

Guardian core chronicles

Time after time

Prologue

Little did I know how turbulent and stressful the third year of my school time would be? Looking back sometimes I'm not sure how I made it. There is a saying no mans an island. I could not have made it through this year without the help of many people. When I first meet Selar I thought Guardians were a one man show. All powerful and needing no one, but nothing could be further from the truth. Anything I've done in my life, I owe a great thanks to all my friends who made it possible.

After all the headache and drama of the first year, the second year of school had gone surprisingly well. Master Leo has continued to help me grow my abilities. The whole second year I mostly worked on becoming fire, as well as learning to make a basic shield and lightning bolt. The last week of school I began focusing on becoming water. As with most of the new skills I would learn this took concentrated effort.

I closed my eyes and focused. I could see all the water flowing in my body. I had to imagine myself like a planet and the water in my body like the streams and rivers. I could use the energy in my body to alter all the other parts of my body into one big ocean.



The first time I tried it, I began to sweat really hard. The second day, my clothes were soaked. By the third day I almost had it. My skin turned clear and a few of my organs turned into water but I was breathing hard and strained from the effort. It was like flexing a muscle. You couldn't keep it flexed indefinitely no matter how strong you are. That was on the last day of school.

Reaper watched me practice and came in with a large bucket of ice water and threw it on me, and said "Here maybe this will help. Like the old saying goes, with friends like these who needs enemies. "Master Leo promised to work with me more over the next two months that we were out of school. But first Reaper and I had a quick trip to make. Ever since I introduced Reaper to pizza, he has been obsessed with everything from earth. Master Selar let Reaper and I take a week's vacation to earth.

Time for vacation

Argyle's view

Etan and Reaper were going to Earth so I decided to tag along. I hadn't been to earth in many years. Sometimes I missed earth but I didn't miss the stress that comes with being a Guardian. Several times I've started to tell Etan about my history with Earth but backed out each time. My mistake ended up costing his planet a lot of grief. Master Selar was kind enough to give us a transport pod with morph capabilities so we could make it look like a modern earth vehicle. He also gave us plenty of money to spend. Etan wanted to go to the era known as the 80's and in the state of California. Back when I left earth, mankind was still using horses and buggies. I'm interested to see what progress they have made since then. Reaper quickly looked up information on the era would be in and changed his appearance with his holographic projection robe. He immediately fell in love with the style of the times. We had to listen to 80's music all the way there.

We landed out of sight and at Etan's suggestion, transformed the pod into a convertible corvette. The weather was a balmy 80 degrees and sunny. Clear skies as far as you could see. It was a nice change from the barren landscape that surrounded the school grounds back home. Eventually the planet would be Terraformed to a paradise but for now it was still bleak.

Reaper was jumping out of his seat the moment we drove into town. Many young people walked around with spiked hair, chains on their pants and piercings over their bodies. The first thing Reaper wanted to do was to go shopping for a new wardrobe. We arrived at a local mall. The first shop we walked in people came running up to reaper screaming "Bon jovi, Bon jovi. Later I found out he was a famous musician of some on earth. So that was the look he changed too, that figures. Etan hadn't recognized at first who his new look was, I guess he wasn't a big music buff either. Reaper signed autographs and several store keepers gave him the VIP treatment, shortly thereafter the police arrived to control the crowds. We must have been in the mall for eight hours that first day. Most of that time Reaper trying on new clothes. Etan called him a diva.

Etan and I opted for Hawaiian shirts and blue jeans, and tried not to be noticed at all. Each meal that week Etan showed us various popular human foods. Italian turned out to be my favorite, and Mexican was Reapers choice. Etan had a good laugh when he introduced Reaper to hot peppers and dared him not to drink water for five minutes thereafter. He was sweating and obviously in pain, but he made it. After which he drank plenty of water then went back for more peppers.

Usually the only emotions Reaper showed were anger or agitation. But now he was like a kid on his birthday. By the third day, the pod was full of his clothes and stocked with junk food. Reaper bought six dozen doughnuts to bring back home. We even visited a zoo. Reaper was bored until got to the reptile area. We showed him the poisonous snakes, he perked up after that. Our last stop was a wrestling competition. We showed up, got our seats and Etan left to go get popcorn and drinks for us. I specifically asked Reaper to keep a low profile. Unfortunately, the place made an announcement that they were inviting anyone from the audience to try to make it two whole minutes with the local champion. Reaper was the first in line to fight the champ. I'm sure he intimidated his way to the front of the line somehow.

By the time Etan got back, Reaper had not only made the two minutes, but was back in his seat holding the trophy and prize money. He gave away the prize money to a child close by, but held the trophy as if it were made of gold. Etan walked back in looked at Reaper and asked "And who did you steal that from?" Reaper smiled and said "I didn't steal it; I won it by pinning the local champ. Are there any other competitions, I can dominate?" The champ stomped out of the arena, either out of anger or embarrassment. Etan had just spent thirty dollars on the popcorn and drinks, and Reaper ruins the whole show. Reaper had a look of reflection "Your planets had thousands of years of constant wars. You got ninja's, samurais, knights, wrestlers, and Chuck Norris So how did you get to be such a pacifist?" Etan grinned and said "I'm not a pacifist; I'm a Guardian in training." "Aahhh, same thing" Reaper said back. In spite of Reaper taking center stage at the match we had a great week. It was good to have real friends again. The last time I had called someone a real friend, he rejected everything I taught him and started an empire. Master Selar signaled us he would pick us up when we were ready. As we secured everything in the pod Reaper was planning our next trip. "Next time, let's go the medieval times. And also there's this guy named Attila the Hun, I bet I can take him." I shook my head at him and told Etan "It seems Reaper has had too much sugar."

Time for a change

Etans view

Reaper hopped in the pilot seat and readied the pod to go. Suddenly, there was a jolt to the pod. We had been hit. I peered outside see what was going on, as another blast hit the pod. Floating in front of us was a small space fighter blasting away at us. We got hit by third blast as Argyle activated the time field. When we materialized, the landscape had changed, before us lay a barren land of rock and ash. "How far back did you take us too?" Argyle looked very confused "I jumped us just a few years ahead of where we were, just enough to get away from the fighter." Reaper confirmed "We were in 1985, now we are in 1989."

I was horrified could we have changed time? "Did we do this?" I asked. "Don't blame me" Reaper commented "All I did was kick some guys butt, I don't see how that could destroy a whole city, though if it did that would be cool." Argyle explained "It's not just this one city; the whole planet had been wiped out. Look here on the monitor and see for yourself." The whole earth was a barren landscape of rock and ash. Even the oceans were gone. I asked again "Could we have done something to cause this?" "No" Argyle said "I don't think so."

Matt reminded me of a few things Master Selar had taught us. It was about the true nature of time. Everything in the universe has checks and balances, even time. You might think that by going back in time and doing a specific action you are changing time. But time is like a rubber band it stretches and then pulls back. It's like dipping an object in a bowl of water. While the object is submerged the water changes volume and shape slightly, but when the object is taken out, then it returns to its former state.

It takes a lot to actually change time permanently. It's possible but difficult. With most things whatever you do when you leave goes back to the way it was before you came. But a few things can be integrated into history itself. So you become part of what was supposed to happen anyway. So either you are bounced out of the fabric of history or you become part of the thread. For any action to permanently change history was difficult to achieve. It answers the well known grandfather paradox. You go back in time and kill your grandfather, before you were born. When you return home to the future, the past you created never happened and you never actually killed him. Even to take me out of my time, Master Selar had to essentially kill me, pull me out of the fabric of my time and integrate me into the fabric of his time. When he made me young again I didn't realize he had done all that. The whole thing gave me a headache but somehow Master Selar seemed to understand it.

If this system of checks and balances did not exist someone would eventually do something stupid and mess up the whole timeline for everyone. We can exist because time keeps itself in balance. We didn't know what was going on, but it was obviously something big. Argyle tried signaling Master Selar but there was no response. "I suggest" Argyle began "We go back to 1985, five minutes before we got fired upon and wait while cloaked. See who our attacker was and if they had anything to do with this." We did just that. When we arrived it looked identical to the future, it was just a barren landscape. "We left this a few minutes ago, why is it different?" Reaper asked. "I'm not sure." I told him. Matt was silent for the moment. We began taking small jumps back in time a few years at a time until we reached the critical place where the disaster struck.

We had made our way back to year 1521 on earth which is current time at school. We flew the pod high into the atmosphere so we could see what was going on. All the super volcanoes and nearly every normal sized volcano were erupting at once. There were around 1500 regular volcanoes on earth and 8 known super volcanoes. Just one super volcano could cause world wide disaster, much less all of them. Argyle and Reaper stared at me, and shook thier heads. "Don't say it, just don't say it." I moaned. But Reaper said it anyway "What is it with you and volcanoes. I can't even take you on vacation without a disaster." "This is obviously a created disaster." Argyle said. Once again we tried to contact Master Selar but had no response. We took the pod and headed back toward the school, it took six hours, so we had plenty of time to contemplate. "How come the Guardians didn't prevent this?" I asked out loud. Argyle looked thoughtful but didn't respond. I could only think of one likely possibility, but hoped it wasn't the case.

When we approached Selar's planet, which was now named Selon we were in for another shock. Master Selar's palace ship and the school weren't there. "Where could they have gone too?" Reaper asked. Even Argyle looked confused "Not only is the ship gone, but there's no evidence of all the Teraforming on the planet. The mining project was almost finished. With in the next few years the filling of the ocean, would begin, but its not there anymore. In fact the planet no longer has any atmosphere. That was one of the earliest projects he did.

After some discussion we decided to check out a few other planets. Planetary guardian Neru was just a short distance away. After a day of surprises, we got yet another one. The planet was being controlled by a militarist empire. This planet used to be mostly agricultural. And the Monitor didn't pick up any Guardian energy in the area. There was a deep space communications relay station just a short distance from our location. We tied in and pulled up a diagram showing all the Guardian protected planets. If the information was right, there were no Guardians left in this galaxy. I asked my matrix if it could sense if one of the prime matrix's still existed. If there was one left it wasn't close enough to sense. After a second round of discussion we decided to go back to earth and see if we can set things right.

We returned to earth and watched in sad remorse the volcanic destruction taking place. "I swear if I do live long enough to become a planetary Guardian, I'm asking for an ice planet." I said to no one in particular. Argyle looked at me with amusement. "That's assuming we figure out the cause, track down the perpetrator, reset the time line, and you make it to planetary status with your sanity intact." That was true. Reaper had to chime in too "Yeah and I know of a planet with ice volcanos" Reaper really knew how to cheer me up. Reaper asked "Ok now what?" I thought on it a moment and said "We go back a little at a time and see if we can catch whoever is setting this off." We adjusted the transport pod to a backwards slide and watched the disaster in reverse. It was like something out of a B rated Sci-fi. We went back and forth several times scanning, and discovered that some kind of powerful explosion went off near the core of the earth just moments before everything went crazy. A few more cycles and we had the time and place narrowed down. The same fighter that fired on us before was on the ground near the opening of one of the Hawaiian volcanoes. A man dressed in black had a large torpedo shaped object. Most likely that was our bomb. It made sense that he would use an already active volcano to send a weapon to the core.

