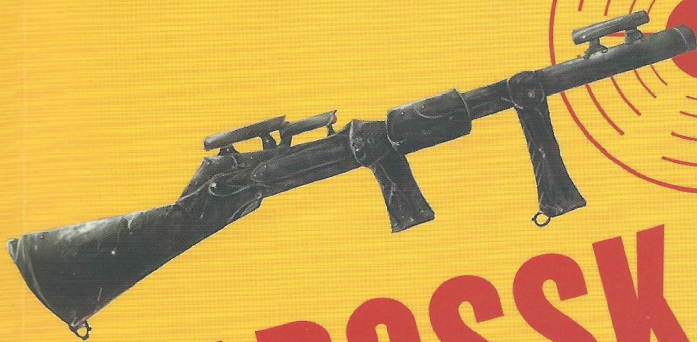


MAKING A KILLING

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CRADOSSK

MAKING A KILLING

by Cradosk,
Head of the Bounty Hunters Guild

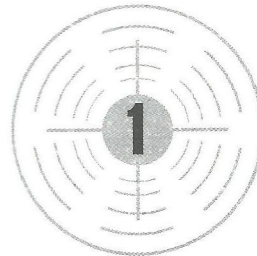


DEDICATION

~~For my son, Bossk.~~

For Boba Fett. I WISH you were my son.

-Cradosk



CUTTING TO THE CHASE

My name is Cradossk. I kill for a living.
For example...

About a month back, I was concealed in a slaughterhouse freezer on a truly backwater moon, quietly sharpening my claws while waiting for an individual I'd never met before. Why? Not because I wanted to have a friendly chat with a stranger in a cold, enclosed environment. No, I was there to earn 100,000 credits by making sure this stranger never chatted with anyone again.

What did this individual, the acquisition, do to have so much money on his head? That wasn't important, not to me. I wasn't even especially curious about who wanted him dead. My interest was in getting the job done so I could collect my money, and also in



staying alive so I could keep doing my job and earn even more money. After all, eliminating quarry isn't a hobby or gentleman's pastime for me. It's a business. To earn my pay, I will do anything.

That includes breaking into the aforementioned freezer and stuffing myself inside a large nerf carcass that was dangling from a hook on a chain, amid dozens of similar carcasses. Patience has its rewards. Why risk your neck chasing down a target if the target will come to you? The acquisition was a well-guarded warlord, but he had predictable habits. I knew that his late-night snack time was my best chance to get him alone. How did I know that? Come now, you can't expect me to tell you everything.

The acquisition entered the freezer at last, alone and right on time, and shut the door behind him. He was big, over two meters tall, and mostly muscle. His species was known for having an excellent olfactory sense, and he might have smelled me a kilometer away if we'd been outside the freezer. His snout didn't even twitch, however, as he moved past my position and reached for a carcass.

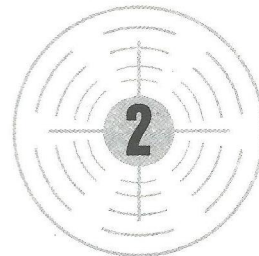
He grunted, blasting steam out of his nostrils as he pulled a carcass off the hook, making the chain rattle loudly above him. He never heard me push out of my hiding spot and launch myself at the back of his head. Tempted as I was to use my claws to tear his throat out,



I was on something of a timetable, so I used a beamdrill for the job.

Less than a minute later, I had the acquisition's head in a satchel. I planted a thermal detonator in the freezer's doorframe and rigged it to blow as soon as the guards tried to force their way in. I scooted through a hole I'd cut in the back of the freezer, then made my way back to my ship, knowing I'd be 100,000 credits richer in the near future.

Just another day at the office.



HOW I GOT STARTED

Because a few too many woefully ignorant interviewers have inquired about my birth, let's get one thing straight. I wasn't born. I was hatched. Like all Trandoshans, I had to kick my way out.

My father was Agnuk, a high-ranking council member of the Bounty Hunters Guild. According to Agnuk, I was tough and hungry from the start. I was the first to emerge from my clutch mother's egg sac. I've witnessed innumerable hatchlings emerge from their eggs, and it is a simple fact that only the strongest, the most determined, and the most innately cunning hatchling survives. I was that hatchling. My spawn-brothers quickly became my first meal.

Hunting runs deep in the blood of all Trandoshans and is the very foundation of our culture. For eons,



our hunts have been monitored by the highest power: the omniscient Scorekeeper, who exists beyond time and space. The Scorekeeper records the deeds of every Trandoshan hunter, evaluates the success or failure of each hunt, and awards jagannath points for the spoils of victory won in mortal combat. If you're a hunter, but not a Trandoshan, the Scorekeeper has only a passing interest in you, and that's your own unfortunate fault, so you'll just have to work doubly hard. Ultimately, the Scorekeeper uses a hunter's lifelong accumulation of jagannath to calculate his merits and to determine his place in the afterlife. No Trandoshan fears death. Every Trandoshan wants to please the Scorekeeper. Is it any wonder so many of us become professional hunters, assassins, mercenaries, and slavers?

Trandoshans don't even pretend to understand life forms that don't hunt, or civilizations that survive by agricultural means alone. We have an old expression, *Richna lu stavask, ichna lu bsikkask*: If you have never hunted, you have never lived.

