**PRT Taranae Rhode (Sith) /** [**House Plagueis**](https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/units/190)

CF

{SA: DPE - DPV}

Event Fiction - Taranae Rhode #13721

The lone ship slowed as it reached its destination, the pilot opening comms as it came to a halt in orbit around the planet below.

‘Master, I have arrived. Should I immediately begin?’

A tall, dark figure in a black cloak spoke with a harsh rasp, sounding as if breathing was troublesome to it. A voice replied, somewhat more normally but with a little static from the unit.

‘Yes, begin your search immediately. Our sources confirm that he is on the planet - this seems to be his home. And if anyone gets in the way of your task, eliminate them.’

‘But what of the family Master; do they fall into the same category?’

‘Yes, I doubt you will have any trouble from the young ones. As for his spouse, deal with her accordingly if she does not co-operate.’

The figure bowed it’s head to the holographic figure

‘As you command, my Master.’

The holocom clicked and the figure disappeared as it blinked out and the figure grasped the controls, moving the ship forwards towards the atmosphere of Naboo, picking up speed as it entered the gravitational field.

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Glorious. The only way the weather could have been described on Naboo was glorious. The sun beat down as animal and sentient alike tried to stay out of the sweltering heat and in the shadows where the temperature was still high and their garments stuck to them moistly. Even the weather, though, could not distract the market traders from setting up their wares on any surface they could find, be it a stall, a small shelf across two pieces of stone or otherwise. A Klatooinian shouted in his native tongue for all to come buy his beautiful fruits while a Twi’lek sold her skins across the way.

 Genarous Rhode strode along the cobbled street like a man with a purpose, ever darting his eyes around the marketplace, taking in lots of information. The markets were not places to be caught off your guard recently, and with the visit he had received of late he did not want his dismissing of the visitors to have any negative drawbacks. And so it was that he watched every corner and dark area just to be sure. Two girls followed behind, animatedly talking with one another about what to spend their credits on, occasionally dashing off to one of the stalls ooh-ing and ahh-ing at what the merchant had to offer. The youngest girl, Vanessa, was caught up in one of the stall-holders’ stories of how he escaped three fighters whilst trying to get his wares to this planet as her sister dragged her away.

‘Hey no fair!’ she screamed at her sister.

‘You know Father says we have to stick together Nessa,’ replied Taranae ‘I know those things are lovely and the story was great, but if we go to a stall Father says he HAS to be with us - you understand?’

Vanessa nodded, a sour expression on her face and her head bowed. Taranae smiled at her and gave her a playful punch on her shoulder.

‘Hey you never know, Father may play a few games of Pazaak with us later - maybe he’ll let you win - *Again*!’

‘Hey you know he cheats!’ she retorted, obviously offended.

‘Maybe he does, maybe he doesn’t.’ she replied ‘Or maybe you’re just not too good at the game so he has to let you win to….’ and she pursed her lips and said in a mock tone and silly voice.’stop your siwwy wikkle tantwums!’

With that, Vanessa finally snapped and punched Taranae hard on the arm. ‘*I hate you sometimes Tara*!’ she screamed, as all heads turned their way, including their father’s. Taranae held Vanessa at arm’s length as she flailed with her arms, trying to reach her.

‘How many times have I told you girls NOT to do this in public?’ he hissed at them.

‘*She started it*!’ screamed Vanessa.

‘I don’t care who…….’ then he just stopped in mid-sentence.

‘Girls, see that door over there? Go inside and don’t come out till I give you the all clear, do you understand?’ The girls stared at him, dumbstruck. ‘GO - NOW!’ he shouted as a figure dropped from above one of the buildings where a Jawa had set up stall, selling robotic parts. The Jawa screamed and ran, leaving his stall in the process and everyone looked his way - to see a figure in a black cloak walking along the road toward Genarous.

Everyone panicked and ran - it seems they all knew what it was that Genarous now faced and wanted to be no part of it, lest they incur the wrath of the Dark Side.