A stitch in time Argyles view

"Let's land and kick his butt" Reaper said with enthusiasm. I had to explain why we couldn't do that. The time generator had been on the whole time even when not transporting us through time. It was what was keeping us from being affected by the time changes. As long as we stayed in the ship with it on, we were in our own time bubble. "We need to destroy the bomb then we can be safe from the present changes." I told him. The man saw us and decided not to chance us being able to fire on the weapon and destroy it, before it could get deep enough to be safe. Reaper fired off a shot but this transport was not a fighter, so its one weapon was weak and not very accurate. The man in black dodged the shot then made a leap for his fighter. In spite of the pods limited capabilities Reaper did a great job maneuvering us out of the line of fire. After missing us four times in a row, the man turned and fled. The fighter opened a time stream, but we could monitor it from the transport and follow. Reaper jumped out the pilots chair told me to fly it because he had an idea. He explained he would hang out the back door with it open and fire on the fighter with his own weapons. I just needed to get him close and pointed in the right direction for a good shot. "You bring weapons on vacation?" Etan asked. "I bring weapons in the shower" Reaper responded. Not sure if he was kidding but knowing Reaper probably not.

Reaper had some kind of plasma gun. It wasn't powerful enough to take down a ship but maybe he could get a lucky shot to an exhaust port or some other critical system. Before he could get off a good shot, the fighter time jumped. We followed him again and the next thing I knew we were flying over a body of water at high speed. The fighter fired some kind of weapon at the shallow part of the body of water. It caused an enormous tidal wave to rush toward us. The wave must have been a mile high. I waited until the wave almost hit us and jumped the transport 5 seconds ahead in time, just avoiding the wave. I looked back and the tidal wave was taking out an island nation. Later on I found out who we had brought disaster on. I had always wondered what had really happened to Atlantis.

The next stop was April of 1986 he tried to hide his fighter's signature next to a nuclear plant. The time showed as just after midnight, so we were able to land without any danger of being detected. By this time Argyle had figured out how to extend our time bubble. He directed it toward the plant. It wouldn't hold long at that range but hopefully we wouldn't need it long.



The fighter shut down and hid out, but we eventually found him. Reaper used stun pellets to knock out all the guards in our way as we made our way in. By no surprise the man in black went straight for the control room, I guess thinking he could take hostages or threaten to cause a melt down. We had him pinned down but we did not have the advantage. "You guys keep him distracted ill handle everything else." Reaper said. When I turned around, Reaper was gone. Etan turned back toward the man in black " We've got you trapped, give up now and you can live." Etan said. The man never said a word but immediately shot all people in the

room. There goes that theory about hostages. He worked a few controls on the consol. Then attached some device to it, and alarms went off through out the complex. Etan and I decided to chance it and just rush him. Hopefully one of us will be able to stop him. We hurried in, and the man turned to us and self destructed. After a few seconds we realized it was a robot. We had stopped this one, but where was the bomb and was there someone else directing this drone?

Before we could decide anything else, I was transported to the fighter vessel. The man turned around to face me and pulled off his hood. It was Reaper, but not our Reaper. This one looked older and had scar on his left cheek.

Time flies

Etans view

I witnessed Argyle being transported away. To make matters worse alarms were going off everywhere. I quickly made my way out and meet Reaper at the transport pod. Suddenly the pod monitored the core of the plant heating up quickly. It looked like it was headed for a meltdown. With the radiation present I wasn't sure how we would continue to track the fighter next time he jumped. As we took off to follow the fighter reaper took a moment to wave at some guy fishing in the local water way. The fighter disappeared and sure enough this the time stream signal did not show up. Apparently that was the mysterious man's plan all along. The historical files on Chernobyl never mentioned robots or invasions by strange men, that part got covered up, just as well, i guess. I even learned later that in other timelines that we never visited Chernobyl still had a meltdown. One of them was simply trying to perform a safety drill, how ironic.

"Don't worry" Reaper said" While you guys were wasting time with the fake. I put a tracking device on the fighter. "Wait a minute" I thought. "You knew it wasn't a real person?" He smiled and said "Of course. I could tell by the way it moved it was some kind of robot." Reaper never ceased to surprise me. We tracked his next jump to 1991. Oh please don't go, where I think your going I said to myself. Sure enough he headed to Mount Pinatubo. I never seem to catch a break. The main eruption i remembered was in June of this year but we were in early march. So i guess i would miss the eruption this time. Some luck at last. The fighter made a plunge toward the solid rock at the base of Pinatubo. It was obviously using some kind of phase tech. Instead of crashing he seemed to go through the rock. This transport didn't have good weapons but it did have great shields, we could do that trick too. We followed him down into the depths.

The rock had interesting layers to them. "I assume by now this is all familiar to you" Reaper said. "Actually" I told him "I've only seen the outside of them never the inside. This is strange though, It is supposed to go off three months from now. There should be plenty of activity here." We reached the spot where the tectonic plates sub ducted. But there was no magma chamber being squeezed up toward the volcano. The fighter dropped off a smaller version of the bomb i saw earlier. The Assailant put it in a small empty pocket. I was guessing this is what would reheat the magma chamber that causes the future eruption.

Someone fired on us from behind. Now we had two fighters to deal with. I told reaper to get out of there and I turned into energy and went to retrieve the bomb. When I got to the bomb I wasn't alone. "You have caused us enough trouble, just die already" The man in black said. I wasn't here to debate him, and I didn't care who he was. I just needed to get rid of all his volcanic bombs. I let lose a fire blast at the bomb but it had no effect. "Is that the best you got? You'll be no challenge at all." The man said. Suddenly it hit me, maybe it did matter who he was. By the sound of his voice and the way he talked I had a feeling, who this person was. I didn't know if it was the same Reaper that I fought a year ago in the intra-verse but I was willing to bet he was a Reaper. I had fought my Reaper enough to know that regardless of what universe he came from a straight head on conflict would probably be fruitless. While I was fighting a Reaper, my Reaper was still zipping back and forth avoiding the shots while trying to get one in on both fighters. He converted the pod to a stream lined speeder. He was zipping in and out of them like a fly. Just then they both fired on him. One of them obviously an inexperienced pilot hit the other fighter damaging it. Since I was still in phase with the pod, I knew i might be able damage the other fighter. I aimed a jet of energy at its exhaust port. The blast traveled up the exhaust system disabling its ability to maneuver.

Reaper could now, teleport over and finish his fight one on one. It only took a few seconds but that was enough time for the man in black to set the bomb. He took off his hood and said "See you later chump" I was right, it was one of the reaper's. I surrounded him with intense fire so he could not escape. "What are you doing, the bomb will go off in a few seconds. We need to leave. I wouldn't want you to miss your appointment with destiny." "no" I responded you need to leave I'm just fine. But you're not going anywhere." He busted through my barrier, but I used my fire to create a lasso that grabbed a hold of him. It wasn't as good as a tractor beam, but it would do for this instant. The bomb went off, the rock super heated and I was super charged. The other reaper's shield held. While it was being strained I fired all my power at him. His shield collapsed and he was incinerated. I immediately felt remorse. I had never killed anyone. Even though The other reaper had been responsible for the destruction of earth, and needed to die, I hoped I would never

have to kill anyone again. I also realized I had just allowed the creation of the magma chamber that would cause the volcano to erupt in a few months. I felt responsible the first time, but this time it actually was my fault. I flew to the surface where reaper was waiting for me. "So what have you been up to"? Reaper asked. "I just killed you." I answered. "Nice, so did I." he responded. I think mine was a clone, how about yours?" I was immediately concerned "I'm not sure, but if there another clone; we could still have a problem." Then it hit me. "Where's Argyle." I asked. "I'm not sure he wasn't on either one of the transports" reaper responded.

Time for a plan

We jumped back to 1521 to try to contact Master Selar. But this day of surprises was not over. As soon as we materialized the world had changed again. This time we did not see a barren landscape but an advanced military base. A battle ship uncloaked right in front of us and tractor our pod. It pulled us into a large landing bay. When the pod doors were opened we were surrounded by at least a hundred troops. I turned into fire but was quickly hit by a weapon that neutralized my abilities. A moment later I was hit by a stun weapon and lost consciousness. When I woke up I was in a small cell of some kind. I could see Reaper was in a similar cell across from me. He was chained by his hands and feet and looked pretty beat up. I wasn't chained up but was betting my cell had some kind of force field or tech that kept me neutralized. Sure enough, when I tried to change I couldn't. The walls were white and made up of some kind of metal. The cell door looked just like bars you would see on a earth prison door. When I felt around I didn't get shocked from anything on the walls or doors. So if I could somehow over some the effect that was neutralizing me I might be able to get out of here. Reaper woke up, just as a holographic message began to play. "Remember me Etan." it asked. It looked like the other me, from the intra-verse. I kept silent. I decided I would not give him anything.

He was very arrogant as he explained "Of course you remember me and you're wondering where you went wrong. You thought you fixed the timeline. And you are wondering how I can exist since you killed me before. Had you bothered to check for a third fighter before you left 1991, you might have caught him before he went back and killed you. Since you died before becoming a guardian trainee you weren't there to help last year during our invasion. When the guardian leaders become too weak to keep the universe from being destroyed they were easy pickings. By that time all our armadas were already in this universe. We simply shut down the door and proceeded with our real plan. With the council out of the way, the galaxy quickly fell. This time I didn't die and earth became just one of the many planets I now rule. Before your feeble mind wonders how your still here, if I was dead. You're still in the time bubble. You killed me; I wanted to return the favor personally. I'm going to let you die in the most appropriate way possible."

I hoped I kept a straight face. I didn't want him to have the satisfaction of me realizing the horror I knew was coming. "See you soon" he said and the image disappeared. "You know, the other you is a real jerk" Reaper commented. Sadly I had to agree. I had an idea I figured wouldn't work but I tried it anyway. I sent reaper a mental message "can you hear this thought." "Yes" he sent back. I wasn't sure how I could still do that. "It is because I am still here" the matrix said. "I had to shut down completely to avoid detection." I was embarrassed for some reason I had forgotten about Matt. "Don't be embarrassed, I took those memories from you and Reapers minds, to keep from being found out." "Shut down to avoid detection, I have a feeling that will come in useful one day." I pondered. After a few minutes of internal discussion, it was decided I would meditate and Matt would try to help me over come the neutralizing field. Priority one was blocking the cameras. The Matt used my mind to send out a repeating signal to fool the cameras. Then I sat down and focused.