My earliest memories are of my father tossing me into a deep, wide pit in which he bred eskrats, large carnivorous rodents. Although Agnuk used the eskrats as bait for trapping larger creatures, they also served to train me (and to sate my hunger). I found tremendous satisfaction in facing a hungry beast that met my gaze as it approached me without fear, as if it regarded me as an easy meal. I would anticipate its panicked howl



a moment before I dug my claws into its eyes and sank my teeth into its throat.

Agnuk was an imposing Trandoshan. The braided Wookiee scalps that dangled from his belt were a testament to his hunting prowess. He did his best to teach me everything he knew. He took me with him when he went hunting, showed me how to set snares, attract prey, and handle blades and blasters. Honing my skills from the petrified forests outside the Trandoshan city Hsskhor to the hallowed islands on the far side of Wasskah, I stalked, snared, shot, stabbed, and sliced for food and sport and glory. The summation of the Trandoshan Way. Initially, I was impatient and quick to kill just about anything that moved. More than once, Agnuk confounded me by saying, "Any fool can swat an insect." But it was not long before I understood what he meant. There is greater honor and satisfaction in hunting *intelligent* prey.

Because my father was a council member of the Bounty Hunters Guild, my youth was more brutal than typical. Agnuk expected me to excel as a hunter and a martial artist, and because he loved me dearly, he put me through trials that would make a rancor cry. Meanwhile, my so-called peers were frequent antagonists, always eager to bring me down a notch in their desperate efforts to damage my father's social standing. Rare was the day that they did not attempt to goad me into a fight and bloody my snout. Naturally, I



was obliged to fight them all, and in the process I killed more than a few. In other words, I had a most fortunate childhood.

As I grew into adolescence, I was predictably disobedient and rebellious. Did I learn that it was not wise to poach from the elders or harass a clutch mother without provocation? Indeed, I did, and the punishments they doled out were as educational as they were exquisitely painful. Some of my contemporaries never learned. They fought and killed as they pleased, without any thought of the future, so confident in their ability to regenerate lost arms and legs that they were careless with the ones they possessed. As my father put it, "Those who take their limbs for granted have already lost their heads."

Was I more ambitious than other hunters? Oh, I don't know about that. If I had any advantage, I suppose it was that my hunger for violence has always been complemented by my raw smarts. Quick reflexes, brute strength, and a tough hide won't get you nearly as far as knowing when and how to use those assets. I was also good with a blaster, and especially enjoyed visits to the moon Alaris so I could shoot at flying gnasps. Blasting moving targets is good practice for any hunter, as it truly hones eye-hand coordination, and I found pleasure in watching the gnasps' heads and bodies burst in mid-flight.

Another thing I've always had going for me is



a surplus of greed, and not just for food and drink. I learned the value of money from my father during an expedition to Kashyyyk, when I was barely in my teens. We'd traveled to the Wookiee planet in my father's freighter, and after we located a large herd of wild grantaloupe, Agnuk instructed me to mow them down. Much as I was looking forward to transforming the horned quadrupeds into a bloodbath, I was curious about why Agnuk wanted to massacre so many more than we needed for food. He clubbed me on the side of the head and said, "You can only eat so much meat at one sitting, but if you find the right buyer, you can sell tons of the stuff." Words of wisdom.

Although we had a narrow escape from a mob of Wookiees, we managed to load the grantaloupe into our freighter and deliver them to my father's client, a businessman in the Nevoota system. When I saw the large bag of credits the client's personal assistant placed in Agnuk's waiting hand, I felt incredible envy. I'm certain that Agnuk sensed my desire for those credits. As we headed back to our freighter, he asked me if I'd like to earn some money for myself. I said, "Who wouldn't?"

Agnuk removed an Imagecaster from his pocket. "My grantaloupe-hungry client has just placed a bounty on a Devaronian who's hiding on a moon in the Obtrexta sector." He activated the Imagecaster to project a holographic image of the acquisition, a thick-



necked humanoid with a horned head and an idiotic, leering grin. "It's really a one-man job, but you need more education."

It took a great deal of effort for me to pretend that I didn't give a blast.

Agnuk said, "You do exactly as I say, and if everything gets done right, I'll give you a percentage. Just remember. *I'm* the one licensed with the Guild. You're nothing but a hired gun. Can you live with that?"

"Certainly," I said. *For now*, I thought. And off we went to the Obtrexta sector.

What happened next? Even after the passage of many years, I am obliged to protect Agnuk's client and safeguard certain information. However, I can divulge a few choice moments.

We tracked the Devaronian to a vine-covered monastery protected by a light energy shield and dozens of old security droids. Staying out of their sights, Agnuk and I scoped out the area with macrobinoculars and got as close as we could. After mere minutes of surveillance, we spotted the acquisition walking in an open courtyard.

Agnuk said, "Are you curious about what the Devaronian did to become an acquisition?"

"Not especially," I said.

"How about whether he's wanted dead or alive?"

"Depends on which pays more."

Agnuk smiled and handed me one of his favorite



weapons. It was a long-barreled slugthrower rifle, a late model Czerka Adventurer that could be quickly broken down. Unlike a blaster rifle, which can reveal the shooter's position as the energy bolt streaks away from a rifle's barrel, a slugthrower's projectile doesn't emit light and moves faster than most eyes can see. When fired, the Adventurer floods its chamber with a rich oxidizer that gives the projectile extra punch and increased range. Agnuk had modified the Adventurer's stock, grip, and trigger to better fit his own hands, but the weapon felt right at home in mine, too.

