

Warhound

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Nothing makes Sartha Thrace feel good the way being saddled up in the cockpit of a huge mech suit does.

She usually likes to say it's because of all the good you can do with that kind of power, because it's a good line for pro-rebellion propaganda, but the truth is that it's far more immediate than that. The joy comes from a million different things. The way the seat beneath her thrums as the machine kicks into life. The scent of machine oil and burnt steel as the reactor spools up. The way everything in the world shakes when her almighty machine, as big as a skyscraper, takes just one single step. The joy isn't in her head. It's in her blood. Her guts.

It's fucking perfect.

All in all, it makes Sartha feel like she's not just a person anymore. A person is just meat, however much of a hero they are. In the cockpit, she's a sixty-foot-tall titan ready to crush the world under her heel. There's nothing like the power trip, and it helps take her mind off some of the anxieties that like to eat at her.

Ancyor is the name of her beast. They know it everywhere, because Sartha is, after all, a hero. Just a name, no class, no model number. Not much point now. *Ancyor* isn't

like anything else after all the cannibalism Sartha's had to do to keep her running. Everything's been replaced twice. Most of it, three times or more. So now *Ancyor* is one hell of an ugly mongrel, but that hasn't done anything to keep it off the rebel recruitment posters. They like using its face almost as much as they do Sartha's.

It's what you get for being a hero. Hell, for being *the* hero. She's the big hero of the rebellion.

They're just coming up on the battlezone now. Sartha trusts her instruments but she trusts her eyes even more, so she takes a moment to peer out of *Ancyor*'s grubby little viewports, even though it's hard with her muzzle in the way. She can see her comrades' battle line unfolding on either side of her, and it doesn't make her happy. None of the other mechs look anything like *Ancyor*.

They're all brand new and freshly-painted, and way too sleek for their own good. The kinds of machines that have just rolled off an Imperial production line. Fresh tech given to fresh meat that doesn't even know how to use it properly. Something about it unsettles Sartha. She has too many ghostly little memories of fighting on the other side, against machines like that. Being with them doesn't feel right.

Memories of someone else's life. That's what Handler always calls them when she tells Sartha not to dwell on them. Sartha does her best to listen, because Handler is always right. Handler is wonderful.

Sartha raises a hand and touches her muzzle as she thinks about that.

Everyone's in position, comes the voice over the radio. Snooty. Elitist. An officer.

Copy, comes the reply. *We're ready*.

Can we send the dog in first? someone asks. A bunch of sniggers follow that one.

Negative, says the officer. We stick to the plan. Commencing bombardment.

A few moments later, the ground starts rumbling and the whole sky lights up red and white. Sartha doesn't look. She knows better than to stare at the fireworks. This isn't her first battle. She's a hero, and she knows what she needs to do. The little drip of adrenaline the blasts prompt helps her focus.

"Here we go, *Ancyor*," she murmurs to no one.

When she opens up the throttle, *Ancyor* responds as always, with an ugly purr. The beast surges forwards. Sartha wants to be right on the heels of the bombardment. That's what she does best. She gets stuck in with blade and chain, wherever it's getting good and messy.

That makes her a really big target, obviously, and sure enough, the enemy is already replying to the artillery in kind. Beams and missiles start to fly past *Ancyor* as it sprints. Well, not all of them. Some of them hit home, and Sartha feels the impact in her own body. It does nothing but put a crazy grin on her face, behind the muzzle's metal cage. She feels her mech clunk underneath her as redundant systems slam into place wherever the damage isn't so superficial.

It'll take more than that to put her beast down.

But since she isn't actually crazy the way people say, Sartha shelters behind a ruin, ready for the tense dance of sprinting from cover to cover as she advances. As she does, she sees her comm system lighting up. It's the enemy, yelling at her across a broad comm band.

Obviously Sartha knows she should ignore it, but there's never been a good pilot who didn't know how to trash talk. She isn't enough of a professional to not reach

over and flick a few switches so she can listen in.

