

Written in the Stardust

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Summary

Katrina and Sarek find common ground at the site of *Discovery's* destruction.

Notes

Takes place in the nine months between *Discovery's* disappearance and reappearance. The ship is assumed destroyed and her crew assumed dead.

The wreckage is irradiated. They won't be able to perform in-depth tests for months, but scans are conclusive. The ship was destroyed in battle with the Klingons. Forensic evidence suggests no escape pods were ejected. No base, planet, or ship within transport range. No life signs amongst the debris.

She'd heard the words. Read the report. But she couldn't accept it until she arrived here, to see it with her own eyes. The remains of the ship float by the window, surrounded by space scarred by the battle. There is a terrible beauty in the swirling colors of space dust.

She leans against the glass, more tired than she wants to admit. She doesn't remember the last time she felt rested. Felt calm. A sharp pain in her side reminds her she's not fully recovered from her own battle with the Klingons. But it also reminds her she's alive.

And he's not. None of them are. *Discovery*, her crew, her captain, her secrets. All lost. And Katrina worries the war with them. But her heart aches for the people. Those killed in action and those left behind.

"Admiral."

She jumps at the voice. She hadn't heard him enter, and her guard is down. Her eyes flicker to meet dark ones watching her with a steady gaze. The space between his eyebrows creases in a subtle frown.

"Apologies. I did not intend to interrupt a vigil." His voice is hushed. Kind, and it startles her again.

"No!" she barks, sudden, as he turns to leave. He pauses, raises an eyebrow. "I'm sorry, Ambassador."

She shakes her head. An apology is the wrong response to a Vulcan, but all her accumulated knowledge of his society's practices has abandoned her in the moment. She purses her lips.

"You didn't interrupt anything. Please stay." Still wrong. And she feels herself blushing under his protracted scrutiny. Damn her human psyche's misinterpretation of Vulcan cultural norms. "Or— has the meeting been set?"

Sarek inclines his head. "Fourteen thirty."

She nods. "Thank you."

He turns his attention to the scene of destruction out the window, walks slowly to stand beside her. As they watch the spinning wreckage in silence she realizes he'd not come to find her, to deliver a message, he'd come for this. He'd come to see the ruins as she had, with his own eyes. The damage that plays in them is mirrored in her own.

"The *Discovery* is a great loss," he states, eyes remaining locked on the flotsam of that loss. "Their technology was a significant advantage."

The spore drive alone had been their best chance to defeat the enemy. But the *Discovery* and her crew also held the key to unlocking the Klingon cloak, and a prisoner of war who might have shared her intelligence.

Kat glances to the Vulcan at her side, now watching her.

At least half of *Discovery's* crew had been survivors of earlier battles. Assigned together, to Lorca, for that reason. Command thought it would bring them together. She worries it made them reckless. She should have done something sooner.

"Yes," she answers finally. A simple word masking a complex set of emotions.

Sarek waits, sensing something more, his gaze unwavering in the low light.

Katrina feels her chest tighten. She takes a breath.

"Captain Lorca was my friend," she murmurs, lowering her eyes.

"I grieve with thee."

The formal response hits hard. She feels tears and blinks rapidly to keep them from slipping down her cheek.

"We met at the Academy," she explains, still quiet.

It seems a lifetime ago. It *was* a lifetime ago, and she was a different person. One who had not seen the wreckage of even one starship. Now, she sees them all destroyed, with her eyes open or closed.

"We came up together."

He'd always been there, in her orbit, and she in his. Gabriel and Katrina. Whatever else, they were always that.

She looks away. "The last time we spoke was in anger."

Things were wrong since the war began. Disconnected, his behavior erratic, trust broken. All the signs were there but she didn't want to push him for fear of pushing him away. Her priorities were wrong.

Sarek listens, gaze fixed and calm. The emotions playing across her face are subtle for a human. Outside the window, starlight hits a chunk of *Discovery's* reflective hull, the glass absorbs most of it but a tendril of light briefly splits the space between them. She trembles, crosses her arms.

"I'm sorry, I—" Shouldn't be burdening the Vulcan ambassador with her regrets. "I'm sorry."

He is accustomed to the human habit of over apologizing. Many of his peers find it frivolous and he doesn't disagree, but he respects it is cultural. And he understands the emotion behind her struggle better than she knows.

"There is no need." She raises her eyes. There in an unexpected compassion in his. "I, too, left words unspoken."

Katrina frowns, struck. Their losses fill the room. His is far greater. "Ambassador, I." She can't imagine. The loss of a child— She stumbles over the words. Pulls her lips in over her teeth, straightens her shoulders. "I grieve with you. And your family."

Her fingers flutter at her side. Her instinct is to reach out, to touch, for comfort, his, and hers. She presses her hands against her side. Sarek ignores it with practiced proficiency.

"It is illogical to measure one loss against another." Her lips part, struck again. She's said the same words a hundred times over. They are harder to hear. "Instead, perhaps, we may be united."

A long, silent moment passes. The light of space blinks in and out as they hold the look, dark eyes to bright. She feels her cheeks flush again, but does not turn away.

"Specialist Burnham saved my life."

Her words are a kindness, and possibly a promise.

"Mine as well," he murmurs, and offers a kindness of his own, "under Captain Lorca's orders."

Perhaps we may be united.

Katrina squares her shoulders with deliberation.

"It's on us then," she declares, voice steady, eyes clear and bright. "To make sure they did not die in vain."

Sarek raises his chin to mirror the jut of hers.