Become the Hunter

**Aru’s Star Commuter 2000
Port Ol’val
37 ABY**

It was the middle of the night when Aru woke up suddenly. Tinker was by his side poking him with one of his retractable arms. Aru grabbed his blaster quickly and pointed it at the confused droid, which beeped in an angry manner.

“It’s only you,” said Aru, as he straightened up in his chair.

He was sleeping aboard his Star Commuter 2000, a gift from his Clan to celebrate his Knighthood. Ever since he got it, he had been living aboard it, because he felt more at home inside a starship, no matter how uncomfortable.

After fully waking up, Aru heard a distinct sound of metal being knocked upon. He wondered who it was at that hour. His question was soon answered when a female sound was heard.

“Vhat are you vaiting for Aru!? Open up!” It was Tali Sroka, the newly appointed Quaestor of House Qel-Droma. Aru rushed to the hatch of his ship and opened it up. He then greeted his Quaestor with a formal bow.

“My Quaestor,” he said inviting her on board, “what gives me the honor of this visit?”

As Tali Sroka climbed aboard, she immediately closed the hatch and handed a datapad to Aru. She then sat on one of the Star Commuter’s passenger chairs and looked around.

“You needt to findt yourself a better place to live Aru. You are a Knight of Qel-Droma.”

“I’m saving up for that,” he said with his usually kind smile. “Do you want a caf to warm you up while I read this datapad?”

His words got Tinker’s attention. He got close to the Twi’lek and beeped in a friendly way.

“I vill take one, thank you.” She said, and immediately Tinker started rotating his head to prepare a coffee for the Quaestor.

Aru quickly read the information on the datapad. It was a mission of high importance assigned from the Grand Master himself. The objective was to capture alive a target which might have information about the Deputy Grand Master’s current whereabouts, following his capture during the Great Jedi War XIII, and the Collective’s next moves. The target was Manu Maurfai, a male Twi’lek.

“I’m to capture this man and bring him here?” Aru confirmed with his Quaestor.

“Yes”, Tali replied, “It is of the upmost importance that you findt him andt bring him back *alive*!” She took a sip of her caf. “Ve might not get another chance.”

Aru scratched his beard. He was trying to figure out the best way of doing such a mission, since his specialty wasn’t capturing targets, or even fighting for that matter.

“Might I ask you a question my Quaestor?” He said respectfully. “Why are you sending me?”

Tali Sroka got up and put her hand on Aru’s shoulder. Then, her lekku moved a bit and she finally said.

“For various reasons. As you know, Sith aren’t velcome in Coruscant, so that rules out skilledt fighters such as your Master Alaisy. The jedi are too rule lovers on this aspect andt they might not be ready to do vhat’s necessary to complete the mission. So, it’s up to the Gray Jedi!”

Aru understood her reasoning, but there would still be more suited followers of both sides of the Force in the Brotherhood.

“More,” she then added, “you are a human andt can easily blendt in the massive crowds of Coruscant. Andt you aren’t known there, so no one vill recognize you.”

“Seems fair.” Aru said, his mind only thinking on how important the assignment was. “It is an honor to have been chosen for this mission.”

“But be varned, Aru.” Tali Sroka stared at him, and then whispered. “This assignment is of the upmost importance for our Clan. They needt to be remindedt of how much they needt us.”

“I understand.” The man said, feeling a bit nervous for what was to come.

“I have other matters to attendt now. You must get on your vay as soon as possible. Take your time to study Manu during your trip.”

“I will.” Aru said with conviction. “I will make you proud!”

“That’s goodt to hear.” The purple Twi’lek said. “Have a safe trip.”

Having said that, Tali Sroka abandoned Aru’s Star Commuter 2000 and went on her way. As soon as the hatch closed, Aru fell on a chair. He felt all the weight that his mission carried and couldn’t think straight.

He was then shocked by Tinker, his droid, which informed him that they needed to go.