Keeping his eyes trained on the acquisition, Agnuk said, "Some say a slugthrower's only disadvantage is that it doesn't have a stun setting, but that's not really a problem. All you have to do is load the slugthrower with knock-out darts."

I checked the Adventurer's ammo pack, but Agnuk had slapped a thick strip of black adhesive tape over it, preventing me from seeing whether it held metallic slugs or darts. Agnuk said, "Make the shot, son."

I swung the rifle up, peered through the scope, locked the acquisition's horned head in my sights, and squeezed the trigger. Through the scope, I saw a slight pop of energy in the distance as the projectile broke through the monastery's protective shield before embedding itself into the acquisition's neck. I must confess, the instant I realized the projectile was



only a dart, I felt disappointed. A split second later, the acquisition slapped the side of his neck as if he were trying to kill a bloodgnat.

And then his head exploded.

What a rush of satisfaction! While not as exhilarating as biting into a victim's throat and feeling his life drain away, it was nevertheless pleasing.

We returned to my father's client in the Nevoota system. After Agnuk handed over my percentage of the bounty, I was completely transformed. My passion for hunting was fueled not only by the need for blood leaking through my fangs, but also by the constant desire for a fresh pile of credits in my hand.

Despite the way I'd disposed of the Devaronian, Agnuk wasn't in any hurry to enlist me for such work again. He said I required more training, and he packed me off for a four-year stretch at Orsis Academy, an elite military school that had special programs in everything from improvised demolitions and long-range shooting techniques to Mandalorian martial arts. Many members of the Bounty Hunters Guild, including my father, had done time at Orsis. The headmaster was a short Falleen named Trezza, a tough little eskrat. Shortly after my arrival, I got into a fight with another cadet, and Trezza himself broke it up. He pinched a nerve I didn't even know I had and sent me straight to the infirmary.

An hour later, he visited me there and found me lying on a cot, still recovering. He climbed up onto a



chair beside me, smiled, and asked if I planned on going through life as stupid as I was ugly. I lunged for him. I still don't know how he did it, but he tapped my skull with one finger and I was out like a busted glowrod.

When I woke up, I was lying on the same cot, but night had fallen. I was livid. I snuck out of the infirmary and was making my way through a corridor, heading for Trezza's quarters, when something clipped the backs of my legs. Next thing I knew, I was sprawled on my back on the floor, and little Trezza was standing on my chest, staring down at me. He said, "You have two choices. Strive to become a model student or be sent home to your father in six separate boxes."

Four years later, I returned to Trandosha considerably smarter and deadlier. Was my father now ready to take me as an apprentice, and endorse my application for the Bounty Hunters Guild? No, he was not, which really irked me. He did invite me to attend his council's meetings at the Guild's station office on Trandosha, and encouraged me to listen and observe. But after my time on Orsis, I wasn't interested in suffering in silence, sitting around while a bunch of old windbags talked about the Guild's "glory days" and argued over who had obtained the trophies that lined the walls. I was better than that. I was mature, ready to start working, so confident in my abilities that I was compelled to address the council directly. But my father told me to shut up, so I scent-marked his chair while he



happened to be sitting in it.

I flew off to Kashyyyk and hunted game for a few days. Upon my return to Trandosha, I had an amusing encounter with three older Trandosians—two slavers and a bounty hunter—in a public lodge on the outskirts of Lorpfan. They were seated around a table, and one slaver made a request of me. I responded with a snarl, insults were exchanged, and the brawl that followed ended with all three dead, my right hand on the floor, and a small battleaxe embedded deep in my thigh.

As I removed the axe and licked it clean, the lodge's bartender informed me that the slaver's request to "grab a chair" had been an invitation to join him and his comrades for a drink, not, as I'd thought, a suggestion that I play with furniture for his amusement. In truth, I felt a bit foolish about that, realizing that my ignorance of the expression had cost me a free drink. But at least I learned a valuable lesson—that words can be tricky—and so I made it my mission to master words as well as weapons.

My father and I hadn't exactly seen eye-to-eye on anything for a long while, but after I killed the guys in Lorpfan he became very attentive. He began introducing me to more important members of the council and invited me to go on hunts with him again. We even flew over to Alaris and slaughtered gundarks for laughs. Sure, we fought like we always did, but I would say our relationship had definitely improved.

