Title is from the Crosby, Stills & Nash song which is an A+ song about feeling sad about your kids growing up.
This is a fic exploring the events leading up to keeping Quill around on the Eclector. This is a story about Yondu and Kraglin trying and failing to not care about Peter. If you want to say hi on tumblr, I'm stardorkquill.

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The first thing the kid does is cry. A few of the others cried too, but most of them knew that they were gonna get picked up eventually. This little Terran is on hour two of sobbing in the cargo hold and Yondu’s starting to wonder if he picked up the wrong kid. Can’t be, they don’t get jobs wrong, they have a reputation to uphold. And Ego, well, he probably makes mistakes but a man literally named Ego isn’t going to admit that he sent them to get the wrong kid.
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

This is setting up the premise for the fic, Peter's sad and alone, Yondu and Kraglin aren't too happy about having a kid running around.

The first thing the kid does is cry. A few of the others cried too, but most of them knew that they were gonna get picked up eventually. This little Terran is on hour two of sobbing in the cargo hold and Yondu's starting to wonder if he picked up the wrong kid. Can’t be, they don’t get jobs wrong, they have a reputation to uphold. And Ego, well, he probably makes mistakes but a man literally named Ego isn’t going to admit that he sent them to get the wrong kid.

Yondu jumps to the next possible explanation: the kid didn’t know he was getting picked up. Well, that isn’t exactly his fault, considering this is the first time he’s even seen the kid, but he knows all too well what it’s like to just be taken. He’s balls deep in a bunch of thoughts he really doesn’t want to be having when Kraglin taps him on the shoulder. The man’s a goddamn ghost and one of these days he’s going to get punched, stabbed, or shot for sneaking up on someone.

“Cap’n, kid’s done cryin’.”

Yondu looks down from the observation dock, and sure enough Kraglin’s right, “So?”

“So, I was thinkin’ you could go say somethin’. He’s sure been cryin’ a lot.”

He isn’t sure when they got to a point that Kraglin felt ballsy enough to give him suggestions on how to run his ship, because he’s sure as hell killed people for less. He’d never admit it but it’s tolerable having another level headed person around, and Kraglin’s right more times than not.

He smirks, “You gettin’ soft?”

“Fuck no,” Kraglin grimaces at the idea, “Kid’s jus’..... Small.”

Yondu bites back a comment of ‘no shit, that’s generally how kids work’ because once again, much to his dismay, his first mate is right. The kid’s just a skinny thing, hugging his knees with his
forehead resting on his kneecaps. Goddamn sentimentality. It’s stupid, he had no problem taking the other kids to Ego and they were just as innocent as this one, so what makes one scrappy Terran any different?

He’s had a bad feeling about this situation for a long time, but he was willing to overlook a few things in the name of profit. He should’ve backed out when those few things started becoming a shitload of things, but backing out of such a profitable arrangement was definitely grounds for a mutiny. Still, nobody decent pays that much for kids to be brought to them, and nobody with good intentions needs that many kids delivered to their doorstep.

He bares his teeth as he speaks, “Fine.”

Kraglin looks surprised, like he didn’t even consider that Yondu would take his advice; well, it’s always good to keep him on his toes. He heads for the staircase down to the cargo hold, but Kraglin’s still standing there like a hologram on pause.

“You comin’? Or are you just gonna stand around gawkin’ all day?”

The kid lifts his head up when the door opens; he looks like he might start crying again and Yondu is debating the pros and cons of leaving right now and letting him finish crying for real. But, the kid stays stoic. Kraglin takes his place next to him, they’re both standing in front of the kid, who wipes his eyes with the back of his hands.

“Are you my dad?” The kid looks up at Kraglin, hands still holding his knees close to his chest.

It takes a second to register that the kid is talking to him but he regains composure, “No, I ain’t yer daddy.”

The kid looks disappointed, still just seconds away from crying but managing to hold it together, “What about him?” He nods towards, Yondu.

The question is so unexpected that Kraglin has to force himself to not laugh, “Considerin’ the fact that he’s blue an’ all, I think it’s safe to say that he ain’t yer daddy either.”
“Then… Then where is he?” The kid’s voice cracks but he’s still holding strong, it’s a kind of determination that even Yondu can find it in himself to be proud of.

“We’re takin’ you to him,” it isn’t much but Yondu has never been good at much of anything other than fighting.

It looks like this is the last straw, because the kid starts blubberyng, “Why--why isn’t he here to get me? Why didn’t he come?”

They’ve been working together long enough that Yondu can tell Kraglin is giving him the ‘what should I do’ look. He gives a small nod that’s become code for ‘do what you think you need to’. Kraglin steps forward and extends a hand to the kid, who just eyes it like it’s some kind of venomous creature preparing to strike.

“C’mon,” Kraglin drops his voice to a whisper.

“Where are you gonna take me?” The kid still looks panicked, eyes wide, shrinking back against the cold metal wall of the cargo hold.

“Less you wanna sleep on the floor down here, I suggest you follow him,” Yondu flashes a smile that makes the kid look even more terrified, which up until this moment, Kraglin hadn’t considered looking more terrified was possible.

The kid grabs his hand in a lightning fast movement and Kraglin pulls him up to a standing position. He doesn’t let go, just keeps his small hand wrapped around Kraglin’s wrist. He steps out into the winding hallways and starts on his way to the room for the kid.

“It’s dark in here…”

The kid squeezes harder on Kraglin’s hand. It is dark in the Eclector, there’s only the soft amber glow of the emergency lights but Kraglin could navigate the ship blindfolded based on sound alone.

They’re close to the room when the kid speaks up again, “What’s your name? My name’s Peter…”
Getting to know the cargo really isn’t part of the plan, so Kraglin keeps moving. He brings them to a stop outside of the door to a room that really isn’t a room. It’s more of a mattress with a blanket shoved into a storage space that’s mostly clean. It’s not much, but to someone like Kraglin, who’s sleeping quarters have included both the streets of Xandar and any open space on the Eclector, including the vents, it’s probably a bit more than the kid deserves.

The kid, Peter, shuffles into the room and sits down on the mattress, “Thanks… Uh…”

Telling Peter his name is probably the least he can do, especially since he doesn’t know exactly how long it’ll take to get to Ego’s Planet, “Kraglin. Name’s Kraglin.”

Peter smiles, just a little bit, “Thanks, Kraglin.”

Kraglin makes a noise of acknowledgement and turns back down the hallway. When he checks back in after his evening rounds, Peter’s curled up with his back against the wall. He’s wearing something that looks like a headset and holding something rectangular in his hands. His eyes are closed and he almost looks peaceful.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

This is a Kraglin-centric chapter. He gets stuck watching after Peter for the day and denies that he cares about the kid while doing things that look an awful lot like caring about someone. Peter gets his first taste of daily life on the Eclector and it's kind of scary. Kraglin also finds out that once you get Peter talking, he pretty much never shuts up.

“You want me to do what?”

Yondu stays seated, picking at something under his nail with a knife, “Bring the kid along with you, keep him busy an’ away from the important shit. Can’t keep him locked up all day ‘cus it ain’t right to do.”

Kraglin could bring up the fact that running kids at all isn’t right to do, but he does enjoy being both alive and the first mate on the Eclector, so he keeps his mouth shut. This isn’t out of the ordinary, they’ve always kept the kids busy, given them a few easy jobs to “earn their keep”. But, Kraglin’s never been the one in charge of a kid. Objectively, it’s not the worst assignment he’s ever gotten, but it’s not the kinda thing he expected he’d have to do after becoming first mate.

“Can’t Tullk do it?” He’s got a bit of leeway when it comes to complaining, mostly because he never complains about anything.

“Naw, kid bit him when he tried ta get close,” Yondu laughs, “Kid’d make a fine Ravager if it weren’t for that prick Ego. You got a rapport wi’ him. Prob’ly won’t bite you.”

Peter’s squished into the corner of the room with his back against the walls; he has pretty good survival instincts for a previously land-locked Terran. At the sight of Kraglin, he peels off the wall. Tullk probably deserved to be bitten, he’s big, ugly, and doesn’t have a mite of tact in his body when it comes to civilians. That’s really what the kid is, a bystander who got wrapped up in something weird.
“Kraglin?!” he’s smiling now and Kraglin regrets telling him his name, the kid’s gonna want to get buddy buddy with him and it’ll be all that harder to get him to go with Ego.

“Yup, c’mon.”

“Where are we going now?” The kid stands up and clips the rectangular object to his waistband of his pants; he notices Kraglin staring at it, “It’s a Walkman, it plays music. Don’t you have them up here?”

“Naw. Now let’s go,” Kraglin’s not much of a talker, but Peter really hasn’t caught onto that yet.

He stands up and follows the other man out of the room. Peter stays quiet for the entirety of Kraglin’s first round, mostly because that involves making sure everyone’s where they need to be and most of the crew looks like they could kill him. When they end up in the stores to run inventory, the kid picks up right where he left off.

“Are you human too?” Peter asks, passing him another ration package to cross off the list.

“Nope,” Kraglin sets it down in the pile of stuff that’s already been inventoried.

“Then what are you? You look like me.”

“’M a Xandarian.”

“What’s a Xandarian?”

“Someone from Xandar,” He says it like it should be obvious to anyone who knows anything.

“Where’s Xandar? Did the blue guy take you too?”

“Nah, joined ‘cos I wanted to,” he checks off the last package Peter handed him, “There should be another three rations ‘round here. You see any more of ‘em?”
Peter shakes his head, “Nope. No more. I don’t know where they went.”

Kraglin’s seen enough new recruits during his days to know where this is going, “Give ‘em back, Pete. We ain’t gonna starve you, but if you’re gonna take rations there’s gonna be consequences. Don’t have to hoard food ‘round here, just hafta ask.”

He pulls the three packages of rations from the back of his waistband and hands them over, tears in his eyes. Kraglin takes them and sets them down on a crate, then grabs the kid’s waist and picks him up.

“HEY! PUT ME DOWN!” The kid bangs his little fists against Kraglin’s arms.

Kraglin sets him down on a crate and shushes him, they’re at eye level now, “We don’t steal from each other. That includes food.”

“B-but you’re so skinny!”

Kraglin smiles, “They ain’t starvin’ me, that’s just what I look like.” He goes back to work, leaving the kid sitting up on top of the crate. Kraglin’s just finally fallen into the weird zen of mind-numbing repetitive tasks when the kid speaks again.

“I miss home.”

Kraglin makes a noise to confirm that he heard it.

“I miss my momma too, but I think she’s dead.”

Kraglin thinks, well, we’ve all been there, but keeps the thought to himself. It isn’t gonna help the kid, it’ll just make things worse.

Peter’s crying again, shaking so hard that he can barely get words out, “She asked me to take her hand and--and--and-- I couldn’t do it. I dunno why, but I--I couldn’t.”
Kraglin sighs, “S’okay, kid, I’m sure she knows you didn’t mean nothin’ bad by it.”

Peter wipes his eyes with the sleeves of his shirt, “You really think so?”

Kraglin nods, “Jump down an’ I’ll take you to the mess hall.”

Peter slides down, off of the crate, and lands on the floor. Kraglin does a last once-over of the storage room, then gestures towards the door. The kid struggles to keep up beside him and Kraglin forces himself to slow down, since his legs are almost as long as the kid is tall. When Peter catches up, he falls into step beside Kraglin and reaches out to grab his wrist again.

