

Guardian Core Chronicles

Darkness Rises

Note to readers

If this is your first time seeing this series don't read this story first. Click on Guardian core chronicles or my name and read them in order. The order is: The Legend begins, Time after time, Home world, the reckoning, the great divide, Death becomes me, Timescape, and then Darkness Rises.

Prologue by Matt

Were all our problems over now? Could Etan and the others sit back and enjoy the benefits of all their labors? Now you know better than that. I mean after all what's life without a little excitement. In the last story each of our four main heroes got shipped off to different locations. In this edition make sure to keep your Guardian light with you as Darkness rises.

The Interim years

One week after being sent away

1's comments

I wasn't an overly emotional person but this hit me pretty hard. I was trained to be tough and in control. But I was losing my two best friends and would not see my husband again for several years if ever. I know Selar had his reasons but it was still going to be tough. Reaper would stay in our own galaxy investigating whatever dark powers were at work but the rest of us were sent to different ones. The galaxy I was sent for was literally on the far side of the universe. I am the only one from our galaxy here, I will be truly alone. Sometimes it's hard to be one of the good guys.

Matts comments

She was sent to a galaxy in the middle of a three way galactic war. To make matters worse the galaxy was attached to the outer zone of the place of eternal light. So it was saturated with light and radiation energy. She would spend a few months in a containment suit that would slowly accommodate her to the new surroundings. It was like a diver from earth going in a pressurized container to accommodate them to the high pressures of the depths of the ocean. When she left it will take another month for her to de-saturate down to a normal level.

Misteeks comments

I took a few of my children as company with me but I was far away from home. I wouldn't see my friends for a long time. I hope all this will be over soon.

4 years later

Reapers comments

Well this sucks. I was captured and thrown in a dark hole. I've got to say though, as prisons go this one's not bad. It's dark, dank and smelly but at least I don't have a snoring roommate. The rats are fun to play with and the guards don't beat me as often now. Even when you're in the bottom of a dungeon you can still look on the bright side. Whoever my captors are have erased most of my memory. I don't even know my real name. They just call me the hunted. I get flashes of memories in my dreams. I think I might be an espionage agent, and that's how I got in this situation. Now I'm just a hunted animal for someone else's amusement.

They release me once a week and practice hunting me down. The further I make it the less I get beat later as a reward. I have to wonder though what they did to me before my memory was erased because I'm missing my right arm and the toe on my right foot. That kind of makes it hard to run. But I make it a little further each time. They laugh because I take different routes of escape. They say if I went to the same areas I might do better as I got to know the lay of the land. But I've got a plan. While on the run I test the barrier projectors. I was planning to find one that is weaker than the others. I will slip through the weak spot and get free.

Two days later I got my chance. The hunting course was in an abandoned city. I could see the barrier from my position. So far I have tested twenty projectors. It looks like there's around three hundred or so, I can't get an exact count. I carefully made my way there, and then I caught a glimpse of something on the ground. It was an odd shaped metal object. It was a metal toe. As soon as I touched it the toe jumped out of my hand and onto my foot. Suddenly a few of my memories returned. My name was Reaper and I was an espionage agent. The toe contained several tools and a few weapons. Now I had a real means of escape. Someone called a Guardian left this here for me to find.

Six months later
Guardian year 5994 Earth year 1994 Etan age 573

An unwanted promotion

Etan's view

The last five years have been interesting. I'm in a neighboring galaxy assisting a planetary Guardian here named Eron. His planet is called Deora. He's been training me to be a future planetary Guardian. He showed me how to affect a government's policies and direction without forcing an issue. Guide them in the right direction, and only interfere when absolutely necessary. You have to let them make their own mistakes along the way. It's the only way they will grow over time.

We attended high society functions as well as talking to the common people. Four years might seem like a long time, but I had just gotten comfortable with my life here when I got a call from Master Selar. On one hand it was good to hear from him again but on the other hand part of me hated to go. This planet was at peace and the job of being a Guardian here was pretty easy. I represented the Guardians in many ways like giving our blessings on various projects and doing charitable activities. My favorite weekly activity is visiting hospitals. We take on the hard cases that the planet's medical science cannot cure. I didn't remember all the details from my past life but I knew the last few hundred years had been rough. This assignment was like a four year vacation. I finally got to see all the good things that can happen when the Guardians are around. So like I say getting the call from Master Selar was bitter sweet. I said goodbye to all my new friends in this galaxy and headed back to the Milky Way.

I reported in to Master Selar as soon as I returned. "Etan my boy it's so good to see you again." He said. We talked for awhile. He briefed me on recent events, and then got serious. "You've done well in your training. Eron says you're as competent as any planetary Guardian, that's why effectively immediately you're being promoted to that status." I knew that's what he was training me for, but I didn't think it would be this soon. Selar explained "Unfortunately this time there can be no party or celebration; it will have to be in secret, but all preparations have been made for you already. Your new mother ship is on its way here now. Most of the crew is from your old ship, including your first officer Commander Cobbs." Commander Cobbs was the grandson of Alesea. She helped me so much I wanted to return the favor. He was only a private when we first met but I could see he had a lot of potential. The only problem I have with him is almost every time he reports something to me it's bad news. Maybe it's just a coincidence, but it seems to happen that way every time. Every time he begins a report I think oh no here it comes. I made a request to Selar to be put in charge of an ice planet. Maybe I could get one that was peaceful with no hostile governments and no volcanoes. But Selar already had an assignment in mind. I will be the Guardian over Terraca. It was an alternate version of the one I helped save many years ago. Selar didn't want me to go public just yet though. Some unknown adversary was causing trouble throughout the galaxy.

He wanted to see if this enemy would make an observable move on the planet. The Guardian watching over Terroca before has disappeared without a trace. This planet in the other universe didn't have a Guardian so we were trying to influence them a little at a time. A few people knew about Guardians but the mass population didn't. Most of the population consisted of scattered tribes and villages. There are two larger cities on the eastern continent but they are of a different culture entirely. They settled this planet many years ago before the universal merger. All in all it was a touchy situation that needed a careful hand. I will need to go slow at first mostly observing and influencing them only in non-direct ways. Selar does not want the enemy to know I am even there if possible. He said I should stay out of the way and let them show themselves.

Matt's comments

That was the back story now we can get on with the main narrative.

Part one Secret Guardian

Getting started Commentary

Etan is now officially a planetary Guardian. He has a full planetary level matrix that Matt absorbed. Going from the memory of a few hundred people to a few thousand people was a big jump. It has taken Etan several days to sort through few of major memories. He now had the experience of a wide range of people and jobs types. It was like he had lived thousands of life times. The memories and experience of doctors, scientist, engineers, diplomats and even lawyers just to name a few were all available to him. It seemed like a hollow victory though. Etan knew some of his memories had been taken away for his protection though he didn't know the details why. He felt like he was missing something in his life, like a close friend. He liked the people that worked for him but it wasn't the same as a best friend. Etan put all that aside and focused on the mission at hand.

Normally at this point he would contact the highest governmental officials and have them sit down and discuss the planetary problems. Most planetary problems revolved around at least one of three issues, availability of land, resources, and the threat of attack from neighboring countries. With Guardian tech the first two could usually be resolved fairly easy. The last one was a matter of the Guardian not letting one country strike out against another. In this case however he needed to watch over the planet, help where he could but stay away from high profile events. Etan knew the enemy would be watching him closely. Hopefully they would let their guard down enough to show themselves.

Etan's comments

I began dealing with the tribes first instead of the cities. I was betting our unknown enemy was heavily invested in the bigger cities. If I was lucky they would stay with the highly populated places and ignore me altogether. If I can get a number of tribes to cooperate I can help them grow in positive directions. Trade roads scattered the landscape from some of the bigger tribes so at least a little interaction was already occurring. What I needed was to get to know them better. I could read their minds but my energy signature could give me away to this mysterious enemy. I decided to keep the mother ship far away and find someone from this world to teach me their ways. On smaller scale I read a few minds but if I did this on a larger scale or too often I could give myself away. What I needed was an introduction to a leader in a larger tribe. Get to know the people without having to reveal myself.

I changed my appearance then released nearly all my light energy. I had the mother ship hide two sectors away and cloak. It would slowly head back to Terroca while I took a shuttle on another mission. I traded the shuttle off at a nearby planet and took a transport to a few different planets. If anyone had been following me this should throw them off my trail. In private I changed to a look like Argyle and began my real mission. I purchased an old shuttle

and headed toward the slave markets. Terroca was one of the few planets that still used hardened criminals as slaves.

Though cruel it was a good deterrent to crime. The key to doing away with slavery was ending violent crimes. Help a society grow to the point of emotional maturity and spiritual enlightenment. But for today their ways would help me achieve a minor goal. I need to find a Tribal from Terroca. I programmed the shuttle to take me to terraca. It took three days stuck in the shuttle to get there with no one for company but Matt.

Matts explanation

Now I know what you're thinking. How could the Guardians allow any slavery to happen? The only kind of slavery that is allowed is career criminals. Criminals like Rapist, murderers or terrorist. What's the point in someone just sitting in jail for decades? Nearly all Guardians would buy these hard to deal with cases. Provide them with shelter, food and medical treatment and they earned their keep in return. Though technically deemed as a slave they are not mistreated or abused. Most individuals after years of service and being taught the right morals can truly be reformed to become moral and honorable. Some even got to earn their freedom if they become law abiding people.

The auction Commentary

After the three grueling days he had finally made it to one of the slave markets. The market was near a group of old buildings in a run down part of town, dirty and unkempt. Most of the people here looked dirty and unkempt too consequently. He was told that Terrocian females were sold, here. A Drax beetle suddenly scurried under his feet, nasty things infesting every space port in the galaxy. They made nests in the wiring of any mechanisms they found and chewed through the wires. He would have to do a thorough check of the transport pod for them, when he returned. Etan decided to grab a bite to eat on the way. Replicator food was not as good as fresh food. He looked and spied was a vendor selling burritos. This must be his lucky day. He didn't realize just how lucky he was until he got up to order and he was getting the last one in the shop. Usually he would have been the guy behind the last one sold. He was about to stop and eat but remembered the time. He needed to get on to the sale before they got started.

Suddenly he felt a dark presence drawing near. The presence of someone with dark energy always gave him a cold chill down his spine. A lesser agent's energy can be easily seen but some higher level agents can mask their signature. He causally looked around trying to pin point it. He ended up colliding with a man dressed in a black cloak. He was about to apologize for his clumsiness but then he caught a glimpse of another suspicious man. He was also dressed in black and was half way hidden behind a sign. This could be a test. Maybe he had been followed after all. Instead of being nice Etan acted angry and told the man to watch where he was going. He could see he was carrying some papers on the sale too. He could be here just for the sale but Etan couldn't take that chance he needed to get out of here. The man picked up his papers and looked at Etan's burrito. He grabbed it out of his hand and said "I'll take this for my troubles" Well if losing his burrito kept anyone from being suspicious it was worth the loss. Etan continued on before any more incidents occurred.

Soon He was close enough to hear the auctioneer "Our next slave is a Tribal female thirty eight years old and healthy." She was tall and slender with flowing blond hair, blue eyes and clear skin. She was dressed in a leather bodice, not a typical way for a slave to dress. It was form fitting, and she filled it well, with hourglass shape hips. If she was a free woman she might have been a model. The auctioneer continued his shouting "Who will start the bidding at a hundred pieces of gold." "Not for her", said a voice from the back "We know all about that Har-asic." Har-asic was a local term which meant wild one. Then the voice said again "She has gone through three masters and she is only good to look at but not for work or play." Several others in the crowd agreed and no one gave a price. Wow! Thought Etan certainly this is my lucky day. She was exactly what he was looking for. "I bid one hundred" Etan cried out. Several people in the audience laughed after they saw the scrawny figure of Etan. He was in Argyle form. So he was five foot tall and skinny with no muscle tone, brown hair with no strong chin or jaw bone.

A man in the crowd commented “Her last master was a large man and couldn’t tame her. What chance does this wimp have?” All eyes turned to Etan. “Watch out” laughed another “or you’ll end up her slave” The auctioneer continued “Going once, twice, three times, sold to the man in the back.”

All this time she did not move or show any emotion, she just stared straight ahead with hate in her eyes. At the sound of the crowd harassing Etan, she turned to see who had won the bid for her. First she looked confused, and then it changed to a look a hunter gets when he bags his first prize. She was ushered back to the waiting cage while Etan went to pay for her. Even chained, she managed to knock out two of the guards on her way down, while she screamed obscenities at the crowd. The auctioneer fell back off the stage into the water barrel. I doubt he will ever forget her. A final cry went out from the annoying voice in the crowd “I give it a week until she’s back and you’re in the hospital” “Or the morgue” another voice chipped in. Payment and processing turned out to be dull and uneventful. Giving your money to the seller was not as exciting as what you’re buying. They had endless laws and papers to be signed to officially make her his slave. Only murderers, rapist or terrorist could be sold as slaves, even so the laws about slave ownership was complex.

Reapers comments

I got a good lead on this new enemy. I made my way to a planet called Terraca. The lead indicated that a woman who was a slave, once acquired an item I’m searching for. I missed the sale because of some bratty teenage boy. The stupid kid bumped into me knocking my papers out of my hand and got mad at me. Who does he think he is me? I’m the only one allowed to do that. Selar asked me to avoid creating any scenes so I didn’t kill him for his arrogance. I took his burrito just for my troubles. I shouldn’t have gone back for the hot sauce from the vendor. By the time I ate and made my way to the slave sale, the female I was looking for was already gone. Later I found out that the snotty teenager bought her. Ok now I did have a good reason to kill him. Maybe this was my lucky day after all. He was gone by the time I got to the right place but I would find him soon enough.