Taranae grabbed Vanessa by the arm and pulled her into the cover of the building where they crouched behind the door as the house owner came running over.

‘Hey what do you think you’re doing in my….’ he gaped as he saw the scene unfold outside and ran, a gibbering wreck, into the rear of the house where Taranae heard a door slam loudly.

The Sith walked calmly along the road toward Genarous and spoke, his voice like gravel.

‘I hear you have had numerous visits from the Jedi, old man.’

‘I don’t see how that concerns you.’ Genarous replied, faking Bravado as he knew he was faced with one of the republic’s most feared enemies.

‘Ah but it does,’ replied the Sith ‘You chose not to go with them and be trained in the force. Such inherent force ability should not go to waste and would be better placed with us.’

‘I have no intention of being trained, by any party!’ he replied, his ire now raised ‘I didn’t go with them and I won’t go with you! I desire not to be trained by any! I didn’t even want this!’ he gestured at himself.

‘You must choose, for if you do not and you choose the Jedi, I will be forced to take matters into my own hands for the good of the Sith.’

Genarous stepped back slightly and drew out a vibroblade from under his clothing. The Sith laughed a deep, hollow laugh - enough to chill the bone to the marrow.

‘You expect to best me with that? *I am Sith*!’ and with that he drew from his cloak a lightsaber and is it’s blade flared to a brilliant red, Genarous charged. The battle lasted only seconds as his first blow was blocked by the Sith’s blade, and as he stumbled on, the Sith turned to the side, letting Genarous’ momentum carry him forward and he brought the lightsaber down across his back.

Vanessa would have screamed if it was not for Taranae’s hand across her mouth, but Taranae was crying uncontrollably as she tried to keep her sister from giving away their hiding place. She gasped as the door at the rear of the room opened and the occupant beckoned them inside. They rushed across, keeping low, and ducked through the door which the man promptly shut.

‘Go out the back,’ he said ‘*Go* and *run* as fast as you can! Get home quickly!’

The girls ran - ran as fast as their legs would carry them…. Straight into the waiting arms of the Sith. He grinned, raised his lightsaber and swung…..

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Taranae screamed as she woke, sweat pouring down her face and her bed soaked. She sat upright, gasping for breath as she heard hurried footsteps approaching. Her Mother burst into the room.

‘Taranae what’s wrong? Did you dream again?’

Taranae nodded, her face flushed and heart beating as though it was trying to burst from her chest.

‘Oh dear,’ her Mother said, walking over and sitting on the bed. She held out her arms and Taranae collapsed into them sobbing.

‘It will pass love. It will get better over time. We all miss him as does your sister.’

‘Mother I’m scared - I am beginning to feel things, th...things around me. I can feel them in my head! Is this what Father was talking to you about that night?’

‘Yes dear it’s called the Force and your father was especially sensitive to it. He had hoped that it wouldn’t have passed to either of you but it seems you are sensitive too. He was visited by Jedi, wanting to take him to be trained in the ways of The Force but he refused, saying he wanted no part of it - no part in their wars. That is why he was hunted down and slain by the Sith. Because he would not join them, they didn’t want him to finally side with the Jedi, so they killed him.’

She sighed then, looking well over her 50 years of age.

‘Mother, I have to find out more about the Force, I don’t want to lose my life just because I won’t decide on who to train me. I’m of a good age now, I can look after myself and I need to go out and discover more about it. Maybe then my nightmares will stop.’ She broke into fits of sobbing as her mother consoled her, stroking her red hair back off her forehead and whispering quiet words as she lulled her daughter back to sleep.

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As she awoke, Taranae felt strange - It was as if she sensed something…. but was unable to tell what it might be. She felt pulled taut as if she was being pulled by some invisible force and she turned to look in the direction of the pull. The roof was all she saw, and she figured that she was sensing something not on Naboo, but elsewhere in the galaxy. Maybe it could even be coming from the fleets above - but she knew she had to find out for herself. She rose, dressed and went for breakfast.

