart of the Nesolat Platform suddenly had a pulse, yet It beat only once and then imploded like a supernova. It stretched through the platform and to the outside Collective ships and cruisers that bombarded them like a coil of pure darkness. It eradicated everything in its path from Force users of the Brotherhood, to the Collective, to outside and in between. Nothing was safe as it phased through the walls and turned any living being it touched into ash and bone. Many didn't scream, they never had a chance. Only seconds passed before hundreds were enveloped in an unholy cataclysm the universe hadn't seen in several millennia.

The blast reached outside the platform to the many frigates and cruisers the Collective committed to the assault on the Nesolat Platform. Everyone from regular engineers to commanders and generals on board met their end simultaneously in the blast. An act of the dark side of the Force, it brought unending affliction and torment to their souls before they died. Turned to nothing more than ash aboard their ships as the damage they sustained careened them down towards the Arx planetary surface.

Sections of the Nesolat Platform itself separated and vaporised, only the epicentre remained clear and free from damage, as if somehow it was immune from the catastrophe that surrounded it. The weapon feasted on the souls of hundreds, leading into thousands to quench an appetite it held for so very long. After only a few minutes, the bright lights faded, and the Collective assault ceased to exist.

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## **War Room**

## **Wrath Resurgent-class Star Destroyer Arx System**

"Sir, you are going to want to see this."

The words of his subordinate caught the little Aleena's ears as he moved over to inspect the information he had acquired. He hoped for good news as the evacuation of artifacts from the Nesolat Platform down to the planet's surface was the biggest priority right now.

"What in the hell?" The blue-skinned Aleena mumbled to himself. Report after report came in of an apparent rapid explosion that tore parts of the Nesolat Platform apart and destroyed the invading Collective fleet attacking it. Lifeform scans revealed complete annihilation, except for one individual that remained.

"Try to make contact with the platform, with any luck this individual might come and say hello." The sarcasm in the Fist's voice was completely intentional. What Justinios may have lacked in physical size he more than made up for in being an intellectual genius. He'd already deduced that whatever caused this more than likely came from one of the many Sith artifacts the Platform kept in storage, possibly even several of them judging from the fact that all that remained of everyone else was ash and bone. His knowledge of particle physics was one thing, but he was no artificer, this was clearly a manifestation of the dark side.

He didn't expect to get a response so quickly, but the static image of a tall human male with short buzz-cut brown hair wearing worn and torn Mandalorian armour stood before him. Justinios was a Taldrya, and recognised the man before him as the Aedile of House Ektrosis from the descriptions he'd received of him. Appius Wight.

"Well, you certainly have some explaining to do, don't you, Mr Wight?" the Aleena Arcanist said, placing his hands behind his back. He awaited a response, but the human before him never said a word.

"Hello? Anyone home?" Justinios continued, waving his hand in front of the image, "are you going to say anything or are you going to keep doing the galaxy's best impression of a statue?"

A pair of fiery amber eyes glared down at the much smaller man, though the Aleena had seen those eyes before. The sign of his complete immersion into the dark side of the Force.

"What I did, I did without choice," the Aedile finally responded with a hint of reasoning in his words. "In the name of peace and sanity."

"What happened down there?" Questioned the Fist. "Did you sacrifice our own to hit the Collective? I have to wonder how the rest of the Brotherhood will feel about this."

"I don't particularly care what they think. You, the Grand Master, Taldryan, or otherwise. The Thought Bomb did its job and ended the assault and the artifacts are safe. I did what I had to

do," countered Appius defiantly, "great men are forged in fire, it is the duty of lesser men to be fuel for the flames."

The communication ended abruptly before Justinios could retort. The small man tapped his left foot on the floor and contemplated his next move. The Collective assault on the Nesolat Platform had stopped, but calling it a victory seemed a bit of a stretch. Still, it would put a dent in Rath Oligard's plans for the time being, even if he had to now inform the seven clans to stay away from the platform for the time being.

"Get me the Grand Master at once," he ordered the many personnel manning the various terminals and computers around him, "no doubt he's going to want to know about all this."

**--END--**