He doesn’t exactly want to walk into the mess hall with a kid hanging off of his arm, but Peter’s just lost everyone that mattered to him. Kid’s got no family left and Kraglin knows that he was probably just as clingy with some of the other kids on the streets of Xandar. Leaving the kid alone would do more harm than good; all he can do is hope that Terrans don’t have some kind of imprinting thing going on.

As soon as they make it into the large room, Peter ducks behind him. He can make out a few of the crew members gesturing at him and the kid, but all he does in retaliation is glare and hope it shuts them up. He leads Peter over to an empty space at a table and sits him down, then holds up an open palm as a signal to stay. The kid looks nervous, but he’s going to have to learn to be alone at some point. He comes back with something hot and reasonably edible, then puts it down on the table in front of Peter.

He looks apprehensive, but he grabs a chunk of meat and sticks it in his mouth.

Peter chews for a second, then tries to talk around the mouthful of food, “Tastes kinda like beef.”

Kraglin isn’t exactly sure what beef is, but he decides it isn’t worth the 5 minute lecture of an answer he’ll get if he asks. Instead, he just watches the kid eat; he’s shovelling food into his mouth like he’s never going to get to eat again despite the conversation Kraglin just had with him. Maybe Peter doesn’t trust him as much as he thought? Or, it’s a Terran thing. They don’t know much about Terra, just that it’s stuck in the dark ages compared to pretty much every other civilized planet in existence.

Peter slides the tray towards Kraglin and yawns, then he props his head up on his hand, eyes half closed.
He yawns again, “What’re we doin’ now?”

It’s at this moment that Kraglin realizes he has no idea how long the Terran day cycle is, or how long Terran kids need to sleep. He’s been on his shift for about 14 hours, maybe longer since the kid was around to slow him down. That’s probably too long for any kid, Terran or not. Shit, it’s probably too long for him but he’s not exactly the pinnacle of healthy habits in the first place.

“You’re goin’ to sleep before you fall asleep right here.”

“What about you?” Peter yawns again as he stands up.

“Got a few more things left.” He replies, leading the kid out of the room.

Peter turns around, stopping Kraglin in the middle of the hallway with a concerned look on his face, “When are you gonna sleep? Do you have to sleep? Or do Xandarians not have to sleep?”

He nudges the kid along, “Yeah, I sleep, just later.”

The kid seems satisfied with the answer. He crawls into the storage space and waves at Kraglin before covering up with the blanket. Then, Kraglin goes off to do the last rounds, he’s probably done enough. Even if he hasn’t, he has the kid for an excuse of why he didn’t get all his work done.

He stops back an hour later; the kid’s technically part of his rounds now, he tells himself, there’s no other reason. The pretense fades away when he gets close. He can hear the kid mumbling something, then the mumbles turn into shouts and then into quiet sobs.

Kraglin kneels down in front of the storage space and drops his voice low, “What’s wrong?”

Peter doesn’t move, just whispers, “Nothing…”

“I don’t know about you, but that sure didn’t sound like ‘nothing’.”
“It’s stupid… Just a dream.”

Kraglin nods and crawls forward into the room. It’s small, but nothing he hasn’t dealt with before. He slides the door closed, leaving a gap of two feet just so they don’t get locked in, then he lies down with his back to the kid. It’s a habit he’s never going to be able to shake, never turn your back on a threat. The open door is significantly more of a threat than the kid who can’t be more than 8 cycles old. Peter waits a couple of minutes to make sure that the man isn’t going to leave, then grabs onto Kraglin’s arm.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Here's a Yondu-Centric chapter. This chapter features both bed-sharing AND attempted murder! There's not much Peter in this chapter, but he'll be back soon enough. (I like the trope of 'first mate shares the bed with the Captain' because bed-sharing but also because it makes sense in the context of 'this is a society in which sleeping space is a precious commodity so that would be a privilege' so it's not out of character.)

Yondu isn’t concerned when Kraglin doesn’t come back to the cabin at night. It’s just strange for someone to pass up on a guaranteed sleeping spot. He also isn’t looking for him, just doing a last set of rounds to be sure everything’s alright, when he finds Kraglin curled up in the storage space with the Terran brat. Looks like all it took to get Kraglin to revert back to the days when he’d sleep in any place he could fit was a kid.

Yondu crouches down and knocks on the wall of the storage space, the door’s half shut, enough that most people won’t look twice but not enough that they’d be locked in. Kraglin shoots up, hand on the knife he keeps in his boot, and notices that it’s just Yondu.

“Rise’n’shine, Krags,” he smirks, “Now, if I didn’t know you, I’d say I think yer goin’ soft.”

Kraglin stretches out as best he can in the small space, joints popping loudly enough to almost make Yondu wince. He finishes off by cracking his knuckles and crawls out of the space.

“Kid was havin’ nightmares.” Kraglin shrugs.

“We all have nightmares but I don’t see you gettin’ cuddly with the rest of the crew.” Yondu knows that this situation is different, but denying it was a hell of a lot easier than admitting it. Kraglin was definitely getting attached to the kid, which would present some problems in the near future but they’re still a week or so from Ego’s planet.

“Is it mornin’ yet?” Kraglin yawns, still stretching now that he can stand all the way up.

“Nah. Still got a couple’a hours of shut-eye left,” Yondu claps him on the back.
“Still on babysittin’ duty tomorrow?”

It’d be easier to dump the kid on Kraglin, but he doesn’t want him to get more attached, “I’ll take over tomorrow. Gotta find out what the kid’s good at so he can pull his weight ‘round here.”

“Pretty good at thievin’,” Kraglin mumbles before he’s even aware he’s said it out loud.

Yondu would be mad, if it weren’t for the fact that it’s a kid they’re talking about, instead, he laughs, “That right? What’d he take?”

Kraglin’s smiling too, “Some Rations, thought I was proof that you was starvin’ us on here.”

“Well, you are a skinny little fuck. Only reason I let you on board was ‘cus you could fit in the vents.”

Kraglin smirks, “That all I’m good for?”

Yondu opens the door to the Captain’s quarters, “Don’t push yer luck. I can always demote you.”

“Well who would you promote?” Kraglin smirks again, being half asleep is making him more mouthy than usual, “I’m startin’ to think you need me around.”

Yondu shoves him into the room, “You better shut up n’ get to sleep before you say somethin’ you regret and I kick you out.”

Kraglin lies down on the bed and curls up so his feet aren’t hanging off the end, “I’m pretty sure we both know that ain’t a real threat.”

Yondu sits down on the bed and Kraglin shifts around until there’s a respectable amount of space between them before he curls in on himself in the way he always seems to do. It’s like he’s trying to make himself as small as is physically possible, and it really can’t be comfortable. He isn’t sure if it’s because Kraglin still doesn’t trust him, or if it’s just something he does. He’s in trouble if it’s the first
one; if your crew doesn’t trust you, then you aren’t gonna make it far.

Kraglin’s breathing is evening out and he looks asleep, so Yondu moves onto the next issue of the day: the kid. Might as well see if he’s any good at stealing. You never know when you’ll need another thief around. Now, he doesn’t want to get the kid killed, so they’re probably gonna have to stop somewhere instead of letting him practice on crew members. There’s gotta be something nearby where he can show the kid the fine art of pickpocketing.

He presents the idea to Kraglin while he’s still half asleep because it’s probably the only way he’s gonna be on board with it.

“I’m thinkin’ we spend some time planet-side on Aurelios-6, restock on everything ‘fore we leave charted territory.”

Kraglin gives him an apprehensive look, “Jus’ did inventory yesterday and we got more than enough of everythin’. Plus, we’ve been out to Ego’s Planet ‘round eight times by now an’ nothing’s gone wrong.”

Yondu scowls, “Don’t question orders.”

“This is about the kid, innit?”

Yondu doesn’t answer, just goes back to searching for a reasonably clean shirt to put on.

“Crew ain’t gonna like it. We’ve never stopped this close to droppin’ one of ‘em off before.”

“Well, it’s your job to make them like it, aint it?” Yondu throws on his jacket before leaving the room.
“We’re goin’ to Aurelios-6, makin’ a pit stop before we drop off the cargo. It’ll take a day to get there,” Yondu’s sitting on the bridge, with his feet propped up on the balcony looking down on the crew. The crew is silent for a second, then all hell breaks loose.

“Why’re we stoppin?”

“Shouldn’t we drop the brat off first an’ then go planet-side fer kicks?!”

It’s everything he expected, they aren’t happy but they aren’t mad enough to mutiny. He isn’t going to react, just let them ride it out.

At least, that is the plan until someone shouts out, “YOU’RE HAVIN’ SECOND THOUGHTS, AIN’TCHA?”

He isn’t sure exactly who said it but anyone will do as an example. He whistles a low note, the yaka arrow glows red; he whistles again and it shoots up to hover in front of him. The crowd silences. He trills and it loops forward, stopping right at the nose of one of the men. The point just barely cuts the man’s flesh and a trickle of green blood drips to the floor.

“Any more complaints?”

The room stays silent and he’s almost ready to call the arrow back, when someone calls out, “Yeah, when’d you start gettin’ soft??”

The room erupts with shouting again, Kraglin should be down there running damage control but it sure as shit doesn’t sound like he’s doing too good of a job. Then, he hears a loud finger-whistle coming from the lower level. Everyone ducks down, then looks around to see who got killed. Kraglin may not be much of a talker, but he sure knows how to get someone’s attention. Yondu calls back the arrow, Kraglin can take it from here.

“Everyone shut up!” Kraglin’s shouting as best as he can, it’s a scary sound coming from someone who regularly sounds like they haven’t spoken in years, “Cap’n gave us some orders an’ it’s our job to carry ‘em out. Ain’t no reason in lettin’ blood be shed over somethin’ as small as stoppin’ for a day.”

There’s already an unspoken understanding among the crew that this is more than just stopping for a
day, it’s a sign of what could happen, it’s a sign that he’s slipping up. He’s debating not going to
Aurelios-6, but now that it’s a matter of principle, he has to go. The last thing they can afford to do is
get attached to the kid. No matter how loyal his crew has been, they’d definitely kill him if he ended
up backing out of a billion unit job. Hell, he’d do the same thing if he was in the crew. Well, this is a
bad situation if he’s ever been in one.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

This is kind of a long chapter, so enjoy! Peter gets misplaced, Yondu and Kraglin get in a fight, and things get more tense on the Eclector as they get closer to Aurelios-6. Chapter 5 is gonna be kind of fluffy to counteract this one, but until then you're gonna have to deal with angst!

“Let’s get the kid an’ explain what we’re doin’ before anyone tries to kill us,” Yondu says after meeting up with Kraglin in one of the lesser known access hallways of the Eclector. It’s a contingency plan, if something goes wrong go to the place that’s least likely to be found.

“We were real close to a mutiny.”

Yondu shrugs, “We got it under control, they listened to you.”

“Still ain’t a good place for us to be. We’ve got another week to go an’ we’re already on shaky ground.”

“Hey. Remember who’s Captain ‘round here. I tell you what we need to do and you make sure it gets done.”

Kraglin makes a noise of confirmation and gestures to the storage room, “Kid’s in here.”

