**Cornered Quarry**

Appearing as if out of nowhere, the star destroyer dropped from hyperspace and set itself into orbit around the planet of Naboo. The stars gleamed in the depths of space in this sector of the galaxy; their fates and destinies unchanged in millennia, But for one lone Jedi, this was not to be the case. The star destroyer scanned the surface of the planet, already aware that their presence would already have been detected by those on the surface charged with keeping a close eye on the long range scanners for any perceived threat. The fact that the colossal ship would be seen as a great threat, no-one aboard had any doubt, but one being aboard the ship would have to brave whatever defences the planet had to reach his quarry.

The inquisitor walked with purpose to the holoterminal and stood at attention as it sprang to life. The face that greeted him had brought fear to many Jedi and rebels in the past and would indeed continue to do so; his power growing each and every day. The black mask stared impassively at the Inquisitor as the one inside it breathed, his breath rasping as if the act caused him much distress.

“Have you arrived, Inquisitor?” he asked, his voice louder than normal. Amplified by his helmet, Darth Vader’s voice chilled the Inquisitor every time he heard it.

“Indeed I have, Lord Vader,” he replied, a macabre grin appearing on his face. He looked upon the figure coming from the holoterminal, and his face was lit from the glare emanating from Lord Vader’s image. The red marks above and below his eyes, placed there deliberately to unease his opponents, seemed to gleam in the light as Vader nodded.

“Very well. You have your orders, Inquisitor. Do not fail me.” Vader’s voice cut off abruptly as the link was severed, the holoterminal flickering off. The inquisitor adjusted his high collar and turned on his heel, heading in the direction of the hangar bay. He had been informed that a lone Jedi was hiding out on Naboo, possibly in the swampy regions and he had been tasked with destroying the threat before the Jedi became too powerful or began training an apprentice. As he rounded the bulkhead to the hangar bay, the sight of the sleek advanced TIE fighter greeted his eyes. His pace quickened as the thrill of the hunt overcame him and he grinned once more.

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The smell of the swamp filled his nose as he strolled through its lush greenery. That the floor was soft and wet underfoot, Ji’en didn’t care. This was his little area of the swamps that were a common feature on Naboo, and he was most at home here. Being amphibious, the water held no fear for him and as he walked, he cast his eyes around, taking in the sights and sounds around him. Passing a tree he knew held fruits of his favourite variety, he paused and scrutinized the tree for any signs of one. The plants were flowering early this season and the air was heavy with pollen. He knew there was a good chance that the trees already bore fruit, it was just a case of finding one. He spied one high on a branch, pink flowers surrounding it on all sides. If he had been a human from the nearby towns such as Theed, he would have missed it, but being Gungan had its advantages. His tongue shot out from his mouth and adhered to the outer surface of the fruit and he pulled. The fruit stayed put. His eyes swivelled around as he heard a noise nearby and he pulled with all his strength. The fruit didn’t give an inch, the branch holding it firmly in place. He pulled again but only succeeded in making his splayed feet sink into the soaked floor of the swamp.

## *Did someone stick dis toda tree?* he thought to himself as he pulled. Hearing a branch crack to his right, his eyes swivelled wildly, seeking the cause. They fixed upon a young Togruta as she stepped from behind the tree his tongue was stuck to who smiled as she approached.

“Would you like a little help, my friend?” she asked in a light, amused tone. She stood with her hands on her hips with a sweet smile on her face. Her white pants and green top suited her for the climate on Naboo, and her blue striped tresses framed her face perfectly. Unable to speak intelligibly, Ji’en just nodded and looked up at the fruit. He felt drool dribble down his mouth as he began salivating. *What a sight misa must be,* he thought, as the Togruta pulled a lightsaber from her hip. The female leaned back and drew her arm backwards. In one fluid motion, she threw her arm forward, the weapon arcing towards the fruit and cutting the branch a little away from where Ji’en’s tongue was fastened. Gravity took over and also the elasticity of Jien’s tongue and the branch took a direct route to his mouth. The fruit landed in his salivating maw as the branch followed, hitting him full in the face and throwing him backwards onto the wet ground.

“I’m so sorry!” she wailed, dashing to his aid. He sat up and shook his head as she helped him sit. The branch dropped to the floor and he greedily gulped down the fruit.

“Issa okeeday, missa doin dis all da time!” he replied, grinning sheepishly. The togruta offered her hand and pulled him up from the ground, brushing some of the dirt off him as she did.

“I’m sorry, you’re a little wet,” she said, “But you’re a Gungan are you not? You’re used to this?”

“Yeah missa walk through here all da time.Missa likein da smells and da sights and sounds. Isa missa home.” he replied. “Missa Ji’en, what's yousa name?”

“My name is Shar’tani,” she replied, “But are you ok?”

“Sure!” he said, rubbing his jaw. “Yousa a Jedi?”

“I try my best to pass for one, you mean.” she replied, her face turned downwards. “My master was killed long ago and I have been running from the Empire ever since. I never finished my training and I feel inadequate sometimes.”

“no yousa bombad! Missa couldn’t throw one a thesa flashy-swishy things likein yousa ganna!”

“Thanks Ji’en,” she smiled back at him, “But I’ll need more than that to keep ahead of the Empire.”