At first the transmissions are too loud, and so messy they almost sound like interference. It's not, it's just too many damn people yelling at once. As usual, the sight of *Ancyor* loping into combat was getting a nice healthy response. After a moment, Sartha manages to pick out a few things here and there:

Traitor.

How could you do this to us?

Why?

What the fuck is wrong with you, Thrace?

What did they do to you?

Somehow, some of that makes it through the adrenaline and Sartha stops grinning. It's not the words exactly. It's the emotion. There's this one woman in particular she can pick out, howling into her radio. It's not familiar, it's no one she knows, but there's something in her voice. A depth; a ragged, throatfucked anguish that only comes from something real.

From real betrayal.

Sartha risks taking a hand off the joystick to adjust her muzzle, trying to make it less uncomfortable.

At the same time, she tries to convince herself it's all bullshit. She tries to remind herself where she is, and what she's fighting for, but that's hard because she doesn't know. All that stuff - the briefings before the mission, for example - is just a haze. It's

fog. It's nothing. It's like she wasn't even there. So what the fuck is this battle?

Another look through the viewport. The whole place is already buried under inches of dust and napalm, but Sartha still can't quite shake the feeling that she knows this city. It feels like maybe, in one of those other lives she sometimes remembers, this was a place she wanted to defend.

There's something wrong with her, she thinks. It's the only way to explain why she keeps flinching whenever she sees one of those sleek, black, fresh Imperial mechs punch out of the dust-fog. Stupid, stupid. They're on her side. She needs to get that straight.

Sartha is keeping *Ancyor* moving, but that's just instinct, and instinct isn't half as good when you're not paying fucking attention. And she can't stop paying attention to that howling voice on the comms.

What did they do to you, Thrace? Was it money? What the fuck did they do to you?

What did they do to her? Sartha doesn't quite know, although she knows for sure it wasn't money. She remembers something, maybe, unless it's just one of those other people's lives. A room. A room that makes her scared shitless. And pain. From electric shocks, she thinks. And lights - lights shined into her head so bright she thought they would punch all the way out the other side. And most of all, words that never ever ever ever stopped whispering.

Fuck. Shit. She's breaking down now, like a raw rookie. Only Sartha's not a rookie, she's a hero, only maybe she's not even that if she's a traitor like the voice on the radio says. She needs to get her head on straight. She needs to figure out where she is and what this battle is. She needs to get this freakish fucking muzzle off her head. She needs-

Click.

The radio goes silent and Sartha goes dead still. She knows *Ancyor* better than she knows her own soul. She knows every little noise it ever makes, and this one is very special. It's an override for the comm system, activating a direct line to one special person in particular. Sartha's breast swells with hope and bile in the instant before she hears her voice.

Can you hear me, Sartha? Handler says.

"Yes," Sartha replies at once, because she would never keep Handler waiting. She's already pulling herself together. She can't break down like this. Not with Handler here.

It seemed like you were getting confused, Handler says. *So here I am.*

Hearing that almost feels bad because it's almost a reproach, but Sartha feels good instead because she's just happy to listen to Handler talking. Handler's voice is love.

I'm going to take care of that for you, Handler warns. *Ready?*

"Yes," Sartha says. She's never quite ready for what's coming, but she's cringingly grateful for it anyway because in a few moments all the things she was worrying about won't matter.

Hound, Handler says in a special voice. *Off The Leash.*

It's not quite instant, and so Sartha gets a single moment to experience her own psyche cracking like an egg. It feels, more than anything, like clarity. She gets it now, as she falls away from herself. Sartha Thrace isn't a real person anymore. Sartha Thrace is gone, they just kept the shape of her, like a papier-mâché mask keeping the imprint of someone's face.

They needed her body, because it's recognizable. They needed her piloting skills, because she's the best. Everything else, they scooped out, except for whatever they needed to keep to make a nice little convenient shell for the thing that's inside her now. The thing that's coming out, now that she's Off The Leash.

Sartha Thrace goes away, and Hound wakes up.

Hound whoops and growls, making Handler laugh approvingly over the radio, and guns *Ancyor's* throttle so viciously hard the mech starts to scream underneath her. Hound doesn't care. Hound doesn't care about anything. She's right where she belongs - in her colossal metal body, muzzle strapped to her face, beloved Handler in her ear.