I made myself rubbery and then got up and slipped through the bars. I jammed the cameras in reapers cell and slipped in. I heated a finger and cut his bonds, and then did the same trick to cut his lock so he could get out of the cell. The hall lead to a doorway at the end, and was sealed by a force field. As we got further from my cell, I could feel myself getting stronger. After another moment of mental chat it was decided we would try to steal the pod and go back before any of this happened and prevent my death. If we could do that the whole timeline should reset. I hoped Argyle would be ok, but if we could fix this then everything including him should be reset.

This time I opted for fire. I changed and went up and through the ventilation shaft. I descended through the shaft in the next room. I knocked out the two guards and opened the door for Reaper. "So all that training with me has finally paid off. You not a complete pansy anymore." he said with pride. I was tempted to make a smart aleck comment back, but I needed to keep focused. We took the clothes and id badges from the two guards. Reapers were a little tight but it worked. Only two times were we recognized but reaper took them down before they could alert anyone. Eventually we made our way to the cargo bay.

We only saw a few guards present but somehow we needed to disarm the tractor beam, force fields and other security measures before we left. I had an idea of what might work. I sent a quick mental image to reaper of what I had in mind, he agreed and we busted in. I became a 10 foot tall rock monster. No one even noticed reaper slipping into the pod. They fired on me but whatever energy weapons they had just bounced off, they didn't expect anything like me. Reaper was supposed to come out of the pod with some kind of weapon he could use. Instead he walked out with a box of donuts. He told me to do what I had to do, he would handle the guards. I turned into fire and flew to the other side of the room. They turned thier attention on him. Four guards surrounded him in a circle. He threw a few donuts at the first guard. They of course bounced off. The guards looked at him with confusion.

I was busy trying to disable the security measures while he did this. I'm glad the pods sensors had recorded what happened next, I would hate to have missed it. He had pocketed a small round throwing disk from the pod. He placed it in a donut and sunk it into one of the guard's necks. The others stood stunned for a moment. While they were distracted Reaper took the second donut and shoved it in one of the guard's mouths and chocked him with it. The two guards that were left came to thier senses and began punching at him. He had the third donut on his knuckles and punched one of the guards, blinding him. Then he finished him off.

Then Reaper picked up the box of donuts off the floor and held it in his hand. He made an offering gesture to the one remaining guard. The last guard did the only smart thing he could think to do. He took his own weapon and stunned himself with it. Reaper looked down at him lying on the floor, he seemed amused then shrugged. He looked at the other three guards and said "They seem to have a glazed look in thier eyes." Sometimes he was a sick man. Just for good measure he put an extra donut on the stunned guard's chest. That would give him a good scare when he woke.

There were too many controls and security measures for me to disarm in any reasonable length of time. I could only think of one solution, but I didn't like it. I would have to become water and short out of the machines. I stood and focused and asked the Matt for help. After a moment I finally did it. It didn't take long for every machine in the cargo bay to short out. Still in water form I flowed over to the pod and we got out of there. Finding out when I died turned out to be easy. We traveled back to before the take over and then tied in to the national records. It showed I had died during Vietnam. The date was the same exact date I had pulled a buddy out of the line of fire and got shot in the foot. I guess that made sense no one would notice one more death in a war.

I knew with in a mile or two where I was on that day. So we jumped back in time, cloaked and searched for the younger me, all this while I was still stuck as water. I couldn't get back to human form. So I was resting in a bucket for a moment. But I could still send Reaper mental messages. Reaper couldn't help but to get a few smart aleck remarks in "You're such a drip. Now you can really wet your bed. And *water* we going to do now." In spite of his annoyance he did have a good idea. He took some coolant from the pod and used it to freeze me. I was able to form myself into a humanoid form from there. "Now you can really give me the cold shoulder" he began. Fortunately we had arrived and he didn't have time for anymore quips. Not right now anyway.

We tracked the younger me down. The younger me was dragging the man I had saved out of the line of fire. This time an Etan clone was tracking him. I couldn't sense the matrix this time so I knew he wasn't the real one. He was using a weapon from the Vietnam War. Apparently to make it look like just any old bullet had hit me. The clone was preparing to fire when reaper fired on him with a weapon he stole from the guards. The other Etan's shot got deflected and hit what was to be my fate. It shot the younger me in the foot. I had always wondered how I got shot from the back, when there were supposedly no enemies in that direction. I can't believe it, I did shoot myself. When I was in Vietnam the doctors had thought I had shoot myself in the foot, and in a strange twist of fate I kind of did.

The clone and Reaper struggled for a moment. I blinded the clone with ice shards and Reaper finished him off. "I could have done it myself" he said. I nodded "I'm sure you could but the other Etan is probably on his way here now, we got to hurry." Right on queue the other me did show up. We put up a valiant fight but once again we were out numbered. We were recaptured. I was put in some kind of tank, and while reaper was handcuffed.

Never enough time



The other Etan mused "I can't believe how much trouble I've been to me." By no surprise this time, we were lead to the crater of the same Hawaiian volcano we had seen before. Argyle was there too and in chains. The other Reaper and Etan flipped a coin to see whose twin would get to see the other one die first. I won or lost the toss, depending on how you look at it. I would die first. I was still a snow man. I couldn't do gas's yet, so I wasn't sure how I could survive dispersal when I fell into the lava. "You wont" the other me said reading my mind. He didn't even give me a chance for last words; he just pushed me in and said "bye frosty". This was a lot like the time right before my promotion when I got tossed into a volcano but this one was real. Half a second before I plunged in, Matt reactivated and took over my body for a second, long enough to turn me to fire. He had made me forget again, and saved himself for a critical moment. Now that I was fire, the lava was fuel not death. I rose up out of the lava as a 40 foot monstrosity. I powered up but was hesitant to kill all the guards. "Don't make my mistake, sometimes you have to fight for the greater good." Argyle yelled. I zapped reapers cuffs freeing him and sent him a message to get argyle free too. The other Etan looked unconcerned. I blanketed the entire area with molten lava from the crater. In an instant all the guards and clones were gone and so was the other reaper, but not the other Etan.

"Well at least I get to kill you now, myself" the other Etan said. "The volcano would have been amusing but this way will be more satisfying." He shot a blast at me. Knocking me back out of the crater and on to the ground and then drained all my power. He didn't say anything but powered up for one last shoot. As the other Etan fired the beam, Argyle jumped in the middle becoming a shield. While he was distracted Reaper had jumped into the fighter and fired a guardian level weapon at the other Etan. He was using all his energy to fire on me, so had very little defense. He was incinerated for the second time. I could sense that Argyle was dying. He reached in and gave me a piece of his spirit. "Here this is to remember me by. No one else will ever remember me, but at least you will." The piece entered me and I received some of his memories.

He had been the guardian for earth. The legends of Zeus came from him. He had helped establish Rome in 753 bc hoping to bring a republic government to all the other nations. In 100 bc his friend Julius Caesar wanted to take Rome from a republic to a empire. Argyle couldn't bring himself to kill him, that a few other mistakes convinced him to step down from being a guardian. He blamed himself for the Roman occupation, and then when Rome fell it started the dark ages. I could feel Argyle wanted to die this way, a hero. I knew how he felt; it was the same way I felt when I was dying in the hospital. "You will be remembered for as long as I live. I will be a living monument of you." I said. I changed to look exactly like him. This will be what everyone sees from now on. He seemed pleased with that. He put his hand on my shoulder and said "goodbye my friend, you made my life have meaning." He took his last breath with a smile on his face. Though I would live for thousands of years, never again did I have a friend quite like Argyle. I sat and cried and didn't care if anyone saw me or not.

Time for remorse

We took the fighter and destroyed the bomb. Then called Master Selar, this time he answered. The trip back was uneventful. A few days later we had a nice funeral for Argyle. All five members of the council attended and gave testimony to his kindness and generosity. The council once again congratulated us on a job well done. Reaper was allowed to keep the fighter as his own personal craft and I was given a gold guardian heart award for wisdom and bravery. Every time I looked in the mirror I saw my friend. I took some comfort from the fact that I held a part of his spirit. I did gain something from the merging though. He was good at healing. I would have to practice but now I knew how to heal and have an Affect on the biology of other people. Matt absorbed this and grew slightly bigger. I also gained a little of Argyle's calming spirit.

Master Leo worked with me all summer vacation. I finally mastered water enough to go from water back to human easily now. Once I got the hang of it, water was fun. I could go down to the school pool and become one with the water there. As each element I saw the world in a whole different light. As rock, everything else seemed as soft as a pillow to me. When I was standing on solid rock I could feel everything on it, the people, animals and, even the plants growing from it. As rubber everything else seemed stiff and unyielding. When I was fire the rest of the world felt cold and lifeless, and as Water I could feel all the other water that saturated in all the life around me. Each new skill I learned I had to gain a new perspective of life. Learning all this helped but I still missed Argyle. Reaper on the other hand was depressed for other reasons. He didn't like my new form. He said I wouldn't be as much of a physical challenge. It was strange Mr. Dark and mysterious had picked up a pet before we left earth. A white kitten he named cuddles. Apparently the king of darkness had a soft spot after all. In a way he was mad at me too for not turning back into my old self again.

I took the rest of the summer to jump ahead on all my classes next year. At least having the Agrarian Dna had made me much smarter than I used to be when I lived on earth and I could assimilate new information faster. By the time school started I had learned most of the stuff we would have for all four classes each day. It was a good bit of work but it would make the lessons that much easier all school year. I had just begun to re adjust from my friend's death when my life was once again turned upside down.

School year 3

Not a good start

Etan's view

Master Selar told me we were getting a new school director named **1**. She was going to be teaching the advanced stealth force classes and over seeing some school issues. I woke up early, eager for the new school year. I opened my eyes and looked around reflecting on the last two years. My room had certainly changed over time since i first came here. There were a few items I had brought back from vacation this summer, ironically a volcanic rock from Pinatubo. I had helped cause it, I might as well have a souvenir, a guards weapon from the battle ship, and a dark swarm emblem I had picked up from the in-traverse base last year, just to name a few. I wanted to keep an item from each main adventure I had. There were also few pictures on the wall, some of me and Reaper's sparing matches, me as the chicken man and as the hawk, and of course my promotion party. I still had the volcano bed reaper got for me as a joke when I got promoted.

As I got out of bed I felt strange. My hands looked smaller. I felt of my head and I had a full head of hair now. I had always kept my hair short and neat. I got up and looked in the bathroom mirror. I could believe what I was seeing somehow over night I had been transformed into a girl, and an ugly one at that. My teeth were jagged, hair stringy and unkempt, my face had little cheek structure and I had no decent female curves. Apparently this is what Argyle would look like as a girl. There was a note on the mirror that said "have fun on your first day of school girly man" signed Reaper. Ok don't panic, I thought. I sat down and focused but nothing happened. I could still turn into rock, fire and water but couldn't change from female back to male. I asked Matt but he refused to answer. This was getting worse. I put on my silver guardian suit and it changed to a top and skirt. I didn't know it could do that. It always changed as I did, Water, rock or fire, so I Guess this makes sense too. I decided to go ask Master Selar for help, it would be embarrassing for him to see me like this, but at least I could get on with my day.