Yondu pulls up the door only to realize that the kid definitely isn’t in there. Nothing good can ever come from a kid running around a ship full of people who want to see some bloodshed. Usually fights just burn out after someone kills someone else, they have to clean up but it all turns out fine. The kid’s a liability, if he gets in the middle of something and gets killed, well, some poor sucker just lost the crew a billion units and not even Yondu could save ’em.

Kraglin taps his arm, “Cap’n, look. Vent’s askew.”

Sure enough, it is, Yondu drags his hands down his face, “Think the brat’s in there?”
Kraglin nods.

“Think it’ll be easy to get ‘im out?”

Kraglin shakes his head, looking down at the floor.

“Anything in there that’ll kill him?”

Kraglin gives him a look that probably means, ‘Well I’m still alive, aren’t I?”.

Yondu groans, “Find him and find him quick. He better be back before we get to Aurelios-6, I don’t want the crew knowin’ we… misplaced… the cargo.”

Kraglin gives a half-hearted, “Yessir.”

Yondu nods and stalks off down the hallway. Kraglin crouches down to get into the room and sits cross legged in front of the vent. He can’t see the kid, which means he’s probably gonna have to go into the vents, which is almost as low as a mutiny on his list of Things He Wants To Happen Today. Unless…

“Pete, come on out,” he shifts until he’s lying on his stomach, looking into the vent. It’s not a particularly good idea, but he figures it’s worth a try. The kid probably isn’t in earshot, and even if he is, there’s no saying he’ll actually listen to him.

There’s no reply, but he tries again anyway, “Pete, I really don’t wanna come in there an’ get you, so if you can hear me, come on out.”

Then, there’s a muffled voice, “What’s happening? Why was everyone shouting?”

Kraglin sighs, “It just happens sometimes. Gotta get used to it.”
'Is it safe now?'

Kraglin thinks for a second, the truth of the matter is that the kid’s not going to be safe until he’s off the ship and on planet with his daddy, and even then it’s debatable. They’ve never run into any of the other kids when making a drop off and it can’t be a coincidence when there’s gotta be at least ten of them running around. On the other hand, lying to the kid is gonna make him feel like he doesn’t have to keep his guard up, which is a bad idea. But, it will make Kraglin’s life easier in the short run and goddamn if that isn’t looking like a good choice.

‘Yep. You’re fine, kid.’

‘Okay,’ the voice says, the sound of shifting metal follows. A few seconds later, Peter crawls out, covered in dust and void knows what else. Kraglin sits up and helps the kid out of the vents. He’s a bonafide mess and a dirty, skinny kid being dragged around by Ravagers would definitely draw attention to them.

‘Let’s go see Yondu an’ find some clean clothes for you.’

Peter looks down at his feet, messing with the hem of his shirt, ‘Do we have to?’

‘Can’t let you run around lookin’ like that,’ Kraglin gestures to the kid’s yellow shirt that’s more of a brown after his trip through the vents.

‘But he’s scary!’

‘He really ain’t that bad, you gotta be scary to be in charge of all the rest of us.’

Peter grimaces at the idea of grouping Kraglin with the rest of the people on the ship, ‘Really?’

Kraglin nods, ‘He’s my friend. You trust me, right? Then you know he’s alright, ‘cos I say so.’

Peter looks up at Kraglin, ‘I guess…’
Kraglin stands up and offers the kid his hand; Peter looks at his hand, then up at him, then back down at his hand before grabbing on tight.

Yondu steps into the cabin, closing the door behind him, “You better have a good reason for callin’ me here in the middle of all of this.”

“Kid’s a mess,” Kraglin says, gesturing to Peter.

“So?” Yondu crosses his arms.

“We gotta clean him up. People’ll be suspicious if we jus’ show up with a kid who looks like he’s been kidnapped.”

“But you did kidnap me!” Peter grabs his arm, “You did!”

Kraglin brings a finger to his lips and Peter falls quiet, then he turns back to Yondu, “Didn’t wanna just go riflin’ through your stuff. He’ll fit in one of my shirts but I dunno what to do about pants. An’ I need somethin’ to wipe his face off.”

Yondu digs through a few drawers before tossing Kraglin a clean looking cloth, “I’ll see what the tailor can do.”

“Thanks,” Kraglin stands up and leads Peter towards the ensuite bathroom, “C’mon Pete.”

In the bathroom, Kraglin lifts him up and sits him down on the counter. Then, he runs the water, getting the rag wet and wringing it out.

“Now, I’m not too good at cleanin’ up, so I want you to do this, ‘kay?”

Peter nods and takes the rag, rubbing it on his cheek.
“Good, now I’m gonna go find you a shirt. I’ll be back.”

Kraglin digs through the pile of his stuff in the corner of the room until he finds something that looks both clean and small enough to kind of fit Peter. He has a bad habit of holding onto everything he owns just in case, including a shirt with a Xandarian punk band’s logo on it that probably hasn’t fit him since his last growth spurt. That’ll do. He checks back in the bathroom, the kid hasn’t done much other than just move the dirt around.

“Put yer arms up,” Kraglin sets the shirt down on the counter. Peter does as he’s told and Kraglin pulls the dirty shirt up and over his head. Then he takes the rag and rinses it out before trying to rub the grime off of the kid.

“That hurts, you’re doin’ it too rough!”

Kraglin nods and slows down a little bit. By the time Yondu gets back in the room, the kid looks passably clean.

Yondu tosses him a bundle of clothes, “They’re ‘sposed to be shorts, but they’ll probably be pants on the kid. We can tie ‘em up if we need to.”

Kraglin passes Peter the shorts, then unfolds the other item of clothing, one of the smallest jackets he’s ever seen.

He raises an eyebrow, “You’re givin’ him our colors?”

Yondu shrugs, “He’s gotta blend in. Don’t wanna stir up any suspicion.”

“You sure you ain’t gettin’ attached?”

If it’s a joke, it sure isn’t a funny one; Yondu scowls, “You’re one to talk, Obfonteri. Actin’ like the kid’s new momma.”
It's a low blow, even for Yondu; Kraglin’s an orphan, same as him, same as the kid--Peter, Kraglin called him. He can’t take it back now, that’s not his style. Still, Kraglin is staring at him, eyes wide and mouth half open like he wants to say something but can’t. Yondu’ll make it up to him eventually, but for now he’s just doing a great job of making enemies today.

The bathroom door opens and Peter steps out in a shirt that’s a bit too big for him and the drawstring of the shorts tied as tight as it’ll go. Kraglin slips the jacket over his shoulders and takes the kid’s hand. He looks like a genuine, tried and true Ravager in the jacket, and Yondu might’ve even felt just a little bit of pride in seeing the kid look like that.

That little bit of pride fades away when Kraglin whispers, “C’mon, Pete.” He leads the kid out of the room without another word. Yondu pinches the bridge of his nose between his forefinger and thumb; he’s really fucked this up.

Yondu knows exactly where Kraglin is. That’s not the problem; the problem is that he doesn’t know what he’s going to say to Kraglin. He can’t exactly say what he’s thinking, that he feels on edge when his first mate isn’t around, ‘cos that just sounds fucking pathetic. He doesn’t want that to be true, but it is whether he likes it or not. It’s just a good strategy, having someone he can trust around, especially when half the crew wants his skin.

So, he settles for the less is more approach, just show up and say he’s sorry, leave out all the pathetic sounding details. Get the humiliating shit over with and have things go back to something like normal. He finds Kraglin just where he was expecting to, sleeping in the storage space with the kid holding onto him. Yondu crouches down and raps on the door. Kraglin jumps up and blinks until he notices that it’s Yondu. He snarls, teeth bared.

“Now, jus’ hear me out,” Yondu tenses up on the off chance that Kraglin isn’t too keen on talking.

Kraglin doesn’t reply, just keeps glaring his creepy death-glare. It’s moments like these when Yondu can really see who Kraglin is; underneath the leathers and the Ravager persona, he’s still the half-feral kid from Xandar that Kraglin only mentions in passing.

“Sorry.”

“What?” Kraglin enunciates the word like it’s an incredible effort to say it.
“Sorry. Didn’t mean what I said earlier. We’re all on edge.” Ravagers are only as good as their word and those particular words have a lot of weight.

Kraglin purses his lips and makes a low noise, like he’s considering how he feels about this.

Now comes the part Yondu really isn’t looking forward to, “Come back with me.”

Kraglin just keeps staring at him and blinks real slowly. Yondu’s admitting that he needs him around and the asshole can’t even be bothered to reply? He curls his hands into fists at his side; he doesn’t need to get angry, it’ll just make things worse and he can’t be down a first mate when they get to Aurelios-6.

So, he tries something else, “You can bring the kid too, gonna have to sleep on the floor, though.”

Kraglin nods; so, they’ve reached an agreement. He shakes the kid awake.

Peter yawns, “Wha’s goin’ on?”

“C’mon,” Kraglin picks him up, holding the kid in one arm and his pillow in the other, “Everythin’s okay.”

The kid’s asleep, head lolling against Kraglin’s shoulder, before they even make it back to Yondu’s quarters. Yondu supposes, that maybe, if he was another person living another life, that might even be something he considers cute. Maybe. Somehow, the kid ends up on the bed anyway and Yondu’s never been more thankful for the fact that the cabin is bio-keyed only to him and Kraglin. It wouldn’t help the situation at all if anyone happened to see this.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Yondu teaches Peter the fine art of pickpocketing, but the little shit uses his skills to nick Yondu's Yaka arrow. Yondu figures out that he's probably more attached to the kid than he wants to be and that Peter's just a bit impressive (after he stops being pissed at him).

Yondu wakes up first, as always. He isn’t in the mood to be punched in the face, so he decides to let Kraglin sleep. That isn’t going to stop him from waking the kid up and making sure he knows what he can and can’t do planetside.

He shakes Peter awake as gently as he can, “Up an’ at ‘em, boy.”

He stirs a little bit, eyes half lidded, and looks around the room. It isn’t familiar; he tenses up and pulls away from Yondu, “Kraglin?!”

Yondu puts a finger to his lips, trying the trick that seemed to work for his first mate, but it doesn’t help, “Shh… Look, he’s still sleepin’. C’mon with me.”

Peter looks at Yondu, then back at the sleeping Kraglin.

“It’s fine, he’ll be alright wi’ it,” Yondu sighs, it’s gonna be hard to get the kid to leave when they get to Ego’s Planet, especially since he seems to have a knack for hiding.

Peter frowns, “But he was mad at you yesterday.”

Yondu is this close to losing it, kid doesn’t know when to stop asking questions and just start doing whatever he’s been asked to do, “That was yesterday. Ain’t mad at me anymore, otherwise you two wouldn’t be in here.”

It’s enough of an answer for the kid, who just nods and rubs the sleep out of his eyes before crawling out of the bed, “Where are we goin’?”
“I’m gonna teach you how to pickpocket ‘fore we get planetside.”

“Stealing’s wrong,” Peter crosses his arms.

“Not in space, it ain’t, you can take whatever you want, just as long as no one sees.”

He stops to consider it for a second, “Hmm… That still sounds bad…”

Yondu isn’t sure how to get the kid to believe him. Kid’s like games, don’t they? Well, he sure hopes they do, “It’s a game. If they don’t see you take it, you don’t have to give it back. You win whatever you can take.”

Yondu leads him into one of the open rooms and shuts the door behind them. He crouches down in front of Peter.

