*Hunting the Hunter*, by Farrin Xies

"Three... two... one... GO!"

Farrin's senses flooded back to him as he struggled against his bonds. He was a Dark Jedi, far from powerless, but without the Force or his weapons he was at a severe disadvantage in a fight against this Lethan Twi'lek. The one advantage that he did have over her, he reflected as he finally slipped free of the ropes binding his arms and feet, was that she was exceedingly cocky. The Dark Jedi knew that if he played his cards right, that flaw would be her downfall and allow Farrin to escape Dagobah once and for all.

Rubbing his wrists to get the circulation in them going again, he surveyed his surroundings, trying to place himself from his memory. Seven years spent in exile on the planet had given him a fairly good recall of places, and this was no different. He had fallen asleep in his hut and woken up to her issuing the directions for her "game," so she must have overcome him while he slept - an easy task, obviously. Now, as he surveyed the clearing she had left him in, he realized she hadn't dragged him far - he was maybe a five minutes' quick walk back to his little isolated parcel of land where, if he was lucky, he'd find his weapons left untouched.

A few minutes later - he estimated he had maybe fifteen minutes left in his "head start" - he had come back to his clearing. Though he still felt blocked from using the Force, his senses were returning back to their original state. He studied the small clearing that contained his hut and cook fire, and, seeing no signs of either the bounty hunter nor any "tricks" she had left, quickly crossed to his shelter. He quickly looked behind the crude door he had fashioned, hoping his blaster rifle remained; of course, it didn't - it had been too obviously placed, there was simply no way she had missed it after knocking him out.

He sunk down to his knees on the floor by his simple sleeping mat and pushed the thatch rug he had woven himself to the side to expose a small wooden trap door. His fingers traced the outline of the door until they found the latch and, pulling it up, Farrin grinned. He was facing a bounty hunter known for her prowess with a long-range rifle, but at least he wouldn't be going against her unarmed: still in the hidden cache where he had left it was a vibrosword he had brought with him to Dagobah seven years ago. He was bringing a knife to a proverbial gunfight, but it was better than nothing.

He slowly looked out the door, holding the vibrosword in one hand and his black cloak tight around him with the other. He had just a few minutes left in his head start, and he had to come up with a plan. The stories he had read about this bounty hunter all said that she would toy with her victims throughout the game, and she loved to give them the illusion they were about to escape her grasp before finally ending them. The best place for her to carry out that sadistic bit of theatre would be overlooking his shuttle, and he was willing to bet that's exactly where she was.

It was for that reason that he found himself, an hour later, covered in mud and peering from the deep shadows of the roots of a tree into the largest clearing in this part of the planet. Sure enough, there sat his shuttle and, just as he thought, its engine hummed and boarding ramp was extended, as if all he had to do was waltz right up to it to get out of this nightmare. She expected her victims to be so overcome that they would make a break for it without thinking, at which point she'd easily gun them down from wherever she had her perch; in fact, even such a highly trained and experienced Dark Jedi as he was, Farrin found himself fighting just that urge. Reason prevailed, however, and so Farrin began to scan the clearing from his own hiding spot, waiting for this overconfident, upstart bounty hunter to make her next mistake. He had spent seven years in solitude on this planet, much of it in meditation; he was more than capable of out-waiting her.

In fact, he needn't wait long, as a mere two hours later his eyes instantly darted to movement on the far side of the clearing. Narrowing his eyes, he strained to see what had gotten his attention and was rewarded with a view of the bounty hunter using a rope to slowly lower herself down from what he assumed was her hunting blind. Circling along the edge of the clearing slowly, she surveyed the surrounding trees with the scope of her rifle. *She thinks she's so clever,* Farrin thought, *and that's going to cost her.* Farrin also realized that the time playing this waiting game with her had an added benefit - whatever drug she had given him to block his connection to the Force was beginning to slowly but surely wear off. As he watched her slowly approach his position, a plan began to formulate in his mind.

When her circuit of the clearing brought her perhaps five meters away, Farrin made an almost imperceptible gesture with his right hand, his left still firmly grasping his vibrosword. In the Twi'lek's perception, there was a swirl of color and motion far to her left - back towards the shuttle and, most importantly, almost opposite from where the Dark Jedi had himself. He watched as a sadistic grin spread across her lips and she quickly dropped to one knee. She swung her rifle up in one practiced motion and readied to aim at the movement, thinking her target had finally come.

In that moment, Farrin leapt from his hiding spot with a roar, the vibrosword humming with energy as he brought it above his head. As he closed the distance, the sick grin that had played across her lips contorted into a snarl and, as if in slow motion, she threw herself back and to the side, swinging her rifle around with her. Before she could, however, the Dark Jedi brought the blade down, cleanly slicing into her right arm to the bone. The rifle and the Twi'lek both fell to the ground as she screamed out in pain, and Farrin brought the blade back up. In one smooth motion, he lowered the blade down, silencing the screams and severing her head in one fell swoop.

Breathing heavily, the Dark Jedi allowed the blood-covered weapon to drop to the ground, staring at the decapitated bounty hunter in front of him. She had set out to kill him, yes, and some of her previous targets had been friends of his. However, he did not take pleasure in killing, and this was no different. He was different than she was, or had been at least. He shook his head as he crossed the clearing to board his shuttle, reflecting that he should take this as a lesson in never getting overly confident, or else he could meet the same end one day.

*What a mess,* he thought.