But as my usual luck, Master Selar was gone. If Reaper found a way to do this to me, he might know a way i could change back. He would torment with me with this, but he would eventually tell me. I found out later that Reaper had injected me with female hormones while I slept. I was on my way over to his room when I saw him on his way to breakfast. When he saw me he laughed so hard he almost cried. Etan you got to be the ugliest woman I ever saw. Anger swelled up inside me, "I have had enough of your pranks" and then I turned into the 10 foot rock monster and held him up by the neck "you will tell me how to change back or I will hurt you and not hold back." He didn't seem afraid but he did seem impressed. "How come" he said in the middle of a laughing so hard he could hardly talk "I had to turn you into a woman to make a man out of you? "

I had taken one kind of harassment after another from Reaper from the time we meet. Argyle had been a much better friend. I held him above my head and tossed him as hard As I could. He flew back over twenty feet and hit a brick wall busting it. The back of his head was bleeding now and he was bruised. He quickly went from amusement to anger. He got up and said "You want to play rough pebbles, Ok then let's dance." He struck at me and I grabbed his arm, and then enveloped his arm with mine. I wrapped around it and turned to diamond and then contracted my entire arm. The bones in his right arm were crushed. I unwrapped from him and held him by his neck again. I was still angry but I stopped "If you ever try anything like this again, I'll turn into fire and burn every inch of your body." Reaper got back up focused his energies into his good hand and punched me in the chest. He broke every bone in his hand and I lost a few pieces of my chest in the process. I picked him back up to throw him again, when I heard a noise from behind.

I felt a hand on the back of my neck and I was instantly changed back to the girl form. I looked back and there was a woman dressed in a red dress holding each of us by our necks as if we weighed nothing at all. She was tall and athletic. Her long flowing red hair matched her dress. She looked young and beautiful but I could feel from the energy flowing out of her. She was a good but older than she looked. Argarian energy signatures change over time. I could tell she was at least 1000 years old, maybe more. She spoke with the cadence of a military drill sergeant. She even marched when she walked.



She looked down at us and said "You two are coming with me." We were all instantly teleported to an office. She put us down and sat back in the desk chair, then took a good look at Reapers arm and hand. She taped one finger nail on the desk and both were instantly healed. "Take a seat" she said to both of us. I sat down obediently. Reaper kept standing just to be defiant. She stood up, taped her nail on the desk again and suddenly Reaper was in a bent over position over the desk and she was holding a large paddle. "Now are you going to do what you're asked or do I need to use this?" He looked back at her with defiance "lady my exercise program each morning is ten times worse than anything you can do to me," She never raised her voice but her mere presence scared me. She calmly stated "normally what makes you able to over come most pain. And what makes you strong is your Argarian DNA that comes from your mother. I have just nullled that out. You are just a weak young boy at the moment." I kept quiet hoping not to be noticed. She looked at me and said "come back in fifteen minutes, this young man needs to learn a quick lesson."

The only thing the fifteen minutes served was to allow me time to be terrified at what might be coming. She was obviously very powerful and not to be messed with. Later I found out she was full Arargian. She wasn't as powerful as a Guardian but still very powerful. In exactly 14 minutes and thirty seconds I walked back to her door and waited. "You may be a trouble maker but at least your punctual." she stated. I normally wasn't a trouble maker but we hadn't met under very good conditions. When I entered Reaper was standing in the corner facing her desk with his hands behind his back. He looked tense, an unusual look for him. "My name is 1. I am the new director of this school. I report only to Master Selar. And from now on anything that goes on here at the school is my responsibility. If you do as I tell you to and well get along just fine, if you don't then were going to have problems. Do I make my self clear?" "yes maam" I answered.

"why do you look like a girl, this is not your natural form?" I had a feeling she already knew the answers but was seeing how I would answer them. "Reaper played a prank on me and caused me to be this way; I haven't learned how to turn myself back yet." "I was told to sit down and she once again tapped her nail on the desk. I was back to me again. "This is not your original form either." I had to explain about Argyle and his death. She responded "This does not set well with me, but given the circumstances I will allow it." She taped again and I was back to the girl form. "Master Selar wants you to figure this out yourself, he said it would be a good growing experience for you and I agree. You will spend two hours a day for the next three months scrubbing the lunch room floor. "Man that was rough I thought." It is because I broke his arm or because I broke the wall? I asked. "It is because you attacked out of anger. That is a big rule in the guardian book. I think Master Selar is letting you off way to easy, but that's what he asked me to punish you with." she responded. After that she excused me and I was glad to get out of there.

When I got back home, I got an hour lecture from Master Selar on why it was important to never strike out in anger. With the kind of power Guardians possess, we must always be in control of our emotions. He never raised his voice or said insulting things but I was devastated I had let him down. I had to just stand there and listen to what he said without argument or excuses. He knew everything about the situation; it wouldn't have done any good anyway. I tried to hold

them back, but I ended up crying anyway. After the lecture I wasn't sure what additional punishment might be coming. But he finished up the speech with "Etan I still believe one day you will make a great guardian. But you must never strike out in anger for any reason." He excused me to my room. I just sat there and sulked. I hadn't asked for this. I was looking forward to this year, and now stupid Reaper had messed everything up. I decided I was finished with him. I was the only friend he had, but I could make others.

Just when I thought the worst was over, I was called into 1's office again. "Do you think you're special?" she asked. I wasn't sure how to respond to that question. "I'm not sure what you mean?" I asked back. "You are not a guardian yet, you will go change clothes and put on a student's uniform." I was so shocked I didn't know what to say for a moment. Given the situation this probably wasn't the best time to argue the point. "and for that matter what's all this about, the students referring to you as guardian." she continued. "I doubt any of my other clothes will fit ma'am" I said. She smiled in a devilish way and said "then you'll have to get all new ones I guess" I decided not to give her the satisfaction of knowing just how annoyed she was making me. "Is that all madam or am I dismissed?" She eyed me and then said "your dismissed young lady" As if Reaper wasn't bad enough. I had helped save the galaxy twice and this is the kind of mess I still had to deal with. I headed to the replicator room and ordered new clothes. I had hoped that there would have been some little elderly lady there to help me. Instead there was a dirty old guy that kept staring at me. Being that this body was flat chested with no curves he probably was trying to figure out if I was male or female. The computer scanned my measurements and I picked out the standard school uniform. I was too embarrassed to even look at the underwear section, but no one would see those anyway so it didn't matter.

Little miss thing

6am

"Andrea time for school" her mom said. Today was the day. Her school had try outs for the future military task force. It was mostly men but she could keep up with any of the boys at her school.

10am

"Hey Andrea watch out, you might get hurt today." Trug said. He was the captain on one of the military task teams. "I'd hate for you to tear your skirt of something." "Don't worry about me, worry about yourself. I'm going to be taking your job soon." She responded.

2pm

Just a little closer now, Andrea thought. She had snuck through the opposing team's defenses and was in position. Her father was a military genius and had taught her a lot. Each team had artificial weapons that fired non-lethal bullets at the enemy. They wore special vests that would register the shots. If a person got hit by three shots they were considered dead for the rest of the exercise. There was a weak point on them where a person could be taken out in a single shot. Her plan was to take out captain Trug. If she got lucky maybe a few other officers would be close enough to hit too. She had laid an old badge down near the captain's tent. He was a master at noticing details so she knew he would find it. No one else had paid any attention to it. He bent down to pick it up, that's when she fired. She hit the inner most sensor in the vest. It sent a stunning shock to him knocking him out. Her luck was holding, no one had seen her but had noticed the captain fall to the ground. Unbelievably two of his lieutenants came running up to him. They were obviously inexperienced, because they left themselves open. How did they get to be lieutenants? Maybe they were friends with the captain. She took them out with a single shot a piece. Andrea stayed hidden and contacted her team letting them know the three top leaders were dead. With this her team was ready to charge.

When her team charged everyone on this team went running to attack back. They only left two people guarding the flag. She tossed in a stun grenade and the flag was easy pickings. When all was said and done and she was back at her own base she was praised as the day's hero. They couldn't believe she had taken out the top three leaders with one shot a piece. She had gone alone in the camp took out the three leaders, and captured the flag all by herself. As a consequence everyone started calling her **1**. The **1** shoot one kill hero.

Dark swarm report

The final shipments needed to complete the orbs are being sent. The core installation is being moved to its critical location. Project extraction has reached its max production.

Reapers commentary

Stupid old Etan, why couldn't he take a joke? It wasn't like he would be stuck that way forever. Now I had some psycho chick in my face, I had pretended to be backed down by the heifer, just to get on with things. Sometime playing lame was the only way to lure your enemy in for the kill. I had taken out not one, but two versions of myself, helped save the galaxy twice and reset time. I could take her out too. Now to wait and watch to see what her weakness was. Could she be embarrassed, angered to the point of violence, or maybe make her have total breakdown? Her attitude was bad enough but now she was taking over my classes too. She said she had other tasks for me to do. But in the end it is I who will win this war. After the third day I realized Etan wasn't going to speak to me anymore. He will get over it eventually. I saw him scrubbing the lunch room's floors a few times, man that sucks. I'll have to get that old battle ax extra good now. I had heard that saying "battle ax" from Etan. He and I had had some great times. I am sure we will again, when he figures out how to turn himself back. I really didn't think it would take him this long.

I entertained myself by altering a few items I brought back from earth. There was an object called a skate board I altered it to hover and used to get to class. I did for the first few days until number 1 pain in the butt showed up and ruined my fun. I also introduced several other students to my new favorite hobby popping a thing called bubble wrap. It got to be very popular, for awhile. The second week of school the old crone called me in her office again. Maybe I need to put my name on a chair. I did have a torch in my room. I'd probably have to wait until 1 was in some kind of meeting or i would get caught before I could finish. I walked in and did an over top salute and said "you called number two?" She looked at me with amusement. "I've called you in to give you an assignment." I didn't care if she wanted me to tour a weapons factory. Whatever she wanted I would not do it. "I need you to infiltrate a secured office and retrieve some sensitive materials." Sounded interesting but I wasn't giving her the satisfaction of knowing that. I smirked and said "let me guess, you want all the materials destroyed showing all the past husbands you killed. "

I must have struck a nerve because then she used her hand to make some kind of invisible tractor beam. It grabbed me by the head. She stood up and walked out the door and down the hall dragging me. I was on the ground face up, being pulled by the head. Several students got a good look, she was ruining my reputation. Now I knew I would have to kill her later. Just for fun I yelled out "oh driver, once around the park, please." That got me a dirty look.

