

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: The Hyperion is here!

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The Hyperion was a Behemoth-class Battlecruiser. The Thunder Child, as an ancient Leviathan-class Battlecruiser, was much smaller. In fact, there was no real contest between the two of them... and indeed, no contest between the Hyperion and anything else in the Dylarian Shipyards either.

Sarah Kerrigan isn't that worried though, even as she escorts Myk-Zod and Mystique over to the Thunder Child to find out what Jim wants to do. After all, she's confident that neither of the impossibly powerful aliens will let anything happen if there's something they can do to stop it... and of course, there's plenty they can do to stop it.

However, when they enter the bridge, Jim looks over and immediately puts a pin in that idea.

“Good, I'm glad you brought them Sarah. You two... I want you to sit this one out.”

Sarah can't help but blink in surprise. Myk-Zod does one better than that though, stepping forward with a frown on his face.

“You have a massive battleship bearing down on you and you want us to 'sit it out'? Why?”

With a sigh, Jim makes his way over to them, pulling the three of them off to the side and crossing his arms over his chest.

“You've done a lot for us already. But at a certain point, a man can't just keep racking up debt. Here's the thing... you ain't planning on sticking around forever, are you?”

Sarah watches as Myk-Zod and Mystique share a glance at that. After a moment, Myk-Zod turns back and shakes his head.

“... No, we aren't. Eventually, we'll move on.”

That made sense. Hell, they probably should have 'moved on' back on Tarsonis. And they would have too if they didn't feel an obligation towards Sarah. It begins to dawn on her then where Jim is going with this.

“So we can't rely on you forever. Which means we can't start overly relying on you two now. For all your power... the Raiders have to be able to stand on our own two feet. If we just keep letting you take care of everything for us, we ain't going to be ready to take care of things ourselves once you're gone.”

He's right, Sarah realizes. In his own way, Jim has to consider the health of all of the men and women who have put themselves under his command. Put bluntly, Myk-Zod and Mystique represent a sort of 'I win' button that will do nothing but atrophy everyone else's fighting skills. Until one day, that button will cease to function entirely.

“... People will die. What if that ship attacks the shipyards directly?”

Jim hesitates at that before shaking his head.

“That won't happen. Mengsk needs the Dylarian Shipyards intact if he wants his Dominion to actually get off the ground. We can't take everything anyways, and I ain't got no intention of scuttling the place either. Besides, I know the man in command on that ship... I know how he thinks.”

Sarah did too. General Edmund Duke. Formerly of the Confederacy, he was a member of one of Tarsonis' Old Families. However, he had ultimately joined the Sons of Korhal during the war... a move that had ultimately been pivotal in winning things for the rebellion.

Still, while Edmund Duke was the sort of man who would do 'the hard thing' in order to win, he was also the sort of man who knew what winning looked like. The Dominion needed the Dylarian Shipyards badly... and that would be the bait.

After a long moment, Myk-Zod finally grunts and crosses his arms over his own chest in response.

"... I'm no soldier. I've never been a General or Commander or anything like that. If you think this is necessary, I'm not going to insert myself into a conflict that neither side wants me to be a part of. That said... if you need our help, just say the word."

That, Sarah felt, was incredibly magnanimous of him. If she were in his shoes, she thinks she might have felt personally slighted at being sidelined like this. She might have said something like 'don't expect my help once it all blows up in your face' or something.

But Myk-Zod was leaving the door open just in case they did wind up needing him and Mystique. Sarah sees the respect in Jim's eyes as he registers this and offers a grateful nod.

"Thank you. Appreciate the offer."

Then, he looks to Sarah.

"Gonna need your help though if we're going to make the plan work, darlin'. Think you're up for some long distance shenanigans?"

Sarah arches a brow at that and quirks the side of her mouth up in an amused smirk.

"Didn't know you knew words as big as that, Commander Raynor."

Jim rolls his eyes at her teasing tone, but also looks at her intently, clearly expecting a proper answer. Sarah makes him wait a moment longer before letting her smirk grow.

“I’m up for anything you need me for, Jim. Always and forever.”

That draws a small smile from the man and they move back to the bridge proper. From there, Sarah’s role in all of this is explained to her... and then, they get right into it. After all, not like the Hyperion or General Duke are going to wait for them to be ready or anything like that.

What follows is... well, it’s not quite as one-sided as Myk-Zod and Mystique’s takeover of the shipyard had been, but it’s also not really much of a fight. The Hyperion is definitely the most dangerous ship in the system by far, with a main gun in the form of the Yamato Cannon that could have easily made short work of the Thunder Child.

There’s just one problem with that... Jim had the Thunder Child reposition itself on the other side of the Dylarian Shipyards the moment the Hyperion arrived in-system. Meaning that if General Duke wants to blast the Thunder Child to pieces, he’ll need to blow a hole in the very shipyard he’s been sent to protect.

The following conversation between Jim and Duke is exactly as incendiary and caustic as one would expect. Sarah herself is tempted to participate, pointing out how Mengsk abandoned her to die on Tarsonis, but Jim’s plan requires her to stay hidden... their ace in the hole.

She likes that, really. Sure, Myk-Zod and Mystique’s presence represents an even greater ace in the hole, but seeing as they’re benched for this battle, Sarah is suddenly the biggest asset that Raynor’s Raiders have. Her psionic potential was always off the charts, but ever since killing Daggoth, she’s had access to a new well of power that even she can’t fully explain.

So... yeah. Tricking General Duke into a trap is pretty much child’s play with her assistance. All she has to do is reach out and connect to the General’s mind, as

well as the minds of his bridge crew. Killing them all would be easy, but that's not what Jim wants from her... no, he wants her to be more subtle than that.

