

STAR WARS[®]

The cover art features a man in a black robe kneeling on the left, looking towards a large, dark, textured creature on the right. The creature has a single red eye and is partially shrouded in a dark, flowing cloak. The background is a dark, smoky blue.

DARTH PLAGUEIS

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Read on for an exciting excerpt from
Star Wars: Darth Plagueis
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Published by Del Rey Book on January 10, 2012

Returned from Ralltiir, Maul sat cross-legged on the floor in the LiMerge Building while Sidious debriefed him. Having just terminated an irritating communication with the Neimoidians, Sidious was in no mood for games.

“The way you make it sound, my apprentice, it seems almost an indignity that none survived to spread the word of your massacre.”

“Your orders were that none should, Master.”

“Yes,” Sidious said, continuing to circle him. “And not one of them proved a challenge?”

“No, Master.”

“Not Sinya?”

“I decapitated the Twi’lek.”

“Not Mighella?”

“My blade halved the Nightsister after she tried to defeat me with summoned Force-lightning.”

Sidious paused for a moment. “Not even Garyn?”

“No.”

Sidious detected a note of hesitation. “No, what, Darth Maul?”

“I drowned him.”

Touching his chin, Sidious stood where the Zabrak could see him.

“Well, someone had to have dealt the wound you suffered to your left hand. Unless, of course, you gave it to yourself.”

Maul clenched the black-gloved hand. “There is no pain where strength lies.”

“I didn’t inquire if the wound hurt. I asked who was responsible.”

“Garyn,” Maul said quietly.

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Sidious feigned surprise. “So he *was* something of a challenge. Being slightly Force-sensitive.”

“He was nothing compared with the power of the dark side.”

Sidious studied him. “Did you tell him as much, my apprentice? Answer honestly.”

“He came to the conclusion.”

“He identified you as a Sith. Did he assume, then, that you were a Sith Lord?”

Maul stared at the floor. “I—”

“You revealed that you answer to a Master. Am I correct?”

Maul forced himself to respond. “Yes, Master.”

“And perhaps you went so far as to say something about the revenge of the Sith.”

“I did, Master.”

Sidious approached him, his face contorted in anger. “And if by some marvel Garyn had managed to escape, or even defeat the one-being army that is Darth Maul, what repercussions might we be facing, apprentice?”

“I beg your forgiveness, Master.”

“Perhaps you’re not worthy of the Infiltrator, after all. The moment you allowed yourself to become distracted, the Black Sun leader cut open your hand.”

Maul remained silent.

“I hope you thanked him before you killed him,” Sidious went on, “because he taught you a valuable lesson. When you face someone strong in the Force you must remain focused—even when you’re convinced that your opponent is incapacitated. Then is not the time to bask in the glory of your victory or draw out the moment. You must deliver a killing strike and be done with it. Reserve your self-praise for after the fact, or you will suffer more than a hand wound.”

“I will remember, Master.”

The silence attenuated. “I want you to leave Coruscant for the time being.”

Maul looked up in alarm.

“Take the Infiltrator and your combat droids and return to your former home. There, train and meditate until I recall you.”

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“My lord, I beg—”

Sidious held up his hands. “Enough! You executed the mission well, and I am pleased. Now learn from your mistake.”

Maul rose slowly, bowed his head once, and headed for the hangar. Watching him leave, Sidious examined the nature of his unease.

Might he, in a similar situation, have given in to an urge to gloat and reveal his true identity?

Had Plagueis done so before killing Veruna? Had he felt compelled to come out from behind his mask? To be *honest*?

Or was Maul’s revelation to Garyn nothing more than a symptom of the dark side’s growing impatience, and its demand for full disclosure?