As all three sat at the table, she decided it was time to tell of her plans.

‘I want to travel.’ she blurted

Her Mother and Vanessa stared, open mouthed.

‘Why would you want to do that Tara?’ her mother asked, a little overwhelmed by the sudden break in silence.

‘As I said last night, I want to learn more about The Force and I have a feeling…. like I’m being pulled.. Mother, I just have to go - I have to do this and find out for myself!’

‘There is war right now Taranae!’ (Taranae knew her Mother was angry now, she always used her full name in this context when she was getting angry at her).

‘There is no way I will let one of my daughters head into space alone when there is a war ongoing, training or no training!’

Her voice softened ‘I know this has to do with your Father Tara but please, reconsider. You could be killed before you even reach the edge of the system.’ - A warm hand on her leg. ‘You will have time for that, love.’

Taranae nodded sadly, she had to play this well - she had no intention of staying on Naboo even after what her Mother had said. She was old enough now at 26 years of age and had been taught how to fly when she joined the republic, shipping items up and down to the fleets in space near the planet. If she could get a hold of a small ship under the pretense of delivering cargo, she would be able to find her own way out of the system.

‘Alright Mother,’ she said ‘I won’t head out further than the fleets.’ she put on a hurt face to lend her act more credibility and her mother smiled.

‘Good girl,’ she said ‘Now tidy up the table for me while I go get the washing.’ With that she made her excuses and rose from the table, heading outside.

‘You’re really going to go aren’t you?’ asked Vanessa quietly.

‘Yes Nessa, I am,’ she replied ‘but I know you won’t tell Mother will you? As this is for father’s sake.’

‘I promise sis.’ Said Nessa. She was 24 years old now and capable of looking after herself and her Mother. Her long, golden hair and angelic face really hid well the fiery temperament underneath. Taranae smiled and hoped that Vanessa had picked that up from her, as her temper was just as bad - although at least her fiery red hair stated the fact. If you messed with Taranae you had better be a fast thinker or find yourself on the end of a bolt from a DL-44, her favoured weapon.

Taranae kissed Vanessa on the cheek

 ‘Take care of Mother, sis. I don’t know when, but I’ll be back.’

Vanessa nodded, her face set in a determined look, and Taranae left quietly.

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Outside was hazy, the sun trying to break through a thin veil of clouds that hung in the sky. Taranae jumped into her speeder and set off in the direction of the starport, hoping to get a consignment to ship to the fleet. She thought as she sped along that her best plan would be to deliver the cargo first, then on her return journey, head out. The trip would probably be a long one if what she was feeling didn’t lead her to the fleets but instead further into space and she knew that she would probably be safe during the jump, but had no idea what to expect as she dropped out of hyper. As she approached the entrance to the starport, she was greeted by her friend, Muse - a slim Twi’lek who smiled and waved at her from the steps. Taranae pulled alongside and stepped out of the speeder, reaching back into the seat for her dual DL-44 blasters which she always carried during these trips. More than once pirates had tried to steal her cargo and thus far she had been successful in holding them off. She hoped this time, there would be no interference.

‘Ok Tara,’ chirped Muse ‘You come for another drop?’

‘Sure have, Muse!’ she grinned ‘Anything going up?’

‘Yeah we got a couple of small ones waiting in the docks - you need any company this time around?’

Taranae thought about this carefully - the company would be nice, but the less people who knew of her intentions the better. And she knew Muse was likely to try to talk her out of the course of action she was embarking on.

 ‘Nah I’m fine for now Muse,’ she replied ‘I got a couple of things to do that would just bore you to tears, so I’ll take it myself today.’

 ‘Ok Tara, your loss!’ she giggled as she walked away, shaking her head as she disappeared into a small grey building off the main starport. Taranae hated deceiving her best friend this way and instantly regretted it. She shook herself mentally and mounted the steps to the starport, knowing that she had to leave quickly before her resolve faltered.

