

# Ria'd

A fiction written by Appius Wight of Clan Taldryan

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*This was supposed to be a simple move...*

Never did Appius expect this to happen. The events on Elysia nearly led to the destruction of the Caelus System, and a division in the friendship between Tracinya and Appius, and Zxyl and Appius. Basically, Appius was to blame.

It all led back to him, right from the moment he said *do it* and Taldryan invaded Kasiya. It didn't matter how justified he was, the consequences of his actions were going to be *dire*. The Taldryan Consul knew this, and he accepted whatever responsibility fell upon him as a result of his decisions.

Yet, he was not prepared to stare into the broken, bloodied corpse of Ria'd Stesca. The Zabrak had left him a broken well of emotions that all seeped out in that one moment. A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, Ria'd was Appius' best friend, a fellow Jedi. He was someone Appius could turn to, cry to, talk to, and he was also the same man that not two months prior threw all of it in the Mandalorian's face when he tried to kill the Taldryan Consul.

Appius was angry, sad, bitter, and every other range of emotion in between them. Frakk it all! What was he supposed to think, feel, or do? His body felt *cold*, numb, like his heart rate had slowed to a snail's pace. The Elysia rain patted against his beskar helmet and soaked his undersuit as he stared into the lifeless body of the man he once called *friend*.

House Thanatos personnel had the temple on immediate lock down. Investigators rushed to the scene as water washed the duracrete dry of the Zabrak's blood. Both Tracinya and Raistline had come to meet with Appius personally. The Quaestor in particular was not fond of the rain, but had the wit to keep his distance from the Taldryan Consul whilst he grieved for the loss of his friend. Tracinya on the other hand, was a different matter.

"This is why you don't have *lighties* in a Brotherhood Clan," the young Entar had commented, but got no response from Appius. "If you ask me, I say good riddance to him."

The Consul's head snapped towards the young woman with a sudden sharpness that caught Tracinya by surprise. The young woman held her ground, and thankfully, Raistline intervened before tensions could escalate any further.

"We think we may have found something, but..."

"Give it to me," Appius ordered the Scion of Taldryan without so much as a single thought to censor the demand in his voice. Raistline either shrugged it up, swallowed his pride, or didn't care as he handed the torn cloth to the Taldryan Consul. It was maroon coursed, leather, and

soaking wet. It didn't matter. This death was recent, and the trail from this object was still warm.

The Arcanist focused on the sensation of the Force pouring through his revenge-seeking mind. Images poured into his head of a warehouse a couple of miles out on the outskirts of Aidos. Whoever this assassin was, he was waiting for him. Good, it would save Appius the trouble of having to give chase.

"Continue with the move to Aidos, I will deal with this matter personally. Do not let anyone interfere if they value their lives."

With that, the Taldryan Consul left the Thanatos summit, head on the trail for his old friends' killer. May the Force have mercy on their soul, for they wouldn't find any from Appius.

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"You finally decided to make my acquaintance, did ya, oh mighty Consul?"

The man in question was tall, Armenian, and middle-aged. His silver locks flowed against the dull beige of the warehouse on the outskirts of Aidos. It stank of fish, and was used by local fishermen to store supplies. Or, at least it was, until Taldryan took over the moon.

"I must say, you made this easy for me. Saves me the trouble of coming to find you if I give you a reason to come to me!" the Arkanian taunted, holding out his arms like a bird stretching his wings. It revealed a heavy arsenal of blasters, explosives, and vibroknives, the latter of which were stained red with Zabrak blood. "I am Quin Todlias. A pleasure to make your..."

Lightning screeched across the distance between Appius and his would-be assassin and enveloped the latter in a web of torturous electricity. The Arkanian collapsed immediately, not expecting to have his showboating interrupted.

"I don't care who you are," Appius responded coldly, with malice laced in each syllable. "I only care about what you have done, and who you have killed."

More lightning struck the assassin, this time screams echoed throughout the warehouse, the lights flashed through the windows onto the storm-ridden world outside.

"You made a terrible mistake today, assassin. I'm going to make you suffer for it."

This was not the usual Appius, and if anyone looked behind the visor, they would see eyes of crimson darkness piercing into the Arkanian's soul. There was no sarcasm, no usual quip of confidence like he usually liked to do. There was just cold, icy detachment from his morals as lightning covered the Arkanian's body in relentless assaults.

Eventually, the screaming stopped. The body twitched before finally going motionless, and Appius stood there. He felt... numb. He expected this whole venture to make him feel better, fulfilled, vindicated. Revenge was his, yet it was bittersweet. Deep down, he knew Ria'd

wouldn't approve of this. This wasn't the Jedi way, but in the heat of the moment, Appius didn't care for that. He was hurting, and someone he cared for had died under his watch, just so an assassin could get to him.

If there was one positive thing out of this whole situation, it was that Appius was aware of how much he needed to improve Taldryan's internal defences, and to organise a system wide search for whoever sent this assassin in the first place.

"This is Consul Wight, have the Summit Guard perform a system wide sweep. Have the scanners search for any anomaly, I want anything found destroyed."

Appius left the warehouse and made for his return to Kasiya. House Thanatos could handle things here, they would have too.

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