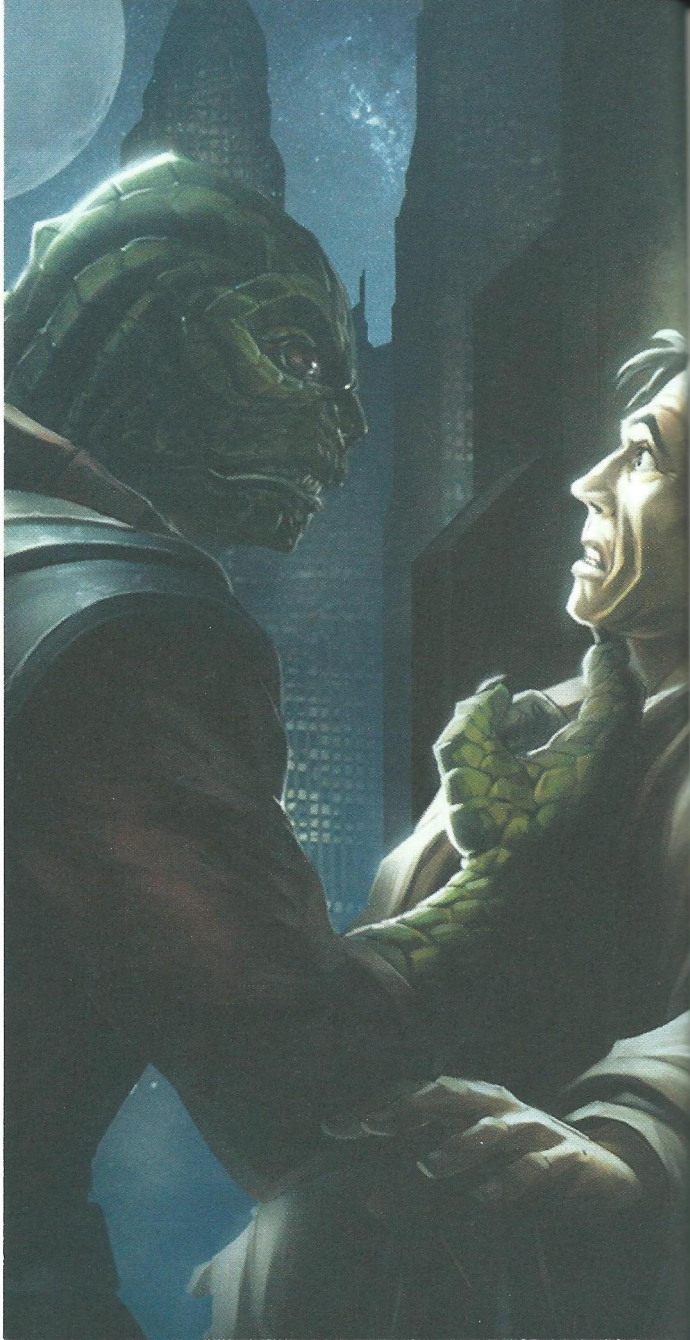


Anyway, after several months of this remarkable personal interest, one of my father's Guild chums got drunk and babbled to me in private about the trio in Lorpfan, whom I'd almost forgotten about. He said my meeting with those guys was no coincidence, that they had in fact been hired to beat me to a pulp. "The funny part is, your father hired them!"

I couldn't wait to confront old Agnuk. He admitted he had been angry with me because of what I'd done to his favorite chair. He said he'd just wanted to teach me a lesson in manners. We both had a good laugh over that. Then I hit him with all I had and broke his jaw.

Even with several shattered teeth and a broken jaw, Agnuk managed to smile. He said, "Son, you're ready for the Guild."

Ah, memories.



FIRST GUILD CONTRACT

As much as I'd like to tell you exactly what I had to do to get into the Bounty Hunters Guild, an entertaining story in itself, such revelations would violate a number of the Guild's rules and confidentiality agreements. Yes, I am aware of various accounts that I broke a few laws (and necks) during my probationary period and apprenticeship with my father. I can't officially confirm, but won't deny, such scuttlebutt. However, because of certain extenuating circumstances, such as a number of significant individuals being dead, I am at liberty to relate my first hunt as a full-fledged member of the Guild. I should note that this happened several decades before the Clone Wars and the rise of the Empire, before anyone had an inkling that the treacherous Jedi Order was scheming to take over the Republic.



My father was my Guild coordinator, the “bounty broker” who gave me my first contract. We met in one of the trophy rooms at the Guild’s station office on Trandosha. I remember it all like it was yesterday.

My father said, “Ah, my strong and ridiculously handsome son and heir,” or something like that, as he handed me a datatape with a contract on it. “What do you make of this?”

I skimmed the contract. The acquisition was a human named Jonmor Tinto. He’d been an accountant in a bank on Humbarine but was caught embezzling and sent to a Republic prison. Tinto had been recently released with other criminals, and they’d established a settlement on Longwind, a minor world in the Trade sector. Despite having served his sentence, he had an outstanding debt to a Humbarine industrialist who was not interested in reparations. The industrialist was the Guild’s client, and he wanted Tinto alive.

I got to the contract’s most important part: Two thousand credits. By Guild standards, that was pin money, hardly worth the effort. But I knew the Guild rules. I knew better than to question or refuse a contract from my supervisor. Still, Agnuk must have noticed something in my countenance that betrayed my disappointment because he said, “Stop grinding your teeth and bloodying your fists with your own claws! And stand up straight! You’re supposed to be a professional, so start behaving like one.”

“I am a professional,” I said, “and as a professional, I was merely considering that expenses for this job will outweigh the value of the bounty. I was under the impression that the Guild was in the business of making money, not losing it.”

Agnuk let out a tired sigh. “Have you forgotten the difference between a good hunter and a great hunter?”

As if he hadn’t told me a million times. “A good hunter gets what he’s after,” I recited. “A great hunter does the same but gets paid more.”

“That’s right. You want more credits? Go out there and find opportunities.”

After I called my beloved father several choice names, he decided to accompany me on the hunt, strictly as an observer. We went straight to my ship, a late model Loronar B-7 light freighter that I’d leased from the Guild. The Loronar was equipped with heavy armor plating and a recently upgraded sensor suite, and I’d personally overseen the installation of a backup automated laser cannon. I could hardly wait to start earning credits so I could add more weapons and stronger shields.

The journey to Longwind was unremarkable. I had no difficulty finding the former prisoners’ settlement, a small sprawl of modular shacks beside a landing field. As I touched down a few kilometers from the settlement, Agnuk said, “Night’s falling. What’s



your plan?"