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The TIE dropped into the swamp slowly, the landing thrusters firing and it settled, sinking a couple of feet into the soft surface of the swamp. The engines cut and the landing ramp lowered with a hiss. Stepping out into the sunshine, the Inquisitor leered. This atmosphere was a little damper than his home planet of Utapau, but he would cope. The ground here was sodden with water and he trod carefully, his senses scanning for any dangers or nearby beings. All he could feel were the few creatures that the swamp was refuge for and the clammy, damp climate pressing in on him like a vice. He had sensed the Jedi in the swamps as his ship descended and he had altered course to intercept. Now he found himself ahead of the Jedi, where he hoped to lie in wait. He felt that this was only a young Jedi with a great sense of loss hanging on his shoulders, easy prey. He found a small grove of trees just as he heard noises coming from north of his position. Reaching out, he sensed the Jedi, but it seemed he had company. He cloaked himself in the force and waited. Moments later, two figures broke through the undergrowth a few yards in front of him and his opinions changed. A Female. This should prove interesting. He dropped his cloak and stepped forward. The female wasted no time in reaching for her weapon as she sensed the foulness pouring from the Inquisitor and she took up a battle-ready stance.

“Don’t try to fight me, young one. I know my abilities are far greater than yours.” he stated, coldly. “You know why I am here, and it seems you have been running for a long time. Tell me, what happened to your master again?”

“Shar’tani, yousa know dis guy?” asked Ji’en. “Missa don’t likein him, hesa bad.”

“You killed him, remember?” she replied to the Inquisitor. “Or is the Sith mind too set on domination to be able to remember past events?” She glanced at Ji’en.

Jie’en’s mouth opened in shock as Shar’tani’s comment sunk in.

“Weesa ganna die!” he cried as he looked for a quick escape.

“Most likely.” the Inquisitor replied. But I will give you one chance to surrender and join us.”

“Never!” shouted Shar’tani as she exploded in a fit of rage. She raised her lightsaber and charged the Inquisitor who calmly raised a hand and flung her backwards into a tree. Numerous fruits fell all around her as she lay winded beneath the tree. She tried to rise but her body contradicted her wants and collapsed to the ground. Stalking towards her, the inquisitor drew his weapon from his back and advanced on her, the blade suddenly lengthening and beginning to spin around the central handgrip.

“You’ve seen this before, young one.” he said. “This is the same weapon that put an end to your master’s sorry existence. The Sith offer far more opportunities than the Jedi could offer you. Come with me and join us!”

The young Jedi rose and prepared to face down her enemy. Just as he reached her she whispered “*Never!*” and leapt. She leaped gracefully over his head and landed behind him in a roll, rising after it and sprinting into the swamps. The Inquisitor smiled. He enjoyed a good hunt.

He suddenly felt a weight on his back and reached behind him to find Ji’en on his back, punching and kicking him.

“Yousa no goin to kill missa friend!” he squealed, pounding with all his might. The Inquisitor gently reached back and grabbed him by his throat. Flinging him from his back and into the tree that Shar’tani had just been thrown against, he brought his lightsaber around and straight across the Gungan’s chest. Ji’en’s eyes opened wide in horror, knowing the blow was a fatal one. He collapsed against the tree, his eyes open and staring, as the Inquisitor stepped back.

“No!” screamed Shar’tani as she burst from the trees to the rear of the Inquisitor, brandishing her lightsaber. She charged at his back, gesturing with her left hand as she came. Her enemy felt a wave of force crash over him with no effect and he grinned, his back still to her. As she closed with him, he thrust his weapon backwards, straight into her chest. She stood, staring down at the weapon piercing her body and a trickle of blood escaped the edge of her mouth. The Inquisitor withdrew his weapon and she collapsed to her knees, coughing.

“As I have said before, the pupil is only as good as their master.” he stated. “In your case, I have found both of you lacking.” He kicked out at her, sending her body flying across the little clearing. His lightsaber deactivated and he surveyed the scene. That he should kill innocents in his pursuit of foes, he had no fear. He glanced at the Gungan. *The right temperament, but lacking in so many other aspects* he thought. Placing his weapon on his back, he began the short walk back to his ship.

The hologram sprung to life as the Inquistor waited. His task complete, he expected Lord Vader to be very pleased.

“Your mission was a success?” Vader asked.

“Yes, My Lord. I offered the Jedi a chance to join us, but she refused.”

“A female? I was not aware that Sor’dan’s apprentice was a female.”

“She seemed to remember the encounter I had with him very well, Lord Vader.”

“I have a feeling that she was not the only one, Inquisitor.”

This took the Inquisitor by surprise. “You mean there may also be a *male* My Lord?”

“Maybe. I will have my intelligence operatives look into it.” With that, the hologram disappeared. The Inquisitor walked back to the cockpit and sat. Another padawan? It was rare, but not unheard of. This one would also be disposed of, he was certain of that. He brought the engines online and ignited them, the TIE rising slowly from the ground, water dripping from the landing gear and struts. Moss and water plants hung on for dear life. The gear raised and the ship angled upwards as he opened the thrusters, taking the ship back to orbit and the waiting Star Destroyer.