

The sound of metal being heated and forged into an elegant piece echoed across the empty forge room. A voice spoke,

"Zu, I bestow upon you this knife that you shall use in your time of need; never forget your clan and your family is the most important lesson you will learn about."

The voice died down while *Tha'Zu-Ri* looked at the knife his father forged for him and vowed to use it in his time of need. After that, Tha walked with his father to train and prepare for his bloodying ceremony in the centuries to come.

Centuries later, after training for what seemed an eternity, Tha was finally of age to complete his bloodying ceremony. As he stepped onto the ship that would transport him to either his grave or victory, he held the knife his father forged for him so many centuries ago and remembered what his father said so long ago.

The shuttle landed, the doors slammed open, and a loud voice erupted.

**“GO RETRIEVE WHAT BELONGS TO US,
RECORD, AND KILL WHAT THE LAST
UNBLOODED FAILED TO DO.”**

With those words uttered, Tha ran out, beginning his hunt for a creature that managed to kill another unblooded. Tha ran further and further into the jungle before stumbling across some footprints. He instantly took out his journal, drawing massive feet with presumably sharp claws. As soon as he scribbled that down, he heard a fearsome roar from the cave. Tha instantly suspected that the cave would be where the last unblooded failed his ceremony. Tha dashed over, avoiding anything that could make a sound. He began to enter the cave, seeing blood covering the walls and floors of the cave, and so he spotted the dead Yautja with his bracers still intact. Tha tried to grab them and run out of the cave, but in the shadows, the serpent appeared, looming around 6 feet. Its hide was red with blood-stained claws, and it stood bruised, bleeding in

some parts, but still watching how Tha moved and prepared for battle.

Tha instantly roared out.

I AM NOT AFRAID OF YOU, SERPENT. YOUR ICHOR WILL MAKE A FINE SALVE FOR MY WOUNDS!

Tha charged the serpent with ferocity. Tha struck the red serpent in the arm with his spear, luckily breaking the serpent's bones, revealing it to be not made up of a modular skeleton system but made up of one exoskeleton inside its body. Luckily, Tha managed to get a strike off on the serpent's claw, rendering it useless. As he tried to leap back, the serpent got a lucky strike, rendering his spear useless and in two parts, the metal tip and wooden grip and unlucky, the red serpent managed to puncture Tha's arm, spilling some green blood on its claw and, as he staggered back in pain Tha managed to grab the broken spearhead from the floor with some green blood on it and impale the other serpent's claw to the cave wall. With the red serpent knowing its time was drawing near, it tried to crush Tha's head with its jaw and inner jaw; it almost succeeded

before Tha remembered his father's knife that he had given to him. Tha instinctively pulled the knife out, jamming it between the serpent's jaw, not allowing it to close its jaw before roaring out.

GOOD TRY, SERPENT. YOU WILL MAKE A FINE TROPHY IN MY QUARTERS

Tha, with his other damaged arm, punched the red serpent's jaw, breaking it before taking out the knife and stabbing it into the head of the serpent. Falling back a bit, Tha pulled out some simple medication leaves, saps, and lichen which he collected while going to the cave and using the serpent's blood as an improvised cautery. He then begins to draw and log what he managed to kill and write speculation on how that serpent appeared and how these red serpents fight:

These red serpents are more ferocious than the ones aboard our ship. They seem to not care about the wounds inflicted on them and continue to fight to their last drop of blood. I suspect their queen is somewhere further into this cave.

As Tha stepped over to the body of the Yautja, he instantly began to look for the bracers, but seemingly they were missing, replaced with a fake set of bracers

made out of leather and metal. He began to look for clues while being attentive if another Serpent crawled out of the cave and tried to fight him. As soon as he began to search, he found an empty bullet casing, but he didn't instantly conclude anything. He continued to search for more evidence of **PRIMATE** activity and find out if they had stolen the sacred Yautja gear. He continued to search around the cave and found a message in red blood reading, "Ran back to camp... These bugs ar- yet, but the dead primitive wasn't fast enough to write the last bit of his message. And so Tha decided to take a break inside the cave. It was a cold *guan*, and the stars looked so beautiful. He looked up at the stars and began to draw familiar constellations that his father had taught him so many eons ago. Maybe they would help him in finding out where the primitives had gone. And so he sat in the damp, dark cave, resting until dawn broke. But while waiting, he continued to write and draw the constellations in his journal. Making sure to log his fight with the red serpent. Deciding to close his eyes and get some rest to continue his hunt tomorrow.

As dawn broke, Tha awoke and noticed weird sounds coming from outside. He decided to peek out and get onto higher ground to observe. He noticed some of the serpents had formed a hunting party and were heading in one direction, so Tha decided to follow them and see where they were going from his *hult'ah*. The serpents led him to a research camp where he suspected the primitives had maybe taken the bracers. But Tha didn't instantly rush in and take the bracers; he continued to observe and see if any prey was skilled or cunning inside this research outpost. So he watched and waited until noon, still watching as most of the primitives had unsuccessfully died to the serpents, but it was getting boring to watch and wait for something to happen. Then he decided to look up at the sky and just wish one day that he could explore the stars by himself so that he could record stories like his father, and elders taught him to do when he was still a pup. But his mind couldn't wander too far; he still had to complete his task and finally become a blooded Yautja, so Tha decided to finally come down and see if there were any primitive survivors of the serpent's attack. He felt something wrap around his legs and watched a knife fly straight to his face, but managing to dodge it, he said to himself,

“A dhi'rauta? HERE? Well. This hunt may have just gotten interesting.”

