

Tahiri: 1734 words

Preferred CS: <https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/14400/snapshots/1429/2827>

Ciara: 713 words

Preferred CS: <https://www.darkjedibrotherhood.com/members/359/snapshots/1372/2705>

“Reliquary”

Quadrant 4: East archipelago islands off the northern hemisphere mainland 10° off the Equator

This island where the two clans' summits had seen fit to send an exploratory party was the biggest in comparison to the other archipelago islands. The tall cliffs seemed to jut up and out over the water, as if in defiance of the surrounding ocean's immense power. Even as the sea's salty water slowly eats away at the base of the cliffs, the island stands against the ravages of time. Maybe there was a good solid base, or maybe it was due to the Dark Side energy that could be felt within the island itself.

Breathing deep the salt spray of the sea below, Tahiri stood looking out over the expansive ocean from her clifftop perch. Glancing over her shoulder as she heard the engines of another craft, she watched the Theta-class T-2c Shuttle of her new Naga Sadow partner as it touched down near her own transport. Turning away from the edge, the crimson skinned Togruta made her way down the rocky outcrop of a cliff, springing from rock to rock before flipping gracefully to stand near the landing area, awaiting her companion.

The Plagueian and Sadowan summits wanted their clan members to work together in different groups at different times. So when they wanted a two-member team to check out this particular site, Tahiri had immediately volunteered and asked to be paired with Ciara. Tahiri got her wish to be paired with the very person she wanted to learn more about. The Battlelord remembered looking through the dossiers of Naga Sadow's members and pausing on one particular member. *Warlord Ciara Tearnan Rothwell Tarentae*. The last name is what had given her pause. Tahiri had been one of the last members of Tarentum to receive the title name, thus she wanted to know more about this older member she knew next to nothing about.

This *hiss* of a ramp descending brought the Aedile back to the present. She watched as a tall, muscular woman descended. The human's lean form showed years of training and battle hardness.

“Greetings, I'm Tahiri Kahn Drakon Night-Thorn Di Morte Tarentae. You can just call me Tahiri.” Tahiri flashed her signature sharp, happy smile as she greeted Ciara cheerfully. She bowed slightly in respect. “It's an honor and pleasure to finally meet you. You're friends with Grandmaster Hades, right?”

Ciara paused for a moment as she took in the woman before her, seeming to try to reconcile her name with the cheery greeting she'd just received. Searching emerald eyes found the sulphuric

yellow of the Togruta's. Their familiar taint was evidence enough of the depth of the Dark Side within, but Ciara looked on a moment longer before finally inclining her own head in a show of respect to the fellow Tarentae.

"Tahiri Kahn Drakon Night-Thorn Di Morte ... Tarentae," Ciara repeated her full name, lingering on the last. "Your reputation precedes you, as well. I do call Battlelord Hades my friend, but a Grandmaster, he is not."

Tahiri laughed at the quizzically raised brow that accompanied the woman's statement.

"Not to you, maybe," the Sith Shadow smiled again. "But, to me, he is the Master of my Master, Battlemaster Wrathus."

"And that makes him ..." Ciara simply couldn't bring herself to say it.

"My Grandmaster," Tahiri completed the obvious answer with another grin.

It was Ciara's turn to smile. Her posture softened as her muscles relaxed and she stepped away from the shuttle to turn her eyes out over the sea.

"I am glad you've found a home for yourself with former Clansmen." Tahiri could tell the word 'former' stuck in the normally eloquent woman's throat the same way it did in hers. "Do you think our leaders intentionally assigned the two of us to a site like this?"

Tahiri appreciated the fact that her skin was as crimson as it was, so that Ciara couldn't see the heat the Togruta clearly felt rising in her cheeks. Instead, Tahiri shrugged and replied sincerely.

"Actually, I volunteered for coming to this site." Tahiri looked towards the sea before continuing. Her voice tone, sad at first, grew with intensity and ended with a bit of a growl at the last word. "I haven't been near an ocean since... since I saw Castle Tarentum fall, and Yridia being attacked by the Collective."

Ciara glanced at the Togruta. Though quite young yet, her eyes already spoke of the experiences and hardships she'd overcome. The layers of emotion in her voice as she spoke of a day Ciara had only seen in horrific visions resonated with the former Consul. She fell silent long enough to make Tahiri uncomfortable, then cut off her attempt at breaking the silence with a question of her own.

