

[Kain and Suu arc] [10] [Reality check] [9648]

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It was a rare day; Suu had just received a call from Earth. In fact, it was the first call ever from Earth ever since she joined Jupiter navy and ended up being under Kain's command.

She didn't think much of it although there was a strange, and faint, expectation as she answered the call.

"Hello, Suu."

It was Casper, her father. And it was extremely unusual that he called.

"Father?" And then Suu couldn't come up with anything else to say.

Beaming a grin at Suu's reaction, he said over the comm, "I suppose you find this rare, don't you?"

Indeed, and he continued.

"Suu, I've called you this day to inform you that I resigned from the Bau council."

She narrowed her eyes; she wasn't even aware that Casper was elected to become a councilor. In fact, the whole reason she joined the navy was to help her father to become a councilor.

Knowing fully well what was going on inside his daughter's mind, Casper beamed a grin and explained, "I chose not to inform you at that time, but your deeds had an indirect influence in me becoming a councilor. For that, I thank you. The reason I chose not to inform you was because I did not wish to distract you from your duties."

"I see, father," Suu replied calmly. Although slightly disappointed, she didn't mind. What was more important was the reason for his call. "Then tell me; why are you telling me that you are resigning?"

Casper's face darkened. "Suu, I had been a councilor for only four weeks before I resigned. Some of councilors were angered by my resignation and saw it as a sign of a protest."

"Was it?" Suu inquired.

It took some seconds for him to answer.

"Yes," He said firmly and added, "Listen, the Bau council as well as United Sol's Ark are dysfunctional. They seek interests of political elites only. I wanted to change it and, therefore, wanted to become a councilor. In the end, I am just a single voice among hundreds. I cannot change it and I could not bear watching them making decisions that would harm their citizens. Therefore, I chose to quit literally."

Casper let out of a long sigh before he'd continue.

"Now, I believe I am being targetted."

"For what?" Suu raised her voice, suspecting the worst. "Assassination?"

Casper shrugged visibly. "I am unsure but that is a possibility that I cannot rule out. I called you to talk you for the last time before I'd go into hiding. I am planning to sneak out of Earth and live in seclusion on Moon. Honestly, after this call, I don't know when I will be able to call you."

"Come here," Suu blurted without a thought. "Come here, father. It will be safe here."

Casper seemed to be taken back. He didn't expect it although he seemed to have quickly caught on that Suu was indeed correct.

"There is no Bau influence here," She explained. "You will be safe and you could even work for the Admiral."

She was making things up but it wasn't entirely baseless. Casper could indeed work

for Kain, she strongly felt.

Casper would remain silent for a moment with his head downcast with crossed arms. Eventually, looking back at Suu, he replied, "I realize I don't really have the luxury of time. I will take that offer."

"I will send a cruiser to Earth right now," She replied promptly.

"No, I will be on Moon. Earth is already too dangerous for me right now."

"Alright, hang in there. I will send someone to pick you up."

Once the communciation was over, Suu quickly made a call.

"Captain Mack, are you there?"

A man answered swiftly, "Yes, Commander."

"It is urgent. I need you to pick someone up at Moon. I need you to head over there ASAP. Overload your engine. Get there in record time."

Without asking for details, the man complied at once. "Aye, Commander."

"I am sending you info on the target. I repeat; this is urgent."

"You can count on me, Commander," He reassured.

Once that was done, she immediately requested a meeting with Kain.

"This is new. In nearly four decades, you've never called for a meeting. I think I am gonna pee," was what Kain said casually when he welcomed Suu in his office.

And, of course, there was Magenta by his side.

Ignoring Kain's usual joke, Suu went straight to the point.

"My father is coming here," She said bluntly, "And he needs a shelter."

"You should probably explain more," Magenta said.

Suu explained her conversation with her father which occurred a moment ago.

"He could work for you," She added in the end.

"Work for me? Your dad?" To which Suu gave Kain a firm nod.

"What would he do for me?"

Frowning slightly, Suu pushed on. "Admiral, this is not a joke, and my father is a proven man."

"A proven bureaucrat, you mean," Magenta added.

"Watch your mouth," Suu warned.

