

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

**A/N:**

**-x-X-x-**

... Well now. As the dust settles, Myk-Zod can't help but be impressed. That was a startlingly display of psychic prowess from Sarah, the woman they'd saved. Though it also looked like it had taken something out of her, the glow in her eyes fading as fast as it appeared and sweat beading on her brow as she pants heavily.

More surprising than her sudden psychic blast, however, is the fact that the rest of the Zerg pull back in the aftermath. Be they coming from land, sky, or sea, Myk-Zod senses them retreating away. And that's strange because while Sarah had certainly done a lot of damage to a lot of Zerg around them, it wasn't nearly all of the Zerg who had been coming at them.

As he and Mystique float back down to the ground, Myk-Zod assumes it has something to do with whatever had attacked Sarah in the first place. He hadn't known what to do to help her when she'd initially fallen to her knees and began screaming herself hoarse. And then that had continued long enough for the Zerg to arrive and start attacking.

Suffice to say, he was really starting to think that their only option might be leaving this universe behind... because it didn't feel like the Zerg were going to stop coming despite this momentary reprieve. More than that, it felt like they were after Sarah in particular, just judging by what had happened so far.

"Sarah? How are you feeling?"

Swallowing hard, the red head sways for a moment before straightening up.

"I'm... fine. Just fine."

Mystique cuts in then, her eyes sharp as she regards their 'damsel in distress' with far more wariness than before.

"What was that, exactly?"

Myk-Zod shoots the shapeshifter a look, but Mystique doesn't back down... and in all fairness, he understands why. This was an unexpected development to say the least.

Sarah, meanwhile, bites her lower lip and hesitates for a moment before letting out a sigh.

"That was... me. I'm psychic, have been since I was a child."

She hesitates again, looking between them both before seemingly coming to a decision.

"... I accidentally killed my mother with my abilities... addled my father too. The Confederacy took me in afterwards. Ran experiments on me. Trained me. Suppressed and used me. But... the long and short of it is, I've always been powerful."

Raising a hand, Sarah stares at her fingers for a moment and a flash of blue energy flickers across them, dancing along her digits.

"This is... new though. I feel stronger than ever before. That creature... he has no idea what he unleashed."

Mystique tenses up beside him, clearly even more concerned than before about their 'damsel'. But Myk-Zod still sees a woman in need of help... not a threat to be afraid of.

"What happened, Sarah? What was the creature that attacked you?"

Sarah's eyes flicker from her fingers to his face and she grimaces.

“A cerebrate.”

Shaking her head in wondrous disbelief, she huffs.

“We had no idea they even existed until now, did you know that? The Zerg Swarm... we assumed they were mindless monsters driven by nothing but a desire to kill and consume. But that was a lie... a lie we told ourselves maybe, but a lie nonetheless. It all makes so much more sense now.”

Hm. Myk-Zod could have probably told her that they were wrong about that, simply from his observations so far. The Zerg were too coordinated to be mindless monsters. There was an intelligence to their actions in both attacks now. It was obvious they weren't just killing or consuming for the sake of it like predators might. No, they had objectives... it was just that so far, those objectives had all been utterly stymied as their capabilities failed against Myk-Zod and Mystique's combined power.

It helped that this world was also under a Yellow Sun. Even now he can feel it rejuvenating him, making him stronger, filling him with solar energy. He assumes it's the same for Mystique. Still...

“What is a cerebrate, exactly?”

Nodding along, Sarah explains.

“They're the zerg brood leaders. They answer to a thing called the 'Overmind', the overarching ruler of the entire Zerg Swarm. He created the cerebrates in order to expand the swarm, each of them leading their own brood. The creature that just tried to take over my mind was called Daggoth, Leader of the Tiamat Brood. He's one of several cerebrates currently here on Tarsonis... here for me.”

And there it is. Myk-Zod straightens up as Sarah admits what they had already pretty much figured out. The Zerg... they weren't just opportunistically trying to kill them, they had been hunting Sarah specifically. First in New Gettysburg, and then all the way here on this island. That they'd pulled back for the moment was strange, but nevertheless...

“Why would they want you, exactly?”

Sarah grimaces at Mystique’s second pointed question, looking down and clenching her hands into fists at her sides.

“They want to infest me. To add me to the Swarm. I’ve seen it before... Zerg Spores turning Terran Marines into parodies of themselves that will turn on their fellows in a heartbeat. But this... I could tell this was more than that. They want my power.”

Sarah’s eyes dart back to her fingers, where blue energy continues to dance along, guided by her subconscious.

“... The Confederacy had to rewrite the scale for me, you know? Back when I joined... I broke their previous understanding of psychic power over my knee, apparently. They adjusted everything and put me as the new example of a PI 10... aka the top of the Psi Index. I guess... I didn’t understand what that might mean until now. The Zerg... the Overmind has plans for me.”

The red head grimaces again at that.

“I should just leave with you two now. If that’s even an option. I should let you both take me away from this planet, from this universe... even if you decide to drop me off in the next to find my own way.”

Myk-Zod blinks, exchanging a glance with Mystique. The shapeshifting mutant arches a brow at him but after a moment... she shrugs. Making it clear that she’s leaving it up to him in the end. Turning back to Sarah, he frowns.

“... You say ‘should’. You clearly don’t want to. If you didn’t leave with us, what would you do instead?”

Sarah’s eyes narrow, her gaze sharpening as she turns and looks out into the distance, across the horizon from whence they’d originally fled.

“I’d take the fight to them. These cerebrates... if I can kill every single one on Tarsonis, the Zerg will either retreat or fall into a disorganized mess. The planet might be able to be reclaimed, in the end.”