And in front of her, there are targets.

Hound makes *Ancyor* lunge out of cover and surge towards the nearest thing she sees that doesn't look like one of her sleek, black packmates, and then start tearing it to shreds. The way *Ancyor* jerks and whines in protest as it really rips into an enemy mech turns Hound's growl into a wolf-scream of pure, untainted glee that lasts until the broken, bleeding thing under *Ancyor's* blades finally stops moving.

Then, Hound lopes off into the rebel city in her mech, looking for more things to kill.

Sartha Thrace doesn't know how much time has passed by the time *Ancyor* heaves back into its berth in the hangar. She only knows it's after the battle, and mostly she knows there was a battle because *Ancyor* is beaten to hell and she's covered in scars

and her own matted blood.

It hurts, but in a good way, like how exercise hurts. The core of that good feeling is the vague sense that she has done a good job today. She fought hard, and they won.

Handler will be proud of her.

Despite how exhausted Sartha is, that knowledge puts a spring in her step as she dismounts from *Ancyor's* cockpit onto one of the huge piers that line the hangar in rows. The hangar is a vast, cavernous space, too big to feel real, so big it'll make your eyes hurt if you stare at the ceiling or the far wall. It's steadily filling up as more and more of Sartha's comrades make it back.

Not as many as there had been when they left, but that's always how it is. Sartha knows how to make herself cold to it.

She gets a lot of hard, bad looks from the other pilots as they dismount. Some even spit. Sartha doesn't let it trouble her. She isn't really one of them, she knows. They're all Imperial to a T: neat, black uniforms, cropped hair, stiff hats and straight backs. Sartha wears grubby old military khakis instead, with more than a few personal touches, and her mid-length blonde hair is messy in a deliberate, handsome way. And there's the muzzle, of course. She doesn't look like one of them. She looks like one of the people on the other side.

Sartha could probably figure out the other, less superficial reasons she wasn't really one of them if she put her mind to it, but she didn't, because Handler had told her not to. Handler always knows best.

Maybe something happened in the battle, and that's why they're so mad. Sartha doesn't really remember, past the beginning. It's all fog. She doesn't worry about that. Another thing Handler has told her not to worry about. Sometimes it feels like her

whole life has been consumed by fog, but she never worries thanks to Handler. That's one of Handler's many gifts to her, and in exchange Sartha needs to be very very good. She delights in being good. She won't remove her muzzle without permission, even now, as it rubs uncomfortably into her face.

And there! Sartha catches sight of Her coming down the pier, as if in response to the hero pilot's yearning.

Handler.

She's magnificent. Beautiful, yes, but in a special way, more like a goddess than a person. Everyone else knows She's special too. The other pilots, the ones who'd been spitting at Sartha, move out of the way and salute at Her passing. A special uniform marks Her rank. It's more ceremonial than practical: tight-fitting leathers and high boots, with a sleek cap to crown Her platinum hair and a heavy, black coat to make Her silhouette all the more imposing.

Sartha senses that the other pilots are a little bit afraid of Her, but she isn't. She could never be afraid of Handler.

"Sartha," Handler says, in a voice that makes Sartha shiver every time.
"Congratulations. You did well."

Every single muscle in Sartha's body goes stiff at the praise. Her head starts spinning giddily and a nervous, twitchy grin comes to her face. This is a sacred moment. But it's too good to be true. It's too much.

"I got... confused," Sartha replies in a crestfallen tone. She can't disagree with Handler, obviously, but nor can she be dishonest. She needs to volunteer these things.

"That's true," Handler conceded. "But you made it back on track. That's what

counts. It was a very confusing place for you. You did well.”

Sartha gasps and shudders. Butterflies in her stomach. The praise is all the sweeter now that she’s unburdened herself. She feels the ecstasy of purification.

“T-thank you,” she blurts out nervously, stupidly.