"She speaks truth though," Kain said, "He is a bureaucrat. I've been doing fine without one."

"My father IS different."

Crossing his fingers and pouting, Kain considered his options. Like he said at the beginning, Suu had never called for any meeting in nearly four decades. However, he could also see why she was making the sudden request. After all, her father's life was on the line but he wasn't entirely sold on the idea of employing him.

"Can I give you my answer later?"

"NO." Suu answered right back and then demanded, "Guarantee his position now."

"Commander Suu, you are being unreasonable and actually being despicable toward your superior officer," Magenta warned with a sharp glare.

They'd start glaring at each other and Kain stood up to stop them.

"Easy now, cats. Fine, Suu, have it your way. I will guarantee your father's job. Say, I will make him the mayor of the colony."

"Admiral!" Magenta exclaimed, "You are the administrator. You are the mayor!"

"Calm down. I've been busy with Project Mothership anyway. I was going to need someone to look after the colony."

"I don't need to listen to you, Magenta," Suu argued and walked out.

The meeting ended awkwardly with Suu walking out.

"She could be court-martialed for this, you know. That was totally out of line," Magenta muttered while she fumed.

"Well." Kain let out of a relived sigh and grinned. "That could have gone better but could have gone worse."

"She was out of her line," Magenta insisted.

"She was. I am not arguing with that."

"You are not really going to keep your words on the promise, are you?"

Kain shrugged with a grin. "I thought it wasn't that bad of an idea. I do need someone to look after the colony. After the mothership is done, I might not even stay on the colony much. Time to delegate, don't you agree?"

Magenta sighed and shook her head weakly instead of giving him a response.

"Well, what do you know about him?" Regardless, Kain inquired.

She took a moment to calm down and responded, "He is a well-known figure, Casper Bau. He is an outsider which was why it took him so long to become elected as a councilor. I reckon Suu's position here had a part in it. He's known to be fair and just but never held a public office until recently."

Kain chuckled and said, "Reality check for him, eh."

"If what Suu told us is true, most likely. He had the desire to change but quickly realized that he couldn't, alone at least."

"Well, from what we were told and from what you know, he sounds like a decent guy. Why were you so against her and the idea?"

"I am sorry. She's been getting on my nerve as of late."

"I know, she isn't the easiest person to deal with."

Kain recalled the early days of their navy training and how he had to ram his frigate to stop Suu from rampaging. Once he recalled memories, he grinned in silence.

Approximately four weeks later, it was announced that Casper had arrived.

"Already?" Kain was surprised to hear his speedy arrival.

"I suppose the Commander was really desperate," Magenta replied.

Rubbing his hands, Kain stood up from his desk and walked around in a circle. "I am actually somewhat nervous. What am I gonna say to the guy?"

"Well? Just be yourself, I guess. It's not like he's going to be your supervisor or anything."

Kain's first impression of Casper was that he looked like the traditional definition of "Gentleman". His attire was that of a gentleman and his aura cried out for grace. He was pretty much the complete opposite of himself who was casual and common.

"Hello, sir!" Kain offered his hand for a handshake as he approached the man. Suu was already by his side. They were exchanging a huge when he had arrived at the docking bay. Magenta was watching the scene from a distance.

"Greetings, Admiral." Beaming a gentle grin, Casper had a firm handshake with Kain.

"I've heard good things about you."

"So have I," Kain replied, with a grin. Pointing toward an exit, he added, "Why don't we talk in my office? Please, this way."

Once arrived at Kain's office and sat down, Kain crossed his fingers and cleared his throat.

"Sir, Commander Suu here has told me what has happened to you," said Kain, "I realize that you seek a shelter and I am glad to say that I can provide you one."

Giving a firm nod, Casper smiled. "I thank you, Admiral."

Suu's glare was fixed at Kain; she wanted him to honor the deal.

"And I believe I have a job for you, sir. Are you aware of Project Mothership?"

"Aye, Admiral."

"It's been occupying most of my time which leaves the colony in dark. I've been seeking someone to oversee colony development and I believe you are fit for the task."

Casper seemed shocked and seemed clearly doubtful of what he had just heard.

"Admiral, I come here out of nowhere and you are suddenly assigning me to such an important post... Dare I say this has something to do with my daughter?"