“Now, you wanna be real quiet. If you even think they can hear ya, you’re bein’ too loud. Got it?”

Peter nods, “Be quiet.”

“Now that might be hard for you since you seem to like runnin’ your mouth, but if you get caught, you don’t get to keep your loot.”

“I can be quiet!” The kid’s tone is fast approaching ‘whiny’ territory.

“Sure you can... You also gotta be real gentle,” He reaches up slowly and unclips the Walkman from the kid’s waistband, “They can’t feel you taking anythin’ or they’ll make you give it back.”

“How gentle?” Peter looks legitimately interested.

“Pretty gentle,” Yondu laughs, “You didn’t even feel me takin’ this.” He holds up the Walkman in front of the kid.
“Hey! Give that back!”

Peter reaches out for it, but Yondu moves it away. The kid tries again, but Yondu stands up, holding it over his head. He jumps up and Yondu lets him just barely touch the Walkman.

“Give it back, Cap’n.”

He turns around, distracted enough that Peter can grab the Walkman and wrap his arms around it protectively. Kraglin’s standing in the doorway, yawning and zipping his jumpsuit up.

“No, we were just havin’ some fun,” he turns back to the kid, “Weren’t we, Peter?”

Peter doesn’t look like he’s having much fun, but he nods anyway.

“We ready to land yet?” Yondu expects that’s the reason Kraglin’s here. They still haven’t patched things up yet.

“Close… We’re almost at—” Kraglin trails off, then, he brings his hands up to cover his mouth. Yondu swears he’s laughing, but that doesn’t make any sense because he hasn’t said anything funny and Kraglin sure as hell shouldn’t be laughing at him.

“What’re you laughin’ at?” Yondu growls.

“Nothin’,” he tries to regain composure by standing up straight and running his hands through his hair, one of his nervous tells, “Nothin’ at all.”

By now, Yondu’s sure it’s something the kid’s doing, so he whips around. Peter’s been way too quiet and he’s standing with his hands behind his back, very pointedly not looking at Yondu.

“What did’ya do, you little shit?” Yondu’s just a little bit pissed; Peter doesn’t say anything, just looks at Kraglin.

Yondu turns back to his first mate, “What’d he do?”
Kraglin just taps his hand against his thigh. Yondu looks down at the holster for his Yaka arrow, which is currently empty. Then he looks back at Kraglin who’s laughing again.

“Kid got yer arrow.” He says when he can finally catch his breath, “An’ you didn’t notice it or nothin’! You’re losin’ your touch!”

Yondu turns back to Peter, “Give it back, boy.”

Peter just laughs and sticks his tongue out; at least the kid has enough sense to start running when Yondu takes a step towards him. He scurries off to hide behind Kraglin, who’s still laughing, and it’s a goddamn blessing that he needs Kraglin around otherwise he’d lock him in the holding cells for a couple of days.

“Give it here, Pete,” Kraglin’s voice is soft and the kid hands him the arrow. He holds it out in front of him and Yondu whistles. It glows to life and Kraglin lets go, letting it hover in the air. He trills and it spirals back into his hands, then he slides it into the harness again.

“Don’t do that again,” Yondu crouches down to make sure the kid sees him, “Or I’ll eat ya.”

The threat works; Peter’s eyes go wide and he grabs onto Kraglin’s arm.

“He ain’t gonna eat you, Pete.”

Peter doesn’t look entirely convinced, but he steps out from behind Kraglin, “You said I could take anything as long as I didn’t get caught!”

“Well, you did get caught. An’ you better not try that shit again.”

Peter crosses his arms, “Only ’cos of Kraglin, he started laughing. You wouldn’ta noticed if he didn’t ruin everything!”

He feels much more relaxed with the arrow back by his side, almost enough that he could find this
funny, “Fair enough. But you better not try it again.”

Kraglin tousles the kid’s hair, “Good job. But, we don’t steal from each other, remember?”

*We don’t steal from each other.* It’s a small thing, an innocent enough statement, but it’s the exact opposite of what Yondu wants to hear.

He grits his teeth, “Kid ain’t one of us. Never gonna be. He’s only ‘round for another week.”

Kraglin nudges Peter out of the door before turning back, “Then why’d you give him our colors?”

The door shuts behind them and Yondu’s left alone to stew in the fact that he *did* give the kid his own jacket. He doesn’t have the flames and hopefully, if everything goes right, won’t be around long enough to get his flames. Still, he was probably starting to mentally group the kid as one of *Us*, too. It was easy to do when you stopped thinking of him as cargo and started thinking of him as a kid. That was the first mistake. It’s too late to back out of Aurelios-6 but afterwards, he’ll have to pawn the kid off on someone else and hope the crew doesn’t murder him.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

I'm posting this early because I'm gonna be super busy tomorrow. This is about as fluffy as Ravagers can get and hopefully isn't too OOC. The gang lands on Aurelios-6, Peter steals some shit, gets mistaken for Kraglin's son, and Kraglin and Yondu come to a realization about Ego.

Yondu doesn’t see Kraglin or the kid again until they’re stopped over Aurelios-6. They meet up in the hangar, Kraglin’s already working on tuning up the M-Ship and Peter’s sitting close by asking what each of the tools are.

“We ready?”

Kraglin doesn’t stop what he’s doing, “Yeah. Jus’ give me a second.”

Yondu can already see Aurelios-6 from the airlocks. It’s too far away to make out most things other than a few features, but he can already tell that the name is ironic. No other reason that such a shithole would have a name meaning gold.

“Okay, s’all good now,” Kraglin opens the ship up and ushers Peter into it, pointing at one of the seats, “Sit down here an’ buckle up.”

The kid tries, but seats are really meant for adult sized Ravagers. He slips out of the harness even when Kraglin tightens it as far as it’ll go. Yondu sits down in the pilots seat and makes sure everything’s alright with the ship computer.

Kraglin sighs, “Kid don’t fit back here.”

Yondu calls back, “So? Just bring ‘im up here an’ hold him. Don’t need a co-pilot to land a M-Ship.”

Kraglin makes a noise of confirmation and leads the kid up into the cockpit. He sits down in the co-pilot’s seat and fastens his own harness before picking Peter up and sitting him on his lap. He tries to keep the kid contained in his arms but he sure likes to squirm.
“What’s this?” Peter points to one of the buttons on the dashboard.

“Don’t touch that,” Kraglin pulls his hand away from the dashboard.

“What about this? What’s it do?” Peter evades Kraglin by pointing with his other hand this time.

Yondu gives him a grim look, “If you touch that you’ll send us into self-destruct, an’ it sure looks like you’re gettin’ real close to touchin’ it.”

Peter jerks his hand back like he’s just been burnt and eyes the lever warily. Yondu laughs and starts the engine.

“Don’t scare him!” Kraglin shoots Yondu a glare, “That one ain’t the self destruct anyway… It’s this one.”

He points to a sufficiently big, red, and ominous looking button. Kraglin actually doesn’t know what it’s for, but he does know that they aren’t stupid enough to stick a self-destruct button on one of their ships.

Peter pulls both of his hands back, keeping them at his side and letting Kraglin hold him without moving around too much. Yondu calls up to the main bridge of the Eclector; Tullk is the de-facto leader since Yondu and Kraglin are planet-side and since he’s the only one who didn’t end up deciding that spending some time on land was a good idea. After getting the okay to go, the M-Ship begins its descent.

“What is this place?” Peter can’t stay quiet for long and Kraglin’s beginning to wonder if Terrans have to talk to stay alive. It wouldn’t be the weirdest feature of alien biology he’s ever seen, but he can’t understand what the point of that kind of adaptation would be.

“We already told you, it’s Aurelios-6.” Yondu doesn’t look over to the kid; he keeps his eyes trained on the planet.

It’s more of a rusted brown than a gold color, yet another contradiction to the name. The system isn’t even named Aurelios, and there aren’t 6 planets in the area. Whoever named it should be spaced for
such an attempt at deceiving travelers. The buildings look run down, but there are people milling about and where there’s people, there’s things to steal. It’s as good a place as any for the kid to start thieving.

There doesn’t seem to be any kind of a port on this side of the planet, so Yondu takes them down to an empty patch of ground. The M-Ship’s engines stir up dust and Peter jumps down to run over to one of the windows on the ship. He presses his face up against it and Yondu just knows he’s gonna leave greasy smears on it.

“I’ve never been to a planet that wasn’t Earth before.”

That’s a given, since Terra’s been consistently too backwards to pick up on even the simplest messages the rest of the known universe has been sending them. Of all the planets to see for the first time off world, this was probably the shittiest. Still, he isn’t gonna kill the kid’s excitement. Kraglin stands up and opens the cargo hold; Peter sprints over to the door but Kraglin catches him before he can make it all the way out.

“Don’t want you to get too far, get lost or anythin’.”

Peter grumbles for a second, but follows Kraglin anyway. He has to admit that it’s nice. This was a very bad idea, but there’s nothing like breathing in air that hasn’t been recycled a thousand times over by an ancient oxygen scrubber after months of being up in the stars. They head towards the marketplace, the one thing on the planet that doesn’t look like a barren wasteland.

The kid takes off running, but stops after Kraglin calls out, “Pete…”

Yondu decides that it’s helpful that Kraglin only has to say the kid’s name to get him to behave, but that still makes it obvious just how attached he’s gotten. Peter slows down and lets them catch up.

“Stick with us, we don’t know who’s on this planet an’ if they’re dangerous,” Kraglin crouches down in front of the kid. “It’s important that we get you to your daddy without any injuries, so don’t go doin’ somethin’ stupid.”

Yondu already knows that the kid’s going to do something stupid and that they’re gonna have to be fast enough to deal with it or they’ll end up with a dead Terran on their hands.
Peter nods, “Fiiiine… But I’m not a baby! My momma used to let me go into town by myself all the time!”

Yondu decides he’s let Kraglin run the show for too long, “Well your momma didn’t just set you loose in a place you never been to before.”

The kid’s all talk because as soon as they make it into the marketplace, he grabs onto Kraglin’s hand again. He notices Yondu staring and shrugs; it’s better than losing their cargo six days away from the drop off point.

Peter stops walking abruptly and points at one of the booths, “What’s that?”

Kraglin nudges him along, “Jus’ some fruit.”

“It looks good!”

“So?” Yondu butts in.

“I’m hungry!”

Kraglin sighs, “We’ll get you one when we come back.”

Peter pouts, but keeps walking. The same thing happens at the next three booths, and eventually it’s decided that Peter will pick one! And that means only one thing he wants at the end of the trip.

When they’ve mixed in the crowd enough that they don’t stand out as much, Yondu crouches down in front of the kid, “Now, I want you to do what I showed you earlier. Don’t even think about gettin’ caught, boy.”

Peter crosses his arms, “I got your arrow, didn’t I?!”

It’s still a bit of a sore spot, but Yondu smiles, “You sure did.”
They only make it a few feet before someone stops them. A woman walks right up to the pair; Kraglin reflexively reaches for the knife on his hip, just in case.

She smiles, “Your son is adorable!”

Kraglin gives her a blank stare, hand still on the hilt of his knife; Yondu quickly pushes his hand out of the way, elbowing him as a reminder to not make themselves look suspicious.

“He is your son, isn’t he?” She leans down to wave at Peter, “Hi, little man!”

“Uh… Yeah. He’s my son.” Kraglin’s voice sounds stilted and uncertain.