Talking to Handler always does this to her. Sartha has as many notches on her bedpost as any other ace but with Handler she’s fourteen again, a tongue-tied virgin struggling to think of a good enough line to get one of the older, prettier girls to take her to prom. She has to grab her left arm with her right hand to stop it shaking too much. But the anxiety is more than balanced out by elation. She can’t be anything but happy when Handler is here.

A thin smile comes to Handler’s face. On anyone else it might have seemed cruel, but Sartha knows that Handler is beyond petty things like cruelty. “You’re a very good hound.”

That phrase is like a magic spell. It lets Sartha relax into the praise. She giggles, and the grin on her face becomes broad and innocent. She’s a good hound for Handler. It’s perfect. It makes whatever she was worrying about earlier when she was confused feel utterly remote and small. Nothing matters when she’s a good hound for Handler. It’s the only important thing in the entire world, and her whole body knows it.

Sartha’s brain throbs endorphins into her bloodstream at a dangerous rate. She’s seeing stars and shivering rapturously. She’s blushing and dripping between her legs; turned on like hell even though this pleasure is so much *more* than just sex. Being a hound is better than being just a hero ever was.

She’s a good hound for Handler.

“And you know what that means,” Handler adds, smiling still. “Don’t you?”

Sartha dares to nod. She has her hopes, but it would be blasphemous to get her hopes up.

“Good hounds get rewards,” Handler tells her, and reaches out to pet her head.

This is special and it makes Sartha stop thinking altogether. Handler’s touch on her head is infinitely familiar, and more reassuring than anything. Her thoughts turn into bubbles that pop as Handler messes her hair affectionately. Sartha doesn’t try to collect herself, she just grins her stupid grin and stretches her back to try and push her head against Handler’s fingers. The lack of self-discipline is an indulgence, but one that she’s allowed from time to time.

“There we go!” Handler coos. “You deserve this. Don’t you?”

“Yesyesyes,” Sartha blurts out, all in a rush. “Thankyouthankyou.”

She could cry. She’s never been happier.

Handler gives her the blessing of letting her enjoy this for a few long moments before She says: “I think there’s another thing you deserve too. You deserve a treat. Hound deserves a treat.”

Sartha nods, drunk on eagerness. A treat is something different. Something specific. She always gets a treat after a mission, unless she’s been very, very bad.

“Sit,” Handler commands.

At once Sartha is on her knees. It doesn’t take thought. She sees that some of the other pilots are gathering round, and some of them are laughing at her. Sartha doesn’t

care. She doesn't care about anyone else when she's with Handler. Those other pilots just don't understand how special She is.

Handler leans in and looms over her, and says in that special voice of Hers: "*Hound. Off The Leash.*"

Sartha Thrace goes away, and Hound wakes up.

It's a very different Hound from the one that wakes in the thick of battle. Hound doesn't growl - she can't, not at Handler - she just makes her eyes big and looks up at her owner. Handler's smile widens.

"Very good," She purrs at Hound's display of patience. Handler pointedly sets one foot forward, resting Her big, heavy, leather boot on its heel. She waits a few moments, allowing Hound's need to build. "OK. Go."

Hound throws herself forward and wraps her entire body around Handler's leg. She pushes her thighs apart as wide as she can, all the better to start grinding her cunt against Handler's boot.

Immediately, Hound lets out a desperate whine of pleasure so loud it echoes around the hangar instead of being swallowed up. Her mind goes blank. The few thoughts Hound is permitted to have vanish. Touching Handler this way makes her unbelievably sensitive. The sensation is earth-shattering even though the heavy material of her clothes is in the way. What this represents is more important than how it actually feels.

Safety. Purpose. Reward.

This is Hound's safe place. Perhaps the only place she feels truly safe, and that's because this is where she's meant to be. There's no doubt. No uncertainty. Not with

Handler. Hound does what she's told and she gets her treat. It's so blissfully simple.

If being good for Handler is the only thing that matters, she doesn't need to think about anything else. And this is how she knows she's been good for Handler.

"Good girl," Handler says, looking down at her. Handler sounds so very amused, and Hound is just pleased to be the one amusing her.

