The air around the temple was thick and incredibly hot and a myriad of insects buzzed around the little Aleena’s head and neck as he stood baking in his armour waiting for his Force Ascendant escort to join him. It had been over an hour since he’d arrived at the Kuku-Hawene temple along with a contingent of Odan-Urr Jedi, soldiers and mercenaries and he’d seen neither hide nor hair of an Oder member since he’d arrived.

“Is it just me or is it really hot here?” Tekk asked to nobody in particular.

“It’s not the heat,” said a voice from over his shoulder “it’s the humidity.”

Turning around Tekk was greeted by the sight of Mar Sul, Queastor of House Satele Shan and commander of the Order of Force Ascendants. “Apologies for making you wait but preparations took longer than expected. Tekk I’d like to introduce you to Anesa Arekson, she’ll be accompanying you into the swamp.”

Looking up at the towering figure before him Tekk threw a mock salute and said “Hey, how ya doin sweetheart”. When no reply was forthcoming the Aleena merc said “Not a bigger talker huh?”

With a scowl Anesa spat “Your presence here offends me mercenary, be thankful I don’t strike you down her and now.”

“Oh yeah.” Tekk shot back “Well your breath offends me but you don’t hear me complaining do ya.”

“Why you little…” Anesa began as she reached for the hilt of her lightsaber.

Before she could ignite the blade Mar shouted “Enough!” before saying “Enough, we must work together to ensure the safety of the people under our protection, pointless bickering will only make that harder to accomplish” in a more even tone.

Turning to Mar Anesa said “You are right of course sir.” before she turned to Tekk and said “I apologise for my remarks” through gritted teeth.

Waving away the apology Tekk replied “Ahhh don’t worry about it. And I was just joking about the breath thing, it ain’t that bad.”

“Well then,” said Anesa “shall we leave?”

With a wave of his hand Tekk motioned her forward and said “After you toots.”

As they left the temple grounds and began the long and arduous trek through the swampy jungle Tekk asked “So what do you know about the things attacking these villages?”

“Not much I’m afraid.” replied Anesa “The Harakoans have many myths and legends about the beasts but little in the way of scientific information. From what I’ve been able to glean the creature is large and aggressive, we will have our work cut out for us.”

It was hard going through the swamp and more than once Anesa had to utilize the Force to aid her movements. Tekk however had no trouble navigating the marshy ground and, despite the heat, seemed to be in a fine mood as his inquisitive nature was being well fed by the new experiences the jungle provided. As Anesa became bogged down for the fifth time inside an hour Tekk could hear some very odd noises coming from somewhere in the jungle to their right.

“Hey can you hear that?” Tekk asked as he wondered off into the trees.

Raising her hand in a feeble attempt to stop the inquisitive Aleena from wandering off she shouted “No Tekk wait!” as she tried her best to extricate herself from the quagmire. But it was to no avail as the mercenary disappeared into the jungle. All was quiet for several minutes, the only sound echoing from the jungle were the grunts of exertion coming from Anesa he she continued to struggle in the thick muck.

Suddenly the Aleena burst through the brush screaming “RUN!!!” as a creature from nightmare burst from the greenery hot on the Aleena’s tail. It was clearly reptilian, its body covered in a thick scaly hide and it was massive, easily tipping the scales at six or seven hundred kilograms, and stretched at least eight feet from the tip of its snout to the tip of its club like tail. It bounded along on four strong legs ending in four long toes tipped with massive six inch curved claws. It jaws were filled with dozens of needle like teeth and a blood red tongue flicked in and out of its mouth as it tasted the air hunting for its prey.

As Tekk ran wildly around the small clearing avoiding the extended claws of the creature he fired wildly behind him coming closer to hitting Anesa than he did the beast. With a mighty effort, and no small amount of the Force, Anesa managed to free herself from the bog and leapt into action. As her lightsaber crackled to life she leaped for the rampaging creature and slashed the blade across its flank, the beast howling in pain as the blue blade bit deep. Quick as a flash the beast turned on her and leapt, its claws extended and aimed for the woman’s torso. With the Force at her side however Anesa was no easy target as she leapt out of the way leaving the beast clutching at thin air.

Taking his opportunity to lay down some fire Tekk raised his E-11 and blasted away, the rifle punching a series of ragged holes down the beasts flank. The beast swung its tail at the source of its newest pain and without the Force to aid his reflexes Tekk was a sitting duck. The heavy club thumped into his side sending him flying into the bushes as every last ounce of air exploded from his lungs. Anesa was alone now standing face to face with this creature from Harakoan myth. Slowly the beast began to circle her searching for a weak spot it could exploit but when it found none it simply charged hoping to use it superior size to its advantage.

Dodging to her left Anesa managed to evade the beasts snapping jaws but not the swipe of it clawed foot. The dagger like claws raked across her shining bronze coloured armour leaving ragged scrapes across the once pristine surface but doing little physical damage. Thrusting with her lightsaber Anesa managed to score another hit, this time into the soft tissue of the throat. The creature roared again and swung its bulky head in her direction striking her square in the chest and knocking her from her feet, her lightsaber flying from a palm slick with sweat.

The beast began to slowly stride toward the downed Jedi almost as if it was savouring its imminent victory over the thing that had caused it so much pain. As the beast closed to within a few feet of Anesa a voice from behind the creature shouted “Hey ugly.” When it turned to look Tekk was standing there a small sphere cupped in his left hand. “Don’t you wanna finish your entrée before you start on the main course?” he yelled.

The beast turned, ignoring Anesa for the moment, and moved to finish off the little merc. As it closed to within a few feet Tekk shouted “Catch!” and threw the object in his hand to the creature who promptly caught it and swallowed it in one quick motion. Tekk dove for the ground and covered his ears, or he would have it he had any, and waited. A handful of seconds later there was a muffled boom followed by a series of wet thumps as chunks of the beasts carcass rained down around the pair.

As Anesa finally rose to her feet she approached the Aleena and, kneeling down, asked “Tekk are you alright?”

“Heh, I said hey ugly and it turned around. That’s funny” he replied.

“Are you alright?” she asked again impatiently.

Groaning and holding his ribs as she assisted him to his feet he said “No, not really. I think I cracked a rib, or all of them.”

“We need to return to the temple, you require medical attention” said Anesa.

“Good idea, let’s get out of here” replied the Aleena before he asked “Anesa, will you carry me?”

Looking down at her tiny companion she said “No” before turning and walking off.