Matt’s comments

We didn’t know at the time we had a run into Reaper. The funny thing was it was a reversal of when He and Etan first meet. Originally Reaper ran into Etan and knocked the stuff out of his hand. Then he was rude to him. Now Etan was the one who ran into Reaper and had to be rude to him. Life’s funny like that.

Day one the auction

Algeria’s view

Once again she was being sent to the slave market. Her last master had beaten her, slapped her, spit on her and had done everything he could think of to break her, but she would not budge. Her master decided he would resell her to get his money back and get a better behaved slave. Algeria was a warrior; she would not give up the fight, ever. Once she was on the slave block they began the process, but only one scrawny man bid on her, her reputation was building. She had out fought men twice her size; she could handle this guy without breaking a sweat. After the bidding one of the guards tried to fondle her, so she reacted by looping her chain over his neck and used it to push his head into the other guards’ skull. Just for fun on the way down she pushed the auctioneer in the water barrel. She knew she couldn’t get away but the point she wanted to cause trouble and add to her reputation. She was led to the medical bay and rechecked for diseases then she escorted by two huge guards to her new master. Now the fun begins

The lead guard comments

Some poor sap got the wild woman. This time I can’t let her get loose or else it’s my job. The buyer was a scrawny teenager. I thought we had stricter rules on the age limits of the buyers. This poor kid doesn’t know what he’s doing. He’s going to get killed. I shook my head but refrained from making a snide comment. I was glad to get rid of this wench, even if it meant the buyer’s funeral. “Where do you want her?” I asked. The little guy put something

around her neck and told me I could go. "Your funeral" I muttered. Oh well not my problem now. I was glad to be rid of that woman.

The first meeting

Etan's memories

I waited in the shuttle pod for her to be delivered. This time she was heavily chained by her feet and hands, and gagged. She was dragged by two large guards. I guess they didn't want a repeat of the stage incident, Can't say I blame them. "Where do you want her?" the guard growled. "Just hold her still for a second, if you please" I replied back evenly. I was so excited I could burst, but this was not the situation to show weakness of emotion. I placed a jeweled necklace around the woman's neck. The two guards had her secured well, so she had no leverage to fight or pry free. The necklace was an advanced bio-crystal tech that absorbed into her skin becoming part of her; she couldn't take this collar off. I touched a sequence of stones to active the collar and stepped back. "You may unchain her and go. Everything will be fine." I told them. She actually didn't need to wear a control collar, she couldn't have hurt me, but I didn't want her to know that yet. The guard stared at me for a second, shook his head again, let out a heavy sign and muttered "Your funeral"

She had no reason to fight getting released, so she stayed still while they unchained her. Either from shock or waiting for the guards to leave and she never moved. She stood perfectly still her eyes never wavering, gazing at me with a cold dead stare. The second the hatch closed she pounced. She moved faster than any beast I had ever seen. She flew at me with her hands spread. She let out an ear piercing screech of rage. In less than a second she had bridged the seven foot gap between us, with animal like reflexes. The collar kicked in, sending pain down her spine. This only slowed her, slightly. She grabbed for my neck, and the collar kicked in with a momentary paralyses. I told her "The collar is on defensive mode and will only activate if you try to attack me." She threatened and insulted me a few times, just for fun. I didn't let it rattle me. Her aggressive actions vaguely reminded me of someone I used to know but I couldn't remember who. She threw down the food offered to her by Nova. She was the Sil assigned to serve me. Misteek's other children had all been more or less male in form and manner. But eventually she decided to design a female Sil after herself. Nova was one of those. Honestly I think Misteek was just worried about me. I guess having Nova to watch out for me was her way of caring. It was too bad the woman refused to eat, Nova is a great cook. I suddenly felt a dark presence drawing near again. I quickly ascended the pod and headed out. The rest of the trip was uneventful.

Algeria's view

They delivered me to my new master. He was a mouse of a man. He put something around my neck; fortunately for him the guards had me very secure. It felt odd but I had experienced many kinds of bonds and restraints before. It absorbed into my neck. If I had too when I got away I would cut it out with a knife. He stepped back and told the guards to leave. I couldn't believe my luck. I would knock him out and take his ship. Since he had been stupid enough to make it easy I might even let him live, after I mocked him a bit of course. I leapt at him but was stopped by the collar. If I couldn't hurt him then I would hurt his stuff instead. Someone in the crowd had said, "I give him a week", Hah in 5 minutes, this weakling will be begging to get rid of me. A few more auctions and the authorities would have to send me back to jail. At least I could fight my way up in the ranks in Jail. That was better than slavery. I am Algeria of the Moroccan Tribe, the most feared warrior clan of our country, second most only in size not ability to fight.

Matts comments

As she approached the consol the necklace which had been scanning her brain learning her personality and intents, pulsed her again. This time it was stronger. She staggered back stopped from her goal. "Know this little man" She said "No matter what you do I will never be yours to command, and I will make your life a living hell." Etan tilted his head, cracked a slight smile and calmly said "Sounds just like my ex wife. Have you two meet?" "Ok no mercy", she stated "you will die slowly". Once again he did not react with anger. "I see from your records your name is Algeria". He stated. She scowled. "As far as you're concerned, my name is your death." Etan looked at her with amusement.

Algeria's comments

I planned to learn as much as I could about my surroundings. When I escaped I would use the lay of the land to my advantage. Most people looked at me and either saw a pleasure slave or a simple barbarian. I was neither. I am an excellent fighter but I am also quit cunning. We arrived at our destination. I was guided out of the ship by the female robot Nova. At least I think she was a robot. She didn't have plated skin or bulky joints like all the others I've seen before. She was more like a smooth silver humanoid. I figured from the tech level of the shuttle pod that the bigger ship waiting on us would be **the same, but it wasn't.**

We stepped out of the pod into a new world. On a few missions for my tribe I've seen computers, lasers and even teleport tech but this was considerably more advanced. Slaves are often shipped in cages. These cages are put on transports. The transports in turn pick up their shipments from cargo bays. I've seen my share of such bays in the five years I've been a slave. There all dirty, dimly lit trash heaps. The people that work these places are low paid, flunkies with even lower IQ's. As long as the products come in safe, no one cares how the place is kept up I guess. You can tell a lot about a society by such places. But this room was clean and bright. The young men working were also clean and smartly dressed. I was in wonder over this place. They must be a thousand years more advanced than any technology I've seen so far.

We exited the craft and the little man told me I could walk or be carried. I didn't mind walking but I needed to put up a fight just to show he had not broken my spirit. He called for two security bots to escort me somewhere then he turned and walked out of the room. These bots looked more like the traditional units I've seen before. In fact I have seen them before. They were almost the same design as the ones used in Jails. I knew their weakness. This model had been changed because of it. I guess they didn't have many security problems on this ship or else they would know about it too. If I could disable both of them then I could still take the pod out of here. This might be my lucky day after all. I waited until they were beside me. With a quick twist I managed to disable the first Drone. One brace on the neck contained a biosensor. This left less room for the stabilizing structure. A random hit wouldn't do it. You had to know exactly where to hit it and how. Fortunately I did. It was exactly this kind of skill that had made me so successful in the first place. I turned to do the same to the second unit when I was knocked down to the floor. A third unit had snuck up behind me. Needless to say after a moment I was back in chains.

Tantrums and Conniptions Commentary

They arrived at the preset coordinates to meet up with the mother ship. Etan landed the pod in the cargo bay and called for two security bots to meet them. He looked at her and said "Now we can do this the easy way or the hard way. I have security bots here to meet us. You can walk or be chained and carried, your choice." As was expected, she chose to do it the hard way. In retrospect, perhaps he should have sent at least four bots. Not sure how she disabled one of the bots while she was wearing the suppression collar but she did. Apparently its head was jammed on backwards now. Disruption aside he was well prepared to deal with this wild woman. Etan lived on a mothership. A mothership is approximately the size of a 100,000 seat sports stadium, big enough for most kinds of missions. He had servant bots and security measures of various kinds all through the ship. Etan hoped he had a good way to train his new slave to be calm and rational. She was lead to the ships bridge. Several people walked back and forth tending to the ship. The bots released her from her bonds, and then Etan focused his attention toward her for a moment. "There" Etan stated with relief "Now you can throw fits to your hearts delight" once again she looked momentarily confused. But this strange action by her new tormentor would not stop her, she thought.

She tried to grab the nearest bot by the neck and do what she did before, that had worked quite well. Her hand passed right through it as if she were a ghost. "What" she said stammering as her momentum carried her to the floor. Etan explained "You are intangible and inaudible to all but me and a few of the specially made bots. I can see and hear you but you are out of phase with the rest of the matter on the ship except for the walls and floor. You can kick and scream until your voice goes horse, no one else can see or hear you, and you can't trash any equipment. The walls and floors are made of very tough alloys, good luck hurting them." She was taken back. "What" she repeated. Then her expression changed "If you can see me then maybe I can still hurt you" Etan smiled "Come and

try it” he said. She didn't need a second invitation for this, she lunged at him, this time the collar didn't stop her. She passed right through him like she did the bot earlier. “NO, no, no” she screamed howling mad. For the next half hour she threw a tantrum like he had never seen before. For awhile it looked like she would never tire out, but eventually she did. Her hair was frazzled and sweaty, face red and clothes torn. He had heard of the term having a conniption but had never witnessed one quite like this. He was glad she was intangible.

Matts comments

She was fun to watch. If she had been in phase with the ship it would have been trashed by now.

Intangible

Algeria's view

I couldn't believe it, he had made me intangible, I paced back and forth mulling the whole situation over looking for a lope hole, or something I could use. I could think of nothing. This went on for over a week I would pace back and forth thinking, then sit and stare at my captor for awhile. I did notice he was working intently on something. He could still see and hear me if I could distract him enough, he might let me go. Normally I could solve most of my problems with violence, but I could do annoying too. I decided to taunted him “Hey you little man, yeah you the shrimp with no life. I'm going to keep talking to you so you can't work, why you don't let me go now, and save yourself the trouble?” He just looked at me and stated. “I can just as easily tune you out so I can't see or hear you either” which he apparently did. Well, there goes that plan. After several hours all to myself I realized how lonely it was. In my tribe, in jail, or even the slave cages I was never truly alone. There were others there who were kindred spirits, but here I was alone.

Commentary

The more she thought about it, the more it made sense that he didn't want to keep her intangible forever. Whatever his purpose or reason behind getting her, she would need to be tangible. This was designed to frustrate her into doing what she was told. She had to admit that part was working. He was obviously not as big a fool as she had taken him to be. He was well prepared, but there had to be a weakness in his plan somewhere. She was a warrior and she knew no defense is perfect. No matter how powerful something is, it has a weakness. She just needed time and opportunity to find his. She could only come to one conclusion, she would have to gain acceptance of his mastery long enough to gain his trust until she could escape or kill him. She approached one of the bots that had served her food. “I am ready to cooperate, tell him that” She stated as false nicely as she knew. But the stupid contraption didn't move or acknowledge anything she said. She had no choice but to sit and wait for the man to talk to her. One day he would pay for this, she would kill him in the worst possible way she could think off.

Algeria's comments

Later he talked to me but somehow, he knew I was lying when I said I would cooperate. I must not have done a good job on the false politeness; I would have to get better with that if I was going to win his trust. Dang it how did he know? This might take longer than I thought. He went back to work and ignored me for a few more days. It was intolerable.

Etan's comments

After awhile I turned and asked her. “And how is our mood now? I hope it's a little better.” I said. “I am ready to cooperate” Algeria said calmly “Is that so” I asked knowingly. “You're lying” I told her “But eventually it will be the truth” She was progressing fast through her journey. Already she was tired of being ignored. A few more days and she might have an emotional break.

The first break Commentary

After a two more days of being intangible and being ignored, she couldn't take it anymore. She was mad, frustrated, and lonely and for the first time in a long time a little scared. She couldn't do anything but sit and cry. The wetness of her tears reminded her of the torrential rains in the forest near her home. She hadn't cried since her mother died. Her mother had taught her to be strong and independent. But her emotional reservoir was so full; she had no choice but to cry it out. At least no one could see or hear her right now. After her cry session, she suddenly felt emotionally numb, as if she had cried out all her feelings for the moment. She promised herself right then that no matter what she would not lose who she was, and she would never stop being a warrior. If she ever stopped fighting, she has already lost. Shortly afterwards she lay on the ground and slept, better than she had slept in a long time.

30 years ago in the Morrigan tribe.

Algeria's memories

“Geria be good for your father while I'm gone tonight, ok?” Algeria didn't want her mother to go on another mission. “But why does it have to always be you?” she asked. She knew the answer to that already. The men fought the battles with other tribes and the women went on the spy missions. Most of the missions they went on were in one of the bigger cites. They like to steal our resources and land. Some of the women would break into high level buildings and get needed items or info. We were expert enough that other tribes hired us help them on their missions. We could trade our services for food, supplies or needed labor.

The next day

I was in class when we heard the news that my mother's raiding party was returning. All us kids got to get out early to meet them. The gate opened up but no one looked happy. There were a few guards carrying a chest full of weapons that had been acquired. What could everyone be unhappy about? Then I saw what it was. My mother was being carried on a stretcher. She had been hit by a toxic blast. It was a type of energy blast that poisoned the victim. If the initial blast didn't kill them the poison would. My father and I spent her last few hours together. She touched my tear streaked face and said “Don't be sad for me. I spent my life protecting my family. I didn't just protect you but all my family, everyone in my tribe. They are your family too.” My father and I had never agreed on what I would do when I grew up. I didn't want to be a warrior. As the daughter of a leader I was expected to take my place among the Warriors. I had always had a creative side and wanted to design things. My mother held my hand one last time before she died and said “Whatever you do I'll be proud of you. But whatever it is, do it to help your family.” She had a look of peace as she breathed out, one final time.