Peter sticks his tongue out, “I’m not adorable.”

Kraglin taps him on the shoulder, “Be nice, Pete.”

“Pete? That’s an interesting name, I’ve never heard it before,” She extends a hand to Peter, “Nice to meet you, I’m Saraea.”

Peter looks up at Kraglin, who looks towards Saraea; the kid accepts the handshake.

“Yeah… It’s… a family name. Real old fashioned.” Kraglin explains, he’s not quite at the point of overdoing the lie but it’s making Yondu nervous anyway.

“You two are lucky to have such a well behaved young man around! We don’t see too many kids around here, have fun Pete!” Saraea stands up and waves at them one last time.

As soon as she’s out of earshot, Yondu can’t stop himself from laughing, “‘Well, uh… it’s… a…. Family name!’ Real smooth, Krags.”

“Stop it!” Kraglin shoves him away, face flushed a dark blue, “I panicked!”
“Someone oughta teach you how to talk to people!”

“We ain’t generally in the business of talkin’ things out!”

Peter pulls on Kraglin’s arm, “Look. Look what I got.” He holds up a zippered rectangular bag.

Yondu grins, “Kid got her fuckin’ wallet! Guess I was right in givin’ you that jacket, boy!”

Peter hands the wallet over to Yondu, who tousles his hair, “Now let’s see ‘bout gettin’ you one of those things you wanted earlier. I think you earned it, you done good for your first time.”

Peter leads them over to a booth that’s selling something fried and coated in sugar. The kid’s head barely peeks out over the counter, so Kraglin lifts him up to let him see.

“I want one’a those,” Peter points to a container of small pieces of fried dough.

“Shit kid, let’s get one for each of us,” Yondu’s still smiling and Kraglin shoots him a look with one eyebrow raised.

The shop owner turns to grab the orders, “Last kid around here wanted some of these too. It was strange, she was with a group of people saying they were taking her to her family nearby, said she was an orphan or something.”

The shopkeeper gives passes one container to Yondu, “But I haven’t seen her since. It’s weird, isn’t it?”

“Everyone nearby has to come here to restock on food and water at least three times a year, but I’ve never seen anybody from over where they were heading…” He passes the last two orders to Peter, then hands Kraglin three long bright colored skewers.

Peter thanks the shopkeeper as they turn away, Kraglin sets him down on the ground, “Go find somewhere for us to sit, we’ll catch up.”
Peter nods and hands Kraglin both containers before running off.

“Think he was talkin’ ‘bout Ego?”

Yondu scowls, “Probably. Shoulda never took this job, but it’s too late now.”

“We could always bail. Take the kid an’ jus’ run. Come back when it’s all blown over.”

Yondu gives him a sad smile Kraglin’s never seen before, “Crew ain’t gonna just get over losin’ a billion units. They’d hunt us down soon as they realized what happened.”

Peter waves at them from the only two benches in the entire marketplace, “C’MON, I’M HUNGRY!”

Kraglin takes a step forward, but Yondu puts out a hand to stop him, “Don’t think too hard ‘bout it, it’ll jus’ make it worse.”

Kraglin nods, looking down at his dust covered boots, “I know. I’ll still be able to do it, when the time comes. Don’t hafta worry ‘bout me.”
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

The second half of Peter's pick-pocketing shenanigans, Yondu admits that he does kind of care about Peter and that something bad is happening over on Ego's planet, and they decide to keep Peter around even if it kills them. This is the calm before the storm, the next two or three chapters are gonna be ROUGH, y'all.

“These are a lot like funnel cakes… Do they have those up here? My momma took me to a fair once and we got a bunch of them. I ate so many I threw up an’ my momma had to take me home but it was okay because I had lots of fun…”

The kid is rambling. Kraglin isn’t really paying attention but he is going ‘uh-huh’ whenever it seems appropriate so it looks like he is. No matter how he looks at it, it doesn’t seem like they’ll be able to get out of this with their lives and the kid.

Poor sucker has no idea what’s gonna happen to him. They don’t really know either, they just know that someone’s seen one of Ego’s kids once and never again. Maybe he’s self sufficient? The guy’s gotta have enough money if he can just drop a billion units on kids every few years. Kraglin knows deep down that Ego probably isn’t self sufficient, and that coupled with the fact that they’ve never seen the kids again either doesn’t look too good.

Yondu leans over, whispering so the kid can’t hear, “I know what you’re thinkin’ ‘bout. Don’t try anythin’ stupid. We all gotta do shit we don’t wanna.”

Kraglin grits his teeth and nods. A job’s a job and this is one hell of a big job.

He hands what’s left of his food over to Peter, “Don’t want the rest, you take it an’ then we’ll keep goin’.”

Peter grins and digs into the extra treats. Kraglin stands up and he follows, still eating while walking. They barely make it ten feet before another person has to stop and tell them how lucky Peter must be to get so spoiled and how sweet of a kid he is and how cute his little leather jacket is.

Yondu laughs, “These people here must have a fuckin’ death wish. Can’t they tell we’re Ravagers?”
An’ they’re just comin’ up to us all because of Pete!”

Peter holds up another bag, “I got that guy’s wallet too! And this!”

Then, he holds up a curved knife with a sharp blade and engravings on the hilt that are in a language neither of them have seen before.

“Where’d you get that from?” Yondu would almost be proud, if he cared about the kid, that is.

Peter points with the knife, “Some lady over there, we passed her a few minutes ago. She had a coupla guns too but I didn’t think I could get one of them.”

Kraglin turns to Yondu, “Maybe we should go, ‘fore she starts missin’ her knife and comes lookin’ for us.”

Yondu nods and Kraglin grabs Peter’s hand, “Now if things go bad an’ we tell you to run, you gotta do it. I don’t think they’re gonna go bad, but just in case.”

Peter pouts, “I don’t see why we have to leave! Yondu said I could keep whatever I take long as I don’t get caught!”

Kraglin shoots Yondu a look that says ‘seriously?!’ then adds, “This is part of not gettin’ caught.”

Yondu can feel eyes on him, “Let’s get goin’, I think she noticed.”

A voice raises above the crowd, “Yes, I think it’s them, I’ve never seen them around here.”

Kraglin speeds up, but Peter starts to fall behind, he’s small and can’t run too fast. Kraglin sighs and picks the kid up before running to catch up with Yondu. They don’t stop until they’re back at the M-Ship.

“Kid’s too slow, gonna get us into trouble one of these days,” Kraglin grumbles as they’re taking off. Yondu doesn’t even bother reminding him that the kid isn’t gonna be around for that much longer.
Tullk’s standing in the hangar bay when they get back, “Heard you three really stirred shit up down there. Good thing the rest of the men are at the bars, otherwise we mighta had to leave an’ everyone would be more pissed.”

Kraglin gestures over at the kid, “S’all Pete’s fault.”

Tullk laughs, “Did’ya have fun?”

Peter seems to have forgotten about the fact that he just bit him a couple of days ago, “Yeah! Look what I got!” He holds up the knife.

Yondu groans, “That’s the thing that almost got us killed. Kid’s got sticky fingers.”

“Good job, boy.” Tullk claps him on the back probably harder than he should’ve, but Peter grins anyway.

Tullk turns back to Yondu, “Most of ‘em are gonna have to spend the night planet-side, too drunk to fly back and we can’t afford to lose any M-Ships.”

Yondu nods, “Make sure we’re set to leave tomorrow. Gotta get the kid to Ego.”

Tullk gives him a look that he can’t discern the meaning of, “Yessir…”

Peter pulls on Yondu’s jacket until he looks down at him, “When I get to my dad, will I ever see you an’ Kraglin again?”

Yondu isn’t in the mood for coddling the kid, “Nope. Probably not.”

“Oh…” Peter looks down at his feet, messing with the sleeves of his jacket, “Okay…”
“Hey,” Kraglin taps him on the shoulder, “How ‘bout we go look through these wallets an’ see what we got.”

The kid doesn’t look up, “Okay…”

Kraglin offers his hand and he grabs on, then they head out for Yondu’s quarters.

Shit. This is gonna be just as hard for Kraglin as it is for the kid. Yondu decides leaving them alone is the best course of action, mostly because he’s still trying to patch things up between them. Obviously, the best way to do that would be to keep the kid around but that’s not something he can do.

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Yondu spends a good hour or two wandering around the empty ship, thinking. He’s bringing the kid to something bad, in all likelihood the rest of his siblings are dead or might as well be dead. He’s brought more kids than he’d like to think about to the same fate. Nothing’s gonna make up for that, but saving one kid might be a start.

By the time he makes it back to the cabin, the kid is asleep on the bed and Kraglin’s still going through the wallets, one hand on the kid’s back like he’s making sure Peter’s still breathing.

“Kid got us a couple hundred units, an’ the Collector’d probably be into the knife but you told him he could keep it…” Kraglin doesn’t look at him as he says it, just looks down at the units he’s holding like they’re currently the most interesting thing in the galaxy.

“Kraglin…”

“I know. I didn’t mean to get attached. I can still give him over, ‘m not soft.” Kraglin still isn’t looking at him.

“Kraglin,” Yondu’s getting impatient, what use is a first mate that won’t listen to him?
“I can still do my job, I promise.”

“Kraglin!”

He finally looks up, and Yondu continues, “I’m sayin’ we should keep him, idjit!”

Kraglin looks at him, brows furrowed in confusion, “You’re sayin’ what?!”

“Somethin’ bad’s happenin’ to them kids an’ we can’t take back the ones we already dropped off but I figure we can do somethin’ about this one,” Yondu doesn’t like saying exactly what he’s feeling but he figures being honest is the best way to convince Kraglin that this isn’t just some kinda test of his loyalty.

Kraglin nods solemnly, “So how’re we gonna do this?”

“I figure we just gotta tell them. Kill anyone who mutinies and get outta here before Ego realizes we ain’t comin’.”

It’s not much of a plan but it’s only been an hour in the works. There’s an unspoken understanding that they might not actually make it out of this and Yondu’s still unsure if the kid’s really worth dying over.

Kraglin nods; Yondu turns back towards the door, “I’m gonna tell Tullk, we need someone else on our side. Seems like we could trust him an’ if we can’t, I can take him out.”

Tullk looks apprehensive but Yondu keeps talking, “Stakar’s gonna find out one day an’ I figure the fact that we didn’t give one of the kids over might soften the blow. So we’re down a billion units, but we still have some of the rest’a the money left over. Some of the crew’ll be mad but they’re expendable. Can always get some new recruits if we need to.”

Tullk nods, “I’ll still be by your side, Cap’n.”
“Good, we need as many people with us as we can get. It ain’t gonna be pretty tomorrow when we tell ‘em.”
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

I'm putting chapter 8 up early in honor of the fact that I've finished this fic!! I have all 12 chapters written, and I'm gonna continue with the 1 chapter a day schedule until I'm done! In this chapter, the mutiny begins, Peter has a really bad day, and Yondu and Kraglin get separated in the chaos of the mutiny. Get ready for an angsty next 4 chapters, but it's all worth it for the last chapter!

Kraglin sleeps, Yondu doesn’t. He can’t, not really; this is one of his worst ideas, which is saying something. Still, one of them ought to be well-rested and level headed. He wakes him up a few hours before Tullk said he’d call the rest of the crew back.

“Ready?”

