

Combat Writing

Scenario : (4) Hive Mind Marines

The door clicked, then whooshed, as it opened. A female soldier turned from her task, shocked at the sound. A female of around her height sauntered nonchalantly through the door with a smirk on her face, her red hair bobbing around her shoulders as she spun a saberstaff hilt expertly like a baton in one hand.

The lights in the room were dim, but not enough that Taranae couldn't see that whatever the female was doing was wrong. Slight shadows cast on the floor showed that she was handling something pyramidal in shape, using the console as a table to examine it while lights blinked in mesmerising patterns below it.

"You're not one of ours," the Sith commented coldly as she raised her staff hilt and glanced at it as if not having a care in the world. "You must be Collective. Why are you here, and what are you doing?"

She kept a steady pace toward the Collective soldier all the while she spoke, slowly and menacingly as her black cloak billowed out behind her. The frown on her face showed that she was far from happy to find the woman here. Facing her, the woman fumbled around behind her back at the console she was at with a look of terror on her face. Swiftly and in one move, Taranae reached towards her belt and pulled out her DL-44 blaster.

"Nuh-uh," she said, clipping her saberstaff hilt back to her belt and waving one outstretched index finger from side to side as her weapon aimed directly at the woman's head. "You really don't want to be doing that, or that head of yours won't be able to hold its contents for too long. Trust me."

The woman halted and froze, obviously holding something in her hands. Suddenly, sounds of blaster fire sounded from behind the door through which the redhead had entered. Taranae stopped, cocked her head to one side as if listening to some internal conversation, and smiled.

"You really think I should do that? Okay, but it's on you if the floor needs cleaning, afterwards. Yeah. Yeah, I know it won't be you cleaning it, but you know what I mean."

A plethora of different expressions drifted across Taranae's face as she spoke, ranging from questioning to outright revulsion. The conversation must have been something to hear indeed.

As the cerebral conversation started, the woman started to grin as she heard the commotion outside. Taranae stopped and looked her directly in the eyes. Only now did she take in the female's garb. Some kind of soldier dressed in a Collective uniform, blonde hair cut to her shoulders and a blaster holstered on her hip that she hadn't reached for yet. No emblems on her uniform, so she must have been a rookie. The jacket was rumpled, too. She had been on

the *Nesolat* some time already, maybe even sneaking around in vents, judging by the dustiness on her clothing.

Staring like a mad woman, her eyes wide, the Sith snapped at her foe, "Fancy your chances then, missy? How fast can you pull a blaster, let alone aim and fire it, before I fire the one already in my hand?"

"You don't stand a chance!" the woman replied. "Those marines outside will make short work of you!"

The redhead cocked her head to one side again, listening to some inside conversation. She looked down. "No, my boots are NOT dusty." she lifted them experimentally as she looked at each one in turn. To her they shone. She always polished them to her best ability. "What? Oh, yes." She looked up and straightened her blaster arm again threateningly.

Then she started to shout. "In here!" she screamed. "I'm trapped by the Brotherhood!"

Taranae shrugged and turned. She fired one single blaster bolt at the door controls, sealing them shut. "Care to rethink that?" she quipped. Holstering her blaster, she again unclipped her staff hilt and advanced on the woman who was now shaking. A holocron dropped to the floor behind her, and she half bent to pick it up again.

"Tch-tch," Taranae tutted, pointing her hilt at the woman's head. "Leave it."

The woman nodded and rose as yelling came from outside the door. Taranae turned and stared at the door with a puzzled expression as sparks began to appear in the bottom corner. The room began to fill with smoke as the light from the sparks intensified. She was aware that a cutter was being used on the door to bypass any need for controls. She held her staff hilt by her side, rubbing her thumb up and down it as she thought. A movement from behind and a scream brought her back to reality and she activated the rear blade of her saberstaff. There was a grunt and a click as she deactivated it. The woman's body slumped to the floor, her blaster in her hand and a hole where the blade had pierced her chest. The body rested in a sitting up position against the console, with a small entry hole in the woman's chest.

"Right temperament, wrong in all other aspects," said Taranae to no-one in particular as a fiery line wormed its way around the door, creating a cut which she knew would soon lead to a breach by who or whatever was outside.

As she thought this, there was a crash and a cloud of dust as the durasteel door fell into the room and four figures rushed over the threshold. The room filled with debris and dust quickly, obscuring everything from sight. Taranae took her chance and leapt up, grabbing the roof vent grilles and pulling one downwards as she swung herself up into the crawl space. As the cloud

dissipated, the figures looked around them, searching for the cause of the distress. One crossed over to the female soldier and took off his helmet as he crouched.