Tha continued to search around the research outpost, finding some dead serpent bodies and some primitive bodies, and suddenly he heard a scream,

“FUCK YA WAITING FOR YA DAMN BUGS,”

coming from the other room. Tha decided to observe if this was the cunning one, and it turned out. It was the one who had set up numerous traps around the outpost designed to take the serpent out now. The “trapper” was marked for the hunt, yet Tha didn’t instantly wish to kill him. He valued this prey as a ***“smart one,”*** he said to himself, not as the other primitives who tried to brute force their way through the bugs. And Tha decided to continue to search for the bracers, but still keep in mind that “smart” primitive. He entered a room with surgical instruments, a dead serpent’s body on an operating table, and nothing else except tools and screens. Tha didn’t care about anything except his task and the stars leading him closer to his life goal. He continued to search around the outpost, finding more rooms, some empty, some with dead human bodies, flora, and even more serpent bodies. The primitives did decide to go on

their little hunt a while ago. And there it was, the bracers sitting atop a mannequin, almost imitating where it would go on a human. But as soon as Tha took off at the mannequin, a large piece of wood came crashing down from behind him, knocking him into the mannequin. And making him fall onto some large pieces of rebar. Fortunately, the rebar only hit one of his arms. Tha was annoyed yet knew that the primitive was cunning with his traps and trickery. But Tha's task was complete; he secured the unblooded Yautja's bracer. Still, he wished to fight or at least take a piece of the "smart" prey who made him spill some blood. Managing to tend his wounds with the red serpent's blood and some leaves. And so he made his way over to the cunning primitive, wishing to meet him face to face. But as soon as he walks over to the corridor, he instantly gets shot at while hearing the primitive say,

**"I'M NOT THAT STUPID; I KNOW NO ONE ELSE
SURVIVED HERE, SO YOU EITHER GOTTA BE
RESCUE OR A GODDAMN BUG!"**

Yet, Tha didn't care about the bullets zipping past him; all he cared about was meeting this "trapper." To take something from a prey he values, he decided to sneak

around the room and use a backdoor the prey forgot to trap. Yet it was silent, and the primitive didn't move from his original spot. Tha suspected a trap, but maybe it was just a false alarm. So Tha decided to pry open the door, not caring about what would happen. And instantly, a serpent's body dropped down on some hook. *Was the dead serpent's body meant to scare him? Was that meant to make him run?* Tha didn't know if it was a joke or an attempt to scare him, so he laughed, getting the attention of the primitive, who instantly turned to the other side as he got startled by the 6'8" hulking creatures. Yet primitive didn't instantly shoot at Tha; it stared at him, wondering why it was here. Yet, Tha introduced himself through some broken translations of their language.

T#ERE I% THA& C@EA&UR^!.

The primitive “*trapper*” was instantly spooked, throwing a knife into Tha's shoulder, but Tha just ripped it out and dropped it on the floor. While pushing the hanging serpent's body and walking over to the now scared primitive, picking him up by the throat while staring at his eyes, Tha throws the cunning primitive across the room

and decides to leave, not before taking an empty bullet casing from the floor and pocketing it.

While walking to the ship, Tha decided to write in his journal.

“My task is complete. I got the bracers and some trophies to put up in my room. I'll finally be able to roam the stars and record battles and tales about my successes and failures.”

After closing his journal, Tha rested for a bit outside, watching the night sky, taking one last look at the research outpost, and then heading to the shuttle, preparing to present the bracers to the elder Yautja. But while walking to the shuttle, he began to draw and write more about the red serpent, describing it in detail, its fighting technique, and anything useful to fight another one. Zu walked up to the shuttle, presenting the bracers and claw to the elders.

A voice spoke out.

“Good work, Tha’Zu-Ri. You have done your duty to your clan and completed your task. I ask you to deliver any information about the

serpents to our shaman after you tend your wounds.”

Hearing those words, Zu stepped onto the shuttle, took a seat, and looked at his now blood-coated father's knife. Remembering those words he uttered so long ago, he clung to them and began to think about his future and what kind of stories he could tell and log.

As *Tha’Zu-Ri* stepped off the shuttle landing pad, finally allowed to be at the upper level of the ship and not the dark, damp living quarters that were below the ship for the youngbloods, he began to look around, trying to remember where their medical bay was. He bumped into the ship's shaman accidentally while entering

“Ah, shaman, excuse me for the intrusion, but.. I wish for my wounds to be fully tended and to relay some information about the serpents.”

As the shaman began to tend to Tha's wounds, he nodded, saying

“I will listen even if that elder is a bit cocky with his way of teaching you and how he decides to withhold information from me at least you don’t plan to.”

Tha began to think, do elders withhold information from other members of the same clan, not caring if it hurts them or themselves? While thinking about that idea, Tha noticed that the shaman was preparing a blend of spices for him to drink. While he was looking, he didn’t notice that his journal was missing and was on the table next to the shaman, reading about Tha’s *chiva* and about the serpents that he found on the planet.

“More... ferocious, you say? Did they have any mutations or abilities when you encountered them?”

Tha nodded, recounting an interaction with a blood-red serpent he had fought and killed with the help of his father's knife and how it didn’t go down even after its arm was broken.

“So it is true... one of our ships crashed there since there isn’t any recorded instance of there

being those kinds of serpents roaming on a planet. I would ask you to present any samples you have of the serpent, it would... help me a lot.”

Tha did comply since the shaman was an elder who was mostly respected by every blooded member, more or less, the *elders* didn't like him very much, spinning tales of him doing dark and twisted rituals on youngbloods. Yet *Tha'Zu-Ri*, or... or now known as ***Tha'Zu-Cnaw***, did ask the shaman,

“One of our ships? How would that even happen? It's not like a bunch of prey had usable ships to take one of ours out and steal our history... OUR stories.”

Yet the shaman didn't answer... out of fear? Out of pity? But that's a story for another day...