"Tarentum is not the first family you've had ripped from your arms, is it, Tahiri Drakon?"

Ciara closed her eyes and let the weight of the question fall where it may on the young Sith. She knew it might come as a knife twisted into an open wound, but there was power to be found in

pain, and the elder Tarentae felt an obligation to ensure Tarentum's heirs embraced every ounce.

The Togruta was a bit surprised by the question. She had not been expecting anything like that from the Warlord. Thinking about it, though, Tahiri felt it only wise to be truthful with Ciara.

"No, it's not. And it doesn't get any karking easier, either." After the short pause, Tahiri replied to Ciara's question, at first with sadness in her voice, then with a tone of viction.

"No, I imagine not." Ciara's shoulders rolled back and her chest rose with a deep breath that seemed to draw in more than just the sea air.

There was comfort in their shared pain. There was promise in their shared rage. There was power here. There was death here. And there was something in the water.

Tahiri's senses began to tingle - the Force alerting her to something. Forgetting her anger, she moved back towards the cliffs, where the sensation seemed to be emanating from. It felt primal, animalistic; however, it also seemed to radiate Dark Side energy.

"Be cautious, there's..." Ciara was cut off suddenly by a deep, immense, snarling growl that seemed to vibrate through the solid ground she stood on. The bronze-skinned woman quickly grabbed her saber, but did not ignite it, unsure as to what and where the threat was going to come from.

"Whoa, you're a big boy, now, aren't you?" Tahiri asked nonchalantly as she looked over the cliff edge to the water below. Ciara raised an inquisitive eyebrow as she moved to join Tahiri on the cliff's edge, but instead took a step back as the Togruta vaulted backwards away from the edge. In midair, Tahiri ignited her saber and crouched, her eyes focused on the clawed tentacle reaching over the edge, searching for something.

Emerald eyes narrowed on the first glimpse of the creature that rocked the island as Ciara ignited her lightsaber and drew the diamond sword from her back into her opposite hand.

The hooked claws on the black and green tentacle left slime and shallow furrows behind in the stone as it thrashed about a moment before withdrawing. Though its approach had not had the same effect, its path away from the cliff carved massive waves through the seas.

"Why didn't we see that before it was on us?" Ciara glanced at Tahiri briefly, but quickly returned her eyes to the retreating waves.

"I don't think it's completely natural." The Togruta never took her eyes off the beast, but the waves diminished and subsided, leaving no obvious trace of the creature. "I can sense the Dark Side at work inside it."

“Intriguing ... so it may have the ability to cloak itself until it wants to be seen.” Ciara’s tone couldn’t seem to decide if she was thrilled or concerned by the prospect. “And why did it leave?”

“I told it we weren’t the droids it was looking for,” Tahiri stood from her crouch with a grin, but kept her distance from the cliffs and her saber at the ready.

“Oh?” Ciara seemed at once pleased and skeptical of the answer. “I hadn’t realized I was in the presence of a beast whisperer. Did you practice your trade on Yridia’s sea life?”

Tahiri didn’t get a chance to answer.

A spray of broken rocks pelted the women as the creature returned and cleared its path with a sweep of its tentacles. Two clawed forearms seemed to climb and latch onto the cliff face, giving the Sith their first glimpse of its scaled head and four orange-red eyes.

The beast showed off its rows of sharp, jagged teeth. The foul breath from its maw swept over the pair as it roared. Catching sight of Ciara, its eyes seemed to glow with primal fury as it launched a slime-covered tentacle towards her. The Warlord leapt nimbly back a few steps while swiftly slicing in a scissor-like movement, cutting into the beast’s flesh. The swords cut through with ease. The soft, muscular flesh parted and greenish-black blood sprayed across the ground. The beast roared in pain as the injured tentacle retreated.

Tahiri whistled as she unsheathed her blacked out vibrosword and ignited her red saber, trying to get the creature’s attention. Two of the creature’s eyes focused on the lithe Togruta, its burning gaze drilling into her own sulfuric eyes. Two tentacles lashed out towards her, defensively, as the third tentacle swept towards Ciara. Dodging the tentacles, Tahiri made small slashes and slices into them, doing just enough damage to get the creature to think twice before attacking again.