"I'll reconnoiter the area and look for Tinto while you wait here."

"I'll go with you."

"Not if you have any respect for me, you won't." My father snarled a bit, but as I walked away from the freighter, he didn't follow.

I proceeded to scope out the settlement. Lights were on in the modulars, revealing the occupants, but I couldn't see Tinto among them. Soon, a man exited one building, and I was quick to subdue him. I only had to break two of his bones before he told me Tinto had left Longwind earlier that day, heading for Nar Shaddaa.

Leaving the man in no state to summon help, I returned to the freighter. I was surprised to see a tall male Jedi, clutching his arm, standing a short distance from the ship. He was looming over my father's body, which rested in two large pieces on the ground. The Jedi faced me and identified himself as Kindro Nimmel. He said he'd been sent to Longwind to monitor the settlers, that he'd been on patrol when he saw my father, and that my father had attacked him and broken his arm. I dropped all my weapons and told Nimmel I wouldn't make any trouble for him, that I just wanted to leave peacefully with my father's remains.

What happened next, I can tell only now that the Clone Wars have ended.

As I bent down over what was left of my father,

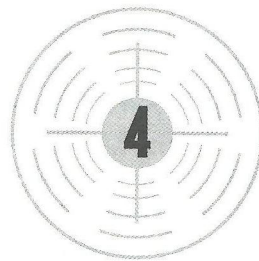


I made a simpering noise to engage the Jedi's emotions. Then I sprang at Nimmel, breaking his legs with one swipe as I launched my other claw at his neck. Then I got my teeth into him. Yes, I slaughtered the Jedi. His blood tasted of cowardice, like any other herbivore's.

I gathered my father's remains, attached his prized Wookiee scalps to my own belt, and proceeded to Nar Shaddaa, also known as the Smuggler's Moon. I left a trail of maimed bodies as I tracked Jonmor Tinto to a gambling den, where I was the one who lucked out. Tinto was with four other wanted fugitives, all valued much, much more than Tinto. Only Tinto was wanted alive. I blasted his companions, permanently disabled and captured Tinto, and collected 127,000 credits for my efforts. I could afford all the modifications I wanted for my ship, and then some.

But I could never buy my father's life back. Still, I pleased the Scorekeeper.

Five years and over 300 successful hunts later, I was elected head of the Bounty Hunters Guild.



LOOKING THE PART

Stop me if you've heard this one before.

When is a Jawa not a Jawa?

When the Jawa is really a Trandosha bounty hunter wearing a filthy hooded robe with two small glow pearls glued below his nostrils, while kneeling on the ground and aiming a concealed blaster at you.

Laugh all you want, but that so-called joke, which has been circulating cantinas for a few decades, was inspired by an actual event. I should know. I was that "Jawa."

As I write this, I'm in my private suite at Bounty Hunters Guild headquarters, wearing a comfortable and elegant lounging robe stitched together from the skins of former employees, including a bodyguard, a valet, and a secretary. I like this robe because it sends



a good, loud message to my current employees, telling them I expect their very best and nothing less. It reminds everyone of my power over them.

Would I wear this robe everywhere only because it's so comfortable? Of course not. Anyone who claims his appearance doesn't matter is a liar, an idiot, or a nerf herder. Did you ever arrive at a meeting wearing inappropriate attire? Did you feel embarrassed and out of place? Well, when you're a bounty hunter, if you show up somewhere in the wrong outfit, you could wind up feeling dead.

That's why a hunter must give careful thought to where he's traveling, to who might see him, and to *how* they will see him. He has to be able to blend in to his surroundings, sometimes at a moment's notice, and to avoid becoming the subject of suspicion. The Scorekeeper doesn't think highly of Trandosians who stick out like dislocated claws when they're not meant to.

Which brings us to disguises. Disguises are more than masks and fake identification documents. A disguise is a *tool* used for access or escape. A disguise's importance is not just in deceiving adversaries, but in reinforcing their perception that nothing is amiss. The goal is to avoid tickling their little minds.

The best disguises are those that make the wearer appear bland and uninteresting, that actually deflect attention. Ideally, they also should be easy to put on and



remove. I'm not only talking about prosthetic disguises, but about basic items used to conceal one's features. Almost every hunter I know packs a set of goggles, a cap or floppy hat, a scarf or breath mask, and a hooded robe, which add up to a standard disguise kit. To gain information from unsophisticated strangers about local populations and establishments, it's always a good idea to have a datapad handy for asking "survey questions."

For all the concerns about practical appearances, disguise is occasionally unnecessary, and might even work against you. For example, early in my career, I'd tracked a thief, a Corellian named Thoxo, to the agriworld Yitabo. Because he wasn't anyone's idea of a rugged individual—he was the type who would shudder at the thought of sleeping outside or eating food that hadn't been prepared by a chef—I knew I'd find him hiding out in one of several settlements, probably at one of the better establishments. I disguised myself as a prospector, with accoutrements that evidenced my expertise in mining. And I faked a limp. I hobbled from one settlement to the next, all the while supporting myself with an old wooden walking stick that concealed a blaster, and I kept my eyes peeled for the acquisition. I was the picture of harmlessness and I quickly gained the trust of a few bartenders and innkeepers.