2 days later at the funeral

Her mom would be missed by everyone. Her mother and father were the bravest people she knew. Her Grandfather was a strong leader that had helped her tribe to grow in power since he had been the leader. Her father had taken after his father and would be a great leader one day too she supposed. It just wasn't fair. Her tribe was just trying to get back what others had stolen from them, and now her mom was dead. Her father told her not to cry. Warriors weren't mourned they were celebrated. She couldn't help it she had to cry. She loved her father but would miss her mother dearly. A few days later her made up her mind that one day she would protect her people in the same way her mother did. Now she would be a warrior but it was by her choice.

Etans memories

She was like a caged wolf, restless and predatory. Each day she paced back and forth and then starred at me for awhile. Fortunately, she didn't know that I could read her mind; she was mulling things over and planning out right trouble. It was funny; she thought she could annoy me into letting her go. I had centuries of experience and patience, I could handle annoying. I told her I would make her inaudible and intangible to me too, which I did.

After a few moments though, I tuned back in without letting her know. I knew she would eventually seek to communicate with me. She did try to communicate with me through one of the bots. I heard her speak to it but I acted like I didn't hear her. I saw in her mind she was pretending to be cooperative. After I told her she was lying, I went back to work, letting her continue to think over her situation. A few days later she sat and cried for awhile, that was good she was beginning to break through her emotional barriers. Centuries ago I had been turned into a woman for a time; I understood the process she was going through.

Agent of the swarm's report

The last of the crystal lattices have been put into place. The chambers will be complete within three months at most. We have yet to find the new Guardian. Some trace readings of light energy have been detected but we have been unable to track the source and we suspect a cloaked mothership to be close by.

The first concession A few days later

Commentary

Algeria was sullen and calm sitting in the corner of the room, waiting for Etan to communicate with her. Nearly a week had passed since she had been here, and this was worse than solitary confinement in jail. She had felt more emotions in the last week than she had in the last five years. Finally Etan turned to her and said. "Are you ready to listen and cooperate this time?" She signed heavily "Yes, what do you want?" She had a feeling she knew what a guy like him would want from an attractive woman like her. "Not much actually, company and conversation" he said evenly. She stared at him in disbelief. "All you want is to talk, nothing else?" She asked. "Are you offering more?" He answered back with a smirk. "No, not to you or anyone else" she said with conviction. "You want my body, you'll have to take it by force" she said darkly. "That is not our way" he answered. "I know you are a warrior of the Moroccan clan, and I know if you make an oath to the God of your people you have to keep it, or else you lose a chance to go to the warrior's place in the afterlife." Etan stated. He had been able to gather some information about the tribes like a few of their wide spread traditions and beliefs. "Yeah, what of it?", Algeria responded. Etan explained "Give me an oath that you will behave yourself. You can't attack me or anything else here. You can't run away and you have to be willing to talk with me, and I'll put you back in phase with everything else again." She couldn't believe it. "Talking, that's all you want from me?" She asked again. "Yes, do we have a deal? I release you and you behave, spend time with me and talk, that's all." He repeated. "Fine I so give an oath if you will do all you say, I will not be violent, and I will talk with you. Also I will not run away." She stated giving her oath. Etan put her back in phase. A few of the men on the bridge got quite a shock. They eyed her while pretending to continue their duties. This was an understandable thing given the situation. Etan, had to admit she was what most people would consider a perfect physical form. He knew he would need to keep her out of eye contact with the males of the crew so they wouldn't be distracted. Commander Cobbs saw this and quickly gave the men other duties to perform elsewhere. Etan decided to assign Nova to show Algeria to her room and get acquainted with the ship.

The beginning of the change

Algeria's view

Ok I don't get this guy at all. He bought me just to have someone to talk too, how big of a loser could he be? Still if that's all he wanted I could deal with him for awhile, better this than the slave cages again I suppose. He treated me to a nice meal; I haven't had real meat in nearly five years. The stuff slaves are feed is not fit for the rats. The smell of the steaks as they came out brought back memories of being around the fire with my tribe. The first bite was like heaven, it was Tarronian beast steak. It was an animal my tribe hunts for food and clothes. It was even seasoned with the local herbs. On the plate was the traditional serving of Alla berries and sliced Guav fruit. I barely managed not to shout for joy but I know my hands were shaking. The Guav was fresh and sweet, which was amazing since it doesn't stay fresh very long. The first bit was salty and bitter then the after taste was a sugary and sweet. The drink was the wine of Ala-don the vintage only a few people on my planet knew the recipe for. Alla berries and Guav fruit was grown and carefully prepared. It was my tribes only export. How had he gotten all of this so fast? And why would he do this for a slave he bought?

After the meal he asked me about the natural wonders of my planet, we talked for a few hours then Nova showed me to my room. When I saw the room for the first time, I was in utter shock. It was designed and decorated just like a room in a Moroccan house. The Warriors God alter was next to the bed, tribal masks on the wall. The lights looked like torches and the walls and floor resembled our building materials. It was almost as if I were home again. Even though they could have made better dwellings than thatched houses all the local tribes insisted on keeping all the old traditions. I just sat in wonder for a few moments.

Then I walked into the bathroom. It was filled with a variety of soaps, shampoos and lotions. I had seen them in the shops of the larger cities, but our tribe never had such things. The experience was one I'll never forget. Soon I was lathered up in the tub, giggling with glee like a kid. Then I felt embarrassed over such behavior even though no one was there to see me. After a few moments of soaking the whole situation sunk in. I was both happy and sad at the same time. It was like being home, but it also reminded me of how far from my real home I was. I would give anything to go back and see my father and my friends again. That life seems far away now.

I started crying again out of relief for the life I now had and the life I've lost. This was still better than Jail or the slave cages. I had become a warrior to protect my family and now I would never see them again. Maybe I could eventually ask the man who bought me if he could find out how my people were doing. That would be better than nothing. For the moment I decided just to enjoy being able to get clean. Most of the time slaves are simply hosed down when necessary. Only well behaved house slaves got to take baths. Men are not as complex as women when it comes to emotions. A woman needs to vent pent up emotions. I just sat in the bath and silently cried for a while. This time I didn't take as long for me to empty out, but now I felt better. As soon as I stood up I could tell the difference in my skin.

I strutted out of the bathroom like a woman going to town. My skin was baby soft from the bathing and lotions; I was like a queen getting ready for some fancy occasion. When I was a little girl I once saw some city girls dressed up in fancy dresses, and I wanted to try it but I never got too. I was trained to be a warrior; our people didn't indulge in such things. But secretly I never lost the desire to try more feminine things. This was my first experience with such things and I liked it. Once again I felt overwhelmed by my situation. Last week I was sleeping on a hard floor in a metal cage and now this. I knew that I needed to say thank you to my new master. I hated it. It was much easier to hate someone than to show thanks, especially since I hated the very idea of being anyone's slave. But he obviously went to a great deal of trouble to create this room. I left the light for several hours and just stared at the room, I could almost imagine one of my tribe members walking up to chat. This was the best gift anyone had ever given me.

Etan's report

The mother ship is now on Terroca. So far I haven't seen evidence of our secret enemy. I have sent out a few thousand cloaked probes to keep me apprised of any unusual occurrences on the planet. I want to eventually help the people start some industry here, something they could use to better themselves and advance their technology and medical knowledge. The hard part will be keeping them from using industry and technology to wage wars, like so many other societies have done in the past. I need two silver Guardians to assist me in doing a complete scan of the planet for all mineral and industrial potential. Time is of the essence, because of the local tension between some of the larger tribes in the area. Promise of a new industry might help ease relations within the intertribal trade dealings.

Etan personal journal

I sent a report to the Guardian core of my progress. I hope they can send the two Silver Guardians soon. On a personal note, Algeria has been intangible now for almost a week, and is now much calmer. While working to check out the local area for mineral potential I purchased a few items from the local tribes. I had Nova fix up her room to match their style. I've had a traditional dinner cooked for her in her tribe's customary style. I can't wait to see her reaction to dinner and then her room. From her records apparently she has been beaten many times by her past masters, between this and her warrior upbringing all she has known was violence. Non violent actions confuse her and set her back, now it's time for her to learn a better way.

Journal addition

Algeria's reaction to the meal and later to her room was priceless. It seems I got everything spot on. It will be interesting to see how this affects her attitude toward me tomorrow. After the meal we talked awhile, I used this time to question her about the planet's natural wonders. It gave me some insight into what other manner of potential this planet might have.

Interview with the first officer

I am lieutenant cobs. I have worked Guardian Etan for many years now. He's been great to work for. All the ship's crew love working for him, and I've never seen him mistreat anyone. But a few days ago he was acting weird. He was talking to the air. Then I found out some wacko woman was intangible. One of the bots showed me a video of her throwing a fit, and boy was she mad. But as usual the Guardian never let it get to him. I couldn't believe it, she was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Suddenly I knew why the master got her but then he gave her a room of her own. Even though I know he is very smart sometimes I just don't understand him.

Etan's thoughts

I need to begin making contacts with the locals. Being tribal in nature there is no central library here for me to research the nuances of their traditions. Sometimes the wrong look or slightest gesture can have very different meaning from culture to culture. Algeria should be able to help me with this task. The day began at the breakfast table, Algeria was quiet and subdued. I could feel her conflicting emotions. Finally after staring at the last piece of toast for ten minutes she said "You obviously went to a lot of trouble for last night's dinner and especially my room." Then she paused. I knew what she was trying to say but was having a hard time saying it out loud. I waited patiently for her to finish. "No one has ever done anything like that for me" she continued. She turned her face away from me. I saw a flash of tears on her cheeks. I could feel her fighting herself. "I will never accept being a slave to anyone, but I do appreciate what you did. Sitting in that room was like being home. I didn't realize until now how much I missed home." She paused again. "Thank you" she said in a quiet voice. The conversation dropped from there. After finishing my meal, I had Nova take her down to the replicator room and pick out several changes of clothes, shoes and all the things she would need.

Later I asked her about the traditions of her culture. When she asked why, I explained we were on her planet. Then she really freaked out when I revealed my true nature to her as a Guardian. She asked if she could see her people, I told her my terms but she refused and then she ran out of the room. A moment later I got an urgent call about a disaster happening in the south. A few hours later when I returned from the disaster she agreed to my terms, and she spent the next two days teaching me her culture. In between lessons we spent time in the Holi-room. She wanted to know all about the Guardians. We were legends to her people.

I let her see recordings of various adventures I had been on since being a Guardian. She went from a look of suspicion to a look of admiration. One adventure in particular interested her when I turned an attacking army's weapon against them. They had cables with bladed weapons. I took control of the weapons and tied them up with them. She said this matched one of their strategies of war called (in-so-fo). It means using your opponent's strength against them. She said I might be shriveled up in body like a vine but I had the mind of a master battle tactician. After that I showed her several major battles the Guardians have fought. She was even more impressed. Then she told me some of her favorite battle tactics as a former warrior in her tribe.

The revelation part one

Algeria's view

The next morning I had to say thank you for all he had done for me. I tried to make myself say it all through breakfast. I muddled through what I had planned to say. He didn't seem surprised at all, in fact it's as if he was reading my mind waiting for me to finish. I turned away from him; I couldn't let him see me tear up. Why can't I control my emotions anymore? What's wrong with me? After breakfast he told Nova to take me to a room where a

machine made all new clothes for me. I've never been clothes shopping before. In our tribe the elderly women make the clothes for whoever needs them. It's their way of contributing to the group since they can't fight anymore.

The machine had a long list of clothing styles to choose from? I admit it was fun; it made me feel like a city girl. Too bad this guy didn't buy me five years ago; my life could have been a lot less horrible. Then I stopped when I realized what I had just thought. I can't believe I am glad he bought me? What am I thinking? I'm getting too wrapped up in this, I need to strengthen my mental defenses. I closed my eyes and chanted to myself several times: I will never yield to anyone; I will never yield to anyone. All this time Nova was showing me clothes and accessory items. I think she was having fun too. "I heard you enjoyed my meal last night." She stated. "So you cooked that?" I asked. "Yes" she stated proudly "Master Etan says I'm a great cook." Whatever kind of creature she was, she apparently still had the female need for affirmation. "The meal was excellent. It was just like the ones back home." I told her. She was pleased with my response and then we went back to looking at the clothes.

Later Master Etan asked me to teach him the cultural attitudes of my tribe. "Why do you want to know that?" I asked. "Because the planet I have been assigned to protect is your home." he replied. "Are we there, now?" I asked, practically stammering." He casually nodded and said "Yes, as a matter of fact we are only about fifty miles away from your village." That caught me off guard. Whatever I had to do, I would do to get to see my people again. Before I could inquire further another thought hit me. So I asked "And what do you mean the planet you are assigned?" he explained "I'm part of an organization that works to bring peace and prosperity to all people. We are called Guardians." I couldn't believe it. "I've heard of Guardians in legend. It's told you're like God's. You end wars and bring peace."

This couldn't be true, I thought, he must be lying to get me to obey him. To be honest I didn't know what to say. "There is a way we are usually identified by" He began "That is the ability to manipulate matter and energy. We can use it to heal wounds, change matter from one type to another, read minds and create energy fields for attack or defense. I see in your mind your left foot bothers you sometimes, an old war wound I believe." He wasn't getting me that easy. "A trick" I told him. "You could have read it on some file on me at the slave auction" He went on "Could they have known you lied about the way you got the injury, even to your fellow tribe members. That you didn't get shot in the foot by a stray laser blast from an enemy but stepped on the trap you has set a few minutes earlier. You lied out of shame. How could I have known that? You told them you would keep the injury as a war token but really you were afraid they would discover the truth if they treated it. Isn't that so?" "No, no, no way you can know that" I said shaking.

