

An Arion Ascends – Part II

by Dru



Just beyond the smallest moon of Vendor a twisting whirlpool of light opened out of nothing, growing into a vast and deep tunnel ... invisible unless beheld directly. Before it blinked out of existence with as much warning as it had arrived, the wormhole deposited three-thousand elite guard direct from the heart of Velor itself. The small nebula of battle-ready Velorians made its way quickly toward the last place Lyra's scribe had reported seeing the Vendorian Protector before her apparent death in battle. Hardened by the news of Lyra's loss, none of them were quite sure why the Enlightenment had called upon so many. One Arion ship could carry only a thousand at most ... but then such a provocative assault so far from the agreed frontiers of conflict was indeed worthy of such a response.

Without checking in with the locals, having already been invited to come, the swarm formed itself into a massive V formation and scoured the surface of the planet for the offending Arion forces.

"There!"

"But ..."

"... There's only one of them."

"She's mine ..."

"Only if you get there first!"

Sirren was still dusting herself off, considering another attempt to penetrate the bunker, when she saw them. The v-shaped cloud of Velorians almost blacked out the sun.

"It worked ..."

She did not have long to wait for the army to stop overhead. From their number a group of five swept down to land in a circle around her.

"Before we kill you, how about you tell us what this was supposed to achieve?"

The blonde man who spoke amused Sirren with his confidence. Little did he realise his presence was the very thing Sirren sought on Vendor.

"Why don't you run why you still can?" she taunted, raising an eyebrow.

"Foolish arrogance is hardly unexpected. Let someone else work out the why."

He moved in with two others flanking him. Another two stepped up behind and Sirren let them secure her arms as the three before her began delivering carefully placed blows. Her smile unnerved those who saw it.

Stepping back, all three stared in amazement at her unblemished skin. Letting them wrestle with their confusion a moment, Sirren twisted her wrists and grasped those who held her. With terrifying ease she swung them both around and killed all five of them in one tremendous impact.

The army overhead broke into motion, but before any could reach her Sirren began sweeping her deadly gaze through the sky. None knew what was going on until it was too late, and their number was reduced by over two-thirds before Sirren relented.

Unaware that she had done so much more than simply kill their comrades with overpowered heat-vision,

those survivors untouched by her special glare assumed their opponent must surely have exhausted herself to perform such an appalling feat. They moved to press advantage only to break themselves upon their super-supremis target.

For the next hour Sirren did nothing but stand on the field of battle allowing the Velorians to try everything they could think of to bring her down. She could feel their blows, sense the warmth from their heat-vision, and see the determination in their faces. Every blow inflicted its pain in reverse, her flesh accepting no injury from their efforts. Despite their apparent failure however, honour allowed them no retreat. There were, after all, still at least six-hundred of them and only one of her. Vendorian drones beamed battlefield footage directly to the planet's general staff, and they were horrified to see a growing number of crippled Velorian warriors laid out at her feet.

Moving at last in the thick throng of attackers, Sirren leaned back and slammed her fists into her sides. The force released by the twin impacts was enough to knock many from the sky, the shockwave clearing the injured violently away. Keeping a straight face Sirren grinned on the inside. All these Velorians could manage to do was to cause themselves harm. Curious, she watched the determined warriors regroup and come at her again. Impressed with what she achieved just putting her hands on her hips, she let them get close and thumped herself firmly in the stomach.

It was as though Sirren had let off a large bomb. The devastation caused to the immediate area surprised her. Even the ground before her was churned up as the shockwave tore through and scattered the Velorian assault.

"I had no idea this would be so easy."

A heartbeat later the assault began again. Ignoring all but one, she grasped hold of a large male and held him before her even as he struggled in her bone crushing grip and his comrades resumed hitting her with everything they had.

"I am so much more than I ever dreamed ..." she told him. "Look around you Velorian."

He did, terrified to see the cleared ground quickly crowded with injured warriors. One after the other a Velorian would fly in close, either swinging a limb or diving directly into their target. One after the other they crashed to the ground broken by their own attacks.

"I don't have to lift a finger to defeat your pathetic army."

