**Somewhere in the swamps of Owyhyee**

**The heat of the swamp was stifling and as small buzzing insects flew lazily around his face Torin Ardell sat back on a fallen tree waiting for the Order of the Force Ascendant to send a shuttle to retrieve the group of men currently occupying a small dry patch of ground in the middle of the swampy jungle. Leaning his rifle against the log the Odanite rose to his fee and pulled off his armour letting what little breeze the was to wash over his soaked undershirt.**

**Off in the distance the sound of a shuttle could be barely heard over the chorus of chirrups and croaks of the wildlife around him. Time dragged on and the sound of the approaching vessel became ever louder until, overhead through the foliage of the trees, the outline of a shuttle could be seen. As the shuttle descended, cracking thick branches on its way, Torin and Fenn moved their prisoners clear of the landing zone. With a gentle rumble the shuttle touched down and as the ramp descended six pairs of boots could be seen striding down the boarding ramp.**

**“Greetings brothers” shouted Fenn over the racket of the engines.**

**Without reply the six Order Jedi pulled their sabers from their belts, ignited their weapons and began to cut down the bound prisoners. Before either Torin or Fenn could react they had struck down every prisoner the pair had taken earlier that day. But their wicked work wasn’t finished as they turned on the Bothan and his Human compatriot. Fenn drew his weapon, the emerald blades of his saberstaff springing to life in an instant to block an incoming strike.**

**“Brothers what are you doing?” he asked but no reply was forthcoming.**

**He fought valiantly but the odds were not in his favour and eventually he was struck down. While Fenn was struggling Torin had his own problems as two of the Order members approached him their sabers humming in the warm swamp air. Torin was in trouble and he knew it, his rifle was nearly thirty feet away across the clearing beside his armour. The only weapon he had was a large bone handled hunting knife his father had given him on his sixteenth birthday.**

**Pulling the blade from its sthiss leather sheath Torin readied himself for the coming fight. The left opponent, an attractive Zeltron woman, feign an attack before stepping back as her partner, a hulking Nautolan with brilliant blue skin, struck out hoping to find the Jedi off balance. The ploy however didn’t work as Torin sidestepped his thrust and struck out with a fist. The blow caught the Nautolan flush on the jaw snapping his head to the left, his head tentacles whipping to and fro from the force of the blow.**

**Before he could recover Torin struck, the blade of his knife plunging into the exposed neck of the Nautolan. As the blade came free of his flesh a torrent of blood erupted from the hole as gurgling sounds came from his mouth. The shock on the Nautolan’s face had Torin transfixed, so much so that he didn’t notice the Zeltron’s slash until it was too late. With barely enough time to move Torin leapt to his left as the Zeltron’s sapphire blade slashed a ragged scorch mark along his upper arm. The pain was incredible and it took Torin a moment to regain his wits but when he did he was that Fenn had fallen and the remaining Order Jedi were now closing on him. As difficult as it was he concentrated through the pain, calling on the Force before he unleashed it in a wave of telekinetic power that knocked the Order Jedi from their feet. Knowing this was his one chance to escape Torin took his chance and sprinted off into the swamp, the shouts of his pursuers off to his rear.**

**Kuku-Hawene Temple**

**Two hours later**

Karan, a grizzled veteran of the Order, strode purposefully through the shadowed halls of the Kuku-Hawene temple his mood clearly dark. All who saw the broad shouldered Jedi stepped out of his way lest they be bowled over by the single minded man. Finally spotting the man he’d been searching for he strode over and stood to attention, waiting for his superior to acknowledge him. Moments later he was beckoned over as the leader of the Order, Mar Sul, beckoned him over.

“Apologies for the interruption sir but I have news that couldn’t wait” said Karan in his gruff voice.

Looking up to the older man Mar said “What is it Karan?”

After a quick glance at Mar’s companion, the leader of Clan Odan-Urr A’lora Kituri, Karan answered “Sir, I’ve just received word that several of Varten’s followers left the compound two hours ago. Word is one of the Odanites has slain one of our members. Varten’s people have gone to take him into custody”

“WHAT!!” shouted A’lora before she regained her composure. “Who is this supposed murderer?” she asked.

Looking to Mar for permission to answer the Order leader gave a slight nod. “Torin Ardell ma’am. They say he went mad and killed a bunch of prisoners before turning on Fenn.”

“That’s ridiculous, Torin would never murder someone in cold blood. You know that as well as I do Mar. Besides if he’s gone rogue they’ll never find him out there” said the Togruta.

“What do you mean?” asked Karan.

Looking up at the man A’lora said “Torin is a Melewati. He’s been trained almost since birth to survive in even the harshest of environments. He can live off the land and eat things that’d make a Hutt vomit. He can track like no-one I’ve ever seen and if he wants to disappear out there he will. Simply put, they’ve probably chosen the worst person to go up against in that environment.”

Noticing Karan looking at him Mar said “Oh she’s not exaggerating. The Melewati are some of the hardiest, most stubborn people I’ve ever encountered and Torin is probably the best of them. And the Force help them if he has a rifle.”