He reached out and touched my face; I felt a warm sensation flow through my body. "There, the scar on your neck and your foot injury are both healed." He said. I wiggled my foot, he was right the pain was gone, It was healed. He must be a Guardian and is here to help my people. Of all the people to be bought by what were the chances? If he could truly help my people then I would cooperate with that part, and that was no lie. "Wait if you have this power why didn't you use it to make me do what you want, instead of convincing me?" I asked. "And for that matter why did you need to make me intangible in the first place, obviously I couldn't hurt you, what are"...I stopped mid thought with the realization of the truth. I had thought he had made me intangible to protect himself from my wrath. But that wasn't it at all. "You made me intangible so I could not do anything to force you to have to use your power on me. Let me calm down on my own without hurting me." I asked. He nodded yes. Dang it! He anticipated my every move and thought so far.

I hated to do this but I knew what would convince him to let me visit home. Regardless of what power he has there is one kind of power most women have over most men. He was after all still a man and I am an attractive woman, even if I do say so myself. Women have been using this tactic for thousands of years on clueless men. I myself had a few opportunities to use it as an infiltration specialist. Distract the men while others snuck in unnoticed. I got closer to him and gave him the submissive look and said. "I know that you find me attractive and I could be very cooperative if I want too. If you will let me visit with my people I will give myself to you voluntarily." He shook his head and said. "That is not our way. If you want to visit with your people you must give me an oath to obey me willingly in all things. If I give you a command you must obey me without hesitation or question?" This made me angry. "You've got to be joking" I told him. Just when I was starting to like him he pulls this. He wasn't offended

by my reaction. “Just remember we all serve something, even a king must serve the traditions of his people” he said. “For one visit, forget it” I said getting madder now. He remained calm and said “not at all, I would let you visit them often, As a matter of fact you would have constant contact with your people, it’s part of what I need you for” he explained. How come he never gets ruffled over anything? How can he be so in control all the time? “You don’t understand, I can’t, I just can’t” I screamed and ran out of the room.

Dark swarm’s command to Terracan agents

We are sending you a new bio- weapon that will force the Guardian out of hiding. Whoever has been assigned to Terraca needs to be neutralized before the coming invasion. The weapon is not completely effective yet. Other similar bio-weapons will be available soon, but this will be enough to force him to reveal his identity.

One hot mess

Normally when a Guardian is promoted to planetary level, he is assigned between two to five silver Guardians. But major events were being played out in other areas of the galaxy. So no extras could be spared at this time. Etan was looking forward to next month’s link with the collective so he can be updated on the situation. They had promised to send help as soon as they could, until then he just have to manage alone. With that in mind Etan sent out a few thousand cloaked probes to scan the planet for trouble.

Etan’s thoughts

One of the probes informed me that a large volcano was about to erupt in a matter of minutes. I’ve had constant run-ins with volcanoes over the years. What would be wrong with a runaway glacier for a change? Many large villages were within eruption distance. Now was a good time to try use a new move I had learned in the last few years. I flash ported myself there, it was more difficult than simple teleporting. The volcano had the familiar cone shape I had seen many times in others, but with one deadly exception. A rare mineral found on this planet called Des-eium was in the rock. It has explosive properties. It is used to power some types of hyper drive technology. If the already explosive force of the volcano combined with this material going off, it would take out the entire continent. I flew up and dived in the volcano, and plunged into the molten rock. Volcanoes used to terrify me but as a Guardian I could stop them now. It felt good actually like a hot spa, in other circumstances I could have just stayed there and soaked for awhile. I jetted out a freezing blast behind me as I dove, solidifying the rock. I plummeted five miles into the planets crust. In a normal volcano this would have been enough, but the des-seium caused the rock to reheat and melt within minutes. Matt chipped in “It’s a good thing for these people you’re the Guardian expert on volcanoes.” I laughed “Yeah but not by choice, it was forced upon me time after time.”

I found the main lave chamber ten miles down. It was huge; I didn’t have enough time to freeze it before the surrounding towns were destroyed. I kept the volcanic tunnel plugged while I pondered. Normally with two silver Guardians helping we could have solidified the whole chamber before it erupted. But sometimes you just got to do things the hard way. The only solution would be to reroute the entire chamber into the sea. Hmm, yes I could do that. If I used the lave tunnel already present and rerouted it about a mile below the surface, that should work. I started back up the chamber, and then the eruption from the main chamber began. The explosive force was right behind me and catching up. I saw a diamond the size of a house on my way; I’d have to remember to come back for that one later. I stopped at the junction point I picked. With my right hand I maintained the plug in the main tunnel and used my left hand to melt a new tunnel to the surface under the ocean.

Within a few minutes I had the whole flow rerouted. But now I had a second problem, the mineral was becoming unstable. I wonder if it’s too early to put in for a vacation. I only had seconds to react before it exploded. I turned myself into pure energy and dispersed myself over the entire mineral field. The area it covered was the size of large city. I changed my energy into a dampening net. The mineral detonated with an overwhelming force. It was like standing on top of rocky out crop and getting hit by a massive tidal wave. It pushed me back and shredded my energy net. I contained most of the explosion. The rest got rerouted through the new tunnel I made. I was blown up

and out of the tunnel as it reacted. I was thrown to the edge of space before I could congeal into my own form. I plummeted toward the planet, but didn't have the strength to stop; I woke up again in the medical ward of the ship. Apparently one of my Sil's spotted me and retrieved my unconscious body. I was told that I had made quite a crater; maybe one day it would be a tourist attraction. I opened my eyes and I saw the medical-Sil hovering over me. "Master Guardian I'm glad to see you awake, we were concerned." It said "Man I really do need a vacation" I muttered. "Yeah, me too". Matt agreed. "How long was I out" I asked. "For half an hour but we found you right away" It replied. "Yeah how's that" I asked. "The slave girl came running in and asked about you, she said she saw a vision of you falling from space." That was interesting. She came by a few minutes later to check on me.

The Revelation part two

Algeria ran out of the room. How can she serve anyone? It's not that she thought he would be a bad master, just the opposite he was kind and thoughtful. If she weren't a warrior, it would be different. But a true warrior cannot willingly serve anyone. Technically she had been a slave for five years but not willingly. She refused to bow or serve any man. She had always hoped that the stories of her defiance would get back to her father and he would be proud of her. She may have gotten captured but she hadn't lost her fighting spirit. Algeria went back to her room to think things over. Nova came in and sat down next to her and explained. "Although I am like a machine in many ways, I have freedom to choose. No one makes me stay here. I am here by choice. I serve for the greater good. I cook and clean or whatever Master Etan asks me to do. But make no mistake I am also a warrior. My race is cunning and powerful. We are called Mistles or just Sils for short. Many centuries ago we fought against the Guardians themselves. They will tell you we were a formidable enemy. We made peace and now work with and for the Guardians. We do so because to serve the needs of others is do the greatest good."

That made sense but it didn't really help her situation any. "I understand what you're saying but the rules in our society won't let me change." Algeria told her. "They won't let you? So that means you are already a slave by choice. You serve your peoples traditions." Nova answered back. Suddenly What Etan had said made sense. He said even a king serves the traditions of his people. She also remembered that her father had said something similar, but she didn't understand it at the time. They continued to talk for a while, she was glad to have nova's company.

She prayed at her God alter for guidance. "Great God lead me in what to do. I want to help my people but how can I give up being a warrior." Her thoughts tossed back and forth like a windy sea. What was the right thing to do? Thirty minutes later she got a vision of Etan falling from space. She and Nova checked with Commander Cobbs and found out she was right. She wondered how this could happen since she's never been psychic. Algeria was struck by the horror. What if Etan died? What would happen to her planet? If she could help her people by serving him should she? While in the slave market she had heard the two countries were developing nuclear bombs that could devastate the planet. Master Etan might be their only hope.

Algeria's comments

I found him in the medical bay. "What happened" I asked? He smiled "I tripped and had a bit of a fall" He said. "A ninety mile fall from space, if that counts" The Sil said in a monotone voice. A sense of dread overcame me. "I had a vision you fell from space but I've never had visions before" I told him. He smiled again in that way that says, I know something you don't. I hate that look, especially since he probably does. This was going to be hard to say. "I understand now what you meant by a king is servant to the traditions of his people, my father used to say the same thing all the time. Everyone serves something." He nodded and said yes. "I have been cooperative anyway, why do you need me to make an oath to be a willing slave?" I asked. He answered "I have to know that you will do what I tell you without question. Lives will depend on a lot of things working right and at the right time. Bringing peace to a troubled planet does not come easy or fast. Decades of work could be undone by one wrong move." That makes sense. Only one person can lead a battle or else wrong orders can cost many lives. "Only by submitting to me and obeying me can I truly use you to help save your people." He stated. "Just so you know I was a slave myself for many years. In fact Master Selar is technically still my Master even now. I understand how it feels and what it means." he finished.

I said to myself, I hope I'm not making a mistake. Great God forgive me, if I have failed you. I need to help my people, and to go home. Ok Algeria, take a deep breath and just say it, before you back out. I looked at him and said "I believe you are an honorable person or you would have used your power in ways you haven't. Also I want to help my people and I want to go home. The mission I got captured on and put on trial for was for the purpose of freeing my people from an enemy. Promise me if I serve you, will you allow me to visit my people?" I said. He came back with "I promise if you obey me, I will let you visit with your people often" This was still hard to say, even now. I closed my eyes and stated. "I so give an oath, I Algeria do swear to obey you in all things, I submit myself as your slave" He seemed pleased with that. "Go get some rest tonight, tomorrow you can begin teaching me about your people and in a few days you'll get to go home" he said. "Yes master" I said, for the first time. The next few days I taught him about my people. While he learned my culture, I learned about the Guardians, they were amazing. Etan explained when he meet my people he did not want to show his abilities. I would introduce him as someone wanting to settle this area and make it his home and that I now worked for him. He would use his abilities if a situation called for it, but not for show. He preferred to let them get to know him first before revealing his abilities if possible.

Matt's explanation of Tribal conduct

In a tribe the warriors eat first. Even when you are a guest if you can't prove you're a warrior, you must let the warriors eat first. This started over five hundred year ago when large predatory beasts called Dagggers roamed the forest. Keeping the village safe was the warrior's job. The warriors got all the best food, houses and the most respect in the tribe. All other jobs, including the medicine man and teachers got second rate status. Over time more people wanted to be warriors, so they could get the best of everything. A hundred years ago the Dagggers were hunted to near extinction. By that time the warrior mentality was so a part of their traditions, that it could not be easily dismissed. It didn't take long before wars began to break out between the tribes. It's been that way ever since, each generation just passing on the same attitudes and traditions as the last.

Non-warrior must gesture their heads down and to the left in a show of respect to any warrior passing by. Red clad warriors are the highest ranked and are the ones who raid other tribes. Brown clad warriors are right under them in rank, they stay in the tribe for defense. The lowest ranked are the white or training warriors. White is considered no color at all. They have a saying "You must earn your colors" This saying is used to mean several different things like passing the warriors test , getting paid for a job, even the right to get married. Also a man that is a guest must not speak to a woman who is not one of his hosts. Any males related to her could take this as an unwanted approach to his daughter or flirtation with his wife.

The trip to the tribe Commentary

A few days later Etan made preparations for the visit. Etan told Algeria to get clothes suitable for meeting her tribe. For a second he was surprised she didn't come out in some kind of leather armor, then he remembered her training. She technically wasn't a warrior anymore so she probably didn't feel it was appropriate to wear the tribal armor. They had strict rules of conduct that she would not violate. Instead she came out in a flowery skirt and a low cut blouse. Even her hair was professionally styled. Nova was standing to the side looking quite pleased. She seemed to be competent at just about everything. They must have added more clothing options with the replicator. "Great, next she'll want a bigger closet." Etan thought. She was already beautiful before but now she was stunning. She might have been raised a warrior but she had good taste. His female form Aria would have approved. This could work to his advantage. While everyone noticed her they would ignore him. He would be practically invisible.

Just then the first officer reported a situation to him. "Sir the local villages have a plague spreading in the area." So Etan directed "Send a bio-probe and get samples from several infected people." Algeria asked. "Is my village sick to?" The first officer looked at her and said "I'm afraid so umm – umm." Not really sure as to how to address her. "You may address her as madam" Etan said sternly. "Yes sir, understood." he responded then quickly left. Algeria looked at him curiously. "I'm your slave why would you care what he calls me"? She asked. "That's right your my slave not his, and besides haven't I always treated you nicely? Why would I let my crew do any less"? Etan explained. Ooh what a nice sentiment, she thought. Even now he shows her such courtesy. Later the bio-probe returned and its sample analyzed. It was definitely a virus of some kind. The medical Sil turned its hollow eyes toward them, "Master Etan there is something unusual about this virus" it said. "It has been manufactured it's not natural." That was unexpected. "How do you know?" Etan asked. "Because" it answered "It has the markings of Dark Guardian tech." For the first time Algeria saw a concerned look on Etan's face instead of his usual calm. This must be serious. "Wait here", he told them, "I must report this to the Guardian counsel, immediately." Algeria wondered what could be enough bad to concern him that much. He returned some time later looking more troubled than before, though he said nothing.