She puts her face as close to Handler as she possibly can. Her muzzle is in the way so she has to turn her head and rub it desperately against her owner's hips. She's desperate for Handler's scent; that scent of leather and polish and dark perfume is infinitely comforting and pleasurable. As it fills her nose, she starts humping more slowly and deliberately, pressing hard so that she can feel every one of the taut laces of Handler's boot rubbing against her cunt.

Hound's whimpers start to fill out into panting, breathless moans. The exertion is almost too much for her. She was already exhausted from combat. But she won't stop. She'd never give up her treat, not for anything.

The crowd around Handler and Hound is growing as more and more Imperial pilots gather to watch the strange ritual. Despite their lurid curiosity, they keep a respectful distance; Handler commands a great deal of fearful respect. Most of them are laughing or leering or making cruel, obscene comments to one another. Hound barely notices, and doesn't care at all. They don't matter. Only Handler matters.

She does care, though, when one of the pilots breaks the circle and approaches. A woman. The laughter dies away, replaced by hushed pleas for their comrade to retreat back into line. She doesn't. Hound flashes her a look, teeth bared, although her treat is too all-consuming for her to expend anything more than a stray thought on anything but rubbing her cunt all over Handler's leg.

The woman returns Hound's look with a hateful glare. "How can you let that... thing do that to you?" she demands of Handler.

Handler stares at her. She doesn't flinch, which is impressive. Handler remains relaxed, amused. "What do you mean?"

"She's a fucking rebel!" the woman spits. She steps forward again. "An enemy."

"Not anymore," Handler replies calmly. "What's your name, pilot?"

"Sergeant Meetra Kotys," she answers. "Sir," she adds, a beat later than she should.

"You needn't be afraid, Sergeant Kotys," Handler tells her. "I personally oversaw Thrace's reconditioning. Our domestication procedures are extremely thorough. There is no risk of reversion to adverse behavior."

Hound hears but doesn't listen. It's not her place to listen. It's her place to rut against Handler's boot like the dumb animal she knows she is.

"I'm not afraid!" Sergeant Kotys spits. "I'm fucking disgusted. That woman took down half my wing at Hebros Ridge last year. Six people in the ground. Because of her." The pilot's eyes are uneven. Wild. "She deserves worse than this."

Handler takes her time composing a reply. She pushes her foot forward, pressing her boot against Hound's cunt. Hound moans, unfathomably grateful for this gift. She keeps humping, the rhythmic, bucking motion of her hips growing steadily more and more desperate.

"The Hound and her mech are a significant asset to the Imperial forces," Handler says eventually. Her voice is icier now. More menacing. "That is all you should need to know, Sergeant. I'm pleased you value the lives of your fellow pilots. You might

consider how many more of them might have been lost today without Hound here.”

Sergeant Kotys bristles at that. With a woman like Handler, there’s an implied threat lurking behind her every word, but the pilot is too aggrieved to care.

“But,” Handler adds, pausing for long enough to emphasize her charity. “Perhaps it will help you to think of it like this: my little warhound here is not Sartha Thrace. She is not the Sartha Thrace who killed your comrades. Whatever you want to do to her, it won’t be revenge. She is not Sartha Thrace. I have made her something else. Understand?”

Sergeant Kotys’s eyes flit uncertainly between Handler and Hound as she struggles to wrap her head around that; to reconcile her anger with it. In the end, she shakes her head.

“No,” she snarls. “No. That’s her. That’s fucking her. Seen that face a hundred times on the posters. That’s her fucking face. What about her hair, huh? And her clothes? If she’s something else, why does she look the same way she always did?”

“Ego totems.” Handler’s calm was impenetrable. “A few personal touches, nothing more. A little continuity and familiarity helps to maintain a sustainable, pliable outer persona.”

Sergeant Kotys just laughs thickly. “Fuck whatever that means.”

She takes another step forward. This is too close for Hound; she rouses herself a little from her stupid rut and begins to growl protectively at the sergeant from behind her muzzle. She only stops and returns to humping when Handler rests Her hand on Hound’s head.