She dragged me all the way to the shuttle bay. She picked me up and threw me in the shuttle and said "the directions to the facility are on the computer, now get going." I leaned back in the chair and stated "what makes you think I am going to cooperate?" She stared at me with intensity "If you don't do what I say, I'm going to turn you into a helpless crying little girl. You'll spend the rest of the year sucking your thumb and calling for mommy." I wasn't going to let this armor plated, psycho slut, intimidate me "I didn't know you were looking for a twin." I said with as much defiance as I could muster. I could see she was really pissed off now. Boy am I good or what. She repeated "get going" and shut the door. I thought about sitting there just to piss her off some more, but I was bored anyway, maybe this would be fun.

Director 1's report

I've had time to consider students Etan and Reaper. Unfortunately we did not meet under good circumstances. The reaper child antagonized Etan who lashed out at him. I had to set an appropriate punishment for Etan, He is a guardian in training he cannot afford to lash out in anger. I am not comfortable with Etan looking like Argyle I still have mixed feelings for him. It is the one emotional issue i still have to over come. Argyle and I were engaged to be married many centuries ago on earth. He rejected me in order to marry a human woman. I gave a challenge to Etan though he doesn't know it's a challenge yet. If he can move past certain limiting view points he has the potential for greatness. Reaper however will be a bigger problem. He is defiant at every turn, even when I offered him a task he would enjoy doing he rebelled to spite me. I demonstrated a small bit of my power. He realized what I could do, yet he was unafraid. If I can train him, he could be a very good espionage agent. He already has much talent and fighting skills, but he needs to learn discipline.

Can't catch a break

It was the end of second day of the second week of school. I was in the lunch room on my hands and knees using a bristled brush to scrub the floors. I thought about putting on a Cinderella dress just for ironies sake but no one would have gotten the reference anyway.

I had a visit that evening. It was from director **1**. She strolled up to me nonchalantly as if this were a chance meeting. "And how is our new cleaning lady doing today?" She was obviously trying to provoke me, though I wasn't sure why. I stood up and bowed my head respectfully and said "I'm simply trying to follow what I was told to do." She seemed to be sizing me up. I had no intention of giving her any new issues against me. "Are you sorry for what you did?" I answered her honestly "Reaper got what he deserved but I regret acting out in anger and bringing myself shame." She had a look of consideration on her face. "Very well you don't have to do 3 months of scrubbing" Was this a turn around or a trick? "Instead you will do 6 months of scrubbing just to make sure your remorseful enough". Was she some kind of demon escaped from hell sent here to torment me? She walked off and said "That's madam demon to you young lady." I kept forgetting she was full Agrarian and could read minds too. Maybe my next skill should be learning to block mind readers.

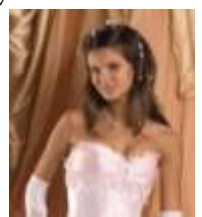


To add insult in injury I now had stay in the girl's dorm. By this time everybody knew what had happened to me. I walked in the dorm the first time with my bedding. I felt everyone's stare as I entered. I was hoping since I was always nice to all the students I would be accepted. But I sensed I was being shunned from all the girls here. One tall, arrogant girl walked up to my bunk. She had three other girls following her. "How come if you're a Guardian you make such an ugly girl? Cant you change your looks?" I was in no mood for this. "How come your feet are so hairy?" I came back. She looked down, and her feet were now as hairy as a monkey. I couldn't change me back at the moment, but I could do minor changes to other people's biochemistry just fine. She screamed in rage and then punched me in the eye.

Ordinarily I could have avoided such a swing, but I was tired, stressed and frustrated. I was afraid to hit her back; I knew I would get in more trouble. "Look" she said "Not only is Etan a girl now, he is a sissy. What's the matter, afraid to fight me? Look girls I scared a Guardian. And it look she's still wearing boy's underwear. What's the matter too embarrassed to see what a real woman wears?" She flipped up her night gown showing her panties. I couldn't help it but I was so frustrated I started crying again. This body and these hormones were really sending me for a loop. Why had everything gone so wrong? A few weeks ago I was the hero who helped saved the galaxy, and now this. "Look at the cry baby." the mean girl continued. I had, had enough of this. I stood up and said "Even if I get severely punished if you don't leave me alone I'm going to cover your whole body with warts, then take a picture and spread it around the campus." She turned in a huff and said "Let's go girls and leave this cry baby to her crib."

I spent all night thinking and sobbing. I had become a guardian to help people, and I had done that already. I saved the galaxy twice now; I could die knowing my life made a difference. And I didn't see how I could come back from all this trouble. By the mornings light I was resolute. I got up to get dressed, and looked in the mirror, I was a mess. I was already ugly so I guess it didn't make a big difference. I brushed my hair and dressed appropriately for what I would do next. I approached **1**'s office and waited to be admitted. I took a deep breath and tried to just speak calm and clear "I'm sure you know why I'm here." **1** looked at me seriously "I know you want to quit.

I figured you for a quitter the first time I laid eyes on you. She said "I no longer cared what she thought of me. I looked directly into her eyes and said " your opinion no longer holds any meaning to me, Just let me go back home. I wanted to save people and I did. I can die knowing that I did that. "She shrugged and said "Master Selar will be back in three days. I can't return you to your time but he can. You will keep scrubbing the floors each day until he returns. Or do I have to show you I can enforce that?" I could have argued the point but I let it go. "The fact that you think, you have to enforce it with me, shows your weakness of spirit not mine." She didn't look happy at that but said "your dismissed" At least in three days I could get out of here. Even if I had to go back to the death bed, it wouldn't matter anymore. No amount of shame here would take away what I had done.



My new mom

When I got back to the dorm that evening, someone had trashed my bunk. I took my pillow and cover and just walked out. I found a soft spot in the grass and laid down. I stared at the stars and wondered how many of them I could have made it to as a guardian. Why am I doing this to myself? I have already made a difference, even though I failed in this in the end I guess it doesn't matter. My mind kept whirling back and forth in a torrent of self torment.

An hour or so later a motherly looking woman strolled up to me. She was of average height with flowing brown hair. She was so graceful when she walked it was as if she were gliding on air. Her manner and clothing reminded me of a princess or fairy. Her voice was almost musical in resonance. Making the overall affect almost magical.

"Hello my dear, what are you doing out here." she asked. I didn't feel like going in to my story, I was emotionally Strawn out right now. She peered at me, as if she were looking into my soul. "My name is Alsea. I'm the school's new councilor." I started to tell her my name. "Don't worry" she said "I already know all about you, and what you have been through. You may think you're a failure but your not. You need two things: A mother to guide you, and friends to help you." The calming way she spoke and the serenity she projected made me think of Argyle. She held her hand out to me "Come with me my dear. Let's get you a new bunk." I immediately felt like I could trust her completely, but I was still hesitant. "You don't understand I'm not really a girl and I don't belong here anymore."

She looked at me, with comforting eyes. "I know exactly who you are. Right now you are a girl. And I'm going to adopt you like a daughter. Let me tell you something, your life is far from over." Then she asked me "Wouldn't you like to prove all your critics wrong?" I shrugged "sure" "You have a lot stacked against you right now. If you overcome this even old iron skirt will have to concede your victory." Iron skirt that was funny. I'd have to remember that one for later. I grabbed my bedding and she pulled me up. "If you do what I tell you to, I guaranty that in two weeks you can be yourself again. I will leave you alone and you'll be glad you stayed. What do you say?" It was a tempting offer but I knew she couldn't really do those things. "You are a very kind woman; you remind me of my best friend who died recently. But I know you can't really promise that." She tilted her head and looked at me with amusement. "As a matter of fact I can.

I know what's holding you back from being able to change. And you don't have to worry about I anymore I am here for you." she said. "But I'm leaving in three days." I told her. "Not anymore. I'm the school councilor. And I'm going to council you." she said matter of factly. "So who was this friend' she asked. I had a feeling Alsea already knew what I was thinking. She must be a mind reader. Why do they always ask questions they know the answer too? Apparently I was right because next she said "We ask for your sake not ours. One day you'll understand." Just thinking of my friend made me sad again "His name was Argyle. He was the kindest person I ever meet." She smiled and said "He was a kind hearted person, so calm all the time. I knew him very well. We had been friends along time. I was on a far away mission when his funeral occurred. Sorry I missed it." She held my hand as we walked, I felt like a child again. We headed out to the new dorm room.

"So why can't I change?" I asked. She spoke as if she were a guardian. They like to ask you questions that lead you to the answer. "What allowed you to finally become the bird two years ago?" I shrugged and said "I couldn't get it until Master Leo brought in a real hawk for me to connect with. I had to look into its mind and feel how its feels." She nodded "Exactly, to become or alter a thing you must understand its true nature. Not just facts about it. It not knowledge you must seek but understanding." That made perfect sense. I didn't know how to think like a girl so I couldn't connect with my own body and so couldn't change it. "How do you know these things?" I asked. She once again seemed amused by my question "My father is the chief engineer on Guardian Aries mother ship. I grew up around guardians all my life. When I became a councilor, Ares who was like an uncle to me, gave me mind reading as a gift "Ok I didn't see that one coming, though that explained a lot, especially the wisdom and kindness.

"I'm the counselor at a school for Guardians, no easy job to get, let me tell you." she said. That made sense. If she was going to counsel Guardians she would have to be very wise indeed. "In order to interview for this job I had to get an endorsement from a planetary guardian. Aries gave me a series of tests before he would endorse me. One of which he turned me into a man for three months." I was awestruck. "But you're so lady like in every way, the way you dress, your mannerisms, you carry yourself like royalty." I said amazed. "Believe me" she said "the experience made me appreciate being a woman even more. The first week I had to work in a dirty old factory shoveling fish guts. Even after I took a shower each night I still smelled like rotten fish. It was awful, and the worst week of my life. I worked around

a group of men who thought passing gas and belching were a form of art. I cried myself to sleep every night that week." "See you didn't like it either" I said. "just hear me out" she continued.

"After that Aries let me spend the rest of time working with a group of nice men. They were guys who worked hard to take care of thier families. Two of the men who I am still friends with today, had four kids a piece. One even took care of his elderly mother. I learned a lot during that time. Like I said it made me appreciate even more that I am a woman. I also gained a whole new respect for men. I got to see the good side, what a honorable man could be. I wouldn't be the councilor I am today without that experience." I was dumfounded "I would have never realized that's what it took to get the job." "oh no" she said "That just got me an audience with Selar, after that, he some of his own tests for me. Though the tests Aries had put me thorough went along way toward gaining his respect. Think about this, Selar chose you himself, that is a big honor and speaks highly of you." she finished. "I was both impressed and confused, at this point." "Ok" she said "I need a promise, that you will do what I tell you to do." I nodded "ok I guess, I just hope your right." Though truthfully I wasn't really convinced, but at this point it's not like I had a lot to lose.



She led me to another dorm. As we walked in several girls came up and hugged Alsea. She was obviously well liked. She looked at two of the girls and said "Ladies this is your new room mate. The smaller of the two said "Yes we know about Etan, sorry to hear you got in trouble because of that Reaper guy." Alicia looked at me and said "you need a girl's name, hmm how about Aria?" Both girls clapped "ooh that's pretty." They introduced themselves as Samara, and Mia. Mia was smaller with blond hair and blue eyes. Samara was taller with green eyes and black hair.