**Somewhere in the swamps of Owyhyee**

He’d been lying in wait for twenty minutes or so, concealing himself in the underbrush amid a scattering of ferns and dead leaves, while insects and reptiles of every kind crawled and slithered there way over his still form as a storm began to rumble its way in from the north. Doing his best to mask his presence in the Force the Jedi waited until one of the Order’s soldiers, a Human male, wandered too far from their allies before he struck. Leaping from the undergrowth like some demon of legend, covered in mud and leaves, he plunged the blade of his knife into the thigh of the man and twisted. The man fell screaming in agony and clutching at the ragged hole in the back of his thigh. Before the rest of the Order Jedi could respond Torin was off back into the increasingly thick jungle.

As the remaining Order Jedi converged on their fallen ally he said through gritted teeth “He went that way” as he pointed off in Torins direction of travel.

The leader, a Zabrak woman motioned, for the Zeltron to stay with him as she and the remaining two members of their party to follow her into the jungle. The two Jedi, a Chiss male and Duros female, followed off into the jungle as the rain began to fall in buckets. They’d been following a reasonably clear trail through the underbrush until it suddenly disappeared.

“Spread out, no more than fifty feet between us” she said.

They began to drift apart, carefully picking their way through the jungle looking for any sign of Torins passing but finding nothing. The Chiss passed the remains of a large tree that had fallen sometime in the past when something grabbed his wrist and raised his arm to shoulder height. Suddenly his elbow exploded in pain as a heavy fist collided with the joint bending it in a direction it was never meant to bend. With a howl of pain the Chiss fell to the floor writhing in pain, never once catching sight of his assailant.

The Duros heard the scream and began to make her way in that direction. As the screams got louder and she got closer to her fallen friend a searing pain shot up her leg and she fell to the ground. As she tried to rise she found she could put no weight on her left foot and, after looking down, she could see why. The back of her boot was slashed and blood flowed liberally from the hole and she knew her Achilles tendon had been severed. The Zabrak was frantic now, her people were dropping like flies and she was now alone against the Jedi. Suddenly she was bowled off her feet as Torin crashed into her shoulder first. She tried to rise to her feet when the cold steel of a knife blade was jammed against her throat.

“I could have killed 'em all, I could've killed you. You come after me again and next time you won’t be so lucky. Out here I’m the hunter, never forget that. ” he whispered in her ear before he rose to his feet and disappeared into the jungle. The Zabrak was in shock, her body shaking violently as tears fell down her tattooed face.

With his pursuers dealt with for the moment Torin made his way back to the clearing with the shuttle. As he entered the clearing he approached his fallen friend, kneeling down to close his lifeless eyes. He said a quick Melewati prayer for the dead to himself before scooping up the lifeless Bothan in his arms and entering the shuttle. He laid his fallen friend on a bench before exiting the shuttle to reacquire his rifle and armour. With his possessions in hand he re-entered the shuttle and slid into the pilot’s seat and took off.

The flight back to the Kuku-Hawene Temple gave him time to reflect on the day’s events. A friend fallen, an alliance potentially shattered, not to mention the fact that rich frakkers were paying a fortune to hunt exotic wildlife in the jungles and forests of New Tython. It was then that the exhaustion washed over his and Torin let his eyes slide shut as he drifted off into a fitful sleep until, what seemed like only moments later, a klaxon began to sound telling him he’d reached his destination.

**Kuku-Hawene Temple**

“Sir,” said Karan as he approached Mar and A’lora “we have an incoming shuttle, transponder marks it as the ship Vartens people left in earlier.”

Rising to his feet Mar motioned for A’lora to precede him as he asked “Shall we?”

The Togruta rose to her feet and followed Karan outside to the landing platform at the far end of the compound as the shuttle slowly descended to the ground. As the boarding ramp slowly descended a single pair of muddy boots could be seen coming down the ramp until Torin, the body of Fenn cradled in his arms, became visible for all to see. “Oh thank the Force” A’lora whispered under her breath. “Torin what happened out there?” she asked.

Taking a deep breath Torin replied “We discovered some men in the swamp; they’d been hunting these strange cat like animals they’d released into the jungle. Fenn and I took them prisoner and where waiting for pickup when six Order members came in that shuttle and killed the prisoners before they turned on us.”

“Fenn?” Mar said motioning to the body in Torins arms.

Nodding the Melewati said “Yeah, he took on four of them and fought bravely but the odds were against him. I barely got away myself.”

“And the Order Jedi?” Mar asked.

“One of them’s dead, three are injured, the other two were fine when I left them” replied Torin.

Motioning over a junior member of the Order he said “Take Fenn and prepare him for burial.”

“Yes sir” replied the young Rodian as he took the dead Bothan from Torin.

Motioning to Karan the leader of the Order said “Take Torin and get him cleaned up and fed.”

Nodding Karan said “Right away sir.”

As he began to turn away Mar called him back and said “And when you’re done take a group of Jedi and find Varten, I would have words with him. And try to keep it quiet Karan” so quietly that even Karan struggled to hear.

“Understood sir” Karan replied under his breath before turning to Torin and leading him off into the temple proper.