“How can you just touch her like that?” Sergeant Kotys demands. She is furious

beyond reason. Furious enough to risk the pilot's wings she wore so proudly on her collar. "It makes me sick. Every time we're told to drag her out into combat I feel like I'm gonna throw up in my damn cockpit."

Hound isn't paying attention again. The sounds of her rubbing herself on Handler's leg are turning increasingly wet. Her cunt is soaked, and the dark stain on the front of her pants is starting to drip.

"Feel like I'm gonna get shot in the back every time I'm not looking her way." The corner of Sergeant Kotys's mouth keeps twitching down. "We all do. How do you know she's not just playing you, huh? How do we know she's not gonna just... just snap out of it, or something?"

Handler's lip turns upwards. "Does she look to you like she's going to snap out of it? See for yourself."

Sergeant Kotys looks at Hound - *really* looks at her. She looks at the expression of dumb, grateful lust on her face. At the metal cage strapped firmly over her mouth. At the vacancy in her eyes, and the vulgar, bestial enthusiasm in her hips. She stares for way too long.

"Fuck..." she breathes. Her cheeks are red. "I can't believe this. This is wrong. This is the woman who... I should really just..."

She reaches to her side and draws her pistol from its holster.

A few brave members of the crowd of pilots start to reach forwards, especially when Sergeant Kotys points her gun straight at Hound. Handler seems to know something they don't, though. She flashes them a look, and they freeze. All eyes are on the sergeant.

She moves slow and shuddery. Like Hound, she's not uninjured. There's a mean cut on her forehead and a couple of bruises on her cheek. She looks exhausted too, but her hand is steady when she puts the barrel of her gun right against Hound's forehead.

Hound barely even notices. To her, it's nothing more than a little shock of cold as she feels the metal touch her skin. A mere distraction from what actually matters. She's in heat. Handler is right here with her. She just needs to do what she's supposed to do. She needs to enjoy her treat.

"God," Sergeant Kotys grunts. She sounds almost disgusted, and almost something else. "What the fuck is wrong with her?"

The tip of her gun travels down the side of Hound's face. The sergeant uses it like an extension of her own hand, dragging it heavily, callously across Hound's skin until she's prodding it into her cheek. The pitch of Hound's moaning changes for a moment, but only for a moment.

"What about this, huh?" Sergeant Kotys nods to Handler as she jabs the tip of her gun hard into the side of Hound's muzzle. Hound whimpers. "What's this for?"

"That's for your benefit, sergeant," Handler replies. There's a slight smirk on her face. "It helps our people understand her new place."

"That's fucking twisted."

The expression on Sergeant Kotys's face is so mixed it's impossible to read. She hasn't taken her eyes off Hound in minutes. She's transfixed, and she barely seems aware of what she's doing as she starts pushing harder with her gun, steadily dislodging Hound's muzzle from where it's supposed to be.

Even in heat, Hound can't fail to notice this. A sudden burst of anxiety claims her. She doesn't know what this means, so she looks pleadingly up at Handler.

"Wait." This is the first true order Handler has given. Her voice is crisp and expectant and makes even Sergeant Kotys pause and look. Handler holds her gaze for a long moment. "She is an asset," She reiterates firmly. "Do not damage her."

Sergeant Kotys nods. A moment later, Handler nods too. Both Hound and the sergeant see the nod for what it is.

Permission.

The barrel of Sergeant Kotys's gun is even more insistent now as it presses against the side of Hound's muzzle. She's pressing hard enough to move the metal cage out of place. Hound lets out an uncertain little whine. Her muzzle is tight enough that it hurts as it's pushed across her skin, but more importantly, this is unfamiliar. But she doesn't try to stop the sergeant, and she doesn't stop steadily bucking her hips as she continues to hump Handler's leg.

Handler gave permission.

Eventually the muzzle comes away from Hound's face. The strap that attaches it to Hound's head is still fastened, but it turns sideways and awkwardly hangs against her cheek. It's a welcome relief, but the crushing pressure of the tight muzzle is almost immediately replaced by the cold of Sergeant Kotys's handgun. She angles it slightly, wedging the very tip between Hound's lips and using it to pry them apart.