After almost a week, I had also gained sore feet and a few extra pounds but, unfortunately, nothing



else. Part of the problem was that all the places I was visiting were fairly crowded all the time, and I realized my prey was probably finding it just as easy to blend into the crowd as I was. So I decided on a change of plan. I stopped limping, chucked the disguise, and changed into my standard work uniform. Then I went to the best inn at the most civilized settlement, fired my walking-stick blaster at the ceiling and bellowed, "Thoxo!"

All of the inn's patrons reacted, of course. But one of them—a man wearing a tunic with an emblem that indicated he was a retired academic from Thyferra—spewed his drink, fell off his seat, and ran for the back door. To my embarrassment, I realized I'd actually met and talked with him the day after my arrival on Yitabo. I'd been deceived by *his* disguise. As I said, this was early in my career. But still, it was an ignominious mistake.

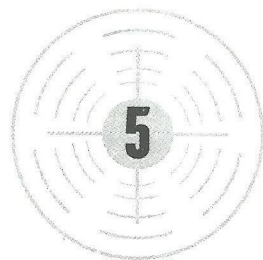
I shot Thoxo. He went down. No one challenged me as I hauled his body out of the inn. So much for the necessity of disguises.

During the Clone Wars, I heard tell of the Jedi Obi-Wan Kenobi using exotic technology to radically alter his facial features and disguise his voice, allowing him to impersonate Rako Hardeen, a bounty hunter from Concord Dawn, an agricultural planet in the Mandalore sector. Although such technological transformations are reversible, the process is reportedly quite painful.



I also heard that the Snivvian bounty hunter Sinrich invented a handheld device that generated what he called a holographic disguise matrix, which completely masked a hunter in a body-concealing hologram. Word has it that Sinrich died and took his technological know-how with him. But from what I gather, his device had its limitations. It required a lot of energy, and the holograms had a tendency to flicker. Not exactly the perfect tool in a life-or-death situation, but if anyone works the bugs out, there's money to be made.

Meanwhile, I encourage hunters to keep disguises simple. And remember, you don't *always* want to look harmless. If you want to survive as a hunter, and if you want to make a profit while you're at it, you'll give a blast about how you look.



ROGUES WHO'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING ME

During my exploits over the years, I've encountered various notable hunters who were not affiliated with the Bounty Hunters Guild. While it pains me that any hunter would decline to join my Guild, I acknowledge that I have had occasion to subcontract independent hunters as backup when Guild hunters weren't available, and I can appreciate skill when I see it.

Of all the independents I ever met, the one who stood highest in my estimation was Jango Fett. I am hardly alone in my regard for this enigmatic man, who



has become a legend. Acquisitions feared him. Other hunters yielded to him. And although details remain sketchy about the origins of the armored troopers who served the Republic Army, it's an easy bet that some very influential Republic power brokers respected Jango Fett enormously. More on that later.

Jango's own origins are also sketchy. Fortunately, the Bounty Hunters Guild has extensive records, and I've managed to glean data from several obscure sources. He was born on Concord Dawn. His family were farmers, but his father also served as a Journeyman Protector who likely taught his son how to handle weapons. Fett was still a child when the Mandalorian Civil War broke out between the factions known as the True Mandalorians and the Death Watch.

I won't bore you with a history lesson. Just know that the True Mandalorians valued a degree of honor as mercenaries, and the Death Watch didn't. Both factions wore Mandalorian armor that included the traditional T-visor helmet, and the only way most citizens of the galaxy could distinguish them was by getting a close look at the emblems on their armor. Few got that close to the Death Watch and lived to tell about it.

I've heard lots of stories about Jango's introduction to the Mandalorians, but the most commonly told one is that the Death Watch killed his family, whereupon the True Mandalorians adopted him



and trained him to become a supercommando. He rose through the ranks and survived the True Mandalorians' defeat by the Jedi at the Battle of Galidraan. The Governor of Galidraan sold the captive Jango to slavers and kept his armor as a souvenir. Unfortunately for the Governor, Jango eventually escaped and reclaimed his armor.

Jango then went into the business of bounty hunting. He made a name for himself almost immediately, mostly in and around Hutt Space. He went after the most dangerous acquisitions, the bounties that paid the most. He didn't seem particular about whether the acquisitions were wanted dead or alive, and he always got the job done. Always. My contacts informed me that he never removed his helmet and didn't talk much. They also told me that he had absolutely no interest in joining the Guild. Rather than taking offense at this, I was intrigued. I liked Jango's style.

But Fett wasn't the only hunter kicking around the galaxy in blasterproof Mandalorian armor and refusing to join the Guild, which caused some confusion at the time. A man named Montross, who claimed he'd served with the True Mandalorians before he'd parted ways with them after a disagreement, had been operating for years in the Outer Rim. Montross had a more powerful build than Jango, didn't always wear his helmet, and favored flight suits with sleeves cut

DISAGREEMENT?! THE TRUE MANDALORIANS
BANISHED MONTROSS BECAUSE HE LACKED HONOR.



above the elbow. A more significant difference between the men was that Montross killed every acquisition he went after, no matter his clients' instructions. From a business perspective, that wasn't pragmatic. A fair number of those bounties had been wanted alive. In any event, there's been nary a peep about Montross in well over a decade, and I'd like to think Jango had something to do with that.