However, the creature just kept coming and more aggressively. Its full attention turned towards Tahiri as she instinctively evaded its great clawed paw by leaping into a small, three meter wide circle of upright stones. The beast paused for a moment, stopping its own great paw from crushing the stone circle. Instead, it used its tentacles to try to get the tiny pest out of the circle. Tahiri dove out of the circle, leaping over and sliding under the tentacles, skidding to a stop next to Ciara.

“Ciara, I think the creature was made to protect something!” Tahiri yelled to be heard over the roar of the beast.

“Really? How do you know that?” Ciara glanced at the Togruta, then back at the beast.

“It’s more a feeling, I don’t fully know that,” Tahiri replied. “But I know how to find out if I’m right.”

Tahiri sheathed her vibroblade and extinguished her saber, stepping cautiously forward. She reached for the Force, letting it flow through her and engulf her senses. She closed her eyes and searched for the creature's mind, which wasn't hard to do, however, with all the emotions swirling around her, it took a moment to center herself on just the beast.

"What are you doing, Tahiri? Stay back!" Ciara shouted anxiously, half wondering if the Togruta was slightly mad.

"Don't worry, Ciara. I know what I'm doing. I've done this kind of thing before. Just stay back a bit and defend yourself if necessary," Tahiri quickly explained. Opening her eyes, the Battlelord strode confidently forward towards the creature, stopping just out of the reach of the beast's paw.

It feels threatened, for its life and for... An image flashed through Tahiri's mind. *A stone circle, dark figures, a stream of lightning, a ship leaving. One command, "Protect the altar from anybody and everybody, until my return."*

"So, you're just protecting something, aren't you, big guy?" Tahiri looked up at the creature.

The beast paused for a moment and then attacked, as if answering Tahiri's question. She let the Force flow through and into the beast, trying to calm its mind. But its mind rebelled, and Tahiri felt herself being lifted. The tip of a tentacle wrapped around her waist and lifted her off the ground. Tahiri was about to be flung into the creature's mouth, but then, as suddenly as she was picked up, Tahiri found herself falling to the ground, hitting the hard surface with a thud. Greenish black blood splattered across her face as she looked up and saw Ciara attacking the tentacles of the beast with her blades.

"Do you really know what you're doing? You almost got killed!" Ciara asked as she came to stand over Tahiri while she got up.

"The beast is definitely a laboratory creation. But it's really strong with the Force. I can't get it to calm down." Tahiri quickly filled Ciara in on the everything she had learned while they both dodged the swinging tentacles and the crushing power of its clawed paws.

"Hmmm, would suppressing its Force abilities help with getting control of it? Like you want?" Ciara asked as she swung at a tentacle that came a bit too close.

"Yes, I think that might just do the trick. Worth a shot," Tahiri replied excitedly. "Let's do this!"

Ciara and Tahiri split up. The Togruta took the cliff side, so that, if and when she got control of the beast, she could tell it to go back into the ocean.

Ciara waited until the beast had its attention on Tahiri, and then immersed herself in the Force as she began to suppress the beast's ability to use the Force. It spread like a blanket around the creature, making sure not to suppress Tahiri's abilities.

Tahiri saw the Warlord nod. Again, the Togruta opened herself to the Force and sent a calming feeling to the beast. Almost immediately, the effect could be seen in the beast, as it stopped roaring and thrashing about. As Tahiri approached the head of the creature, it sounded like it was purring, in a way.

Tahiri gently patted it before stepping aside to let the creature slip back into the ocean below.

"Well, that was interesting," Tahiri sighed and then laughed, flashing Ciara a smile as the Human joined her at the cliff's edge.

"Will it come back?" Ciara asked as she looked at the waves caused by the creature's descent.

"No. I told it we weren't here to harm it, and we were no danger to it." Tahiri turned and walked over to the circle altar. Looking at it a moment, Tahiri shot a quick burst of lightning at the center. The circle began to rise, and inside a little nook were three prism-shaped objects.

"These almost look like holocrons," Ciara picked one up curiously.

"Yeah, they do, don't they?" Tahiri picked the other two up and then bent over to pick up a rock.

"Well, what say you and I get back to the main land and report in? Maybe we can talk some more over a drink or two?" Tahiri asked.

"Sounds good to me."