The girls helped me settle in. They asked about some of my adventures so far. I told them about the two times I helped save the galaxy. They were exited and impressed. Then they asked about the planet I was from and what girls on my planet liked to do. I said "well from what I know most girls like to go shopping and to places like the nail salon." They looked at me with confusion. "What's a nail salon?" they asked. I pulled out my computer pad which held a great many the files about earth. Long ago I had gotten used to being asked about earth so I had most anything about earth down loaded to it. Although there are a number of advanced civilizations, almost none of them had the variety that earth did. We had more options in areas like music, literature, art and clothes. I had come to the conclusion it was because there was more competition on earth than other planets. The Guardians helped keep thier planets peaceful and prosperous so thier was little need of competition.

The girls had never heard of cosmetic stores or beauty shops either. The next day was the start of the weekend for us, they told Alsea about all the earth things I had shared. She looked just as interested as the girls were. I told them where to go but said i wanted to stay here. They left to go pack a shuttle for the trip. I still had to do my scrubbing so I headed for the lunch room. Just as I was getting started I felt a sting in the back of the neck and everything went black. When I woke up I was in the back of the shuttle. This was like the third or fourth time that's happened since I have been training as a Guardian. Maybe I need to get a neck guard or something. "well I guess I don't have to ask where were headed?" I said. Alsea looked at me and smiled "We got one quick stop to make first."

We stopped at a local planet she was familiar with. I was lead into a building filled with small children. "What are we doing here?" I asked. She gave me another mischievous look and said "You'll see in a minute come on." I was lead to a room that contained a number of infant children. She talked to one of the caretakers, evidently someone she knew. She turned to me and said. "Pick up one of the babies and tell me what you feel." Everywhere I go I seemed to be pushed into things i don't want to do. So I told her "My wife and I never had kids, i really don't know anything about babies." But she was insistent. I picked up the nearest child and held it. I had never had any real experience with children but now I did feel a certain bond. Without thinking I began to rock the child in my arms and coo at it. Alsea smirked at me and said "Yeah that's what I thought." She directed me to go sit down in a chair in the corner while she picked out another child. Granted the baby was cute but this was getting me no where.

I sat down and she brought me a younger baby. She told me to hold it up to my chest and think of myself as its mother. I was trying to be patient here but this was all a waste of time. I should be somewhere meditating trying to change form. After a few more minutes of her insistence I gave it a try. I looked down at the child in my arms and tried to

imagine me as its mother. I never could have done this as my former self, but I guess this body came with its own feelings. When I did this I immediately felt a connection to this present body for the first time. I felt a sudden urge to have my own little one to care for. It was really quite strange. There was a rush of energy in my body and I suddenly grew breasts, this body had been completely flat chested before. I was both excited there was a change and embarrassed at the same time.

Alseia reached over and pulled up my shirt a bit. "Now she said 'Feed the child' This was going too far." Look I know you're trying to help, but I made a connection; I should be able to get it from here." I knew I was being difficult, but this was embarrassing. She sat down beside me as patient as ever. "Try this, if you don't like it, I'll admit I was wrong and I'll take you back home and ask 1 to change you back." I shock my head "Selar already said no". She smiled "I am the councilor; he will go with my recommendations." I wasn't trying to be a problem, but I just couldn't do it.

She changed tactics "You know what your problem is? You don't respect women." That kind of irritated me. "I have no problems with women, why would you say that?" She went back into mother mode "you had a bad experience with your wife and now you don't respect women so as a woman you can't respect yourself. I challenge you to prove me wrong." I didn't say anything back I didn't want to upset her since she had been so nice to me. "Look" she continued "it's not easy being a woman, if it was men could do it. A woman is expected to be graceful, patient, loving, forgiving, a good listener and caregiver. "Sounds like a Guardian," I said. Selar had been lecturing me on those basic same qualities since I first came to the school. "That's the point. If you learn to see from a woman's point of view, you'll be stronger, closer to being a Guardian and a better man. I guaranty it." she finished. She evidently wasn't going to let this go. I sighed heavily. Maybe if I just tried it for a minute she would leave me alone and get the iron dragon to change me back. "Fine" I said. "But don't expect too much." Why me? I thought. I saved the galaxy twice and this torment I go through. I just wanted to go to school to learn to be a Guardian, not a nurse maid. I hope Reaper never found out about this, I would never live it down.



I pulled the child up to my now ample breasts. It was strange seeing them from this perspective. I had to fight the urge to play with them, and make them bounce. Alsea must have picked up these thoughts because she was giving me a peculiar look. It took a few minutes of coaching to get the position and technique right. I would have never guessed there was skill to this. I just thought it would be like any other animal. I had seen puppies and cows do it. The child latched on and a strange sensation washed over me. It was a feeling of contentment, fulfillment and love. The thought hit me " I want a sweet little baby of my own to love." I laid my head back and closed my eyes allowing the child to suckle. For the next few minutes many thoughts came to me. I looked back at the very same situations I had thought on before, but I could see them in a completely new light. This was going to take, much more time in meditation over to understand everything coming to mind. After a moment I looked up when I noticed neither Alesia nor the girls had said anything. But they were giving me another peculiar look. Then I realized I had been crying, but not tears of sadness. If it wasn't for the fact that I was trying to be a Guardian, I would have been tempted to stay a girl. Mia took the baby back to one of the caretakers and Alsea pulled me up and gave me a big hug. "Welcome to the club" she said joyfully. We both cried and laughed while the girls clapped happily.

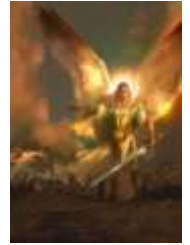
All is not perfect Alesia's past

This day started no different for Alceia than many others had. She went to school for several hours a day then came back to thier quarters and helped with a few household chores, then she was free to spend time with her friends. She was eighteen and would be graduating school this year, but she didn't know what she wanted to do with her life. Her father was chief engineer on Guardian Aries mother ship and her mother was a researcher. She didn't want to be either one of those. When she got the news that her mother had been killed by a dark agent raid, she was in shock. The guardians kept the galaxy in relative peace though the dark guardians still caused trouble on a smaller scale. Apparently the research station her mother was at had something they wanted. Her mother and three others died in the attack. Aries himself spoke at her mother's funeral. Her mother was popular on the ship; everyone loved her because she was so kind and caring.

Weeks past and Alesia couldn't think of anything else but her mother's death. It just wasn't fair. Her mother wasn't a soldier in an army, she was a researcher. They had no reason to kill her or the others. She couldn't even be around her friends without breaking out in tears. At first her friends supported her but after six months they were beginning to get tired of her obsessing with it. She tried to move on, but she was still angry over why her mother had died. If her mother was dying of old age that would be one thing but this wasn't right. Maybe she should move away from all Guardian planets, somewhere the dark Guardians would have no reason to bother. Alesia's mom and dad had always called her their little princesses. They bought her lots of elegant clothes. Most of them looked like something a queen might wear. But she couldn't stand the sight of them anymore, they all reminded her of her mom. She began wearing pull over shirts and pants.

Alesia's comments

I hated to feel the way I did, but I couldn't forgive the ones who killed my mother. I guess subconsciously I thought since my parents worked for a guardian we would always be safe. Why her? Why now? I looked up a remote mining operation that needed a teacher for younger children in the school. I decided to go there and get as far away from guardians as I could. As I was packing Guardian Aries showed up. "Alesia we need to talk." He said. I knew he would try to talk me out of going. "Aries you have been so kind to me and my parents. My father speaks very highly of you. But I have to go. I want to get far away from this life." I said. "Before you go I want to show you something." Aries said. He snapped his fingers and we were suddenly teleported from the mother ship to a planet a few systems away. Any planetary Guardian was powerful but Aries was the senior planetary Guardian. He had shining gold armor that resembled the plated armor of many ancient civilizations, and huge white, bird like wings on his back. He certainly looked intimidating. My father once told me he took on ten dark guardians at the same time, all by himself.



Aries put his hand to my head and gave me a gift. I could now read the minds of most humanoid. As we walked down the street I got to scan everyone around me. No one was without sorrows. Even people who seemed happy had secret things in the back of their minds that caused them grief. Then he took me to a guardian sponsored orphanage. The children were well taken care of. But most of them were orphans because of the dark guardians. A few even came from remote mining operations like the one I was going to move to. He had me stay there for the next week spending time with the children. I knew how they felt. They asked about my parents. After I told them about my mom, I got a sympathetic hug from each one. They thought it was neat that my father worked on a Guardian ship. After the week was over I actually felt a little better. Then Aries told me something that changed my life forever. "Alesia we do our best to keep peace, and help every planet be prosperous. But we are not perfect. Bad things can still happen to good people. That's why we need people like your mom and dad to make a difference. You can't bring your mother back but by living a life of service to others, you carry on her spirit. Your mother was a kind and gentle soul who helped others all the time. Because of the heartache you suffered, you understand others suffering as well. You have the potential to make a great councilor one day." From that point on Aries kept me busy with opportunities to comfort others in their pains. And helping them helped me.

Head to head

Reapers view

The first mission was way too easy. There were only three guards, no gun turrets and very little automated defenses. I could have taken the stairs or the elevator to where I was going but decided to climb up the elevator shaft. That way I'd get some exercise. At the end of the hall was an office of some kind. I got in, got the stupid papers the super slut wanted, and got out without a scratch. Except for the itch I had in my back that got scratched. Just for fun on my way out I went through the guards' pockets. The only cool thing I got was a neat looking watch.

As soon as I landed in the shuttle bay, the psycho wench was waiting for me. "In my office, now" she demanded, and walked out. Well, that didn't seem like congratulations to me. I wonder if there was a file on her somewhere. Find out

how I could kill her. Selar probably wouldn't be too mad, I'm sure she was a pain to him too. I strutted in the office. "I'm here for my medal" I stated with confidence. She looked at me like I was crazy. People did that all the time but usually for other reasons. "Why would I give a medal for failure?" I was honestly shocked "What do you mean? That was a flawless victory." She seemed just as honestly shocked by my reaction "Your task was to get in and get out unnoticed. You were to leave no evidence you were ever there. I told you that in the briefing." I shrugged " I wasn't listening, your opinion just not that important." I said defiantly. If I was lucky this would really get her steaming. Unfortunately she remained calm. "I also had a reminder on the consol of the shuttle." she stated. I looked away as if I didn't care and I didn't actually. "That got used in the bathroom when the paper wipes ran out." Once again she did not react violently. What did I have to do to get her going?