My first meeting with Jango was a bit awkward. This happened back when Montross was still active. I was already head of the Bounty Hunters Guild, traveling in my freighter over a wretched excuse for a desert planet called Aridus. I was hot on the tail of a Rodian who had an important court date and the temerity to attempt to evade me in a skyhopper, when my freighter's engines malfunctioned. As I wrestled with the controls to stop from tumbling to Aridus's surface, a Kuat Drive Yards gunship with two bulked-up sublight engines and an amphibious hull swooped in from out of nowhere.

The gunship fired at the skyhopper, clipping one of its wings, and then used a tractor beam to snare the prey that was, by the laws of the Guild, legally mine. Could I ignore such an affront? Certainly not. The only thing that stopped me from blasting the gunship out of the sky was that I was too busy making a crash-landing.

I sent an emergency signal to summon Guild support, grabbed my rifle, and jumped out of my



ruined freighter. I expected the gunship and skyhopper to be long gone. Imagine my surprise to see both ships—the skyhopper still the gunship's captive—touch down about 50 meters behind me. The Rodian sat motionless in the skyhopper's cockpit. I was spitting mad and in a killing mood as I walked straight for the gunship. A man clad in a dark flight suit and Mandalorian armor stepped out.

Having heard of both Jango Fett and Montross, I quickly noted that the man did not have a remarkably large build, and that his flight suit covered his arms. I also observed that both his blaster pistols remained holstered. Unsure why he hadn't escaped with the Rodian, but seeing an opportunity to recruit a new member for the Guild, I lowered my rifle and said, "Greetings, Jango Fett."

"Cradossk," Jango said. Of course he knew of me.

I said, "What brings you to Aridus?"

"Just passing through."

Because no one passes through Aridus unless they absolutely have to, I suspected Jango had arrived on business. I said, "So, you just happened to see me pursuing an acquisition, saw me crash, and decided to lend a hand?"

Ignoring my question, Jango tilted his head in the direction of my ship. "I could take you to the



nearest spaceport."

Knowing a Guild team would arrive soon enough, I declined. I gestured to the skyhopper. "The Rodian was my acquisition, but you *did* help apprehend him. What do you say we share the bounty?"

"Not interested."

I smiled as I felt my anger rise. "So, you intend to claim this bounty all for yourself?"

"You misunderstand. I'm not interested in the bounty. The acquisition is yours."

I was surprised and abashed. "Apologies," I said. "For an independent hunter, you're unusually civilized. Tell me, Jango, what can I do to convince you to join the Guild?"

"Not interested in that either." Then he turned, boarded his ship, and took off, leaving me with the Rodian. I was baffled by Jango's behavior, but would never forget that he had helped me, while asking for nothing in return.

Jango and I had other encounters, including the time he met my son Bossk. If you've seen any holovids of the *Bounty Hunters Guild's Greatest Hits*, specifically the episodes that followed a few of my missions with Bossk, then you're aware that my son Bossk and I don't always agree. Anyway, shortly before the Clone Wars started, Bossk and I met up with Jango on the planet Esseles. It was also on Esseles that Bossk and I met

FATHER SAID HE SABOTAGED C'S SHIP. HIRED TO DELAY C FROM
DELU THE RODIAN TO REPUBLIC AUTHORITIES



Jango's son, a fine lad named Boba. I regret that Jango may have believed my awareness of the boy's existence was problematic, for he showed me a corpse in an effort to convince me he'd killed Boba.

Jango generally worked alone, but word had it that he occasionally worked with Zam Wesell, a female shape-shifting Clawdite. Wesell was an independent hunter, too, but worked more frequently as an assassin. I can't say I had the pleasure of meeting her, but by all accounts she was an extremely gifted mimic. The last confirmed sighting of Wesell was in a nightclub on Coruscant, where a pair of Jedi attacked her. Several eyewitnesses maintained that they saw the Jedi haul Wesell out through a door that led to an alley. I remember hearing about this a few days before the Battle of Geonosis. After that, Wesell doesn't turn up on any records.

As for Jango, he died at the Battle of Geonosis. He had been taking assignments from the Separatist leader Count Dooku for some time before the battle, where he was slain by the head of the Jedi Council, Mace Windu, just before the Republic's convenient army made their debut in combat.

I knew there was a connection between Jango and the Republic army the moment I saw the holovids from Geonosis. All the troopers not only wore armor similar to Jango's, but they moved like him as well. More

FATHER ON CORUSC. JUST BEFORE BATTLE OF GEO. WORKING WITH ZAM? BOBA



bizarre was the fact they were all Jango's size. To the centimeter. And then reports came in that the troopers were clones, grown in vats on the planet Kamino. I soon learned Jango Fett had been the template for the clones, that he clandestinely trained the clones in the art of warfare. How Jango became the template remains a mystery, but given the time it takes to grow a clone, his role in the process began at least ten years prior to the Clone Wars. Did Jango himself foresee that the Republic would eventually require an army? Perhaps. In any event, I don't doubt he was well paid for his contribution.

I also learned Boba Fett was still alive. I can only assume that when Jango had attempted to deceive me about killing his own son, he'd shown me a corpse of a young clone. Boba had been an eyewitness to his father's death, and he craved vengeance. I know this because, during the Clone Wars, Boba conscripted Bossk and other bounty hunters to hunt down Mace Windu. According to Bossk, they nearly killed Windu on Vanqor, but failure landed them in a Republic prison. As my father often said, "There's rarely profit in *almost* killing anyone."