She looks back over her shoulder at them, her jaw clenching.

“It was my fault, you know. The Zerg... my side brought them to this world.”

Myk-Zod’s eyes widen slightly at the admission. Admittedly, he hadn’t stopped to think about which ‘side’ Sarah was on or anything like that. There simply hadn’t been time to talk about it. But it seemed she was willing to talk about it now.

“I’ve been on every side of this conflict. I was recruited by the Confederacy as a child and I killed for them as one of their Ghosts. Eventually, I was taken in by the Rebels... but those same Rebels are the ones who weaponized the Zerg against the Confederacy. This world was the seat of the Confederacy’s power, home to two billion souls... most of them either dead or infested now. And all because once the Zerg were here, I followed orders to stop the Protoss from eradicating them. I *let* the Zerg Swarm get a foothold in this planet, to make sure they would break the Confederacy once and for all.”

Sarah’s lips curl into a wan smile that doesn’t reach her eyes.

“You deserve to know that. You deserve to know what sort of woman I am. And... you both need to leave. Leave me here... to clean up my own mess.”

What? Myk-Zod blinks, caught off guard by the sudden demand. While he does find himself reeling a bit from suddenly having Sarah’s truncated life story thrust in his face, he’s not just going to abandon her to the monsters trying to take her for themselves!

She huffs at him, responding before he can even speak.

“You don’t understand. The Zerg want you two just as much as they want me now. Daggoth and the other cerebrates will be gunning for you both harder than ever once they’ve had a chance to regroup and make a plan. He called you ‘the

anomalies'. He wanted to take over my mind so that I could then dominate *your* minds and bring you both to him."

Ah. That was... well, that was certainly a frightening prospect. He and Mystique were much too powerful to be harmed by these Zerg creatures. They had yet to so much as suffer a single scratch from anything that the Zerg Swarm could throw at them. Physically, they were untouchable.

Mentally though... that was another thing entirely. The thought that their minds might come under attack and that their strength might be turned against each other or innocents... that did make Myk-Zod's gut twist a bit in worry.

"But he failed, didn't he?"

Myk-Zod blinks, caught a little off guard when Mystique suddenly speaks up again. This time it's not nearly as pointed a question... in fact, the Half-Kryptonian almost sounds gentle. Sarah blinks as well, clearly surprised by the way her brow furrows in response to Mystique's inquiry.

"Yes... he failed this time. I don't know what will happen next time though. It's possible he didn't bring everything he had to bear."

Mystique smirks, tilting her head to the side.

"Sounds like we just need to take the fight to him then. *Together.*"

Sarah's mouth opens... and then closes again as she looks truly flummoxed for a moment before shaking her head.

"This isn't your fight. Either of yours. Why would you stay?"

Mystique thrusts a thumb in his direction.

"Because this big lug is too damn good of a man to be able to live with himself if he were to abandon you."

Myk-Zod freezes up at that frank appraisal... but after a moment, he's forced to admit Mystique is right. He could see multiple worlds where he did in fact leave Sarah behind and left this universe with Mystique to try their luck with the next.

While he would like to stay in one place long enough to get the resources to make some upgrades to his bracer and this universe DID seem to have a higher technological level than the previous, it also had a serious pest problem and given the worldwide destruction, he doubted he was going to find much to work with here on Tarsonis.

And yet... if he and Mystique did leave to try their luck in the next universe, abandoning Sarah to whatever fate she would have here... he *would* regret it. The question of whether or not he could have done something would always be there in the back of his mind, needling at him.

Hah... Mystique already knew him so well, didn't she? Myk-Zod can't help but give the shapeshifter a fond look, one she returns with a roll of her eyes and an amused quirk of her lips. When they look back at Sarah, she's fully turned back around and is looking between them both quietly. Studying them for a long moment, the red head slowly nods.

"Alright... I suppose then, if you're sticking around and willing to help... I'm not exactly in a position to say no. If nothing else, getting back to the mainland where Daggoth and the other cerebrates have entrenched themselves would have been much more difficult without your assistance."

Myk-Zod raises a brow at that and glances past Sarah to the distance horizon.

"'More difficult' seems like it might be an understatement. How would you ever get off of this island without us?"

Sarah quirks up the corner of her mouth at that, smirking.

"A girl's got to have some secrets, doesn't she?"

That makes Myk-Zod chuckle, even as Mystique snorts in amusement. In all fairness, it wasn't like Sarah knew everything about either of them either. Hell, Mystique hadn't even changed from her base form yet since they'd arrived in this world, so the other red head had no idea his companion was a shapeshifter.

Regardless... it seemed like they had a path forward now. They were going to take the fight to the Zerg... or rather, these cerebrates that apparently controlled the Zerg. Though...

"This Overmind... is it also on Tarsonis?"

Sarah pauses for a moment before shaking her head.

"No... no he's not. If he was, we'd probably be in a lot more trouble... the impression I got from what Daggoth inadvertently shared with me is that the Overmind is several magnitudes more powerful than his cerebrates."

Damn, that was too bad. Being able to cut the head off the snake directly might have been quite helpful... but they'd have to settle for dealing with these cerebrates here on Tarsonis, he supposed.

Shrugging, Myk-Zod moves forward and offers Sarah his arms. The red head flushes faintly but nevertheless 'climbs aboard', allowing him to cradle her again with a hand on the back of her head as he and Mystique both rise into the air.

They'd fled from the planet's main continent mere hours before and now they were heading right back into the heart of danger. Myk-Zod could only hope that Sarah's confidence wasn't feigned. They were going to need her to guide them through what came next, after all.

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