Even the volume of her words hurt him. How can she be so beautiful? How could she be so overwhelmingly powerful?

"I just have to show up."

Deeply offended by her arrogance, the Velorian she held reeled back and brought his head down on her in a move of last resort, but somehow she moved so that instead of her face, he rammed his forehead into her inviting breast ... and everything got very hazy.

Sirren smiled. There was no stopping her now. Already she was strong enough to ignore a direct assault by the hardest Velorian warriors. She cast her eyes over the man she held, feeling his drop of power enter her increasing reservoir with almost as much pleasure as she had felt taking the two-thousand before him.

"Kneel!" she commanded, the power of her voice pained every Vendorian within a mile ... so much so it stopped each and everyone of them tracks, driving the nearest to the ground in agony. "Kneel before your goddess!!!"

As they recovered, none of them knew what to do. For several extended heartbeats the Velorians looked about, as though everyone was expecting someone else to take the lead. Sirren watched them sternly, thoroughly enjoying their fear. Their fear of failure. Their fear of death. But above all, their fear of her. As

she prepared to repeat her command, one of them at last made a decision.

“Retreat!”

There was reluctance ... but few hesitated to respond to the cry. As fast as they could move, Those able-bodied assisting the injured, the surviving Velorians streamed into the upper-atmosphere and flew directly toward the wormhole. This foe was unlike anything any of them had ever seen or heard of, and their battle against her had extensively proven the futility of pressing on with the assault.

Sirren filled with tremendous pride as she watched the Velorian army, or what little remained of it, turn tail and run ... as though she were a raging fire and they the fauna that stood helplessly in its path. Though she knew they were flying with all speed she knew she could easily outpace them. Her entire body brimmed with raw power ... and not only had she taken their physical strength, Sirren had stolen their knowledge as well. And so she knew where they were going. She knew they would need time to open the wormhole. Time she would happily give them ... because she knew where the wormhole led.

Looking down and examining the interior of the bunker Sirren was dismayed to see it was now almost entirely devoid of toys. The intelligent Vendorian admiralty had ordered the facility be abandoned during the battle, and the men of the base were very efficient about following that command.

“You have nowhere to run,” Sirren observed, hovering up over the base to cast her penetrating gaze over the land all around the bunker, mapping the tunnels that spread from it in almost all directions. She found the tunnels connected the bunker to other military outposts through hundreds of miles of bedrock far beneath the surface. In fact, as she investigated further Sirren found a network of tunnels connecting each and every military base she could see.

Smiling with anticipation, Sirren once again dove at the bunker. This time the impact went very differently. The top-secret metal that had proven impassable on her first try gave up instantly on the second attempt. Having overestimated its strength Sirren had hit with far, far too much force. Those few who remained either in the bunker itself, and those still fleeing in tunnels, were killed instantly as a crater three-miles bigger than the base and half again as deep was torn violently into the surface of Vendor. Millions of tonnes of earth and steel were churned up and tossed several miles into the air.

Flying clear of the damage Sirren was stunned by her own power. The rumble was still resounding as the ground continued to quake for what seemed to her an eternity. The dust cloud would hover for hours, perhaps days, above the devastation. But as much as she was awed, Sirren could not afford to admire her handiwork any longer.

Looking at the fleeing Velorians, she was pleased to see they had almost made it. Reaching up and stretching out she accelerated into pursuit, and amazed herself with the speed she achieved. The distance closed almost instantly, then grew as she went wide around the six-hundred strong cloud of frightened blondes and continued on to their intended location. Taking a position on the surface of the small moon nearby, Sirren waited and watched.

General Karak had given her very extensive, yet clear instructions. After provoking and then absorbing the Velorians, she had been supposed to finish her conquest of Vendor and wait there for her General to arrive. He intended a long drawn-out war against the Velorian Enlightenment, his plan to wear them down until they surrendered so he could then grind them into dust. He dreamed of decades of war. But Sirren had a new plan ... one with a much shorter time-frame.