The medical Sil's report did not help either. "None of the treatments are working. When we kill one batch of the virus the other batches become immune to the same treatment." It said. "Then I must kill all the cases simultaneously" Etan stated. He sent several messengers to the local villages to let everyone know where to meet. He sent several probes to scan the area for infected people who might not have gotten the message. Within three days several thousand people were camped outside one the nearest towns. Just for safeties sake anyone who came in contact was asked to join too, even if they weren't showing signs of the infection. They meet up with Algeria's tribe members at that place including her father who was very ill with the virus and close to death. Etan had everyone stand close together and infused himself in the air. He created an antiviral field that wiped out all the cases at the same time. Once a person was scanned and cleared by the medical Sil they were free to go home.

Etans comments

I took a big risk curing everyone like I did but I couldn't let them die. If I'm lucky then this unknown enemy would still be busy with their plans elsewhere.

The trip to the tribe Algeria's view.

We were finally leaving to go see my people. Master Etan came up with an idea on how to cure everyone. This would certainly put him in good standing with all the tribes. We approached Antioch glade which was just outside the tribe called Orador. They were a small tribe made up mostly of farmers and craftsman. They traded food with other tribes in exchange for protection and other supplies. Master Etan had all the sick people meet just in the area. We saw at least several thousand people. How many were infected? I looked for our tribal banner throughout the encampments. I found my father, on a straw bed gasping for air. He stared at me with a strange look no doubt wondering why I was dressed the way I was. I would have liked to be wearing my old armor but now it wouldn't be appropriate for me to have them. I figured dressing like a city woman would make explaining the situation to my father easier. I say easier but there was bound to have a fit. Right now though, he wasn't in any shape to argue. I had only seen him sick one day in his life; my father was the strongest man I ever knew. A few people were just now showing the symptoms but most were in bad shape. Many people would not last the night, we came just in time.

The people were called to gather in one spot and Master Etan turned into a cloud and spread across the group. Within a few minutes everyone was cured. There was an immediate change in mood now. Instead of sorrow there was joy, everyone, except Master Etan. He should have been overjoyed, but there was a look of discomfort on his face. He was able to hide it from everyone else, but I could tell. I may not be his wife, but I still had strong female instincts about such things. Most men were blissfully unaware that a wife can tell what he is thinking most of the time even when he is hiding it. I wonder if the same is true on other worlds.

Seeing all the tribes brought back memories. Once a week for example the men of my tribe would get together to boast about their exploits. They bragged about what kind of animal they killed or warrior they slew in battle. While the men were off trying to outdo each other, the women would get together and share secrets about the men. How they were as husbands, and such. Sometimes even funny secrets the men would die over, if they knew got out. Crag the second ranked warrior in the tribe liked to put on his wife's leather skirt and strut around the house. We could just imagine his huge bulging muscled self in her skirt. I laughed myself sore that night. Those were good days.

By the time I finished this thought I realized most of the groups were packing up. To avoid needless fighting in this time of celebration all tribes returned to their home towns. There was cheering and banner waving all around as we approached the city. It was fanfare like I hadn't seen since my father won the battle over the Altret tribe when I was a child. I got a good look at everything as we were paraded in the city gates. We had 20 foot tall stone walls that surrounded our tribe. They didn't look much different than the last time I was here. My people were using some modern materials in the construction of defenses and weapons. The water system looked like it had slight upgrade too. I saw small pipes running along the ground for distribution. So how is it that we can progress with these things and still be stuck in many useless traditions? I guess I felt this way because of how I knew my father would feel when he found out the truth about me. If I was still free would I think the traditions were useless then? No, probably not. As we past the warrior memorial I saw mine was already there. I guess before today they thought I was dead.

My father led us to the central square. He announced that Master Etan was his honored guest and that we all owed him our lives. The only notable incident to start off was when Etan was offered a celebration drink. I had forgotten to tell him about not picking it up with his right hand but with his left. The right hand was the hand that wields the sword and is considered holy. When I thought this, I heard "Thanks" in my mind and a mental smile. He had heard me think it. He quickly changed hands before grabbing the drink and avoided an embarrassing situation. Master Etan still looked like he was in pain, but I decided to ask him about it later. I told my father Etan had saved me from the slave cages and now I worked for him. He obviously didn't approve of this, but was glad that I was safe. Later my father made a speech on how I was destined for greatness. When he sat down he told me he needed me to help save our people in another way. He needed me to marry the new king of the tribe to the south. The tribe was the Tornacks. Sometimes they were friends sometimes rivals. My father wanted the marriage because they were the biggest tribe in our region. If we could secure a marriage and join as one people we could stand against all other tribes. Actually they were large enough to be called a city not a tribe but again tradition demanded that term.

I was terrified, what could I say to my father. I could think of no reason to back out of the marriage. Most likely he would find out the truth eventually, I might as well get this over with. "I cannot marry anyone, I am still a slave and must serve my master" I said. Father looked at me with rage. "How can you willingly be a slave to anyone, I raised a queen." He glared at me with anger and sadness. I knew what he was thinking. By being a willing slave I had violated one of the most sacred traditions of my people. It was be the same as if a high priest preformed some type of sacrilege and rejected the God he had vowed to serve. Maybe in some other society the father would have offered a great price to buy his daughter back, but my father could not. It would dishonor our laws and traditions. This was the perfect example of how a king is servant to the traditions of his people. He had to uphold our ways more than anyone else. To not do so would disqualify him from leadership and probably cause great division in our tribe.

I saw the look in his eyes I knew what he was about to do. He addressed Master Etan "You cured us so we owe you our lives, but know this you are not welcome here anymore. I'd rather have died than let this happen to my child." I couldn't help but react "Father how can you say that, he is the most honorable person I've have ever meet. He could put all your warriors to shame" father stood up and said "No daughter of this tribe would ever say such a thing. I don't know what happened to you, but you are no blood of mine. I hereby formally disown you as my lineage. Your name will be taken out the hall of hero's, the scrolls of your deeds burnt, and no one will be allowed to petition for your soul when you die. And when you die, you will die a coward, and a traitor. Go now and never return." Etan stood up but did not protest. He understood our ways enough now to see that arguing wouldn't have done any good. He took me by the hand and we quietly left. My people have been stuck in the same traditions for hundreds of years. They need to change if we were going to survive. This was proof of that. On our way out my father ordered my memorial to be taken down. We were hurried out the gates and locked out. This was officially, the worst day of my life.

Etan's report

A plaque broke out recently. As stated in the message earlier it was dark Guardian tech. I cured the people of the disease. That turned out to be the easy part. Now I am infected. It did not emanate dark energy until I had cured everyone. That leads me to believe that infecting me was their plan all along. The Dark energy infection is growing in me. It feels like getting stabbed in the abdomen with a blade. Several times during the evening I tried to change my energy matrix to eliminate it but I couldn't. Matt fell unconscious. He seems to be comatose. I hope my little buddy will be alright. I managed to create an energy envelope to contain the organism, but while I'm holding it I cannot tie into the life stream. To make matters worse there were some complications with the one of the local tribes. I will update you on the details at our next meeting.

Commentary

The next day Master Selar arrived. He looked Etan over and scanned him. He stated "We have a serious problem indeed. I cannot cure you without linking to you and getting myself infected. This organism was obviously designed with Argarian physiology in mind. You are not only cut off from the life stream but must not join the collective link until we can find some other way to cure you." He went on to explain. "This is worse than I thought; they have been attacking one system after another. First they saturate entire populations with dark energy and now their creating plagues to wipe others out. I'm sorry we haven't been able to send you help, but the dark Guardians have taken out twenty silvers" he finished. Etan was speechless. "I sense there is something bigger here than just a plaque to wipe these people out, but what?" Etan asked. "I don't know either, and that's what concerns me." Selar replied. "Though we are preoccupied with a war on several fronts, you are not alone. In spite of your sickness we need you here. Keep researching find out if there is a bigger plot going on here." Selar said. He sighed heavily "I would like to stay and offer you assistance in this, but three planetary Guardians have disappeared. It's crucial I see to this immediately. If the dark Guardians are strong enough to take out a planetary Guardian fast enough he cannot call for back up, then a whole new strategy will need to be made. They may be hurt or unable to contact us, but either way we need to know" Etan understood the need for swift action in this case. "You don't have to worry Master Selar" Etan said "I will continue to uphold all the duties of being a Guardian" Selar smiled "Of that I'm sure, we'll be in touch my boy" With that he disappeared. Would that be the last time he saw his Master.

Matts comments

I was out for this whole thing. Poor Etan had to carry on by himself. **1** and Misteek got recalled to our galaxy. It would take **1** a few weeks to accommodate down from her energy saturation suit but she could get up to speed on current events and begin directing our fleets in that time.

An unfamiliar face

Several weeks later

Algera's comments

In spite of the bad situation with my tribe it seems we were in for bit of good luck this day. Master sent me with a bot in a shuttle pod to town to retrieve some supplies. The other local tribes wanted to thank Master for his service even if my tribe rejected us, though that could have played apart in this too. They could be welcoming him to get him on their side against my former people. We were half way to the nearest large city when the shuttle was fired upon by an unknown assailant. I sent out a distress signal, but would anyone get here in time to help? The pod was damaged but the bot managed to land us safely anyway. I got a little banged up, but I've had worse in prison.

A man in a black cloak approached the shuttle; he looked like something out of a night mare. "Where is it slave? Tell me and I'll let you die mercifully, deny me and I'll show you suffering that you can only imagine." He said. I still had warrior instincts I flew at him, but he knocked me back several feet to the bulk head wall as if I weighed nothing at all. Attached to his right hand was a bladed weapon that emanated an ominous black glow. Was this one of the dark Guardians that Master Etan mentioned before? Suddenly the room was filled with light. Master Etan had arrived. Etan looked at me with those caring eyes. "Are you ok?" He asked. "I'm a little bruised from the crash but otherwise ok" I told him. "What do you want?" Etan asked the man "I want my stolen item" he announced "Quit wasting my time, give it back and I'll think about letting you live." he said.

Etan looked at me. "I haven't stolen anything. What he is talking about?" I said back. He turned to the stranger and said. "She is telling the truth, I can read minds, I don't know what you've lost but she doesn't have it." The man looked exasperated for having to explain but he did anyway. "Five years ago a kolo crystal disk came up missing from a military base and it was brought to this planet. Recently I was sent to obtain the disk. Her team of so called freedom fighters raided a kathreil stronghold and found the crystal. Now I am here to retrieve it. My patience is wearing thin so hand it over now." I remembered the item he was talking about but I didn't have it my father did. "I gave the crystal to my father as a war trophy." I told him He looked very impatient. "Where is your father now?" he asked darkly. "Wait say nothing" Master interjected. "Here's the deal, you tell me what's on the crystal and I might help you get it." Etan said diplomatically. He held up his sword and said "No deals, just death" Then he reformed the sword on his hand into a Scythe. He stopped for a moment and said. "I recognize you. You were that scrawny kid that bumped into me near the slave market and caused me to be late for the sale. I guess this was just your day to die."

He struck at Etan faster than my eyes could keep up with. Etan dodged a few strikes, and then the stranger got a lucky hit in and looped off his head. "The Reaper has come" he said and turned to me. Master waited until the dark man turned around to reform his head to his body. The man held the Scythe up to my neck and said "Last chance to live, little lady tell or die." Master used this chance to power up and hit the man in black with a powerful energy blast. The man was thrown back hard, hitting the bulk head and splinting it into. He landed outside on the ground. The man was bruised and cut in a few places from the attack but not stopped. "Nice" he smiled "You may be a bit of fun after all. I might even drink a toast to you, after you die. Wouldn't that be nice?"

He strolled back in, like a man who was going to the bank to collect. He seemed to take a moment to stretch, as if he were a getting ready for a training exercise. "Do you know who I am?" The man asked. "Do you know who I am" Master replied back in the same tone." The man look annoyed "This is not a game of who the Drax are you. For I am Reaper, the Reaper; but as far as you're concerned you can call me your death." I laughed "Yeah I tried that once too, didn't work for me either." He apparently ignored that statement. Master replied unshaken. "You're in a black cloak, holding a Scythe. You call yourself Reaper, how original." Reaper grimly responded "What's your name; I like to keep a list of the people, who has suffered most at my hand." Reaper responded. "I am Cronos Etan, Guardian of this planet." Master stated. The man had a surprised look on his face, maybe that sacred him. No one who has heard of Guardians will cross them. I thought he might retreat leaving well enough alone. Instead he got right up in Masters Face and stopped. The strange man seemed to come to a realization. "I see you are a Guardian." He said "But you're sick, I can sense a dark plaque of some kind, that's too bad. You're too weak to be a real test. Lucky for you I work for the Guardians, so I am not supposed to kill you." he said with amusement.

I came to my own realization "Master is sick, I knew it, I knew something was wrong." If you work for the Guardians prove it "Tell me", Master said "Do you know the riddle of the stream?" The man nodded his head "A man stands in the mouth of the river" he replied. Master continued "which direction does he go" "he doesn't, he changes to match to flow" the man in black finished. "What is your true name" Master said. He whispered something into his ears and showed him a glowing ring. "Very well Reaper let see about getting this disk of yours?" Master said. They continued to talk for awhile, though I wasn't privy to the conversation.

Etan personal; Journal

I meet the person known as Reaper; he seems a little unhinged. Something seemed familiar about him, though I couldn't think of what it was. He apparently contains both light and dark energy making him one of a kind and very dangerous. In my normally healthy state I could have taken him easily, but weakened I might not have been able to defeat him. Fortunately he seems to be on my side, at least for now. He didn't recognize me as a Guardian because I am sick with this dark virus and he couldn't sense my energy. I was careless in using so much energy to attack before I knew the whole situation. This virus is making me weak, and it's causing me to make mistakes. Right now the Guardians need me more than ever; I must be vigilant in all my duties and responsibilities.