“Right!” Aru said. “Map us to Coruscant pal.”

**Aru’s Star Commuter 2000
Hyperlane to Coruscant
37 ABY**

While his starship made its way across the Hyperlane, carefully guided by Tinker, Aru was reading his datapad meticulously. He was trying to absorb every bit of information available there that could give him an advantage.

By studying previous reports on Manu Maurfai, Aru learned that his target was a very capable opponent, and a seriously skilled slicer. Open conflict wasn’t an option and trying to make his life harder through slicing wasn’t either. For this one, he would have to catch him off guard and would have to be swift about it.

Aru traced various plans in his head, but none seemed solid enough to guarantee that he wouldn’t fail. And he wasn’t even thinking on backup plans. “*This assignment is of the upmost importance for our Clan*.”, Tali’s words echoed in Aru’s head.

“Argh! It’s no use!”, he screamed, “I can’t focus!”

Tinker beeped in an array of high- and low-pitched sounds, telling his owner that they were about to exit Hyperspace. Aru sat on the commands of his Star Commuter 2000 and prepared to make contact with Coruscant authorities.

His holocomm signaled that he was being hailed and so, Aru opened a communication channel.

“This is Aru Law, Captain of this Star Commuter 2000, permission to land requested.” Two seconds of static were heard before an officer could be heard on the other side.

“Do you have anything to declare aboard that starship?” The officer asked.

“No sir!” Aru said immediately. “I only travel with my R2 unit.”

“What brings you on Coruscant, captain?”

“Visiting my family on the mid-levels sir. Haven’t seen them in a while.”

Aru waited for several seconds before he got an answer from the officer.

“Very well. Permission granted.” He finally said. “Please make your way to hangar B-567. Welcome to Coruscant, captain!”

“Thank you.” Aru said, relieved that he wasn’t going to be asked any more questions.

He made his way to the hangar he had been appointed, letting Tinker drive the starship. Meanwhile, he turned his commlink on and contacted his Mistress Alaisy Tir’eivra.

“What is it, apprentice?” Her modulated voice sounded even more modulated through the commlink. Aru could see she was in a hurry.

“Hello, Mistress. I’ve been assigned a search and capture mission and I was wondering if you could give me some advice on how to deal with a superior opponent.”

His Mistress didn’t answer immediately. She was busy handling dangerous toxins that required her full attention.

“Perhaps we should talk another time?” Aru proposed, trying not to make his Mistress mad.

“Patience, Aru!” She eventually said.

“I’m sorry, Mistress.” The dark-haired Human said, disappointed with himself.

“First. Just because I don’t answer you immediately, doesn’t mean I am not going to give you a response.” The Sith-woman said. “Second! Remember your training with me. Use the environment to your advantage. Be patient and wait for the best opportunity to attack! If all you have is one chance, make sure that it counts.”

His Mistress’ words gave him renewed confidence. He focused on his training and became once again his usual calm self.

“You’re right, Mistress! I can do this!” When he said this, his starship had finally touched down.

“I expect you will not fail, apprentice.” The dark-haired Sith added. “After all, you were trained by me.”

Aru could clearly picture in his mind Alaisy’s confident smile that she usually gave others. “Thank you for your insight, Mistress. Aru out.”

He closed the communication channel with his Mistress and geared up. He made sure his blaster was loaded and that his lightsaber was fully working. He then picked up his favorite sabacc deck and exited his starship.

Followed by Tinker, Aru made his way through the hangar, only stopping by a mechanic to give him a small incentive to take proper care of his starship.

**Inside a Cantina
Coruscant Mid-levels
37 ABY**

Aru found himself in a small cantina in the mid-levels of the planet city. Somehow, he always managed to find a good cantina wherever he went. The tall Human was wearing his usual attire, but was covered with an overall mantle, that kept some attention away from him.

