

T'kal Ek-thok's story

T'kal laid one of his clawed hands on the rudimentary weapon before him, and slowly and precisely began to take it apart, bit by bit, bolt by bolt, to understand what secrets it may hold.

Certainly, it would prove itself to be bereft of any secrets at all, but his Elders tasked him to do so anyways, for, as they said, the soft meats' prime strength were their sharp minds: to understand them, he'd need to understand their weapons first. "*What is there to understand about this un-elegant piece of scrap?*" he said as he continued with his task, removing the weapon's pumping mechanism.

Yes, it had wounded him, even gave him a scar on his lower abdomen that he'd more than likely flaunt and be proud of, but it still was just that, a piece of scrap, one that paled in comparison to his Clan's, and his race's, sacred weaponry.

The Yautja closed his eyes and let out a sound that might've been a sigh, had he been a human. The Elders told him to focus on his memory of the battle, to learn a lesson he'd carry with him until the day of his glorious death: and so, he delved and savoured every part of that recollection.

Rocky hills, orange sand. The sound of moving water: a river, its currents stained in red and yellow blood; serpents and humans, fighting, for what exactly he did not care to know. His focus had been another, then: one of the humans, falling back after its pack had been wiped out by four great rkas.

A coward, he had thought at first; then, the soft meat, ambushed by another, silent rkas, had fought like a cornered animal, finally killing off the serpent after a brutal struggle. "*A worthy soft-meat to hunt, it seems*" he had told himself as he drew closer to the human, disengaging his cloak and bellowing a roar in challenge.

Sword and shield had been his weapons that day, and the blade had been of his own make: it was a curved, sharp and fearsome weapon, one he had been proud of, yet one that had remained untested, until this day.

He remembered how he had dashed forward, shield at his side, to give his prey a fighting chance, the blade's tip pointed right at his target. A burst of

gunfire ricocheted off of his shoulder pad, then one bullet had grazed his neck; he closed in and delivered a quick downwards strike that would've bisected his prey's face in half, had it not jerked backwards suddenly, firing off another burst from his rifle, this time striking T'kal right in the chest: some of the bullets were deflected by his chestpiece, others broke his skin and went deep, causing green blood to ooze out of the wounds.

With another roar, the hunter raised his shield and delivered a quick bash to his prey's chest, throwing him off balance and making him stumble backwards. It was a short respite, however, as the human, having let out a pained wheeze, trained his weapon on him again.

A less accurate hail of gunfire impacted with his clan shield, the rounds either embedding themselves into it or being simply deflected away. "*Just as soft as the others, it seems*" T'kal said in his clicking tongue, feinting another downwards strike, turning it into a fast thrust forward just at the last moment.

It had been far too quick for his prey to anticipate, naturally, and the human found itself on the ground, one of his eyes having been poked out by the unfathomably sharp Yautja blade. "**Die**" he vocalized with his translator as he let go of the sword and stabbed the man through his abdomen with the wrist-blades extending from his bracer.

The human let out a shout, one that turned into a pained gurgle; yet, he gave T'kal an almost smug, confident and bloody grin. "Yeah, you too, bastard" was what the Yautja managed to make out of his prey's whisper, just as searing pain shot through his body, followed by a muffled **BANG**.

T'kal let go of the now lifeless human, and stumbled backwards, his lower abdomen perforated by a myriad of holes, sharp metallic darts embedded deep within his body. With one final defiant act, his prey had drawn a curiously shaped gun, composed in part of wood, which now laid on the sand next to him.

The hunter fell to one knee, hissing in pain as he bled onto the ground below him; had he been able to grit his teeth, he'd have done so, reaching into his medi-comp for a crystal containing the sacred serum. "*No bones broken. Substantial bleeding.. missed vitals by a quill's breath*" he clicked out with something that sounded like begrudging respect, having inspected the rapidly clotting wound and found the most optimal insertion site.

Having injected himself as quickly as he could, he rose to his feet, bellowing triumphantly: only the claiming of trophies and shrapnel removal were left, now.

He opened his eyes again, brought to the present as that fond memory ended. Only the secrets of the weapon now remained, whatever they might be; no matter how simple it may have looked to him, he'd heed the advice of his Elders. It had managed to wound him grievously, after all: maybe, in all its simplicity, it was hiding something ones wiser than him had already gleaned.