She showed me a recording of the mission. It was great seeing me take out the guards. I wonder how I could get one of these recorders. She picked apart everything I did. Like not taking out the cameras first and leaving finger prints. I really didn't care. Espionage is fun but I want to be infamous." Well" she said "If you want to keep working for the Guardians your going to have to start following orders." I wasn't going to let her manipulate me like that "Ok then I'll leave. I am reaper I don't need them. "Come with me" she said. "No" I told her once again, just being defiant. Why, you might ask, simply because I can. "And once again she dragged me by the head, this time to Selar. Oh great! I thought bring in the big guns why don't you? Let me guess, another one of those, I'll take all your abilities away threat again. But that wasn't it. Instead she had him show me something that changed my whole perspective.

Master Selar could open a door in time and see likely futures. He showed me two futures, one where I stayed with the Guardians and the other without them. The one I left I died in 40 years an old man. I had some adventures but never as great as I had wanted. The other showed me hundreds of years from now taking out an entire army by myself. There were at least several thousands soldiers. I could become the galaxies most dangerous agent. I would be feared by thousands across the galaxy.

Enemies who heard my name would run in fear. I would have access to the best weapons tech that exists. A future where I could become that great had my attention. "Ok. Ok, I'll work on following orders better." I knew Master Selar could see right through that lie. Selar looked at **1** for a moment. They were thinking something to each other. After a moment **1** turned to me and said "You're coming with me. Walk or be dragged your choice." I still wasn't letting her get the upper hand "Being dragging is fun, but I need to stretch my legs anyway." I stated. If she heard me, she pretended not to notice, and walked out, dang her.

Madam 1's report

I've been watching Etan's progress carefully. I intentionally tried to provoke him, to see if he had learned his lesson. He was annoyed at me but did not react. I can see greatness in him and why Selar chose him. Later that day he was having so much trouble, I let Alsea know he needed her help. She is a competent councilor; she should be all the help he needs. Reaper on the other hand is a challenge all to himself. Although reaper wants to still be rebellious, seeing his future has tempered him some. I intend to send him on some difficult training missions to test his limits. Hopefully he will be so tired from the effort he won't have the strength to rebel as much.

A little reprieve from the stress

Etan's view

After a laugh and cry session ended I asked " Ok now that I've experienced a few girly feelings now what?" Alsea looked at me and shook her head "Your a hard nut to crack." I laughed "Where did you learn that saying?" Selar gave me a social file from earth that might come in handy when dealing with you." I thought is there anything he does not anticipate? "Well now we can take out trip to earth." she said. "Well I can't go to earth, remember I still have to scrub each day" I told her. Alsea smiled "You don't have to scrub anymore; it's been taken care off." I decided not to inquire

further right now. She would tell me if she wanted too. She was a kind hearted person but still very formidable. "Remember when you touched the mind of the bird to understand it? She asked. "Yeah" She gestured "Link with either Samaria or Mia." "Why not you" I asked. "She smiled and said" Trust me you couldn't handle my mind at this point." I linked with Mia. I could feel how she felt. Now that I had experienced female emotions, I could recognize them. I could also feel that Mia liked me and hoped that I would ask her out, when I got to be me again. I let the bonding continue until the old Etan no longer existed in this body. Now I was aria. "Now we can go" Alsea said

We spent the next two days on earth having some fun. The irony was I was a former man in a girls body showing 3 alien women about earth makeovers. We all got our nails and hair done. It was as much a new experience for me as them. I got a picture placed on my nails that resembled the guardian symbol. Then we went to the mall to get shoes, dresses and a few accessories. I still find it strange that other planets don't have bras, and high heels. I showed Mia and Samaria how to flirt earth style. It turned out flirting was almost universal. What worked on earth seemed to work almost everywhere. Who could have guessed? Now that I was totally female in body and mind I could change my body around. I made myself curvy and beautiful. Wait if I could do that, then should be able to turn back into my old self. I didn't want to do it, dressed like I was. So I decided to wait until we got back home. Besides we were all having fun and I needed the break from the stress I had been under. There was a boy band in town we went to see. The girls hooped and hollered like any of the earth women. Samaria got a rose thrown to her from one of the singers on stage. I actually felt jealous for a second that I didn't get one, then I felt embarrassed when had to remember who I really was. This whole experience had opened my eyes to many things. All in all it was a good weekend

We did make two more stops before heading home. We visited a zoo, and a aquarium I linked with twenty different animals and practiced each. Now that i understood the process it didn't take but a few minutes to get them down fairly well. A few times i was seen by one of the other visitors while I was in a half way form. I told them i was practicing for a magic show. Twenty was all that I could handle. After that i was mentally worn out. I planned to come back here next week and learn some more. If i ever fought reaper again he would have big surprise. Maybe next time i could make the big purple tentacle monster he always wanted to fight. My new friends were very supportive. They loved watching me practice each new form. It took a few tries to get each new one down. I even got a few laughs when i showed them the earth joke of the fish face, and said "Here is a change you can do too."

I got back home changed clothes and sat down and prepared myself mentally. I should be able to do it this time. I focused and became me for a second then my body returned to girl form for some reason. I tried it again, without success. Ok what was I missing here? Alsea walked in just in time. "I thought this might be what you were up too." she said. "I changed then my body came back to this form for some reason." I explained. She nodded knowingly "I think you've had so much fun that subconsciously you don't want to be your old self again. With what you been going through lately I can't say I blame you. A part of you wants to stay being a girl." I realized she was right. She went to explain "Right now your judgment on the matter is still clouded. Why don't you become your old self again then decide." "But how" I asked. Set in your mind that you can always change back when you want too, but for now you want to be the old you again, if it helps think about your friend Argyle. "I closed my eyes and focused. Suddenly I was Etan again. She hugged me tight and congratulated me.

Matt opened back up to me, He congratulated me also and I felt different. I was in awe of what came to mind "I feel calmer and more in control now, which is good. But I also feel like I lost a great amount of emotional understanding." Alsea said "you and me and only few others will ever truly understand the difference. I hugged her back now. "I can't thank you enough. You don't know how much you have meant to me." She held me tight "Son or daughter I will still consider you like my child." "Can I still be Aria sometimes and we go on more trips together?" I asked. "Of course dear." she said joyfully. With that we hugged one last time before I headed out.

A new state of mind

Etan's veiw

With all the new insights my mind was filled with, now I knew what i needed to do. The first was too check in with Master Selar. We talked for awhile. I told him of all that happened. I know he could read my mind but he let me tell him anyway. He seemed pleased with my progress. After the trouble I had been in before this was a great relief. I practiced changing back and forth a few times just to make sure I had it down pat before my next few tasks to be done.

After that I went to my room put on my silver Guardian attire and headed out to my second stop. The computer said **1** was in her office. I stepped up to the door and politely knocked. She bid me come in and then looked at me with annoyance. "I thought I told you not to wear that. Just because they gave it to you doesn't mean you're a Guardian yet." Alsea had been right I understood now much better what being a real man was about. I felt a surge of determination I had never felt before.

I had practiced what I would say "Madam **1** while I mean you no disrespect. You're wrong. I wasn't given this uniform I earned it. I was awarded an honorary silver Guardian position with all the privileges that come with it. You commented before about the other students calling me a Guardian. I never asked them too. I earned that respect. I'm not a full Guardian yet but the progress I have made I have earned through a lot of hard work, and you're not going to take that away from me. And I'll fight you on it." I may have just signed my death warrant as far as she was concerned but I wasn't backing down. She nodded and then smiled and said "Now you're thinking like a Guardian. And it's about time too." That is not what I expected at all. "You mean you wanted me to stand up to you." I asked. "Yes" she said "A Guardian must stand up for what's right, but without being prideful. It's a hard balance to obtain." We talked for awhile. And I asked for her permission to do two things I felt needed to be done, I got her blessing. At that moment I felt strong. I was still fascinated by the difference in feeling between how I felt as a man and a woman. And now I did understand better what it really meant to be a man. Reaper was my third stop.

First I went to the replicator and made an item for Reaper. I knocked on his door and waited for an answer. He apparently was shocked to see me. I handed him my gift and said "Here is my apology. I'm sorry for attacking you in anger." Him, having me apologizing just feed his ego so he eagerly opened the gift. It was a pink hair bow. "What?" he asked. "You're going to need this." I touched him on the shoulder and turned him into a woman. I also nulled out some of his Argarian Dna. I couldn't keep him nulled but for just a moment but it was enough. He swung at me a few times but I easily avoided them now that he had less enhancements. "This will give you a new perspective on life, I guaranty it." While he cursed obscenities at me, I walked off humming to myself happily.

I had one more stop to make. I changed back to a girl then changed clothes, and headed out. The schoolgirl who had been so mean to me before now had to scrub the floors. **1** gave her a certain amount each night to complete before she could leave. Since I was an honorary Guardian and she had attacked me, the punishment was the same as if she had attacked a teacher. I had found all this out from **1** this last meeting. She was fortunate they didn't expel her permanently. I walked in; she looked up and glared at me. "Come to gloat?" I got on the floor with her and said "Nope, come to scrub." She looked gleeful "Ha! You got to do your punishment anyway." I put my hand on her shoulder " You misunderstand I'm not being punished anymore. But you have to scrub a certain amount before you can leave. So I'm going to help you get through quicker." She was haughty again "I don't need your favors or your pity." I continued to scrub as I talked "What you need is a real friend. You have followers but no real friends." She huffed "I rather just be alone."

I shook my head " I'm going to help you whether you like it or not. Besides how else could I make you jealous of my new panties?" I flipped up my skirt up to reveal some pink lacy ones I got from earth. She looked and I could tell she was jealous. "In two weeks me and my friends are going on another shopping trip to earth if you want to come?" I said. I could see she was interested but was hesitant. I could feel she regretted what she had done but something still bothered her. "You have made a few bad decisions but you can choose right now to make better ones." I said. She looked up at me for a second then went back to scrubbing but her hands were shaking. I tried again "I forgive you; we can start over and be friends you know." She just stared at me for a moment then broke down and started crying. I guess I had finally hit the mark. I gave her a sisterly hug, and we cried together. As we continued scrubbing I could feel she wanted to say more but was too embarrassed. Then I realized what it was.

Apparently her feet were still hairy, and even if she shaved them the hair would grow back within hours. **1** had not undone my change to her. I told her to take off her socks and shoes and I would fix her feet. She was a stylish girl so this had hit her hard. I touched her feet and in a moment they were as smooth as silk with the hair from them on the floor. She looked down and in a quite voice said "Thank you". She was obviously not used to gratitude. After a long talk I found out that she was bullied in school and now she had become the same way to others. But with a true friend, I figured that would change. In two weeks she did come with us. Alsea got her as pass. She loved shopping for clothes by no surprise.

During our scrub sessions the next few months, we became good friends. Before the end of the year most of the girls at school wanted to have makeover and shopping trips to earth, the school would never be the same. During the day I was myself and some nights a girl. As myself I took Mia on a few dates to earth. After all the stress of the first half of the year, the second half went very well. I had new found confidence, several new friends, a new perspective, new forms to change into, and Aria got a lot of new clothes. Reaper on the other hand had problems of his own.