Still, Boba Fett earned my admiration. After his father's death, he could have gone into hiding or taken up a different life, perhaps as a farmer, like his grandfather on Concord Dawn. But Boba could never



be a farmer. He has too much of his father in him. While most of the galaxy still regarded Jedi as heroes, that boy saw them for the villains they were, and organized other hunters to take action against them. Mark my words, Boba Fett will go far.

One of the other hunters Boba Fett and Bossk worked with was Aurra Sing, a sneering assassin and a tireless hunter of Jedi. She was a humanoid female with a ghastly pallor, unusually long fingers, and a penchant for collecting the lightsabers of the Jedi she killed. Rumor has it she was once a Jedi herself, but I can confirm only that she was responsible for the deaths of several. She made quite an impression on me.

Boba and Bossk broke out of prison along with the Duros bounty hunter Cad Bane. Bane's name popped up with some frequency in HoloNet News reports during the Clone Wars, prompting more than one reporter to ask me whether I'd dealt with Cad Bane. My standard response was "No comment." You see, Bane's assignments had brought him into numerous confrontations with the Jedi Order, which made him widely regarded as an outlaw. To admit any connection with Bane was to invite trouble. But thanks to Emperor Palpatine, everyone is now aware that the Jedi were hardly the noble peacekeepers they claimed to be, and it would be an understatement to say the popular perception of Bane has changed. Now when asked



about Bane, I readily admit, "Yes, I dealt with him."

We first ran into each other before the Clone Wars. I'd received reports from Guild members who indicated that an unidentified independent hunter had claimed at least three Guild-contracted bounties, possibly more, in the Expansion Region. After I recovered from my outrage, I noticed the three bounties had a few things in common. All had been posted by the Hutt Cartel more than a year earlier. The acquisitions had been as dangerous as they'd been elusive. One had taken the lives of two Guild hunters before the independent got him.

The independent had been remarkably discreet in his dealings with the Hutts, but I soon identified him as Cad Bane, and arranged a meeting with him on Ord Mantell. Although I was dismayed by his reluctance to join the Guild, at least we agreed on one thing: We would stay out of each other's way.

Bane used various non-Guild bounty hunters as backup during the Clone Wars. His accomplices included many whose acquaintance I have made.

Besides Aurra Sing, there was the Patrolian saboteur and demolitions expert Robonino, the Weequay Shahan Alama (a nasty piece of work), and the Clawdite Cato Parasitti. Bane also utilized droids, including IG-86 sentinels and a techno-service droid designated Todo

360. Most learned the hard way that Bane wasn't in prison, Bane told me Cradosk tried to trap and kill him but failed. Claimed he could have killed Cradosk, but didn't for "professional reasons." BB-BA

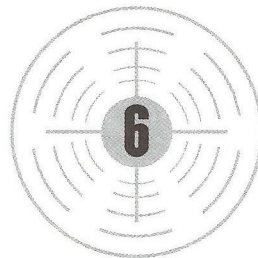


remarkably loyal, that he seemed to regard most of his accomplices as expendable.

And that brings us to what really separates the independent hunters from Guild members: Loyalty. The Guild is not merely a well-organized gang of dangerous and highly skilled hunters and killers. The Guild is a brotherhood. Would I claim an acquisition that rightfully belonged to another? No. Turn my back on a Guild hunter in need of assistance? Never. Devour a Guild hunter who displeased me? It's been known to happen, but only after grave consideration. As an example to others.

Am I suggesting that all non-Guild hunters are incapable of loyalty and professionalism? Hardly. Again, I cite Jango Fett as an example. Jango was as professional in his work as he was loyal to his son. If you think I praise him too much, consider his legacy. Without Jango, there never would have been an army to save the galaxy from the threat of the Jedi Order.

And remember that he wasn't an ordinary man. He was a bounty hunter.



WATCH YOURSELF

Because my life and work are doubtless more interesting than yours, I trust you've enjoyed reading my book. By allowing this glimpse into the life of one of the galaxy's greatest bounty hunters, I've given you plenty to dream about. It's only natural you'd feel grateful. You may even think you now know me on some level, that if you and I were to meet socially, we might get along, and even become friends.

Don't get any ideas.

If someone posted a legitimate bounty and wanted you delivered alive to the far side of the galaxy, you'd be on your way there right now wearing a pair of energy binders. If the bounty was for your death, and neatness didn't count, your brains, or whatever you have that passes for such, would already be vaporized



or spattered all over the walls.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You think your distance from me keeps you safe, still alive, still conscious, still reading. Maybe you've never broken any laws, or maybe you did, but you doubt anyone knows about it. Maybe it's hard for you to imagine that anyone wants you dead, let alone that they would pay someone like me to do the job. You're certain that I couldn't touch you, not where you are now.

Then let me ask...

Before you turned back the cover to this book, before you even *touched* this book, did you thoroughly inspect it? Run it through scanners to classify its molecular content and check for any energy emissions? Determine exactly where the book came from, who might have touched it, and how it arrived in your possession? Deploy a droid you programmed yourself to open it from a safe distance? And because some concealed explosives are particularly sensitive and engineered for specific targets, did you also make sure that your enlisted droid's metal fingertips were coated with minute samples of genetic material from your own body?

Now, tell me the truth. Did you do those things? *Any* of them? And even if you did, would you allow the possibility that I know, oh, maybe 50 other ways to use a book to deliver death from afar? I've already mentioned



explosives, but how about exotic poisons? While you're thinking about that, you should put this book down for a moment and examine your hands, which might be itching by now. Notice any discoloration?

Made you look.



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