The instant the wormhole flowered into existence, Sirren launched herself from the moon to almost instantly place herself between the churning opening and those whose intended escape it was meant to provide. Unperturbed by her small presence in the vast opening, the Velorians moved forward ... hoping to get past through speed and numbers. Sirren let them get close enough to believe they would make it before unleashing her true power upon them. When the golden light blinked out three seconds later, not one of her quarry remained.

With even greater power now, Sirren had no feelings of doubt as she entered the wormhole ... the conquest of Vendor could wait a few hours. Taking the might of three-thousand had been incredible. Sirren wondered what taking five-and-half-billion would be like ...

Karak was still furious with Sirren for going off on her own, even though he had half expected it. He had not expected her to be so bold as to take the fight to Velor on the very first day in the field with her new powers. This changed things. He would have to swallow his uncertainty, and make his move today.

"Impulsive," he mused.

"I don't know that the tracking device will survive the wormhole, General. The signal is breaking up."

"The material will protect it, Major." Karak assured him.

"We're losing her ..." one of Betan technicians reported urgently.

"We know where she's going, you fool. We cannot follow her there. All we can do now is wait for her to come back. She might be killed; but we must ready ourselves for the strong possibility she will defeat any and all who stand before her."

Karak calmly turned away from the monitor he had been glued to for the last two-hours, the live feed from the camera hidden in Sirren's uniform now showed only the swirling wall of the wormhole ... and already the image had become fragmented.

"I think the experiment was perhaps too successful," Major Eilera observed. "I still don't understand why you didn't test it on me."

Karak destroyed her irritation with a cold humiliating glare, making her look to the floor and mumble a formal apology. "Of course your wisdom knows not defeat, great General. Forgive my ignorance of your grand design."

"I must prepare for Sirren's return. Stay here and monitor for her tracking beacon. I want to know the moment she comes out of the Velorian system. If she survives, she will be powerful beyond your feeble imagination. But I will ready. I will crush her."

Karak rose, leaving Eilera to her assigned task. Making his way through the ship, towards his destiny, he thought back to the display he had just witnessed. Those he passed in the corridors were unnerved by his smile. General Karak never smiled ...

When the door to the lab opened, the busy Betan scientists turned to see Karak's intimidating form fill the space.

"Plans have changed. Turn it on."

The Betan in shook nervously. "But General, we need more time ..."

"We have none." He entered the room and sat down in front of the emitter.

"But I still don't fully understand ..."

"You told me you could operate it."

"Operate it, yes. Guarantee success ... not yet."

"I can offer you a guarantee, Betan. If you don't obey me this instant, I'll personally tear your limbs from your weak frame. Starting with your favourite one."

"General you don't understand ... The process could kill you. I just don't completely understand it yet. I have to know more ..."

“At this point, it doesn’t matter if I do die. Either the High Command will discover my treachery, and kill all of us. Including you, by the way. Or Sirren will return and all you know will be destroyed. So if you want to live as much as I do, then smarten-up, and push the fucking button.”

Stunned by the General’s honesty, the Betan was slow to start but quick about it once he got going. He barked instructions at his surprised team, and within three minutes Karak was hit with a brilliant beam of purple light.

Major Eilera sat fuming. She tried not to feel it, but resentment burned within her. The feed from Sirren’s battle on Vendor had both terrified, and aroused her. The idea of facing such power on a field of war was a truly depressing one, but the idea of wielding that power made her burn with desire. But her chance had passed her by, Karak had passed the opportunity to another. And now that other had betrayed him. If her General had bestowed such a gift upon Eilera her loyalty would only have strengthened with her body. Now it was too late. She knew he would not share such a gift again. She knew deep down that he would take the power for himself, and for himself alone.

As she wondered how long she would live after Karak had the ability Sirren had proven so effective, the intercom pinged.

“Major Eilera, this is Private Second-Class Ma-Tyn in the medical lab. We have a situation.”

Eilera tried to keep her annoyance from showing. “I’ve got orders. I’m busy. Get someone else.”

“I’m afraid you’ll have to come yourself, Major. I believe this situation requires the presence of the ranking officer.”

Her annoyance was now on full display. “Then get the General you oaf!”

“Major, the General is already here. We need you.”

The uncertainty in Ma-Tyn’s voice gave rise to a little guilty hope. “I’ll be right there.”