Kraglin nods, checking the charge on his guns and doing a last once over of his knives.

“This ain’t gonna be easy, better hope the kid’s worth it. I hear teenagers can get real annoying,” Yondu flashes a crooked smile, it isn’t the time for jokes but someone needs to lighten the mood.

“We should bring Pete along. When shit goes down, crew’ll look here first,” Kraglin slides his knife back into the sheath on his hip.

Yondu nods, “So, I figure we try talkin’ this out, but when that fails, the crew that ain’t loyal are expendable.”

The sound system crackles to life, “First wave’s back, sir, I’m sendin’ them to the lower bridge.”

“Get the kid up, we gotta be ready soon.”

Kraglin shakes Peter awake, the kid blinks and yawns, rubbing his hands against his eyes, “Lemme sleep more…”
“Can’t let you do that, kid.” Yondu looks out into the empty hallway, making sure nobody got tipped off and is on their way to take matters into their own hands.

Peter groans, but stands up, “What’s happenin’?”

Kraglin looks over at Yondu, eyebrows raised in an unspoken question.

“Nothin’,” Yondu turns back into the room, “Let’s go. If anythin’ happens—”

“Meet up at the M-Ships,” Kraglin cuts him off. Yondu nods and steps out into the hallway.

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They get to the upper deck of the bridge just as the first few people start filing in, Kraglin tucks the kid under one of the control panels, out of sight but close enough that they can grab him if things go south. It’s not actually a matter of ‘if’, as much as it is a matter of ‘when’.

“Why do I have to hide?” Peter tugs on Kraglin’s sleeve as he starts to stand up.

“Shut up an’ do what you’re told,” Kraglin sees the wide eyed expression on the kid’s face, then crouches back down and tousles his hair, “S’all fine, just don’t do anythin’ unless me or Yondu tells you to do it.”

“Can I listen to my music?” Peter looks scared, well and truly scared, for the first time since the first day he was on the Eclector.

It’s a good idea, the music, that way the kid can’t hear any of the stuff that’s gonna happen. No matter what happens, it’s bound to be something the kid shouldn’t hear. Kraglin nods; Peter slips the headphones over his ears and clicks the play button. Then, Kraglin stands up. The last of the crew is packed in the room.

“Now I got news,” Yondu starts, sauntering towards the guard rail of the upper deck, “An’ most of you ain’t gonna like it, but whoever complains is gonna get spaced.”
A wave of whispering falls over the crowd, that’s a good sign. When they start shouting, that’s when things are gonna get bad.

Yondu raises his voice, not quite shouting but not whispering either, “Y’all gonna shut up long enough that I can tell you what it is or am I jus’ gonna stand here all day?”

It’s enough to silence the crowd, Yondu continues, “We ain’t givin’ the kid over to Ego.”

There’s thirty seconds of perfect calm. No talking, no fighting, nothing. Yondu never claimed to have the smartest crew in the Ravagers, but he sure didn’t expect it’d take that long for them to process something so life-changing.

Someone in the crowd bursts out laughing, then shouts out, “GOOD ONE, CAP’N, YOU REALLY HAD US THERE FOR A SECOND!”

Yondu pinches the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger, maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to kill all of them and start over with a newer, smarter crew, “No, this ain’t a joke. We’re keepin’ the kid. Somethin’ ‘bout Ego ain’t right and I figure we might as well get out before Stakar finds out.”

Another person in the crowd shouts out, “CAP’N’S GONE SOFT!”

A murmur moves over the crowd, until eventually they’ve reached a consensus that yes, Yondu has gone soft. Yondu glances over at Kraglin as casually as he can; the first mate nods, as if to say ‘I’m ready’. The murmuring shifts into shouting, then an all out riot.

“Naw, he ain’t sof--”

Yondu can see someone in the crowd go down, probably the loyal sucker who didn’t think to keep their mouth shut. He isn’t ready to move, not yet, things aren’t as bad as they could be and he works best under pressure.

“MUTINY!” Only one person shouts it, but the rest join in soon after.
Now is a good time to get going. He’s almost ready to tell Kraglin they need to leave immediately when the shot goes off. He ducks down reflexively, it’s hard to be accurate when you’re shooting up twenty feet but it’s better to be safe than sorry.

“CAP’N?” He can hear Kraglin shouting.

He stays kneeling, uncertain of where the shot came from or if another one’s coming, “‘M fine, get the kid.”

He sees Kraglin heading for the door leading to the staircase down and bolts after them. Kraglin’s holding onto the kid, leaning out of the doorway and shooting down at the people mobbing in the stairwell. He clips a tall man in a shoulder, leaving a spray of deep green blood on the wall; the man signals at the others to turn back. Without the crowd in the hallway, Yondu can see that there are at least five bodies piled up on the ground at the base of the staircase.

“Let’s go,” Kraglin mumbles, standing up.

He holds Peter’s head against his shoulder, but the kid still squirms around until he can see what’s going on, “Are those bodies? Are they dead?”

Yondu shushes the kid. After they descend the staircase, Kraglin walks sideways, with his back to the wall and Yondu standing in front of him. They stop in front of the nearest door out of the hallway, it leads into the lower deck of the bridge; Kraglin slides down on the wall until he’s sitting.

“Take the kid... Got an idea.” Kraglin slides Peter off of his lap and onto the ground next to Yondu, “Go, I’ll lead ‘em away.”

Yondu nods, normally he wouldn’t be too happy about Kraglin ordering him around, but this is a special situation. Any and all ideas of how to get out of this clusterfuck of a situation are much appreciated. Yondu grabs the kid’s arm and starts walking towards the rest of the hallway. The kid doesn’t move, just allows himself to be dragged behind Yondu.

“What about Kraglin?” He looks like he’s gonna start crying.
“He’ll be fine, now c’mon.” Yondu starts walking again. He looks back at Kraglin, who smiles before hitting the button to open the door. He takes the knife from his boot and stab it into the control panel; when it shuts behind him, it’s gonna take a lot of time and energy to get it back open. Then, Kraglin sprints out into the crowd.

Yondu picks up his pace as much as Peter can handle; Kraglin just got them a head start and probably is gonna kill himself in the process, they shouldn’t just waste it. Yondu stops at a corner, peering around it. A few people have figured everything out, there are five of them standing in the hallway, trying to decide which way he went. He whistles a low note, bringing the Yaka arrow to life, and repeats the noise to bring it up out of the holster.

Peter stares at the red glow, transfixed; he reaches out for the stream of light. It’d be fine if they weren’t in the middle of a fucking mutiny. Yondu trills and the arrow darts out, hitting the first man in the hallway in the stomach, then going through the head of the shorter woman behind him. He goes up in pitch, sending the arrow arcing up through the neck of the next person in the hallway. The three topple to the ground as the arrow curves back around to hit the last two in the chest. He drops down a few notes and the arrow circles back to him.

Yondu slides it into the holster and looks down at the kid; if he looked scared earlier, then he looks well and truly terrified now. His stomach is also covered in blood. Yondu plays back through all the things that have happened in the past ten minutes but he can’t think of anything that would’ve gotten the kid hurt. Peter was either in hiding or with Kraglin the whole time. He crouches down in front of the kid, looking for a wound, when he remembers that Terran’s don’t bleed blue.

Shit.

The shot that started the mutiny.

They weren’t aiming for Yondu.

His hands clench into fists at his side, “Stupid fuck’s gonna bleed out runnin’ ‘round like that.”
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

I’m apologizing in advance for this chapter. Kraglin goes on a suicide mission with a plan of ‘run and hope no one catches me’ and gets captured after getting the shit beat out of him.

Kraglin is currently trying to not focus on the fact that he’s been shot. It’s actually a pretty easy thing to do, since most of his attention is trained on trying not to die. He doesn’t have much of a plan outside of running as fast as he can and also taking down as many people as he can.

He cups his hands around his mouth to amplify his voice, “COME GET ME!”

It doesn’t look like anyone in the room has realized that he’s just a distraction. That’s good; the more time he can give Yondu, the better. He ducks down under the arm of a tall purple-skinned man who swings at him and keeps running. The man looks confused for a second, then turns to see Kraglin vanishing into the rest of the crowd. He manages to get a few shots off, he’s mostly aiming for legs because if they can’t walk, they can’t catch him.

Kraglin’s about halfway through the room when he spots step two of his plan, a small ledge in front of one of the vents. He just has to make it there and then he can climb up somewhere where no one will be able to get him. He also has to make sure he gives Yondu enough time to figure something out. He weaves between another two people, sending them crashing into each other. They sure know how to pick their crew… If he makes it out of this he’s going to have to give Yondu a few pointers on how to pick their crew members. His lungs burn and it’s suddenly very hard to ignore the bullet wound in his gut. He needs a break, but that’s not really feasible… Unless…

He sticks his thumb and forefinger in his mouth and whistles as loud as he can. Most of the crew duck down on gut reflex, muscle memory or some shit.

Of the few still standing up, there’s a sharp-toothed man who shouts out, “Get up, you idiots! Yondu isn’t even in the room! Ain’t no reason to be scared of whistlin’!”

So he’s the de-facto leader of the mutiny.
In every other situation, Kraglin would’ve tried to shoot him, but he’s dizzy from the blood loss and starting to see two of the man. He can’t reliably pick out which one’s the real one and he’d only have one chance to get it right. 50/50 odds aren’t too bad, except for when they’re literally life or death. He figures he still has a few seconds of disorientation left, so he keeps taking deep breaths and trying to not hyperventilate. This is nothing he hasn’t dealt with before.

Someone cocks a gun; that’s his signal to go. He starts sprinting again. People are starting to stand up and he weaves between them. He knocks into a woman turned away from him. Shit. He’s really seeing double now because he was certain there wasn’t a person standing there. She’s turning around just as he pulls the trigger. She winces, clutching at her arm as Kraglin darts off again. He’s close to the ledge, close enough that he just lets adrenaline take over.

He shoots again and again, in front of him, trying to incapacitate as many people as he can. Someone grabs his arm, ripping the gun from his hand. His left hand curls into a fist and he punches the guy closest to him as hard as he can and hopes it’s the one who took the gun. There’s a faraway cracking sound, followed by a white hot pain in his knuckles. He probably just broke a few fingers but it’s a nice change of pace compared to the constant gnawing pain in his stomach.

Kraglin’s in the middle of jumping for the ledge when he realizes that he might not be able to grab it with his left hand. His right hand catches first, then he pulls his left hand up to grab for support. It hurts like shit but his fingers curl around the lip of the ledge. He takes a second to breath and begins to pull himself up.

He has both arms up on the ledge and the upper half of his torso. He’s almost ready to admit that things are turning out kind of okay, all circumstances considered. Then, he feels something grab his ankle. He kicks his other foot against the hand wrapped around his ankle as hard as he can, but it doesn’t seem to be a deterrent. He’s sliding off the ledge, there’s not much he can do. The smears of blue blood on the metal are making it hard to get any traction.

The hand on his ankle yanks hard and he starts to fall. Kraglin hooks his fingers on the ledge, but whoever has him just pulls harder. There’s another spike of pain running through his fingers and he isn’t sure if he’s just feeling the aftershocks of his left hand or if he’s broken the fingers on his right hand too. He lets go, crying out, and hits the ground hard.