If I don't have anymore big energy expenditures I estimate I have around three months before I run out of energy to contain this virus within me and it either kills me or takes over my mind and converts me to a dark Guardian. I will not let that happen so I have begun making preparations for my death in such a case. I have recorded my will into the ship's computer. Every member of my crew will be generously rewarded for their service and Algeria will be well provided for. I have grown to care for her. My only regret is not getting more time to enjoy her company. There is still time to hope for a cure, but time is quickly running out. Whatever happens I will live my last days as a true Guardian.

Reapers report to counsel

I had an encounter with Cronos Etan. Its strange I feel like we've meet before but I have no memory of him. We exchanged a few moves then eventually identified ourselves. He was surprised I knew the riddle of the stream. There is more going on at this planet than would seem. As I'm sure you know Etan has contracted some kind of sickness and is weak, so I will stay and assist. I'm hoping there is trouble here. I'm looking forward to matching up with some dark Guardians, it should be fun.

Etan's comments

Reaper has retrieved the disk from Algeria's tribe. He strolled right up, in the middle of day like he was supposed to be there. He walked slowly down the main street, never looking away from his tech arm computer. Occasionally he pushed a button and typed something on it. Each time a guard would approach him he would knock him out with his left hand, never bothering to look up at him. Shoots fired at a distance just bounced off him. He walked in, grabbed the disk, walked out, and never lost stride or concentration on his mini screen. Later I found out what had interested him so. He was trying to order take out from a local Terracan diner. I'm glad he is our side.

Author's interruption

I never imagined young children would like my series but they do. I originally wrote these stories for myself and others just happened to like them too. Later I found out that kids as young as ten years old were reading my stories. As a consequence I changed a few scenes in various stories for their sake. None of my material was vulgar but a few were borderline suggestive. Life is complicated. I try to let my stories reflect the complexity of life in that manner. Instead of deleting this whole next section I decided to blank out a few individual words and only remove one or two sentences. I was able to make this section safe enough for all ages without compromising the entire thing. This section was necessary for the progression of Etan and Algeria's relationship but I had no intention of hurting a child in the process. With that in mind please enjoy.

Ps. If any kids are reading this, skip the next section. You'll find it boring anyway.

A few weeks later

Our first night together

Algeria's view

Our link must be getting stronger; I'm picking up more thoughts and feelings from Master Etan. He hasn't complained about the pain, or weakness but I can feel it. It took a lot out of him to come rescue me. He is one of the bravest men I've ever meet. He is a true warrior and I've grown to love him. I can feel he has come to love me too. I waited for him to retire to his room for the night, and then I knocked on his door. "Yes" came his voice. "I understand now why you didn't take me up on my offer before; I was doing it out of duty. But know this; I have come to respect you and now to love you. Though you haven't said anything I know your sick and may die. Let me spend this time with you while I can." I said. There was a sad look in his eyes, then he smiled and said "Very well come in" I didn't know how much more time we had, so I came prepared. When I slipped off my sk**t and blouse. I got ahold of some lingerie that was listed on the computer. I had on a lacy b** and silk p****s. I just dare him not to notice.

He had a surprise for me too. His body glowed for a second and changed. Normally he was just over five foot tall and skinny with no muscles tone. I on the other hand am over six foot tall and athletically built. His body reformed, into a wonderful sight. There lying in bed was a man of perfect form. Over six foot tall, with broad shoulders, large muscles, and a strong square face. He was the very picture of a perfect warrior. I don't know if he read this from my subconscious or had based it on the warriors of my tribe. Either way he had good taste. I was impressed and exc***d. He must have seen that look on my face. "Watch out, get violent and I might have to make you intangible again" he said jokingly. Or at least I think he was joking.

Though he has changed he was still wearing shorts and a loose shirt. I'll have to do something about those, they were in my way. I think he was teasing me. I brought with me a bottle of r*****g oil. I proceeded to take off his shirt then I began with oi***g his shoulders and worked down his perfectly sculpted arms. I couldn't believe this former scrawny, little man was the same guy. I finished massaging his chest then down his legs. Then he returned the favor and r****d me down. I never would have guessed that massaging was a Guardian power. His hands were strong but gentle. It was if electricity was surging from head to toe. I asked him later if he had used his powers to do that or if I was just that wo***d up. He never answered me, dang him sometimes.

I was enjoying this part, but as a warrior I knew when to go in for the kill. That time was now. That's all the details I care to share, the rest is between us, but lets just say it was not at all disappointing. We spent half the night m***** love. I had done this once with a warrior back in my tribe when I was young, that one does not compare. Master probably used his powers here too, to enhance things along. After a few hours we were both tired, or at least I was. I was exhausted but blissful. If it wasn't for the fact of the danger we all faced with the dark Guardians looming and the trouble with my tribe, this would have been the perfect night. If a cure is found for him, I guaranty he will never have lonely or disappointing night. With this thought in mind I feel asleep by his side with his arms around me.

Matt's update

Etan was not getting any better. He was spending most of his time in the lab trying to create a machine that could siphon the dark virus out, so he would not need to link with the others. The trick was finding a substance or type of energy that would attach itself to the dark virus, and could still be extracted. It was more trial and error than actual science at this point but if it worked it didn't matter. A report came in from Reaper that he had found a few dark agents on the planet. Not a dark Guardian, but Terroccians who worked for them. He followed one out of the city and captured him. After the interrogation he learned the location of a secret base underground and that the major business men of this planet were involved. It was decided that Reaper would sneak into the base learn what he could and get out.

Reapers fun day

The interrogation was good, but he wanted some real action. Reaper made his way to the above ground location of the entrance to the base. It was disguised as a rocky outcropping but he had contact lens that contained scanners in them. He saw right through the camouflage. Three guards were trying to stay hidden. Only three, maybe there will be more inside. This was way too easy. Reaper didn't even try to hide as he walked right up to the door. Two of the soldiers jumped out, as if it were a surprise. The two guards held some kind of energy weapons. They were confident in their approach to him. They walked right up, as if this was not the day they would die. Really, Reaper thought, you guys are making it too easy, this is not even fun. The first guard started to ask who he was and why he was there. Both guards hit the ground dead before he could finish his sentence. He retrieved his Schukra throwing knives from their heads before turning around to finish the other guard. He fainted. What day care did they get these guys from? He decided to drug the guy with a memory eraser, instead of killing him. He battled warriors, not cowards. Just for fun he stripped the guy naked and concealed his clothes. How would he explain this to superiors?

He opened the door and proceeded in. Not surprisingly it was dark and dank. The complex was a maze of tunnels filled with metal pipes, capacitors and large conduits of some kind. He followed their path until he was led to a massive room. He had passed several huge tanks on the way there. Where he had come in was a service entrance for the machines in that area. He came out on a metal framework that was used as a walkway. It was about three floors up in a massive room. All four walls contained the same walkways leading to other tunnels. Several levels contained these walkways too. How extensive was this place? He found four massive conduits about fifty feet wide that led to the ground floor in all directions. They all meet up in one location, a central hub. In this hub was a crystal chamber. It was still under construction. Several engineers and robots went about their work in a hurried fashion. This could be the power source. But what was running the facility and what was all that power needed for? For that matter the central core is commonly constructed before all the outlying secondary systems. Why would the core be one of the last things finished? There were several mysteries here.

He exited the room and reported the situation to the Master Selar. He gave him a very nice gift last year for his birthday, a new holographic image recorder. He had it implanted on him and made intangible so he couldn't lose this one. He used it to record all his adventures. He just loved watching himself kick butt. Seeing the look of horror or surprise on his enemy's faces in slow motion was epic. When he was in the heat of battle he was too busy to enjoy the little things, but with this device he could watch them over and over. Selar probably got it, because he refused to file long, boring detailed reports. Guardians were neurotic about wanting every last detail on anything. His idea of a report was I went in, kicked butt; I got the stuff out. The Guardian counsel were not keen on that kind of report.

Selar advised him to not let it be known he was there. He was authorized to sabotage the place. He could slow them down. But he needed to make it look like an accident. He could do that with his favorite pets. They were a scourge in most places of the galaxy. They were such a scourge that the word Drax has come to be used as a swear word. The dark Guardians were in for a surprise. The officer over shipping was responsible for inspecting each shipment to make sure that no beetle infestation found its way to his facility. The beetles would begin causing numerous malfunctions to this facility within hours. He brought along a hundred drones and two queens just to make sure they could cause trouble for awhile. The shipping officer here would surely get blamed. Now he wanted to do a little mischief of his own. He used a muti-tool to weaken the walkway that crossed over a large vat of acid, several stories down. He left it just strong enough, that it would hold together until someone stepped on it, and then they would fall in the acid. He went around losing all the bolts on walkway ramparts. That way when he created a flaw in the main mechanism, it would not be seen as a sabotage but simply poor workmanship.

Reapers comments

Several machines here made noise, so I knew I wouldn't be heard. I jumped up on the railing and did a summersault, landing on the edge of the vat of acid. I got a thrill from such things, if only momentarily. Selar would say what I did was reckless. He calls it reckless, I call it recreation. When I got to ground floor I cloaked to avoid detection. I would rather have just strolled in there, kicking butt, however Selar asked me to be discreet this time. If we destroyed this facility now they could just build another one and we still wouldn't know what this one is for.

I saw crystal chambers, vats of chemicals, power conduits and massive energy capacitors here. What is this place? I walked up and used my tool to create micro- fissures in the crystal. I created several at the base and where it connected to the power conduits. When they powered this up all the way, it should split apart. The one thing I did not see was computer terminals. I spent the next two hours wondering around from tunnel to tunnel, looking for a monitoring room. How could a facility like this operate, or maintain its systems without computers. When the chamber is activated how will they control the flow of energy? Strangest of all, there were other rooms with nearly identical crystal chambers. These looked completed but were not active. There were more mysteries here than answers. Later I slipped out and returned to Etan's ship

Etan's report

The disk Reaper sought was analyzed. Apparently in the raid it had been damaged so most of the information was lost. There was a section that indicated that a virus was created using cells from Reaper since he contains both light and dark energy. It did name the facility as Abyss and the name of the project as End game.

I knew from the size and complexity of the facility it was obviously important but this was more confirmation. It had one more useful piece of information a list of names. After researching I discovered many of the names were people who lived on this planet. They weren't hard to find as they were some of this planets richest business men. All but one was from the eastern most country. It was the one that had the space port, which makes sense. I will attend an event in just over a week. I'll have Reaper capture a lower ranked business man and take his place. It's a fancy get together for all the movers and shakers of this world. It will be the perfect time to get the information I am seeking.

Commentary

The event day came without incident and all preparations were made. Etan handed Algeria a bra to add to the clothes she would wear to the gala. "Put this on, it will protect you" he said. She gave him a funny look. She winked at him and said, "It might not protect you from me later" she responded. They had grown close the last few weeks. Then she was thought about home again. Etan reminded her of the fourteenth warrior's code. If a dishonored warrior helps win a great battle their honor is restored. A battle was coming with the dark Guardians, no matter if they stopped this particular project or not, she would have her chance to fight and win back her honor.

Etan took careful thought into preparing for the Gala event. The lower ranked agent, was named Salbin, a weapons shop owner. Etan changed to match his look. As expected the Gala was held at a large convention center. There were waiters, maids, and staff of all kinds serving and cleaning. Ogreish looking guards, stood at every door in case of trouble. Algeria hoped Etan knew what he was doing, in his weakened condition he could be walking into a trap. In spite of his condition and the danger they faced, Etan seemed strangely calm. She hadn't seen him this calm since before the news about the dark Guardians.

The gala

Algeria's view

Master Etan seemed perfectly at ease as he walked around talking to the other business men. How could he be so calm in a situation like this? All I had to do was serve him any or one else I was told too, and I was a wreck. I was afraid to say or do anything to mess it up. He floated around the room, from person to person, smooth and stress-free. I had just begun to relax a bit when I overheard an interesting conversation. Etan had given me some implants that enhanced my hearing. I could listen to a conversation from across the room if I needed too. Then I realized maybe that's why Master is so calm, he was just the distraction. Am I here to gather the real Intel? Great that's just what I needed more pressure.

The conversation I heard was about Master. One of the guards was giving a report to the other. "Foren said we should set up out back. They plan to bring him out there so we can eliminate him." said the first. "I thought they were going to just wait until the virus killed him and see if he infects anyone along the way" the second guard responded. "He won't link with the others, and now he may be getting close to our plans." the first one explained. "We'll take him down now, and find another way to infect the others." he finished "Lets go" Master was surrounded by a number of people. She mentally sent him a message "Their planning to kill you" "let me be" he sent back to her. Ooh noo. He wanted to get caught so he could get the truth from them, send the info to her and she could report it to Reaper, Then he could forward it to the counsel. He knew he was going to die anyway; maybe it didn't matter to him anymore. No, she would not sit idly by while he threw away his life. She was a former military incursion expert; she knew how to make a weapon from almost anything.

She pocketed several gold knives and two gold forks and slipped into the ladies room. They had a laser corrector in there. Ladies could put their face to it and it would correct any facial blemishes. Warts, pimples, or even acne could all be eliminated instantly. She used the doorstop she swiped from the kitchen to block the bathroom door. Then she pulled off the front cover to the laser corrector and jacked up the wattage. Then she used the laser to reform the knives into four gold bracelets. Then cut off the handle of the forks and attached the end of the forks to the bracelets. Now she had golden claws. Finally she used the laser to sharpen the fork ends. Finally she put everything back in place so she wouldn't raise suspicion. By the time she was finished, Master and the business men were gone. She tracked through the center listening for his voice. It sounded like they were heading down a corridor. She dashed through the kitchen looking for the servant's entrance. A few cooks yelled her direction but they were too busy to chase her.