Kain did not lie.

"Yes, your daughter put a knife under my throat." He even exaggerated for the fun of it. "I do this or I am dead, as good as dead."

Suu looked like screaming and was clearly livid at Kain.

Turning around to look at his daughter, Casper exclaimed at her, "Suu, how could you? He is your superior officer!"

Suu had to defend himself. "It's... It's not entirely true!"

"Are you saying the Admiral is lying here?"

Clearly on a moral crossroad, Suu hesitated to give an answer at which point Kain burst into a loud laughter.

"Man, you two are so serious. I guess I see where Suu earned her attitude," Kain said while still laughing.

Amused, Casper looked back at him. "Admiral?"

Kain explained what exactly happened.

"She did push my hand. That part is true. My wife here, Magenta, was livid because of it."

Magenta nodded, affirming Kain's statement.

"But I could have easily ignored or overtuned her demand. Her threatening had

virtually no effect on my decision. I chose to employ you based on your daughter's behavior. Her nickname is 'Hardass'. Did you know that Commander?"

"What?!" Suu's reaction indicated that she wasn't aware of it.

"She's the most unyielding, ungrateful, bitch," Kain joked and added, "But there is absolutely zero corruption in her ranks and crews under her are drilled so well that their battle-readiness is excellent. She cleared out pirates and created her own protocol."

Suu's own protocol which overrode United Sol's protocol was nicknamed by others as "No pain, no gain" protocol. It was simply known as NPNG code. Her harsh stance over pirates which was simply to exterminate them on spot instead of letting them go made pirates fear roaming in Outer Sol. Although harsh, the result was indisputable. Security of Outer Sol was so high that some daring merchants chose not to hire escorts at all.

Although the outcome was positive, politically it wasn't all green. Human rights organizations attempted to put a stop on Suu's NPNG protocol, arguing that pirates had to be either let go or had to be arrested. They pressured Kain but he ignored them.

The organizations, then, filed a lawsuit to stop NPNG, and they did win the lawsuit but Kain, as the sole admiral in Outer Sol, had the authority to ignore results of lawsuits in name of national security.

In the end, NPNG was upheld.

Shrugging, Kain concluded, "In the end, she has good and bad and I guess the good overshadows the bad. So, I figure her father would be good, no?"

"Kain, I hope you realize that you aren't making any sense or whatsoever," Magenta warned.

"So what? I ain't no scientist. I ain't no politician. I don't need to give good speeches. I just do my job."

Casper shut his eyes momentarily. When he responded, his voice was firm.

"Admiral, I see how you work. I also see your methods and structure. Personally, I do not see how I'd fit in your plans. Therefore, I must reject your offer," He declared.

"Father?!" Suu blurted.

"Suu, I am a bureaucrat."

"So what? You are a good bureaucrat."

"You must understand that I was born and raised in a family that was deeply involved in politics. In short, I was raised in bureaucracy. My thought process and how I handle affairs are fundamentally different from Admiral Kain here."

"But, father, you deserve this. You deserve-"

"Entitlements are what bureaucrats want in general. I am actually ashamed to say that. No one deserves anything. They must earn it."

Suu dropped her head and became silent, and Kain looked amused.

"Well, Magenta, my dear?" Lazily, with a smile, Kain turned his attention to her. In response, Magenta sagged her shoulders.

"Fine, man. You win the bet. I will wear the lingerie."

Turning his attention back on Casper, he declared, "Mr. Casper, you've earned the job. Welcome to the administration." And then he struck out his hand for a handshake.

Casper's official title was "Uranus colony deputy mayor". His primary task was indeed being a mayor of Uranus colony residential and commercial districts. The announcement was met with mixed responses, mainly due to a fact that Kain was

now completely surrounded by people of the Bau. He had been in charge for long enough for people not to worry about his corruption. However, people's fear was the future. Since Kain was surrounded by the Bau, it was only logical that the Bau would be taking over the station when he either dies or steps down.

For majority of Uranians, the colony was the last place for them. And, for the majority of Uranians, they loathed the Bau from the bottom of their hearts.

Their fear would eventually create an underground resistance faction, but that is for the future far away.