"This one's dead." he said. "Looks like a lightsaber."

"Well, no one came out of this room so search it!" another barked.

Four pairs of eyes scoured the room, as one other pair surveyed the scene from the grilles in the roof. Taking care not to make any noise, Taranae watched from her hiding place. Opress had been briefed on these soldiers. Hive Mind Marines, they called them. They all wore black Purge Trooper armour and were heavily armed. Taranae noticed the multitude of weapons slung around their waist: blasters. Explosives and some things she would place bets on being hidden about their person. The one who crouched and removed his helmet had pure white skin and no hair whatsoever. The Sith found this curious and wanted to look at him more closely.

"You want me to do what? But I'll have to fight them!" she groaned inwardly. "It'll be fun? Oh, in that case, count me in!"

She braced and kicked out at the grilles, unclipping and igniting her saberstaff in one fluid movement. The first Marine she caught by surprise across his back. As he arched backwards with the strike, she spun and impaled him through the chest after a brief resistance to the staff's blade. The dust cloud she had kicked up dispersed quickly as the other Marines recovered from the shock. She regained her stance as they bore down on her together as one. Taranae spun her saber over her head with one hand as she beckoned with her other.

"Come on, boys," she cooed. "If you *are* all boys, that is." She had realised that it was impossible to tell their genders apart. Their attire and features were all the same to her. "There's plenty of li'l ol' me to go around!"

The Marines advanced, and the Sith carefully watched each one in turn, noting their movements. Two approached her with vibroswords in hand, whilst the last played with something on his wrist. She knew that these Marines were connected. What one of them found out, the others would instantly know. If you attacked one way, they would learn to counter it until you attacked another way. Then they would learn to counter that, too.

Taranae ducked and twisted underneath the first vibroblade swing, cutting at the assailant's legs. Hitting one leg, she forced the Marine to stagger sideways into his accomplice. They both fell sideways as she rolled into a crouch, facing the third Marine who now had a wrist launcher aimed directly at her.

"Now you know you'll blow us all up if you fire that." she commented. "Are you really going to... oh, poodoo!"

Taranae leapt out of the way as a missile ignited and streaked towards her position. Using a series of somersaults, she flipped and cartwheeled her way behind the console that she caught the woman standing at nearby. She ducked as a loud explosion reverberated through the room. Glowing hot shrapnel and debris flew over her head and showered her as she raised her arms to protect herself. The robes she wore wouldn't protect her much; they were optimised for stealth, and right now, she wished otherwise. Huge clouds of smoke filled the room and the smell of burning filled the air. Taranae coughed as she inhaled, trying to get a breath of fresh air, and stood with her arm across her mouth using her sleeve as a filter. Once the smoke cleared, she looked around to find all three Marines no worse for wear. She sighed and unclipped a thermal detonator from her belt.

As she did, she noticed the dropped holocron. Now a smouldering piece of metal - she grimaced. An artifact lost to the Brotherhood. Her anger rose, and the ghosts inside her stirred. Rising, she threw the detonator directly at the Marine with the launcher. She intended to give him a taste of his own medicine.

As the detonator flew, she leapt over the console and grabbed the Marine with no helmet around the neck. She pulled back her saberstaff to thrust it through his back but was stopped short as the thermal device exploded at the far side of the room, throwing the Marine with the launcher into the wall with such force that she heard his bones crack.

As she turned her attention back to the man in her chokehold, she arched her stomach backwards as the other Marine's vibrosword pierced the stomach of the one she was holding and exited through his lower back, almost impaling her. Using her captive as leverage, she used her feet to run her lower body up the wall beside them, and she leapt over both men, surprising the attacker who still had his sword embedded in "no helmet man's" chest. Taranae spun as she landed and thrust her staff straight through the back of the sword wielding Marine, once again skewering the first man in the process. It surprised her that the armour had just a little resistance to her lightsaber. She remembered to note this for future skirmishes involving Purge Trooper armour.

She leaned forward as the man gurgled. "Don't ever mess with the Brotherhood," she spat as she retracted her weapon. The Marine clutched his stomach as he fell and Taranae swept the blade of her saber across his neck for good measure, severing his head.

Deactivating her saberstaff, Taranae clipped it back to her belt and looked around. She began to smile, and turning toward the door, she skipped her way out of the room.

"No, we didn't get it," she said to no one. "Yeah, they'll have my hide, but who cares?"