**Chapter 5 – Jedi Training Begins (Lexicons’ Big Game Hunt! #1)**

 **Sullust – 34 ABY**

A beat of sweat, thick on Sparky’s brow, slid down his dirt-streaked grime-covered face.

 *“Fwec this”*, Sparky thought grimly as he attempted to channel his inner patience. Sparky remained motionless as the sweat drop continued its path, falling off Sparky’s jaw towards the damp jungle undergrowth beneath his feed. He attempted to remember the things he’d begun learning at the Great Library back in Rousae. *Focus…allow the force to calm your inner being*.

 The background noise of the jungle seemed to surround Sparky in a deafening roar as he struggled with his inner battle to remain completely motionless. His quarry, a rockrender, was busy nearby burrowing into the hillside of the Western Judeccan mountain ranges. The beast’s keen senses would detect even minimal movement.

 So…Sparky sat there in the muggy, boiling heat of the jungle. His sweat a constant irritation, he fought an inner battle to remain calm until his chance to strike would come. *How the living fwec did I even get to this?*, he thought bitterly.

Only months before, he was standing aboard the bridge of the *Vanquisher*, fighting to put down the Excidium rebellion. The cool, crisp lines of the starship indelibly burned into his memory and his heart yearned to return to the stars. Yet the calling of the force was all but overpowering. He’d resigned his commission to return to his studies of the force that he’d begun so many years ago at Luke’s academy. Now he studied on his own, forging his own path through mastery of the force. Taking down this great beast would be the first real test of his force abilities.

 As Sparky contemplated his past training compared to his current self-study, he realized things were a lot different at the Great Library. There weren’t any pesky masters. No Jedi. No Sith. Just peace and balance. *Fwec that too, I doubt this Rockrender gives two kraytshits about balance in the force*.

 In the distance, a rock bird chirped in warning as the Rockrender continued devouring the mountainside. With a sigh, Sparky realized that opportunities to succeed must be sought after, instead of waited for. With that realization, he tapped into the force, felt its strength giving flow and leapt from his hiding spot on the jungle floor. He ignited his light saber in midair with a *snap hiss* as the yellow blade sprang to life.

 As Sparky broke free from the line of trees along the mountain’s foot, the Rockrender stirred as it sensed Sparky’s approach. Reeling back onto its massive, leather-skinned brown legs, the beast attempted to twist to the right to meet the attacker. However, in a split second, Sparky landed on the hunched shoulders of the beast with a muffled thump. In one quick motion, Sparky twisted his lightsaber downward and plunged the blade into the Rockrender’s leathery skin along the upper spine with both of his hands.

 The Rockrender roared in pain and snapped upright, throwing Sparky back towards the tree line. Sparky attempted to twist and brace for the fall but only ended up plunging into the soggy jungle undergrowth shoulder first. Instead of being able to roll into an upright fighting position, Sparky merely ended up tumbling through the muck and moss into a tangled heap at the bottom of a pillar sized jungle tree. As Sparky attempted to stand up, white hot pain seared through Sparky’s shoulder and leg. *Fwec Fwec Fwec Fwec Fwec,* Sparky thought as he immediately attempted Jedi healing on his injured limbs.

 The ground shook and the trees shuddered as the Rockrender reeled around, turning to face Sparky. With an ominous, aggressive roar, the Rockrender began to lumber towards Sparky. Sparky felt rage and fear begin to boil inside of his soul. Fear at being destroyed. Fear at being though impotent as he couldn’t kill this beast. Rage at the thought of his life ending so insignificantly. Rage at his inability to utilize Jedi healing. As the rage built inside Sparky, a palpable heat rose in the already hot air on the jungle floor.

 With a guttural, feral roar from Sparky’s dry lips, he stood on two feet and reignited his lightsaber. He stared murderously at the Rockrender as it lumbered towards him. The Rockrender cocked its right arm back, preparing to strike at Sparky. In the blink of an eye, Sparky threw his lightsaber towards the Rockrender, blade end outward. As the blade streamed towards the beast, Sparky dove towards the left side of the creature. The blade penetrated the soft tissue under the right arm of the Rockrender and immediately began to fall back towards Sparky. Sparky extended his hand out to retrieve his saber using the force. The cool metal of the hilt thumped satisfyingly into Sparky’s extended hand as the force guided it back to him. In another quick motion, Sparky used the saber to slash the left leg of the beast at the knee.

 Sparky utilized his continued motion and slide past the beast, rolling back onto his feet and twisting to gauge the creature’s response. Knee crippled and shoulder wounded, the Rockrender collapsed into the tree line, tearing the gigantic trees down as it rolled to a halt. The trees crashed down to the ground with a deafening cacophony of cracks, thuds, and pops. The Rockrender attempted to use the remaining good leg and arm to stand, only to collapse again into the mucky jungle floor.

 In that moment, a sense of peace filled Sparky’s being as he realized he’d won. The pain in his shoulder and leg completely dissipated. The beast was lightly breathing, lying on the ground awaiting its fate. Sparky dropped a hand to his utility belt that was strapped to his clan armor. He unsnapped the console sized satchel with one hand and snapped his saber to his belt with the other. Using both hands, he tossed the stun net over the beast, using the force to cinch it in place. The Rockrender whimpered as Sparky placed a hand on its soft underbelly, calming the creature.

 A dull ache slowly began to return to Sparky’s limbs as his rage subsided and adrenaline slowed to a stop.

Pulling his wrist comlink to his mouth, he spoke, “ *Vanquisher 6 to Vanquisher 3 Actual”.*

His comlink crackled in response, “*Good to hear from you Vanquisher 6, go for Vanquisher 3.”*

Sparky responded, “*Mission accomplished, Vanquisher 3. Contac t Lex and let him know he can come get his pet any time he wants”.*