Hound whimpers. The sergeant isn't gentle. She butts the gun against Hound's teeth and folds her lips up against her face. Hound can't help but drool; she was already drooling a little from the sheer, gratifying pleasure of Handler's boot against her cunt short-circuiting her devastated brain, but now trickles of saliva are dangling down her

face and coating the gun's barrel.

Sergeant Kotys's expression twists.

She keeps going. She takes her time exploring, watching Hound's face twitch whenever she moves the gun like this or like that. Everyone is watching her, as she goes ten times further than any of the other pilots would have dared. They're not laughing now, they're just staring, mesmerized by what's happening.

The sergeant looks mesmerized too. She looks like she can't stop.

Her pushing and prodding starts to turn more deliberate. Hound is panting from pleasure, and Sergeant Kotys takes advantage to push her gun deeper, forcing Hound's teeth apart and ramming the hard, cold, metal barrel into her mouth. It slips in deep enough to make Hound choke on the unfamiliar object.

But after that, she starts sucking.

It's what Sergeant Kotys wants. Hound can tell from the way she moves the gun back and forth, thrusting it, fucking Hound's face. Hound doesn't care about the sergeant at all, but she cares about Handler more than anything, and she knows Handler wants this. That alone is enough to fill her with giddy, heady enthusiasm and make her bob her head as she laps pleasingly at the gun barrel despite the acrid taste of burnt metal and oil.

"Fuck," Sergeant Kotys breathes as she looks down at her.

There's something in the sergeant's eyes. Something bright, something growing. She keeps pumping faster with her gun, daring Hound to match her pace. She's wearing the expression of a girl who's just figuring out that breaking toys is simply a special, better way of playing with them. Her nostrils flare with each breath, and the

way her chest rises and falls beneath her uniform is sinful. There are a hundred ways to read what's going on in her face, but one thing is very obvious to every single person watching.

She is enjoying this.

Hound is enjoying it too. She enjoys everything Handler wants her to do, no matter what, but after grinding her needy cunt into Handler's boot for so long, her head is full of endorphins that make her stupid and transform anything into pleasure. And beyond that, a part of her simply loves the attention; a simple, brute, canine part of her they hammered into her head to make her more workable.

So, she has to try as hard as she can to be a very very good hound, and that means sucking off Sergeant Kotys's gun with the rapturous adoration she'd usually reserve for Handler Herself. She doesn't have to pay attention to the way her hips are moving, that's automatic, so can lavish all her attention on the stiff rod of the gun's barrel, lapping at it, drooling on it, taking it as deep as she can into her throat.

It's still difficult. Hound is delirious on everything now - the pain, the exhaustion, the attention - and she's trembling desperately as an orgasm builds inside her. It's messy. Her drool and spittle form a messy stain down the front of her top almost as bad as the one on her pants, and Sergeant Kotys's gun has been completely defiled with hanging loops of sticky, trembling saliva. Hound's moaning is back, so bestial and lewd and breathy it makes all the watching pilots blush.

She's close. Close to finishing her treat.

Then she hears a loud *click* as Sergeant Kotys flicks off the safety.

The click provokes a shudder from everyone, and Hound is no different. She glances up and sees that Sergeant Kotys's eyes are as wide as ever. She looks capable

of anything. Despite how fucked out of her skull she is, that click reminds Hound of what the object in her mouth is.

It's a gun, a killing thing, just like her.

That thought is as exciting as it is terrible. The danger makes Hound freeze in her tracks, but only for a moment, because then her body screams at her and reminds her that, no, she can't stop, not now, Handler didn't say she could stop, and besides, she's too fucking close, she can't take it.

So she starts humping again, moans low and breathy and pitiful, and somehow it feels better than ever. It's lightning against her cunt. Despite how insanely dangerous it is, Hound can't help jostling the gun. She can't remember if Sergeant Kotys's finger is on the trigger and it's too late to check because all she can see is white.