He can hear the sound of his back hitting the metal floor, and then he can’t breathe. He’s trying to, he’s trying harder than he’s ever had to before. Every inhale just makes a sickening sound, like he’s gasping and also choking at the same time. He’s determined not to cry, but that’s getting real fucking hard. So this is how it ends, killed by his own crew over some kid. It’s not such a bad reason to die, Kraglin’s sure that the kid’s life is worth a hell of a lot more than his. He’s done a lot that can’t be taken back, but Peter? Peter’s still good. Peter can still do good.
Then, he has the wherewithal to roll over on his side. He tries to prop himself up but everything about his arms is aching too much to support him. He still manages to pull himself up onto his forearms, then he retches, tasting metal in his mouth, and spits blood onto the ground. Finally, he can breath again. People have circled around him sometime in between falling and realizing that he’s choking on his own blood. They all have guns trained on him.

“Should we kill ‘im?” One of the crowd asks.

“No.”

The crowd falls silent. The leader of the mutiny steps out into the circle, standing in front of Kraglin. He can make out his reflection in the man’s boots; eyes wide, scared, blood smeared all over his face. It’s not a dignified look, but everything about him hurts too much to try to look cocky.

“Look at me,” the man growls out the order.

Kraglin turns his head up, but black splotches swim in his vision and he isn’t sure how long he can keep it up.

Then, the man turns back to the crowd, “We’re keepin’ him alive. For now. He’s a bargainin’ chip.”

Fuck. The part of him that’s still lucid hopes that Yondu and Peter are long gone, because he knows they’d come back for him and get themselves killed in the process. He’s made his peace, maybe he won’t get a Ravager’s funeral, but that’s okay.

It’s the last thought he has before he’s falling forward. His head cracks against the floor and then he feels nothing.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Yondu finds out that Kraglin's been captured, Peter's a little bit traumatized, Yondu goes to save Kraglin, and runs into a group of people still loyal to him on the way. Credit to marfacat on tumblr for Rasper's name!

Yondu’s sitting in the hangar when the sound system crackles to life. Peter’s sitting behind him, headphones on and tears streaming down his face, but he isn’t gonna say anything. It’s the kid’s first battle, hopefully not his last, and there’s plenty of time to grow out of crying when you see a dead body.

“Yondu Udonta,” the voice over the sound system isn’t recognizable. One of the lower ranks must’ve gotten some delusions of grandeur and thought they could pull off a mutiny. He isn’t in the mood to talk, so much as he’s in the mood to kill someone.

The person on the intercom gives a pause for emphasis, then adds, “We have your first mate.”

It seems unlikely that Kraglin would let himself get captured, so that either means they’re bluffing or Kraglin’s seriously fucked up.

Yondu doesn’t want to consider the latter option, so he turns on his communicator, selecting the upper bridge deck, “Prove it.”

The intercom crackles back on, “‘Fraid we can’t do that. He’s... unconscious as of now.”

They still could be bluffing. Saying that Kraglin’s unconscious doesn’t mean he’s actually there. But Yondu knows that if they have the time to play games, then Kraglin isn’t still keeping them busy. If he’d made it out okay, he’d be here by now.

So, what to do now. He could probably kill his way out of the situation if things went bad. They have to know that Yondu isn’t exactly in the business of negotiations. The whole thing was probably a trap and he does have Peter to think about. Then, he hears footsteps. He whistles, stopping the Yaka arrow just inches from the intruder’s head.
The man holds both his hands up, it’s all Yondu can see from the doorway.

“C-can I come in?”

Yondu calls the arrow back a few feet and lets the man step into the room. He keeps his hands up, as a show of good faith. In the light, Yondu can see that it’s Tullk.

“Jus’ me, Cap’n,” he drops his hands to his side, “Guess I didn’t seem that important to the rest of ‘em. Doubt they know where I am.”

Yondu calls the arrow back, “Some of them got Kraglin.”

Tullk nods and continues into the room, over to where Yondu’s sitting.

“Gonna go get him an’ end all this bullshit. Need you to watch the kid,” Yondu looks over at Peter. This whole situation is a lot for a kid to take in, but he’s doing pretty damn good, all things considered.

“It’d be a damn shame for him to get killed after all the trouble he’s caused,” he doesn’t really mean it, but he says it anyway.

Tullk nods, “Don’t gotta worry about me.”

Yondu gets to his feet, then salutes Tullk; the man mirrors the action.

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So far his plan is mostly kill everybody involved. With the way things are going, it’s not worth weeding out the people who are still loyal, especially not if Kraglin’s dead. That’s not something he wants to think about, but it’s something he has to think about. The logical course of action would be to promote Tullk to first mate, but that would just feel wrong. Still, Kraglin’s hard to kill. He’s bounced back from injuries that should’ve been fatal more times than he can count. But that luck has
to run out eventually. If it did happen to do so today, it sure picked a sh*t time to run out.

He’s so lost in thought that he practically walks into a group of people milling about in the hallway. He’s still sharp enough that the arrow is out and up in the air before they even realize he’s in the same room as them.

The arrow slices through the stomach of the man closest to him when one of the others cries out, ‘Wait!’

Yondu cuts the note he’s whistling off and stays the arrow. It buzzes with anticipation, inches from the speaker’s neck.

“You better hope you got somethin’ interestin’ to say ‘cos my patience is wearin’ thin” he spits the words at the woman’s feet.

“We ain’t turned on you,” she doesn’t drop her knife but she holds up her hands, “We’re tryna help.”

Oh. Well. Maybe he should’nt’ve killed that guy but a mutiny isn’t really the time to ask questions first.

“Uh-huh,” he eyes her warily, most of the people with her are newer recruits and not too much of a threat, “An’ what’s your name?”

She lowers her hands, sliding her knife back into its sheath, “Rasper.”

“Rasper, huh?”

She gives a sardonic grin and bows, “At your service.”

Her rag-tag crew don’t look much like fighters, but Yondu supposes this helps even the odds out just a bit.

“Now Rasper, I want you n’ your friends to lead as many people as you can away from the bridge so
I can get there. Do whatever you gotta do, everyone’s expendable now.”

“Yessir,” she says, with a look that means she knows they’re also considered expendable. It’s nothing against her, hell, Yondu knows the likelihood of him surviving isn’t too good either.

She turns back to her followers, “Striker, you an’ Divek go blockade the hallway on the way to the bridge, and Striker?” A messy haired person, face streaked with grease, looks up; Rasper continues, “See if you can get a bomb together. Preferably with shrapnel.”

“You got it, Rasp!” They stand up and grab the man standing next to them, then the two start running towards the hallway.

“The rest of y’all are in charge of leading people to the blockade. We gotta take out as many as we can at once, ‘fore they wise up to what we’re doin’,”

A few of the new recruits look terrified, but if they live, this will be a great learning experience, Rasper gives them a smile, “I’ll be with you the whole time.” She turns down one of the offshoots of the hallway and the others follow behind her.

Yondu whistles again, bringing the Yaka arrow back up in front of him, and starts walking. Better safe than dead, he always says. His new plan is to get close to the bridge and wait until he hears something blow up, which is much easier than trying to kill everyone all by himself.

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The ten minutes of waiting are maybe the longest ten minutes of his life. He spends all of them holed up in a corner of hallway about a hundred feet from the staircase to the upper bridge. He doesn’t want any surprises from either side and the corner has the best vantage point. He’s beginning to think Rasper’s crew is dead when he can hear a faraway impact. The impact is followed by blaring alarms that can only mean ‘hey, idiot! Someone just tried to blow up the ship from the inside!’

Rasper’s smart, he’ll give her that. Not even a minute later, Yondu can hear people running away from the bridge, off towards the hallway on the other side. It’s his time to move. He jumps up and heads up the stairs. He’s going at an agonizing pace, but he doesn’t want anyone to hear him coming. A guard at the doorway spots him, but he silences him with a knife to the soft underside of his chin. It’s quieter than the Yaka arrow and it’s crucial that no one know he’s there.
He waits outside for another minute; the alarms go off and he can hear two people talking inside. That doesn’t mean there aren’t more people in there, but he figures most of the non-essential mutineers went to check on the explosion. He can’t understand exactly what they’re saying, he only knows that there are two distinct voices. He counts down from ten, then shoots the lock on the door and pushes into the room.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Yondu is here to save the day, Kraglin's half dead and delirious, there's a "dying" declaration of love, and Kraglin's pissed off that Yondu couldn't just let him die heroically in peace.

Kraglin can hear alarms overhead, but more importantly, he’s alive.

“I’m alive,” he mumbles to himself, then he starts laughing even though there are tears pouring down his cheeks. He’s alive. He’s still alive. He decides to start easy, he wills every part of himself to open his eyes. The light makes his head ache, but he can see that he’s in the upper bridge.

That’s a start; he tries to move his arms. They catch against something and he looks up to see them shackled against the control panel. They’re both asleep, feeling numb and disconnected from the rest of him, and Kraglin is seriously starting to reconsider his stance on the existence of a higher power because it’s probably the only thing keeping him from being aware of the fact that all of his fingers are broken.

He can’t breathe through his nose, but he can smell blood so it’s probably broken. He’s dimly aware that he fell face first onto the metal floor but he isn’t sure how long ago it happened. The bullet hole in his stomach isn’t bleeding anymore. The dried blood on his jumpsuit is almost black and everything feels stiff and sticky.

The alarms shut off and someone finally notices Kraglin’s awake, “Prisoner’s wakin’ up.”

The person speaking is to his right, but he doesn’t think he can turn his head without throwing up.

“What should we do, boss? Should we try callin’ Yondu again?”

It’s not the ringleader. He has to be in here somewhere, though. Someone steps into view, not the ringleader, but a stocky man who grabs Kraglin’s chin, turning his head like he’s inspecting fruit in a market.
“Maybe we oughta put ‘im out of his misery. Don’t think his cap’n’s comin’.”

“Don’t forget who’s idea this was,” Ringleader barks out, “You don’t do anything ‘less I say you can. We’ll give Udonta ten minutes more to decide he’ll negotiate, now that the bargaining chip’s awake.”

Then, he hears a gunshot. He squeezes his eyes shut reflexively and thinks I’m dead. Fuck. I’m dead.

The gunshot is followed by a thud and Kraglin opens his eyes again. The man standing in front of him is now lying on the ground. There’s a streak of red hovering in the place where the man used to be standing.

Yondu?! What is he still doing here? Couldn’t he just let Kraglin die to save him without fucking everything up?

Before he can finish the thought, the rest of the people in the room hit the ground. Yondu’s still standing in the doorway and he slips the arrow back into his holster. Kraglin can’t remember seeing him walking over, but the next time he opens his eyes, Yondu’s sitting next to him. He has both hands cupping Kraglin’s face and Kraglin smiles.

“Can’t fall asleep, idjit,” Yondu is shaking him. He wants to tell him to stop shaking him but that’s a lot of words that he doesn’t think he can get his mouth to say.

Instead he swallows hard, his saliva tastes like blood, and mumbles, “Ruined m’jumpsuit.”

Yondu looks confused and he realizes just how stupid of a statement that is. That’s the least of his problems right now.

“That don’t matter, you can get another one,” Yondu tries to pull the zipper down but it catches on something, so he unsheathes his knife and cuts into the leather. He peels it back as carefully as he can, but the coagulated blood makes it almost like a second skin. Kraglin winces as Yondu finally pulls the area over the bullet wound free. The wound starts bleeding again without the outer layer of hardened blood to keep everything in.