“How should I proceed?” He started thinking on his course of action, but then got distracted by a bunch of locals, playing sabacc. “I get sent to the beautiful city of Coruscant and don’t even get to enjoy it?” And he growled.

“Had a bad day huh?” The bartender asked, filling Aru’s glass with beer.

“I can’t drink anymore sir. I have things to do.”

“This one’s on me. I just feel like you need it.”

Aru cheered the man with a slight movement of his hand, focusing his mind on the bartender’s and compelled him through the Force to answer his question.

“You will tell me about Manu Maurfai.” The gray Jedi spoke clearly and looked deeply into the bartender’s eyes.

“He’s come here before once,” the man started saying. “He asked for a cheap place to stay and for a supplier of armament. I know nothing more of him.”

Before his influence over the man faded, since Aru felt his control over the Force dwindle, the Human left a big tip on the table and left. His droid awaited him outside and started following him as he walked away from the cantina.

Cloaked by the Force, Aru made his way through the crowds without being noticed.

“I can’t slice a terminal to find him. I’m sure he has taken measures against that.” He mumbled to himself. “I also can’t fight him in the open. His marksmanship skills are great and my Soresu is no match for that, yet.” He mentally assured himself that he would become proficient enough in the art of Soresu the next time such skills were demanded of him. “C’mon Aru, think!”

Aru was so deeply entranced in his thoughts that he wasn’t even paying attention to where he was going. Nor did he see the obstacle that was on his way. Suddenly, he bumped into someone and, before he could apologize, was pushed aside.

“Watch it punk!” A man yelled at him. Aru lift his eyes and was perplexed at what he saw. Manu Maurfai was right in front of him. By pure luck, misfortune or perhaps the Force, they had bumped into each other.

What happened next was just a mere moment, but it played out slowly in Aru’s eyes. The tall human reached for his lightsaber almost instantly and prepared to incapacitate his target. But Manu was fast on the trigger and he too, pulled his blaster as an instantaneous response to Aru’s movement.

And for the first time, Aru felt something in the Force which urged him to take a defensive stance. What was it? He had heard of it before, ways of the Force to warn against imminent danger and had even undergone training in order to achieve such a skill, but it had never manifested itself. But now, he felt it.

With a last second change of his stance, Aru barely avoided the first blaster shot, which scraped his left arm, but managed to deflect the next one, directing it to Manu Maurfai’s leg.

The Twi’lek fell to the ground in pain and Aru kicked his blaster out of reach. He then picked his own blaster and shot Manu’s other leg, preventing him from walking.

Although there was a crowd there, few paid attention to what was happening, since they didn’t want to be involved. It was a good thing that the Twi’lek was working alone, at least as far as Aru had seen. If Collective agents were truly watching the Twi’lek, they weren’t letting themselves be noticed at the moment.

Aru took some time to create the Illusion around himself that he was only walking casually with Manu by his side so that others would see them as just passersby. Having handcuffed his target and covered his mouth, he guided him towards his hangar.

**Aru’s Star Commuter 2000
Coruscant Hangar B-567
37 ABY**

Aru was already inside his Star Commuter 2000. Manu Maurfai was well secured, strapped to one of his starships’ seats, unconscious. He was making his final preparations for takeoff.

“This went better than I expected pal.” He happily remarked to his droid, Tinker, which beeped in a happy manner.

As they flew out of the hangar and onto Coruscant’s near space, Aru reached his Quaestor via the holocomm on his starship.

“Hello Aru. Got any news for me?” Tali Sroka asked with her usual happy voice.

“Target acquired my Quaestor. I’m making my way to Port Ol’val as we speak.”

“Vonderful! I knew you couldt do it! I shall inform my superiors. Have a safe journey home!”

“Thank you!” The dark-haired Human said, feeling good about himself. After delivering Manu Maurfai safely to the Brotherhood, he was going to relax with a few rounds of sabacc and read more about Master Fay, his somewhat of a crush in Force related matters.

“Let’s go home!”