She darted through a back corridor, while she continued to listen for a familiar voice. Two big guards blocked the next door; this must be the right place. She slowed her run to a walk and strolled up to the guards. "Excuse me Gentle men I seem have gotten lost from my party." she said. The first turned to her "We know who is supposed to be here and who isn't. Leave now or we might let you cure our boredom." "If that's what you want. I am a professional escort, what can you afford?" She said in a sultry voice. As she said this she pulled down the neckline of her dress. They couldn't help but stare, men, are so predictable. When they gazed down she pulled out her claws, and used both hands to stab the guards in the gut simultaneously. Right before he died, one of them managed to get off one blast from his weapon. It just bounced right off her, she should be dead. The bra must contain a shield, nice. It did protect her when she needed after all.

Etan's death

Narration commentary

Algeria continued down the corridor racing to find Etan before it was too late. Several passages were available, but she found herself at a dead end. She could hear the men talking again, and now she got a mental image of what was going on. They had Etan tied up tight with dark powered cables. "Did you think you could fool us? We are much smarter than you Guardians." One man stated. "We know what you up too, we know about your facility, and we know how to stop you." Etan responded. The man laughed and said "It doesn't matter what you know, when we tap into the dark stream, this war is over. All the planets in the galaxy will be saturated with dark energy within minutes, and there is nothing you can do to stop us." Etan laughed at him. "We don't have to, your crystal chamber won't work" Etan said. "Ha," the man laughed back "Shows what you know, when the dark queen stands in the

chamber, the dark stream will open to us, and we will remake the galaxy in our image.” “Even if somehow it did work, you won’t be finished in time, the Guardians are organizing an offensive as we speak.” Etan said. “Wrong again, moron, before you can drive us out of the Tala system we will be ready. Before the next full moon, the reign of the chaos Guardians will be complete.” he finished.

A voice spoke in her head. “Leave here and tell Reaper all that you have just heard. Your planet and the rest of the galaxy depend on this.” He had gotten the man to tell the whole plan. What the machine was, how it worked, and how long until it was ready. Now she was torn, should she go to Reaper now, or try to save Etan first. Then the decision was made for her. The men fired their weapons on Etan. When he was drained of energy, they incinerated his body. They would pay, if she had to kill them one at a time, they would all pay. She made her way out, and back to the pod without incident. This was awful, how could he just give up and let himself be captured like that. There had to have been some other way. She had lost her tribe, her honor, and now the only man she ever loved. What was there left in her life? At least she got to help her people, even if they didn’t see the value in it. She informed Reaper of what she had heard so he could tell the Guardian counsel. The crew took the news of Master Etan’s death pretty hard. Most had worked for him for many years.

When she finally returned to her room, a note was on her bed, it was signed Etan. It said take the bra I gave you to the medical ward and tell the bot to place in the bio-vat. That was a strange request. She did as the note said. The moment the bot placed the bra in the vat, it began to bubble. A smoke formed from it, and coalesced into a body. Etan formed from the smoke. Algeria ran and hugged him tight. “I thought you were dead” she cried. “They incinerated you.” He explained. “That was my bio-gram,” He stated smiling. “What?” Algeria asked. It’s like a Holo-gram but made of bio-material. It’s not much more than a puppet. It has no intelligence or awareness but it can be controlled telepathically.” Etan said “So you were in my bra?” she asked “I was your bra”, he said smirking. “A vicarious experience for me as you can imagine” Reaper was present for this and decided to chip in a thought. “Etan just wanted to keep abreast of the situation” he stated. “ oohh, good one” Etan said back. “There might be hope for you yet.”

Algreia was dumbfounded “Let me get this straight you created a replica of yourself, turned into my bra, and then controlled the replica. You let the replica get captured and made the bad guys give away their plan?” “Yeah pretty much, and a nice bonus is they think I’m dead right now” he beamed. She hugged him again. She was just glad he was alive. He went on to explain “Keeping the virus contained, takes a lot of energy, so this was the simplest solution. After the death of the replica, I simply shut down to avoid detection. I learned that trick a long time ago from Matt. By the way nice job on the improvised claw weapon, that was creative.” Reaper chimed in. “So we went from plan A to plan double D” Etan laughed again. “Ok Reaper that’s enough” Etan said, while fighting another smirk. “And with all that bouncing around I don’t see how he concentrated at all” Reaper continued. “Algeria was not at all amused by this humor at her expense. “If you don’t stop I’m going to smack you” Reaper had to get in one more crack. “From now on your nickname is D D” Reaper still had a smile on his face for a few minutes after and so did Etan. They were probably exchanging thoughts, such men.

Reapers comments

All this sitting around and waiting is driving me crazy. If I don’t get to kill someone soon, I’m going to go out and start my own war. The counsel said they need the dark Guardians to finish the facility so they can take them all out at the same time. Maybe I could sneak in and just kill a few bad guys, no one will miss them, there’s plenty more where these came from. I still can’t believe Eten turned himself into her bra that kills me. That’s the funniest thing I ever heard. I can’t wait to tell Selar the jokes. Speaking of Selar I have been unable to contact him since my underground mission. Something big must be going on. While were waiting I plan to place hover mines near the site that should be chosen for landing. If I get lucky they might take out some of troop carriers before they can unload.

Role Reversal

Etan woke up a possessed man. His light energy was nearly depleted and some of the dark energy was affecting his mind. He immediately went into a rampage. He tore through the ship ripping apart computer terminals and power conduits. The crew didn't know what the matter with him was but decided to get out of the way. Reaper was close by when he got the call to go subdue him. He knew Selar wouldn't like him doing serious damage to one of his Guardians so he would need to take it easy on him. By the time Reaper made it there Etan was outside the ship continuing his rampage. Reaper watched him for a moment. "That's a good fit your throwing, almost worthy of me. But I was sent here to stop you." Etan turned around. Reaper didn't like what he saw at all. Etan's eyes were solid black. "The prodigal son of the night returns." Etan said to him. "Ok I see there is someone else running your control center now. I'll stop you and return you to normal without hurting you too much if I can." Etan just laughed a creepy laugh this time. His hand swept around and dark force pushed Reaper into the ground. It kept pushing him down until he was nearly a mile underground buried in solid rock. In the old days Reaper would have gone into one of his own rages at this point. But now he was a little more in control. He concentrated and used his tech arm to take himself out of phase with the rock. By the time Reaper reached the surface Etan had killed every living thing in his vicinity. He had created a death circle 100 foot wide around him. He was using some kind of dark beam to extract energy from living animals and plants to grow stronger.

Reaper started to attack back then Etan disappeared. He came back a moment later wearing a familiar looking armor set and carrying two blades. Suddenly he recognized those as being his old Seraca blades. The ones he had when he was in school. How did Etan get those? He didn't remember what happened to them, only that they came up missing nearly five years ago. He had also changed his appearance to look like Reaper himself. Now he had to fight another copy of himself once again. He wondered why this always happened to him. He was constantly meeting himself as an opponent in one way or another it seems. Of course having a whole town full of Reapers didn't help that tendency any. Reaper got a flash in his mind of him sparring with Etan in the past. He remembered there was something about a chest made of stone and a large hammer. Maybe this would be a good time to practice using his elemental abilities. When he got captured the ones imprisoning him disabled the computer part of the elemental bridge. He still technically had the ability to affect the elements but now he had to learn them as if he were a Guardian.

Reaper turned to stone and tried to get close enough to Etan to inject him with some light energy. Reaper grabbed Etan and they wrestled for control. After a moment Reaper had him securely held. Etan dislocated his shoulder and slipped out of the hold. Reaper was purposely holding back but maybe he would have to get a little more serious. Etan marched up to Reaper and punched his way through Reaper's chest. It dazed him for a second but didn't stop him. Reaper took a moment to find the pebbles of his body left behind from that chest punch. That hit actually hurt. If he hadn't been as strong as he was, that could have easily been a knockout punch. Why is all this so familiar? They continued to exchange energy blasts for a minute then Reaper got another flash. He got an image of diamond skin and spikes. I guess this was as good a tactic as any. He turned into diamond skin and shot out diamond spikes. He was able to pin Etan to the ground long enough to give him a dose of light energy. That worked out nicely. As Etan's light and dark side fought he sent out waves of destructive energy. Reaper was knocked back and bruised but otherwise ok. Etan came to his senses a few minutes later.

Selars comments

We discovered the enemy was in fact the return of the chaos Guardians after all this time. Now that we know this I decided to return Etan and Reaper's memories. I decided to wait until the dark Guardians powered up the machine, before destroying their faculty. Any receiver stations linked to it would be destroyed in a chain reaction. If all goes well we could take out the entire system at once. Timing will be key to victory. If we can channel enough light stream energy into the dark gate way, we should be able to prevent them from ever opening it again. I visited Etan today, I was able to infuse him with a small amount of life stream energy to help, but that was only a stop gap measure. That won't work for long as his ability to hold light energy is diminishing quickly. After this situation is taken care of, I will devote great resources to curing him.

Narration commentary

The calm before the storm

With a fresh infusion of life stream, Selar gave him; Etan was feeling pretty good again. He couldn't believe the virus took over his mind like that. He didn't want that to ever happen again so he had a dark energy detection device implanted in him. It would kill him if he turned dark again. Chances are he would be dead before this war ended so now was good time for one last special night with Algeria. The only off world sights she had seen was the slave cages, while Etan had seen hundreds of worlds. If he somehow survived this ordeal he would show her sights that she wouldn't believe. He couldn't chance leaving the planet but he could program the Holo-room to imitate anywhere he had been. He went through the list. He considered the possibilities.

First there was the flying rainbow fish migration of Luna prime. They were iridescent at night, and a popular vacation spot or perhaps the singing trees of alteear. The trees communicated with each other through low thrumming noises. The willow wisps of for-te would be good too. They were harmless energy based creatures that are attracted to anything that gives off heat, including people. Couples come and sit on designated benches. Each night the willow wisps come out to play. They skirt and dart all over the place. When one passes right through you, it leaves behind a trail of energy that gives you a sense of euphoria. He continued down the list until he came to the fire springs of Vega three. There is an island where a volcano actively ejects molten rock. Just a short distance away is a deep spring. The molten rock keeps the spring heated, and it erupts every ten minutes. At night when you stand in front of the spring you can see the volcanoes red glow reflecting in the erupting water. Given his history with volcanoes this seemed ironically appropriate. It reminded him of Hawaii. The legend of the people here is that this volcano is a fountain of the blood that their ancestors. They fought hard to win their freedom several centuries ago. Yes this is perfect.

Date night

Etans veiw

"Ok, keep your eyes closed now" I told her "no peeking" "What's this all about" she asked. "Just be patient, you'll see in a minute." I lead her to the Holo-room. The program was already running. I give instructions to the crew that unless there was an emergency not to disturb us. The door opened up and we were standing on the deck of an ocean faring ship, the kind that delivers people to the island. The program was very detailed. In front of us was a wooden walkway with posts and ropes for railings. Tiki Style torches lit the way to the pavilion. There were greeters along the way that offered drinks and flowered head wraps. The program had even included random couples walking around enjoying an evening stroll. Congo drums and flutes played near the middle of the path intersection with dancers showing off their moves. There was even a spit with a beast cooking nearby.

She was very impressed by all this. "This is amazing, I've never seen anything like this." she said. "Just wait we haven't got to the good part yet" I told her. "Is this a date?" She asked. "Do you really have to ask?" I said. "I guess not" she answered "You never cease to surprise me. When I first laid eyes on you, I thought you were just a scrawny wimp that I would capture or slay." "But it was you who captured me, and I'm slain for you, sounds corny but its true." she said as she eyed me. "I do have one request." Even without reading her mind, it was not a hard guess. I changed forms to the six foot tall man I had taken before. She grabbed tight to my bulging arms and leaned on me as we walked. As we cleared the tropical trees she saw the volcano. She was spellbound by the sheer power and beauty of the spectacle. She had never witnessed an active volcano. "Come over here and watch this." I told her. The program timed it perfect; it waited for us to sit down on a bench before making the spring erupt. Her eyes lit up as much as the volcano. "This is the most amazing thing I've ever seen", she exclaimed. I told her what I had studied about it. "This place is called the fire springs." I went on to explain the legend of the volcano and about the stories of the ancestors here. She was taken by the whole experience. I even shared a few of my past experiences with other volcanoes. We sat for awhile then had some of the beast for dinner, and danced to the music. We finished off the night on the beach under the moon.

The Beginning of the end

The day began no different than the last few weeks. Suddenly without warning a hundred battle cruisers dropped out of hyper space and took up orbit around the planet. Smaller troop carriers emerged from them and began landing near the mountains that the facility was placed near. The hover mines Reaper placed started exploding. A few of the carriers were destroyed completely, every bit helps. Most sustained enough damaged to hinder their ability to provide air fire support. Within an hour five thousand dark soldiers surrounded the compound. A rumble sounded and a nearby mountain split in half. The whole top opened up and a crystal structure the size of a mother ship emerged from the top.

The enemy soldiers didn't attack or advance. They just stood there defending the facility. From what Etan had gathered from the Gala their plan was simple. When all was prepared the dark queen would stand in the largest crystal chamber and other dark Guardians in the smaller ones. The smaller ones would channel their power to the main chamber. With all this power the queen could open a rift to the dark stream. Once opened the dark stream would flow back down to the chambers to all the other chambers on the other planets linked to it. Every planet that had one would be saturated with dark energy at the same time.