"He is an interesting character. I can see why he is popular," Casper remarked in a restaurant with Suu. "He is certainly not a bureaucrat."

Suu simply nodded once and was simply having her meal with a glass of wine. They would silently continue to eat their meal until Casper spoke again at one point.

"Before I came here, I ... heard rumors," He said carefully.

"What rumors?"

"I heard that he had two Bau mistresses. But then he married one."

Suu paused eating and, frowning, looked at her father.

"Suu, they think you are his mistress which I don't think it's true."

"Of course, not!" She exclaimed angrily.

"Regardless, the rumor won't go away unless you make sure that it's not true."

"What are you saying?"

"Get married. That will denounce the rumor."

"To whom?"

Casper sighed because he didn't know. "I don't have a candidate for you, lass, sorry. I was hoping you had someone in your mind. It'd be the best for you to marry someone you like instead of an arranged marriage."

"True but..."

She hadn't had a relationship in her entire life. She had never had a boyfriend. If there was any male companion who was even remotely close to her, that was Kain.

And, if anyone was tolerant to her attitude, it was also Kain.

"I don't have anyone in my mind right now," She claimed.

"You don't mind that the rumors persist?"

"Rumors are rumors, father. If people have so much spare time to munch on such gossips, so be it."

"I see. If you say so, my dear."

Kain and Magenta were overseeing the mothership which was yet to be given a formal name. Two years into production, there was still nothing much of a mothership because it took two years to build a mobile shipyard to build the mothership within.

They were within an observing desk hanging above the construction site. The ship's skeleton, called superstructure, was currently being joined in zero gravity.

The couple was standing behind a thick glass window and were observing the current operation. There was another officer who was behind them, reporting current situation.

"The superstructure is about 30% complete, Admiral. We expect to complete the superstructure within 180 days," He reported politely.

"I see. What is the next step?" Kain inquired while staring down at the site.

"Once superstructure is complete, we will build hull structure around it, sir."

Magenta added, "Once hull is done, internal wiring and so on and then armors on top of hull structure."

"I see." Kain nodded repeatedly in a slow motion. "Any accurate ETA?"

"We don't know yet, sir," The officer said, "There are just too many unforeseen variables at this point."

"I see. Thank you for the report. You are dismissed."

Saluting at once, the officer departed. Once they had privacy, Kain crossed arms and leaned against the window. Sighing, he asked Magenta.

"Any reports on Juron?"

"He's got his own problems internally but his war preparation seems to be going smoothly."

"Meaning we might not have this mothership in time for the invasion?"

"Afraid so."

"Have you sent the evidence to the Ark?"

Magenta shrugged. "Did and ignored."

"Fucking great," Kain muttered, "Really, what the fuck is wrong with them?"

"They live in a comfortable bubble. That's all, I think."

He continued to mutter, "Whatever, fucking retards."

In reality, the Ark was in no condition to do anything even if they did acknowledge the evidence. They simply did not have the budget. Magenta was well aware of this and she wasn't surprised when her evidence was met with silence from the Ark.

"We are alone here," Kain said, "And I fear how long we are going to last."

It was a genuine concern which any sane man would have. Odds against him was too great. He may have somehow survived the first and the second. But how long would his luck last?

Magenta couldn't give a decent answer to Kain, for she also did not know. The outlook looked bleak. As a leader though, Kain had been putting on a brave, positive, face to others. However, in private, Kain was always down, sighing and cursing as

well as bemoaning his lack of resources. All Magenta could do was listen to him and relieve his stress through intercourse. Truthfully, that was all she could do.

There were also hard facts to back up their fears. Kain had 3,000 ships which would have been more than enough in normal times but it wasn't enough for this era. According to Magenta's spies, Juron was preparing a giant fleet of 20,000 ships. With Earth defense fleet recovering at a snail space and with a good chance of Emuel's fleet being useless in time of a war, United Sol wasn't in a good position to repel the third invasion.

However, only few were actually aware of the dire situation. It was mainly due to a fact that Earth News Network (ENN) was forbidden to report the real situation in name of public security. Other smaller media outlets were also legally forbidden to report truth.

For Kain and those around him though, the clock was ticking loudly for them.

Fin