“Shit,” Yondu presses down against the wound. Pressure stops bleeding, right? He can’t really
remember right now but that sounds right enough to try. He can still feel the wet heat seeping out around his fingers, but he can’t afford to not believe it’s helping.

Kraglin’s head is feeling unbelievably heavy and it’s a supernatural effort to still keep it up, “Kiss me.”

He isn’t sure when his mind decided that was something he wanted to do, but it was probably somewhere between getting shot and ending up bleeding out on the bridge. Hey, he’s dying, it’s worth a try.

There’s no response and he’s about to try saying it again when Yondu presses harder against the wound, “No.”

Well shit, Kraglin’s dying and the asshole can’t even be bothered to follow his dying request?

“Ain’t doin’ that just ‘cos you’re half-dead an’ delirious. When all of this is over, try askin’ again,” Yondu looks up at the shackles and uses one hand to shoot them open. Then he moves Kraglin’s hands over the wound.

“Press down, gotta use the ‘com an’ call our backup.”

Kraglin nods and pushes down on the wound. He still can’t really feel his arms but he’s pretty sure it isn’t helping.

Yondu hits the call button on the intercom, “Rasper, if you’re out there, get up here soon as you can.”

Then, he kneels back down and takes over again, “You call that keepin’ pressure on a wound?”

Kraglin drops his hands to his side and shrugs as best he can, “Broke my fingers…”

He’s seeing spots again and it’s getting really hard to keep his eyes open.
Yondu leans forward and kisses him once, real light and fast, “If you die, I’ll fuckin’ kill you. Hear that, Krags?”

He must look as bad as he feels, if not worse, since Yondu took back what he said earlier. He probably tastes like blood and it can’t have been too nice for Yondu. If he doesn’t die, he’ll have to make it up to him.

That’s okay, he decides as he closes his eyes, there are plenty of other people out there for Yondu to kiss that won’t taste like blood.

There’s shouting in the background and he really wants to tell them to stop because it’s hurting his head.

“You know anythin’ ‘bout patchin’ up bullet holes?” Yondu sounds frantic. It’s strange and kind of frightening; Kraglin’s so used to the Captain sounding level headed and reasonable.

Someone replies. He can’t hear any words, just noises melting together and he doesn’t recognize the voice either. He hopes Peter isn’t there, no use in the kid seeing him like this. He just lost his momma and he’s probably figured out that his daddy ain’t what he was expecting. Seeing him covered in blood and only barely conscious just wouldn’t be fair. It’s the last thought he has before he falls asleep.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Kraglin lives, Yondu admits that he kinda likes having a kid around, Peter doesn't want to be alone again, and Yondu and Kraglin dance around the idea of a relationship. This is the final chapter y'all, hope you enjoy the ending!

This fic is the longest thing I've ever written, it's longer than the short story I wrote for my midterm project for my writing class this year. I'm probably gonna write some more things about this time period because it's fun to play around with. I had a great time with this and I just want to thank all of you for reading it!

By some dumb luck, one of Rasper’s crew was apprenticing with the medic before everything went to hell. The boy’s hands are shaking the whole time but he manages to get Kraglin stable enough to be carried to the medbay. The medic is still loyal, or at least smart enough to say yes when Yondu asks.

Yondu stays on the bridge with Rasper, it’s not what he wants to do, but it’s what he has to do. He’s still the captain, whether he wants to be or not.

“You know anythin’ about flyin’?” He sits back in one of the seats. It’s been a long day.

Rasper gives a half smile, “Sure. Think I know enough.”

“Get us the fuck outta here.”

Rasper salutes and sits down at the control panel, “Any preference on where?”

Yondu drags his hands down his face, “Somewhere we can go get shitfaced. Think we earned it.”

She laughs and keys in some coordinates.
Yondu gives himself five minutes before he calls Tullk on a private channel, “Everythin’s okay. Don’t bring the kid up, though. Lots’a bodies.”

“Good to know,” Tullk answers.

Yondu can hear the kid in the background, “What about Kraglin?”

Tullk’s voice comes through, significantly clearer than Peter’s, “Kid wants to know about Kraglin.”

“He’s pretty banged up but he’s tough.”

The answer is vague enough that the kid won’t be able to claim he lied if Kraglin doesn’t make it. That’s a worst case scenario, but one he has to consider. He hangs up before he can hear Peter’s reaction. Comforting a crying kid over comm isn’t something he wants to do right now.

Most of Rasper’s crew is asleep on the floor of the bridge, he navigates his way through them until he’s standing by her.

“How’d it go?”

She looks just as tired as he does, “Striker stayed behind an’ killed durin’ the explosion. Kid died for you without hardly knowin’ you.”

It’s one of the unspoken parts of the Code, you have to be ready to die for your captain, but that doesn’t make it any less bullshit. When he gets to start over he’s gonna try to know the people ready to die for him.

“I’m sorry,” he says because it’s been too long of a day to try to keep up any pretenses of being hardened and heartless, “I really am.”

Rasper nods, “Rest of ‘em made it out alright. What’re we doin’ now?”
“You should go. Take the rest of ‘em, too.”

She looks outraged at the concept but Yondu continues, “See Stakar, tell him what you did for us. I’ll put a word in an’ I’m sure he’ll let you be a captain. You deserve it more than any of us after what happened today.”

“But--”

Yondu smirks, “It’s fine. You won’t be able to go back to workin’ under me after all of this an’ it’d be a waste of your talents. I won’t tell Stakar we been runnin’ kids or nothin’. He’ll find out one day but hopefully it’ll be after you already got a crew. You’re halfway there already,” he gestures to the sleepers around them.

She nods and salutes, “After we get where we’re goin, we’ll part ways.”

“Good luck,” Yondu salutes back.

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Yondu is asleep in the chair when Rasper shakes him awake.

He damn near punches her but she stays his hand and whispers, “Kraglin’s stable. Medic called up a few minutes ago.”

“How long have I been out?” he stretches out, trying to work out the crick in his back from sleeping mostly sitting up in a chair.

“Couple of hours, thought you could use it.”

He isn’t too happy about it, but Rasper is right.

He calls Tullk on the private channel again, “Take the kid to the medbay, I’ll meet you there.”
Tullk and Peter make it to the medbay before he does. Peter has tear-stains on his face and he’s still wearing the bloody shirt, but he looks otherwise unharmed. When he sees Yondu, he jumps up and runs over to him.

He throws his arms around Yondu and starts crying again, “I thought you two were gonna die an’ leave me alone again.”

Yondu really isn’t sure what the protocol is for this situation, he doesn’t exactly have much experience with kids. So, he settles for patting the kid’s head.

“Hey, hey, I ain’t dead yet.”

It doesn’t seem to help much, so he tries putting his hands on the kid’s back, just letting him know he’s here. He flashes a look at Tullk, one that he hopes says no one can know of this, ever; Tullk ducks out of the room with an understanding nod.

“Look who’s attached now,” Kraglin’s voice is quiet, not much quieter than usual which has to be a good sign. The kid squirms out of Yondu’s awkward attempt at a hug and runs over to the side of Kraglin’s bed.

“I’m fine,” he looks at Peter, who doesn’t look too convinced, “Really, Pete.”

Yondu walks over, “How’re you feelin’?”

“Finger’s fuckin’ hurt. More than the gunshot but I dunno how that’s possible.”

Peter’s just staring at him with wide eyes; Kraglin sighs, “People’re gonna get hurt, Pete. That’s just life. But if you want, you can sit up on the bed.”

Peter jumps up on the end of the bed and gives him a solemn look, “I was really worried.”
“You gotta remember, this is what we do.”

“Is this gonna happen again?”

Kraglin thinks for a second, there’s always a chance of a mutiny but he doesn’t need Peter to constantly be afraid that one’s about to happen, “Maybe, maybe not. Never can tell.”

Peter seems satisfied with the answer and lays down, curled up at the foot of the bed. The action looks almost like second nature and Yondu remembers that he never figured out how the kid’s momma died.

“Where are we goin’ now?” Kraglin asks after making sure the kid is asleep.

“As far away from Ego’s Planet as is possible.”

He laughs, “Good fuckin’ riddance.”

There’s another period of tense silence, Yondu stays standing by his bed.

“Sorry ‘bout earlier,” Kraglin looks uncomfortable, “Prob’ly tasted like blood.”

Yondu gives him a confused look, “Well no shit, you were in the middle of bleedin’ out. Ain’t nothin’ to apologize for.”

Kraglin looks marginally less uncomfortable when he speaks again, “So, that offer still stand? ‘Cos I’m not delirious anymore.”

He’s pretty sure that Yondu only kissed him because he thought he was actually dying, but stranger things have happened. Like, for example, Yondu agreeing to keep Peter around and almost dying in the process.
Yondu smirks, “Guess it’s worth seein’ what it’s like when you’re lucid enough to enjoy it.”

“I wasn’t that far gone.”

“Whoever you say,” Yondu leans forward and cups one hand on Kraglin’s cheek, bringing him closer. Then he kisses him, just a bit longer than the first time. It’s nicer when Kraglin isn’t one step away from choking on his own blood.

Yondu leans back, still close, “We good now?”

Kraglin smiles, “I dunno.”

“Watch yer luck,” Yondu says, but there’s no venom behind the threat. He leans in and kisses Kraglin again. This is probably something he could get used to, just like having a kid around.

Kraglin’s smiling at him again, “I’m hopin’ I don’t hafta almost die for this to happen again.”

“Naw, I don’t need another reason for you to run off an’ do reckless shit,” Yondu gives him a look that means he definitely isn’t joking about this.

“Good, I think the kid’s already reason enough to do reckless shit,” he looks down at Peter, still asleep. The kid looks even smaller than he really is when he’s curled up, but at least he looks calm and safe.

“Scoot your skinny ass over,” Yondu says, climbing up onto the bed. It kind of hurts to move but Kraglin slides over anyway until there’s enough space for Yondu to sit next to him. He leans his head against Yondu’s shoulder.

Yondu laughs, “Guess we’re a real fuckin’ family now.”

“That don’t sound too bad, ‘side from the fact that the kid’s gonna have to deal with all them hyphens. Peter Quill-Udonta-Obfonteri’s one helluva mouthful…”
“Now we ain't adoptin’ the kid. Jus’ takin’ care of him for the foreseeable future.”

Kraglin smirks, “Hate to break it to you, but I think he's already pretty much ours. Kid doesn't have anyone left 'cept for Ego, who oughta never find him. Ever.”

“We ain't gonna let him find Pete, that's a promise. But now you gotta sleep so you can heal 'cos I can't be down a first mate when we're recruitin’.”

Kraglin would protest if being asleep didn’t sound like a really good idea, “Fine, but that don’t mean you get to leave soon as I fall asleep.”

“We don’t currently have a crew to order ‘round, so I’m thinkin’ I can take a night off.”

Kraglin makes a noise of confirmation and closes his eyes. Yondu’s tired, too, but he isn’t gonna think about trying to sleep until he’s sure Kraglin’s fine. He waits until he can hear Kraglin’s breathing slow down and even out; it’s not slow enough that something’s wrong, but he’s definitely asleep. Yondu finally lets himself relax, he could get used to this. Not the mutiny part, but this part. This part’s nice.

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