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 The smell of oil hit Taranae as she walked in through the entrance to the starport, the engineers working diligently on the tasks they had each been assigned in their respective bays. The numerous ship sat idly, awaiting their payloads, their cargo or their crews, looking like they belonged together in a huge spaceship graveyard. None were moving right now - an indication that not much was moving off-planet today. Taranae thanked her lucky stars that she had a shipment, albeit a small one, to take up out of the atmosphere to the waiting ships in orbit around the planet. She headed toward the ship she was assigned on joining this little operation, the *Stensar*. The battered YV-2400 stood as testament to the close scrapes Taranae had been in whilst on various delivery duties in orbit. Many had tried to take her on and grab her precious cargo, but she had learned how to cope with the pirates long ago, and was proud to have taken out quite a few - some of which she had even collected small rewards for either destroying or putting out of commission. Yes, she had become a skilled pilot whilst in the service of the republic, but her real ambition was to leave Naboo and explore further into the system. She had seen all the differing species on Naboo and wondered what their home planets were like, what kinds of things they had to endure in their lives.

Lost in her reverie, she hardly noticed when an engineer tapped her on the arm, her hands automatically reaching to her belt for her blasters. She halted when she saw his shocked face.

 ‘I’m sorry Den’ar,r’ she said tho the Togruta, holding up her hands in a show of misunderstanding. ‘I was daydreaming again.’

 ‘That’s ok,’ the Togruta smiled meekly, ‘It’s not the first time and probably won’t be the last time you almost blow my head off, Miss.’

 Taranae mentally berated herself for reacting so foolishly and snapped the fasteners back over the grips of her DL-44’s.

 ‘How is she?’ she asked ‘And is she loaded and fuelled?’

 ‘She is Miss, yes,’ said Den’arr, looking up at the ship ‘but take care with those thrusters. They seemed a little loose on the port side, but I’ve fixed them up and they should hold - just keep an eye on them.’

 ‘Thanks Den’arr,’ replied Taranae ‘The usual stuff for the fleet?’ she glanced at the other ships standing idly around, seemingly not even being prepped to fly.

 ‘Yes Miss, but not much on order today. Seems not many actually needed to turn up’

Taranae nodded as she climbed the ramp into the ship.

 ‘So I’m the only flight up there right now?’ she asked.

 ‘Yes Miss, be careful out there - there’s no-one to watch your back.’

 ‘Understood Den.’ she replied, continuing into the ship and hitting the panel to close the ramp for the voyage into orbit, knowing she wouldn’t be back anytime soon.

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 ‘Thanks Andorr.’ Taranae shouted to the back of the figure. Walking away slowly, he raised his hand in a salute without turning around and carried on, disappearing around a bulkhead seconds later.

 *Well that’s gratitude for you I suppose.* thought Taranae. She had just delivered the three small packages to the orbital station, only to be greeted by noncommittal grunts and the occasional *humph.* from the male Twi’lek who had offloaded her cargo and walked away. She sighed and climbed the ramp once more after checking that the port thruster was still holding in there and hit the panel, closing the hatch. She began walking to the cockpit as she felt the pull again - it wasn’t on the station…. She looked out of the viewport in the direction she felt the tug and saw only space.

 *So, whatever I’m feeling is out there somewhere.* she thought. She sat herself down in the luxurious padded chair she had fitted into the ship - as she relaxed, she sank into the upholstery and sighed. This was her favourite chair in all of the ships in their little fleet of courier ships. Once she had the ship assigned to her she went searching for just the right seating for the cockpit - if she was going to be flying, she wanted to be comfortable doing it. She had found the chair being sold by a Jawa in the Naboo markets and bought it immediately after trying it and sinking into it’s lush embrace.

 She tried doing what she had seen her Father do on numerous occasions and sat stock still, looking more like a statue than a living, breathing entity and she reached out with her mind…..

