

## **We are the Collective**

### **By Aura Ta'var**

*Nesolat Platform*  
38 ABY

Collective soldier A-15 stepped onto the platform, fully armed and operational. A thousand other voices spoke inside it, the chatter from its other units already in the field. A-15 looked out onto the battlefield, this time a platform they called the Nesolat. A-15 pulled up the rapidly forming schematics, its fellow units' data uploaded to A-15 every few seconds. A second list of personnel counts and their associated records came in the next download. Red x's were next to many names as they were already terminated. A-15 filtered for optimal specimens, be it brain or brawn, and was left with a list of 100 people. A-15 then queried the hive mind for their locations, which quickly populated next to their names. All this took no more than a minute.

*A-15 reporting for duty, pursuing targets,* thought the Collective soldier.

A cacophony of responses in the span of a microsecond took place and A-15 walked towards its assigned target. Methodically, A-15 stomped purposefully through the hallways, ignoring fleeing denizens its fellow units had already trapped. They just didn't know it yet. As A-15 turned a corner it walked past a sobbing man currently being dragged along the floor.

"You killed her! You animals. How could you!" screamed the inconsolable and petrified man.

"We will upgrade you. You will be fine," seemed to ring through the halls as A-15's fellow units brought their quarry's to the processing station.

"No. I'll never be one of you. You can't make me! Let me go!" yelled the prisoner as he struggled.

A-15 ignored them and turned to face a door welded shut. The still orange bubbles in the durasteel marked it as a recent modification. A-15 tilted its head and raised its plasma cutter to the door. Sparks flew as the torch met metal, the brightness did not affect A-15's vision. A-15 patiently cut an oval in the door, calling up manufacturing documents on the door while it waited. Noticing a design flaw, apparently left there for appearance purposes, A-15 redirected its plasma cutter upward. A loud snap went off, one of the door's security mechanisms gone. A-15 didn't have a normal concept of time. To A-15 it was a series of 0's and 1's but regardless eventually the plasma torch was turned off and A-15 kicked the door down. A loud set of screams went off as the frightened inhabitants scurried to a corner. A-15 registered one female, age 45, and a small child of age 7.

The pair held onto each other and cried. The room they were in registered as a domicile. A-15 said nothing and simply tore the child from the mother as if it was a rag doll. Unfeeling and

unthinking it dragged the screaming child out of the domicile. A-15 now stood between mother and child. The woman ran forward in desperation but A-15 already put a blaster bolt in her forehead, the telltale thump eliciting the predicted response from its quarry. The kid bit hard on its right hand, causing blood to start to pour down it. The boy reached out a hand towards his mother to touch her face one last time, but A-15 was already dragging the child back to the ship.

“Noooo, I want my mother. Give me my mother.”

A-15 said nothing and simply marched forward through the warzone, constantly calculating the trajectory of bolts to ensure the to-be convert was delivered. A warning trigger went off and A-15 quickly spun around, a stray bolt striking its other arm. Not even a wince escaped it. It simply marched faster.

“Let me go! Please,” cried the boy.

A-15 felt nothing and proceeded to open the hatch to the closest processing ship.

“I hate you! Give me my mother or I’ll—”

The hatch whooshed open and the sound of active machinery amid the screams of in-process converts escaped, making the child tug back even further. A-15 for once was confused. This was home.

“Ah, good. Younger is better,” said a droid as it stabbed the child with a sedative.

“Resistance is futile. We are the Collective,” said A-15, the first words it had said all day.

A-15 put the to-be convert on the assembly line and went back to the next target. It was its purpose and it would find everyone on its list or die trying.