Normally when the dark Guardians used dark energy bombs on a population the effect was temporary. They would be saturated and serve them for several hours, but it would wear off eventually. Limited access to dark energy is what gave the Guardians some advantage over the dark Guardians. The guardians reached the life stream by achieving emotional balance and discipline. The dark Guardians could not do the same for the dark stream, as evil cannot reach emotional balance and still be evil. True evil gets its power through chaos not order, and emotional balance is order. The key to winning over the chaos Guardians would be to destroy the chamber when it was fully activated and linked to all the other chambers in the galaxy to create a chain reaction. If enough light energy is channeled at the right time at the dark stream, it could potentially block their access to it permanently.

Etans Journal

I spent time in the lab and Holo-room performing an experiment. I had the computer scan me and make a holographic mock up of me, including all my energy and biological functions. I wanted to see how the darkness takes over and how long it took. I was hoping to find some weakness in the process. Although I didn't actually find a weakness, I did find what could be used as a loop hole in the dark Guardian's plans. When the darkness takes over, apparently it eventually wipes out all memories. Then the victim is programmed by the virus to become violent. Before I could make all necessary preparations the invasion began. Selar was not far behind the initial appearance of the battle cruisers. He told me of their plan, and the surprise they had coming. The even had a back up plan in case this battle went badly for us. The commander stayed to protect one of the heavily populated planets from the effects of the darkness. He would personally block the dark energy, so we would have a stronghold to fall back to if needed.

The Guardian council was keeping a close eye on the dark queen and knew she was on her way here. The plan was Selar and Etan would take out some of the dark soldiers while waiting for the queen to show up. When she got here, we had backup coming that would show up after the queen began activating the chamber. They would barrage the compound destroy the crystal chamber and cause a chain reaction. Selar brought a light bracelet weapon for Etan to wear so he could fight too and not use his own limited energy. Reaper and all the bots will be working on the ground to take out as many as they can. Algeria was given a hover pack and personal shield and would act as go between keeping everyone coordinated.

1's comments

Most of the planets have a small fleet of battle ships around them now, to many to contain at one time. I have been called in the help take out as many as possible. Misteek is close by leading the Mistles to protect the populations from air or ground bombardments.

Here we go

This is what Reaper had been waiting for. He jumped right into the middle of a column of soldiers did what he did best. He must have at least fifty soldiers surrounding him. Some used bladed weapons, while others had energy based weapons. Finally he could have some fun. With the black blades in both hands he swung around cutting off limbs and heads. Most of the energy fired at him just bounced off harmlessly so they changed tactics. They all rushed him and sheer weight began slowing him. Then he had an idea, he would let himself be captured. Hopefully he would be taken to the queen. If not then he would escape and take out whoever was around. They tied him up with dark powered cables. "You should feel honored; you're going to see the queen. Soon you will fight for us" the nearest commanding officer stated. This was perfect. At the right time, he would take out the queen, pick off a few bad guys for fun and call it a day. Later tonight he would watch the video today day. That was a good day in his book. While being escorted to the inner chamber the queen appeared. She was tall, and slender. She had a reptilian look about her, and glided forward as if she were floating.

When she talked it was like the hiss of a snake "I can see in your mind, you hope to kill me when I am in the chamber. We have known about the Guardians plan to kill me when I activate the machine. We have a little surprise for them. When this day is done you will be one of us, all the planets in the galaxy will be under my rule and the Guardian council will be dead. We have spent centuries preparing for this day, and we are well prepared for any resistance." Reaper countered her statements. "Knowing that I came to kill you will not stop me, your plan will fail and centuries will have been wasted on a failed offensive." Reaper stated confidently.

She didn't respond to his goading. Instead she opened communications with the coordinator. "What's our status"? She asked. "All planets report ready, the only significant resistance is from the Val-us system where the Commander is. He is holding position over the chamber in that system. We believe he is planning to block the dark stream when it transfers there." the coordinator said. "When the dark Guardians enter the sub chambers here, do the same there and deploy the weapon. We will hit our targets at the same time, so they don't have time to recover." the queen stated. "Will that be enough to kill him?" the man responded. "It doesn't have to kill him, just knock him out long enough to saturate the whole crystal system, then it will be too late for them to do anything." the queen explained. "My queen, scanners report the three remaining Regents just appeared in the sky and have begun taking out our army." one commander reported in. She didn't look worried at all. Instead she looked pleased. When she smiled it looked like a crack in a rock. "Get all Dark Guardians to the chambers and deploy the weapon as soon as we power up." she commanded.

A dark day

Etan was glad Selar had given him a weapon to utilize so he wouldn't be useless. He and Selar began picking off the army one by one. The army fired on them, but his shield easily held. As he was fighting he could see Reaper in the mix, it looked like he was having fun. This was his idea of recreation. A few minutes later he was swarmed by at least thirty soldiers holding him down. When he checked his mind, he saw he was letting himself get captured so he could get to the queen. Well at least that would be a good back up plan in case they failed. Shortly thereafter Reaper sent him a mental message. "They know about your back up, and their waiting for the regents too appear to power up. They have a..." then he was cut off. His message was being blocked. Etan let Selar know, and he relayed the message for the other regents to materialize.

Three bright flashes came into view in the upper atmosphere. The regents were here. They began assaulting the battleships, making a path toward the chamber. The mountain rumbled and an enormous crystal was lifted from inside to the top of the mountain. Etan could feel a build up of power on a massive scale. The crystal began to glow. The four regents stopped fighting the ships and made their way toward the mountain top. They landed around it and prepared to strike. Unseen by them, were four massive cannons deployed from the mountain side. They were powered by the chamber system. The cannon barrels were at least thirty feet in diameter. The amount of dark energy they channeled was massive. Now the large power conduits he had seen in the recording made sense. Fortunately they felt the power building behind them and turned to what was happening. They let loose a powerful blast at the cannons. Their attack was deflected, by light energy. How could this be? They would need to change

their energy to a non light based plasma attack on the cannons. A number of dark soldiers fired on them, taking away their attention just long enough for the cannons to fire. The cannons were channeling the dark power from several hundred worlds. When the blast hit them, they fell from the sky. Etan had never felt such a massive amount of Dark power. At the same time another four cannons were firing on the Commander. He managed to avoid some of it, but was severely weakened. Etan himself did not have enough energy left to take out the queen. What now? With the lead Guardians no longer a threat, the queen activated the machines true power. She began building up to tap into the dark stream. How did every thing go so wrong?

The queen's calamity

He was working his hands in the bindings. A few more minutes and he would have his right hand free. The queen was no fool; she would take him out soon before he had a chance to do anything else. In a moment the machine would be fully charged. Then she could then open the door to the dark stream and convert Reaper, before sending the stream to the rest of the planets. The chamber began to glow and the queen was surrounded with dark energy. He could feel his own dark energy growing. He made one last ditch effort; he channeled all his strength and energy into freeing his right hand.

As his hand slipped free, he formed the black sword and swung around to take out two of the guards. "Kill him now" the queen screamed. They fired several blasts at him. He dodged and he used one of the dead guards as a shield. The whole place shuddered, as a beam of pure dark energy collected from the hundreds of worlds all converged on one spot. A vortex formed a few hundred meters above the mountain. "Reverse the flow" the queen commanded. The vortex fully formed washing down pure evil in energy form. It only took a few minutes for Reaper to kill all the guards in her chamber but that was enough time for the vortex to fully open. Reaper had an idea of how to kill the queen or at least stop her. He dashed over to her chamber and stabbed her with the black sword. "Fool" she said "your dark energy will only feed me more" While the sword was in her, he hollowed it out and injected her with his light energy, then retracted the sword and got out of the way. "The reaper has come" he stated. He would never forget the look of surprise then horror on her face when she realized what he had done. He hoped his Holo recorder didn't miss this. She became unbalanced, and couldn't direct the flow. She tried to regain control but it was too late. Power of this level had to be maintained very carefully. The raw energy ripped her apart. But the whole system was self sustaining now, and the power was flowing out to all the worlds. At least now Reaper could report her death to the others. "Can you hold the chamber secure" Etan asked. "I am reaper" he said back. Etan took that to mean yes.

When all else fails Etan's comments

During this time Algeria had taken a pod and four bots to pick up the fallen Regents. She took them to the medical ward on the ship and hooked them up to a machine to supply them light energy. The queen was dead but now the facility could channel its own energy automatically through the chambers. I had an idea what I could do. I contacted the Commander and explained my idea; he agreed and headed my way. I finished the necessary preparations in the medical ward while explaining my strategy to the four regents. Commander Mekil arrived and set up the necessary link. "You know if this works, it wont take but a few minutes for it to kill you, and you won't have long to pull it off." The commnader explained. "I lived as a Guardian, I will die as a Guardian" I told him.

I approached my dear Algeria "I'm afraid I can't come back from this one, just know I love you." She was devastated "No, you can't do this, I already lost you once, don't make me go through that again." she said desperately. "I have to, the fate of the galaxy literally hangs on what I'm about to do, there is no other way. I wish there were. Take care of my two daughters" I told her. "What?" she asked. "You're pregnant and you're going to have twins. We talked and cried for a few minutes, then Mikel teled me to the crystal chamber. When I got to the chamber Reaper was just hanging out, killing a few guards that tried to enter. He looked my way and said. "About time you showed up, I was getting bored" No surprise there, I thought. "What I'm about to do will leave me weak, and will soon kill me, please take my body back to the ship so the Guardians can give me a proper burial." I told him.

I stepped in the chamber and sent a message to Guardian Mikel to send me all the energy he had left. I powered up and blasted the crystal chamber with light energy. The conflict between the light and dark energies caused the crystal chamber to begin to crack. I ran out of energy just as the chamber shut down completely. After a few seconds the vortex destabilized too and sent a dark shock wave through the system. I leapt out of the chamber just in time not to be hit, and then I lost consciousness.

Lost and found Reapers view.

The crazy idiot did it. He did something to break the whole contraption. I wasted no time; I grabbed his scrawny butt and headed out of there. I called for my ship to beam us out when I got near the entrance. Upon my return, the regents were conscience but too weak to move. The first officer once again came in with bad news. "The dark hoard is coming this way, and the ship was damaged in the battle and cannot lift off." He said. "I hate to admit but there are thousands of soldiers left, too many for me to take alone." I told him. Unfortunately the regents were too weak to put up a fight right now. If they killed us now, the chaos agents would just build another set of chambers and start this all over again, next time with no resistance. "What about your ship?" Algeria asked. "It got shot up getting Etan and me out of the chamber. Its in no condition to fly right now." I told her. "This whole situation is your fault" she said. "How is this my fault?" I growled. "The virus was developed from your cells. Because you contain both light and dark." she responded. I came to a startling realization. "Well Double D" I might just get to save him after all." I told her. "I told you to stop calling me that" she said while smacking me on the head. "Watch out, I might take that as flirting" I told her. "uuugh" she responded disgusted. He he I still had the touch.

I had an idea that could save Etan and take out the army at the same time. I once had an over dose of dark energy and went into a killing rage, and was able to mentally control several dark agents. I took Etan's body to the hatch of the ship; if this worked I would only have control for a minute or two, so every second counted. I put my hands on his chest and used my energy to draw out all the dark plague. I went into immediate dark super charge. Much like when I was in the chamber but many times more powerful. This virus had grown strong through absorbing Etan's light energy and transforming it to dark. I felt all powerful. I am darkness, I am death, I am Reaper. If I had this power all the time, no one would be safe from my wrath.

I turned myself into a dark flood, like a black colored wave. I Surged through the hoard, and caused them to turn on each other. Within minutes most were dead, the rest fled back to the troop carriers. The few remaining dark Guardians decided they would fight another day. They quickly got out of there. This battle was over. By the time I got Back Etan was awake and feeling better. I looked at him and said "Well, well, well," I said mocking Kane's favorite introduction. "You mighty Guardians owe little old me a big pat on the back, not to mention a big pay check. I took out the queen, saved scrawny butt here, and even took out the remainder of the army all by myself. Yeah, that's right me, just me. Who's the man?" I was feeling quite good about myself. My only regret was what would I do for an encore? I could always hope for a Crelox invasion. Crelox were slimy Octopus like creatures with poisonous tentacles, Yeah that would be fun.

Wrapping it up A few days later

All five Guardian leaders and Etan were back to full strength. Etan's mothership and Reapers scavenger class vessel were both repaired. The bots had been sent out to clean up the bodies. It had taken several days for the dark energy to wear off the population of the planets. In that time several wars were declared, a few plaques got loose and thousands of cities experienced riots and looting. The battle was over, but there would be years of clean up work to do socially.

Selar shared these thoughts with Etan “It seems though we won the battle but the war is far from over. The war showed our weakness, and the social unrest makes the situation worse. Three planetary Guardians are still missing. We discovered, the light shield that protected the cannons was made using guardian light energy. Now we know why the three Guardians went missing. Apparently they found a way to siphon Guardian energy and use it as a shield against a Guardian energy blast. The Guardian counsel publicly awarded Etan , Reaper and Algeria for their bravery and sacrifice. They each got a gold heart medallion. Reaper once again thought he should get two of them since he did double the work. Algeria's tribe was invited to the ceremony and got to see her awarded for her deeds in the war, so her honor was restored.

Etan's journal

We saved the planet, won the battle and I have someone to love, life is good. After my recovery Algeria showed me just how much she loves me. I still have yet to tell, her as long as she's with me her spirit is tied to mine and she will age as slowly as me. So she will live for thousands of years and still look young. With luck, she will live long enough to see her people grow from tribes to an advanced civilization. There will be other battles to face but we will face them together. But the big battle is yet to come, when I have to explain to her that her children will inherit my abilities. Imagine a two year old that can really throw a tantrum. Fortunately she's a warrior, she will win the battle eventually I'm sure. We had many more adventures together, but that is another story.

The End