The pull was strong, and she sensed the direction and approximated the distance before snapping out of her trance-like state. Rising, she immediately consulted her start maps. She could find nothing at the centre of the area she had felt the pull from, but there was one planet nearby - a planet named Ziost.

If that was where this Force was pulling her, she knew she *had* to investigate. She felt that this was what destiny had in store for her- that whatever was on that planet was meant to change her life, and maybe, after this she wouldn’t be hunted like her Father. She punched in the co-ordinates, and guided the *Stensar* out of the hangar, swung the nose around to the correct heading and engaged hyperdrive. This was it - there was no turning back. Her ship would be reported as stolen and no-one would have any idea where it or its’ pilot was. She would bring it back, of course, but only after she faced what fate had in store for her somewhere out in the galaxy..

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 The *Stensar* dropped out of hyperspace quite a way from the planet, and Taranae could see ships in orbit of the planet Ziost. There were a large number of them present and she began a scan of the ships to see if she should report her codes. She gasped as the results flashed on her screen - they were Imperial Star Destroyers! The screens also gave a reading of many more smaller ships, obviously fighter escorts and she swung the ship’s nose as fast as she could. She had battled pirates in her own atmosphere and in orbit, but a whole fleet of Imperial origin was definitely no match for even her skills.

She pushed the controls to hit full forward speed - and the sound of an ear-splitting explosion washed across her eardrums from the rear of the ship. A large cloud of smoke followed and the ship slowed to a halt.

 Cursing under her breath, Taranae had an idea what had happened. From the hatch where she could see the smoke pouring from, a small fire started and she jumped up and hit the emergency fire suppression system controls.A burst of gas issued from piping above the hatch and flooded the corridor behind, but the fire soon died and Taranae ducked into the hatch to confirm her suspicions. As she guessed, the thruster on the port side had blown completely and all that was left was a charred husk, smelling faintly of fuel. She checked just to make sure that no fuel was leaking from the blowout and to her relief found none, but she realised that the system was out in its’ entirety. She was adrift in space with no propulsion and an Imperial fleet sitting off her Starboard side - she was alone with no-one to turn to.

 ‘Unidentified ship state your destination and purpose.’

Taranae blinked - it could only be a ship from the fleet near the planet. Had they picked her up so soon?

 ‘Er, this is Taranae Rhode of the *Stensar*. I was headed to Ziost on a...a…..reconnaissance run?’

 ‘This is the Exar - what is your allegiance?’

 ‘Allegiance?’ This was not a question Tarnae expected to have to answer. The only times this was asked was…. where was it? A Warzone?? Taranae thought quickly. ‘I have no allegiance, I’m freelance.’ she replied. A moment of silence followed.

 ‘*Stensar*, you are to follow us to the planet surface. We have instructions to bring you to the unit commander on the surface’

 ‘I can’t follow,’ she replied. ‘My thrusters are out.’ Another silence.

 ‘Prepare to be boarded *Stensar* - we will have you towed via Tractor and you will be repaired before descending to the surface. Consider yourself under ship arrest until we land.’

 Taranae had no choice but to obey. She could not run and could not fight with the array of ships before her. she felt the tractor beams lock and her ship was slowly pulled toward the waiting fleet.

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 ‘Taranae Rhode, we have orders to arrest you and transport you to our commander of forces on the surface of Ziost.’ the guard told Taranae sternly.

 ‘On what charges??’ she screamed ‘I’ve done nothing except arrive here to find your ships in orbit above the planet!’

 ‘We found these,’ he said throwing her a pile of papers ‘on your ship as we were repairing your thrusters.’

 Taranae caught the papers in her hands, almost dropping them. With trembling fingers she read the print at the top of the page and almost fainted. *The manifests*! She had totally forgotten about the shipping manifests she had from the delivery to the orbital station around Naboo.

 ‘These say you have delivered cargo to an orbital station in Rebel space, therefore marking you as a conspirator to the Empire. You will be taken from here to the surface where your fate will be decided.’ the guard said. ‘You are lucky - normally the sentence for this crime is death, but someone on the surface wishes to meet you.’