Commanding the Betan technicians to maintain their vigil, Eilera followed in Karak’s footsteps to the door of the medical lab. Private Second-class Ma-Tyn stood outside waiting for her.

“Inside ...” he told her, his salute clumsy.

“Wait here. Let no-one in.”

When she opened the door, she was greeted with a horrible sight. So horrible that for just a heartbeat or two the experienced veteran felt nauseous. What was left of her General was scattered over the whole room, small pieces of him clinging to everything and everyone she could see. The entire room seemed drenched in blood.

“I warned him!” the team leader declared, clearly shaken by the event. “He insisted! Check the security camera ... I told him not to ...”

“You were in charge of the equipment?” Eilera demanded. “What went wrong?”

“We weren’t ready! The machines are still set as Ky-Noir left them ... theoretically it should have worked ... it shouldn’t have mattered.”

“What? What shouldn’t have mattered?”

“I thought there was chance ... Sex shouldn’t have affected it ...”

“Skietra damn you! What went wrong?”

"I don't know ... I don't know."

"You obviously know something."

"Well ... the subject was a woman last time. Maybe adjustments are required for a male ... but it shouldn't be the case. If I had more time, I could've finished my examination of the equipment."

Her General was dead. Eilera suddenly outranked every Warrior-Prime on the ship. She turned to regard the seat Karak exploded out of, casting her eyes over the mess he had become.

"Is the equipment damaged?"

The nervous Betan darted to the main console and tapped a few keys. "No. There appears to be no damage to the machines. Everything reads as normal."

"And you think you failed because the General was not a woman?"

"I don't know. Not for sure."

Eilera didn't hesitate. After what she had seen Sirren accomplish after her transformation, Eilera had to have that power too.

"Get that seat cleaned off," she commanded, shoving a nearby scientist toward it. "Now."

Three other technicians aided the first. As soon as she deemed it clean enough to sit upon, Eilera did just that.

"Activate the machine."

"But Major Eilera ... we just saw what can happen ..."

"We saw what happened to Karak. But I've seen what happened to the first to sit here ... and I'm willing to risk death for chance to have that, understand?"

For the second time, the Betan steeled himself and started issuing orders to his team. Blood was carefully removed from the emitter array, and Eilera shut her eyes as the machinery wound up.

"And here we go ... three, two, one ..."

Eilera felt very foolish as her nerves screamed out in pain. She was certain she would fly apart. Surely it wasn't meant to hurt this much ... was it? To her, the three minutes it took for the process to be complete was a lifetime of agony. But it was a lifetime that passed.

The purple light dissipated, leaving Eilera sitting in total silence. The Betans, who sheltered from what they were sure would be another gruesome failure, slowly moved toward her.

The one responsible for creating the second super-enhanced Arion warrior looked her over with very wide eyes. He was certain she had grown larger. And had she been so beautiful before? He didn't remember Eilera being so easy on the eye before. Her bulky physique seemed somehow more streamlined, her skin smoother. He had no doubt her tanned flesh, so openly displayed in her uniform, had not possessed that sheen of health before. The lines of age had vanished from her improved features, taking years off her appearance, making her look like she was fresh out of the academy.

"Major Eilera ... ? Are you alright? Did it work?"

She was better than alright. The pain had departed instantly, replaced with a feeling of deep well-being she had not felt in decades.

"I'm definitely alright," she mused. "As for whether or not it worked ... lets find out."

The Betans didn't know about the special bonus in the new gene sequence. Karak had seen no need to tell them everything. So when Eilera tested her new ability for the first time they greeted death in total bewilderment.

"Oh ... yes!"

Though she gained very little from them, her success in absorbing the Betan technicians felt wonderful. She hadn't expected ... or wanted ... their knowledge, but that came too. She also noticed that the gold radiation had removed the pieces of Karak wherever it had touched his scattered remains. Smiling, she completely removed all evidence of her General's unnatural demise.

She could feel her strength grow as she cleaned the room ... but because his mind had already been destroyed, Eilera did not gain any knowledge from Karak's fragments.

"More. I must have more ..."