All Hound can do is fuck herself stupid and choke herself on the barrel and prepare for the thunderous oblivion that's coming. Her hips have hit the point of agony but she's rutting faster than ever, and so is the sergeant, turning Hound's throat into another cunt with her pistol. The long piece of steel, now dripping wet and body-warm, chokes Hound's moans, but she doesn't care how uncomfortable it is. She just wants to explode. She wants the end. Every part of her is desperate for it, even the parts that used to be Sartha Thrace.

When it finally hits her, Hound howls around the gun at the hangar ceiling before finally, blissfully, she can let herself go slack and slump against Handler's body.

This is as close as she gets to heaven. It's sacred. It's her treat. The privilege of getting to touch Handler like that outweighs anything, any potential humiliation, not that Hound cares about things like humiliation. It's the ultimate affirmation, smothering all doubts as the indelibly-conditioned link between obedience and reward gets another notch deeper.

This is her. This is Hound. This is her purpose.

Unusually, no one is looking at Hound right now. They're all looking at Sergeant Kotys.

She looks like she's just cum too, even though she has not touched herself. A few moments later, her face turns, and she looks utterly consumed with disgust and shame. Then the disgust recedes and she fills with calm, but it's a calm that glows from within and makes her fellow pilots nervous. Sergeant Kotys takes her time as she kneels down and cleans her gun on a dry portion of Hound's soiled clothing. Then she stands, turns to Handler, and salutes.

"Thank you, sir," she says crisply. "I think I understand now."

Handler's smile widens. She's pleased with the lesson, and pleased with Hound as she starts to rouse herself from her post-orgasmic stupor and see to the task of licking clean Handler's boots. "And what do you understand?"

"That this thing isn't Sartha Thrace, sir," Sergeant Kotys replies. "There's no way Sartha Thrace would have ever let me do that." She relaxes a little and the calm expression slips from her face, replaced with a smirk that is a mirror to Handler's own. "We broke her."

She's still pushing it by speaking to someone as senior as Handler this way, but she senses - correctly - that she can get away with it. The two of them share something now. An appetite, perhaps. An understanding that her fellow pilots have yet to partake in.

"That's right," Handler says. "Now, sergeant, please report to my office tomorrow. We need to discuss your conduct today."

It isn't a threat. It's an opportunity. Sergeant Kotys salutes again as she is dismissed.
"Yes, sir!"

Handler turns next to her charge. "Up, Hound."

Hound is so exhausted and stupefied by her orgasm that it takes her a moment to register what's being asked of her but inevitably, she obeys. With some reluctance, she hauls herself to her feet. Handler's boots aren't clean yet. It's a task that mustn't be left half-finished.

"You can finish that later, in your kennel," Handler instructs. She always knows what's going on inside Hound's head. "Now, here."

She reaches past Hound and properly unfastens her muzzle, only so she can fix it back in place and tie it tight. The way she does it is strict, but not even slightly cruel. She makes sure not to pinch Hound's skin or knot her hair. There's something gentle, even loving about the way she attaches the muzzle - which the crowd of watching pilots obviously finds extremely creepy.

"There," Handler says, once she's finished. And then, in her special voice: "*On The Leash.*"

Hound submerges instantly, but it takes a long while for Sartha to truly wake up, leaving their body to sway emptily for a moment before Sartha finds her footing. Once she does, just smiles. Handler is here. All is well. Being able to bask in Her presence washes away any lingering confusion, and the aftershocks of pleasure in her own body simply add to her mood.

She doesn't question them. She has no need. She's with Handler.

“Come along, Sartha,” Handler says, turning away. “I need to debrief you.”

Sartha nods and trots after her so she can stand at her place, at Handler’s heel. The debriefing is important, she knows. She never remembers her debriefings, but she knows she needs them to stay good. The two of them walk across the hangar deck to the elevator, Handler’s boots clacking loudly against the metal floor. Before they leave Sartha turns back to look.

All her fellow pilots are watching her. Some of them are smiling. Some of them are laughing. Some of their faces are filled with awe. Sartha isn’t surprised by the way they’re staring. She’s used to it. It’s only natural.

She’s a hero, after all.

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