 The guard motioned, beckoning to two others outside the door who promptly entered and took out stun cuffs, opening them and pushing them towards Taranae’s hands. One brought Taranae’s arms behind her back and snapped on the cuffs tightly, the cuffs digging painfully into her flesh and she was led through the hangar to a waiting transport shuttle. She was unceremoniously ushered onto the shuttle and forced into a seat, a blaster pointed at her all the while. Her two DL-44’s had been taken from her the moment her ship had reached the Star Destroyer and she had been boarded by armed guards and now she knew not what her fate would be as the shuttle left the hangar and began its’ descent to the surface.

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 Taranae was pushed out of the shuttle door by one of the burly guards, a blaster in the small of her back. The scene in front of her made her gasp - a battlefield, broken ships, gun emplacements and bodies could be seen everywhere. This is what Taranae had sensed - not the Force beckoning to her but a war. The war had taken its’ toll on the surface of Ziost - the bodies and scattered weapons strewn around, the metal remains of buildings, their steel skeletons stretching up to the sky like metal fingers in prayer to some God who never intervened. The scorched earth all around that Taranae wished had been campfires, with people happily sharing food or singing in merriment, but were in fact impact craters from huge projectiles which had hit with such immense force that most of the surrounding landscape had been decimated for hundreds of yards in all directions. She quaked in fear as she took in every minute detail of what had transpired here - the pain and suffering of the inhabitants, the sheer loss of life.

 Then she saw a sight that made her heart stop dead. A lone figure, his body twisted into unnatural shapes, his legs at strange angles which would not be possible in any form and the metal cylinder laid just by his body, his hand outstretched as if to reach it, that hand missing fingers also.

A Jedi. Her heart sank as she realised she was not a hostage that was to be rescued anytime soon. If a Jedi had fallen to the Empire, It meant only one thing could be on the surface to cause such carnage to the Jedi and his surroundings - There had to be Sith.

 As if in answer to her thoughts, a figure stepped around an outcropping, and looked her way with a puzzled look on his face. She remembered the name of his race being Chiss, a race of humanoids with blue skin and blood red eyes - The figure before her was no exception and as he stared right through her, she felt as if he saw her innermost thoughts, her very being.

 ‘Leave us.’ he commanded and the guards bowed in homage and retreated silently. The Chiss looked Taranae up and down finally declaring ‘The Force is strong in you. You will make an excellent apprentice’ With that he motioned at Taranae and jagged lightning arced at her from his fingertips. Taranae screamed as her body was wracked with a pain such as she had never endured before - her blood felt as if it were boiling in her veins, her skin seemed as if to blister, but to her disbelief, even though she seemed to burn within her skin seemed to be intact. He finally released his hold on Taranae and she collapsed, gasping. The pain subsided and through her tears and the sound of whistling in her ears she heard him say ‘I have felt your coming for some time Taranae. You see what power I wield - it would be futile for you to deny me what I ask. With me you could rise in power and destroy all who oppose you.’ he shocked her again.

 ‘And what is your other choice? Why I could kill you now as we stand talking and no-one would know different. So, what is your choice, little one? Will you join me in my crusade or will you die here, just another statistic of those dead by my hand here today?’

 He let Taranae drop, almost unconscious and stalked over to her, grabbing her chin and lifting her off her feet, staring into her face.

 ‘I asked a question and I demand an answer!’ he spat. ‘Do you join me or die?’

 ‘I..I...will… join you.’ Taranae managed to gasp, although the hand around her chin and neck was almost choking her.

 ‘You will call me *Master*!’ he spat. ‘I am *Sith* and you are my Apprentice! Together we will crush all who oppose us and I will show you power you never dreamed of!’

 ‘Yes…. M..m ...Master.’ she squealed, choking.

 ‘Good girl,’ he purred as she blacked out ‘Now you are mine and we will cut a swathe through the enemy in this, the Darkest of Crusades!’