Sarah can do subtle. She can tamp down on the General's instincts and that of his bridge crew, ramping up their intense desire to win above all else. And so General Duke sends the Hyperion plunging forward into the Dylarian Shipyards, his intention of getting through the shipyard so he can fire on the Thunder Child overwhelming for him. He foregoes any conventional tactics in favor of full speed ahead, but that just means he gets himself stuck in the maze of the very thing he's not allowed to blow up.

Luring him into the real trap, a set of cranes that latch onto the Hyperion and force it up against the dock, allows the Raiders to do the rest of the work. A contingent of marines invades the Hyperion, storming the ship before anyone onboard can really react or prepare for it.

Do people die? Yes, some people die. Sarah feels every life that winks out, even as she stands there on the bridge of the Thunder Child alongside Jim and a watching Myk-Zod and Mystique. But... it's only a handful of lives lost. Not quite the squeaky clean operation that the original takeover of the Dylarian Shipyards was, but there's a stark difference between this and that.

That had been Myk-Zod and Mystique and nobody else, really. This? This was a Terran triumph. This was a human success. And as Sarah pulls back her psionic presence the moment that a rifle is pointed directly at General Duke's face, forcing his surrender... she can't help but feel like this is all the sweeter for that.

There are cheers on the bridge of the Thunder Child as General Duke's surrender is broadcast to everyone else in the star system. They've done it... they've successfully captured a Behemoth-class Battlecruiser intact, entirely on their own merits and without a single ounce of help from the gods in their midst.

Sarah, for her part, just smiles softly from the side. Yes, she'd played a pivotal role in the battle... but most would never know that. Only Jim and a few others could even understand what she'd done to help them set General Duke up for this catastrophic defeat.

She didn't mind though. She was used to being a ghost, after all. Although... she does lean in close to Jim and whisper in his ear. When he hears her demand, he furrows his brow for a moment and looks like he wants to deny her. But in the end... he reluctantly nods and Sarah smirks like the cat who caught the canary.

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Half an hour later, Sarah steps into the interrogation room to find Edmund Duke sat on the other side of the table. Stripped of his armor, the grey-haired General looks almost... small as he sits there, glaring at nothing. That is, until he lays eyes on her. As soon as he sees her, Duke goes wide-eyed, shocked by her survival no doubt.

"Surprised to see me, General? I'm sure Mengsk told you that I was... an acceptable loss as you all pulled back from Tarsonis."

Marshaling himself rather quickly, Duke clenches his jaw and narrows his eyes.

"Kerrigan. You and Raynor are making a mockery of things, don't you think? The moment the Confederacy is defeated, you both turn to piracy."

Sarah scoffs as she sits down on the other side of the table.

"Don't talk to me about defeating the Confederacy. You were a Confederate General right up until weeks before Tarsonis. Jim and I... we were part of the Sons of Korhal for years. We fought for Mengsk across a hundred battlefields. And he betrayed us. Left us to die to the Zerg that YOU helped unleash."

That last bit brings a grimace to the General's face, though he does his best to rally.

"You're not exactly one to pass blame, Kerrigan. You protected the Zerg from the Protoss on Mengsk's orders as well."

She had, yes. And she would carry guilt over that for quite some time. But even still...

"I did so because I thought we were building towards a better future. I assumed you joined us for the exact same reason."

That gets the General up in arms.

"Of course I did! What are you talking about, Kerrigan?! You and Raynor are the ones running around attacking shipyards! Mengsk is doing exactly what he promised! He's building something better in the ashes of the Confederacy, something that will stand the test of time!"

Sarah scoffs at that.

"You don't really believe that, Duke. He's building a monument to his ego. He's made an Empire so he can call himself Emperor. Everything the Sons of Korhal fought for, all the tyranny we stood against... he's going to be just as bad if not worse."

"You... you don't know that."

Arching a brow, Sarah gestures to herself pointedly.

"Don't I?"

The old General doesn't quite squirm, but it's still a near thing. In the end... he slumps back, glaring at Sarah in not-quite-defeat.

"What the hell do you want from me, Kerrigan? You and Raynor... you could have put a bullet through my head already, but you haven't. Why am I still alive?"

Sarah scoffs.

“Obviously we’re not going to kill you, Duke. In fact, Jim is planning to let you go along with anyone else from your crew who doesn’t want to join us.”

Duke’s eyes narrow at that, prompting Sarah to smirk.

“Of course, the Hyperion is ours now. You’ll just have to live with that.”

Rather than rising to the bait, the General snorts derisively.

“That’s a lot of ship for you and Raynor. Not sure the two of you are up to the challenge.”

She shouldn’t let that get to her. She shouldn’t be rising to the bait herself. And yet... Sarah can’t help but bare her teeth a bit, even as she rises from her seat and leans forward over the table.

“I think you’ll find we’re more than up for any challenge that you or your new Emperor will try to give us, Duke. You wanted to know what I want from you? That’s what I want from you. I want you to go back to Mengsk with your tail between your legs, having lost your ship, and I want you to tell him that I lived... and that I’m coming for him. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But some day soon, when he least expects it... I’ll be there. And I’ll finish what I started all those years ago.”

General Duke’s jaw is clenched by the end of her spiel. His nostrils flare as he glares up at her. But he doesn’t say a word... and Sarah is done speaking as well. So she turns and leaves the room, nodding to the marines outside so they can drag him away to be dropped off in the shipyards when they’re finally ready to leave the system behind.

As she departs, Sarah finds herself hesitating for a moment... before letting her feet take her where they want to go. For better or worse.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!