Reaper's girl power

Man this sucks. Etan turned me into a girl and I won't turn me back. I'll show her I'll own everyone anyway. Since I was going to get sent on a mission as a female I planned to use it to my advantage. I went to the replicator and had a few clothes with weapons embedding in them made. Strangely the old crone didn't object to this. I was sent to a secured tower that contained some vital information the guardians wanted. It was similar to the last mission I had done but had much more security measures, the shuttle pilot teled me just outside the building. It was a good 40 stories tall with cannons on the top corners. The front of the bottom floor had only two small windows and a large metal door. Six guards lined the outside of the complex. I had done my research on this place and knew the names of some of the middle management here. I also had a proper I'd made up. I had dressed provocatively and approached the guards making sure they saw my cleavage. I introduced my self as starlit night, a high rolling prostitute. The guards tried to hit on me but I told them they couldn't afford me. I was searched but my weapons were made part of the fabric so they didn't find any.

They called the manager I had said I was coming to see. He had a girl come in once or twice a week. We had taken care of her and I was her replacement. The manger approved and I was allowed in. The entrance in side was just as heavily guarded. At least twenty guards filled the entrance and front hall. They had security cameras, two gun turrets per side, and robotic attack drones. Well this was more like it. One of the guards was assigned to escort me to the office. He was a big lug, a good foot taller than me, and muscled. I would have to remember to take him out later, if I had time, just because I could. The guard opened the door for me and said to look him up later; he might be able to afford me too.

The manager was a middle aged slightly pudgy guy with glasses, too easy. As soon as the guard closed the door I didn't waste any time. I walked over to the guy and knocked him out. His id badge gave him up to level 8 clearance I needed a full level 12 level to get the items I needed. I used the holographic field in my clothes to change my look to his. I took a sample of his prints and placed them on my fingers then I left the room. The guard was still standing outside the room, I guess waiting me to emerge. He was surprised to see his boss emerge instead. I told him "I got to go grab a few things don't let that slut leave till I get back." With that I casually strolled down the hall in a relaxed manner. Attitude is everything. The information I was given had said what I needed would be on the 39 floor in the control room. The guardians had determined this tower was a communications complex linking with all the dark Guardians' activities. As I walked through the corridors i scanned for any individuals with higher clearance than mine. I didn't see a level 12 but there was a level 11 in a conference room. I waited till he walked out alone. I followed him down a hallway. He recognized the man I was imitating. "Daras, what are you doing here.?" he asked. "I was told to bring this to you and only hand you this in a secure location." I told him. One thing I know is secret organizations keeps secret from thier own people as well as enemies.



My luck was with me today. He took me to a room with a large window that looked into a control room. This was a monitoring room that monitored the ones monitoring the fleet deployment. Monitors that monitor, other monitors now that is redundancy at its best. I slipped my hand under his nose and shot him with sleeping gas, he slouched to the floor. I figured I was safe from cameras here since they didn't want any recordings of what happens here for anyone to find. The three techs watching and coordinating in the next room hadn't even noticed we had come in yet. I changed to the higher mangers appearance and dragged him into a hiding place. I used a small mind probe I had with me to scan for security codes or passes he knew. After this was done, I approached the door to the control room and stated the necessary security measures. When I got inside I stated " we have problem, I need files 1a through 3e all other files in this room must be destroyed. This room is being moved to a new location. All the back up sights has been compromised." They immediately grabbed the necessary files and handed them to me. "You new location will be given to you once shut down here is complete." I said officially. How did I know thier would be back up sights? As paranoid as this

organization was, they would have to have several. As secretive as this place was, my request sounded like a normal order. As far as they knew it could have just been a drill but they proceeded to shut everything down. This would slow them down for awhile. I changed back to the pudgy man and made my way back the office. I stayed 10 minutes then came back out as the prostitute. The guard escorted me back down stairs. When we got to the entrance I told the guard I would give him one free if he wanted because he was so cute. I can't believe he fell for it. As soon as we were around the corner, I had him knocked out in less than a minute. I got a new weapon in the process. It was some kind of dematerializer. Neat I always wanted one of those. The shuttle picked me up, I wasn't going back to base the guardians wanted me to head out to meet up with the battle ship using the information I had gotten for the next mission. From espionage to a battleship, this was more like it.

Meeting with Selar

Alsea reported first "Etan has finally made it back to his own form again, and he learned a lot in the process. Then **1** said "Etan finally stood up to me. And he had an idea of what might help with Reaper. And so far it seems to be helping. Reaper has been much more cooperative now." He chuckled slightly "So our young guardian taught you something then?" **1** seemed a little embarrassed at that but said "It seems so." She wasn't used to learning things from a person so much younger than her. Selar seemed to be taking great joy that his pick of Guardian was progressing so well. It was well known Master Selar was one of the oldest living guardians. He was as wise and powerful as the commander himself. When he spoke, everyone listened. "I'm pleased with the progress you both have made." Selar said. "I will have it put it on your records that I am giving you high recommendations for a job well done." They were both very happy to hear that. Getting Master Selar's recommendation was tough to do. After that he discussed a few more projects in the near future.

Before they could leave, a mysterious figure entered the room. It was like a shadow not quite there. "Well, well, well, what do we have here? The little guardian family is growing. Alsea and **1** suddenly felt a dread come over them. They could feel powerful dark energy present. They found out later this was a projection sent by a very powerful being. "What do you want Kane?" Selar asked. "I heard your salvage project, Argyle is dead. I came to offer my condolences," he said. "You came see who else you could torment." Selar responded. "And I'm not going to let you harm my new guardian in training." How about a little wager then? Kane asked. "What did you have in mind?" Selar responded. "This" and he sent Selar a mental message. "What's stakes do you offer " Selar asked. " If we win you give up the kabala system if we lose we give up the Terrocian system." The Kabala system was heavily populated and protected by the guardians, while the Terrocian system only had a small population but contained a highly sought after mineral called Desium. Selar was not impressed. "We can't trust you to keep your word." he said. "We will pull out of the system right away. Not one of us will remain. But if you lose you must give your word you will leave both systems immediately." the dark man said. "Deal, let me know when your ready" Selar said with a smile.



To be or not to be Etan's view

It was half way into the school year, and for a change things were going smoothly. Reaper had been having some problems with **1** before but things had gotten better for him too. Master Selar called me in for a mission. "I have something I need you to do. I'm going to give you a list. You must follow this list exactly as I tell you too. Even if it doesn't seem to make sense at the time, I need you to follow it. Do you understand?" "Yes master I understand." I said. He sent me in a fighter pod to a far away system. After the initial scans I discovered there was population of just less than 5000 people all in tribes. There seemed to be an accumulation of dark energy here. Now that I had done the scans the list said to touch the mind orb Master gave me to give me my mission. Selar's voice came to me" This population has been flooded with dark energy. Dark beings are using them like cattle to produce more dark energy for them to feed on. If this is allowed to continue they will eventually have enough to saturate the whole galaxy. You must use the

weapons on this craft to eliminate them. I know that seems cruel. It was a hard decision to come by but it must be done.

I never would have guessed I would be given a task like this. In the three years I had been with Selar I had never heard of Selar ever being wrong. I knew from the other teachers, that Master Selar was considered to be almost infinitely wise. But how could he ask that? I asked Matt, but he was strangely silent. Hmm the only times when he was silent before was when he needed to hide, but then he made me forget him too. The other was when I was being tested. Could this be a test? It also made sense for this to be a test. Why would Selar give this job to a trainee? And he could kill all of them in a blink himself if he wanted too. But if this was a test what was the right thing to do. Obey my Master, and keep my word, or disobey but maybe save the people. But what answer were they looking for. This reminded me of the moral dilemma the commander had given me when the council first questioned me. So was this a real situation, or some kind of mock up. In a way maybe it didn't matter, I would be expected to make the right decision either way.

One of the big policies of the guardians is violence is only to be used to uphold the peace or to protect life. Even though its wrong to kill these people; what if it's saves the rest of the galaxy? That related to another of the tests " Is it right to do something wrong if it accomplishes something good." The question: How do you know what is just, applies here as well, and what is truly honorable. After more thought, I realized pretty much everything they tested me on was at stake here. This was awful having to decide the fate of a whole civilization. I pondered on this dilemma back and forth for the next half hour. I felt like I was in a losing situation here either way. No matter which one I choose bad things would happen. Ultimately it came down to I could not kill all those people needlessly. It didn't seem right to me, even if that decision seemed to save many others. I hoped I was doing the right thing. I wanted to try one thing before I left, I teled one of the people aboard the craft into a holding cell. He was very hostile. Probably due to all the dark energy I sensed in him. I focused and sent all the light energy I could call up at him. It took a few moments of trial and error but I managed to eradicate all the dark energy from him. He immediately calmed down. I explained the situation to him and let him go. If I could do this then surly Master Selar could cure all of them at the same time the same way. I set the craft to head back home.

Suddenly I was back in Master Selar's chamber. He was there and so was a shadowy figure that emanated dark energy. "He passed your test, now get out." Master Selar said to the man. "The Terrocian system is yours for today, but you wont keep it long so it doesn't matter. "He said then disappeared. Master put his hand on my shoulder and said "I have to say this to you. Congratulations! You thought it was you who got lucky I found you, but I think we may be the lucky ones." He went on to explain about the bet. It was whether I would choose to obey Selar or not. Selar already had seen I would pass. He could look through time. The closer the event the more likely what he saw would occur, the further out an event was, the more chance that things could go another route. But this was only a few hours in advance he was pretty much assured victory. "I can't wait to see the look on 1's face when she finds out about this." he said. "Once again you did me proud." That night I had a interesting new story to tell the girls.

Etan's commentary

The first reports came in on the new planet acquired. It seems there was billions of dark energy bombs scattered around the planet just waiting to go off. Maybe that was the dark ones plan all along. Practically give the Guardians a planet and then bomb it so they could take down a guardian or two. But the council had a plan. I was called into see Selar "Etan I've got another mission for you. This one is real. This is no test. This time it is imperative you follow my directions. I can't take a chance of anyone knowing what we are about to do. So I must send you on this mission blind. The instruction of where you are to go is in the shuttle I had prepared for you. Open this letter when you arrive at your destination." I was taken back. Well that was heavy. I didn't know where I was going or what i would be doing. But it had to be something serious. I left in the shuttle an hour later. The instructions said I was headed to the new planet. At least getting there was unieventful. When I arrived it looked like a nice place. Its land was green and its oceans blue. It actually reminded me of earth in some ways. After I took up a high orbit I opened the letter. It told me when I was given the signal I was to move to a specific location just outside this solar system and wait there. Selar would use me as a guardian relay station or beacon to signal another Regent from a nearby galaxy. The enemy would not see this coming and would underestimate the power the council had at thier disposal.

Dark swarm update

The guardians are preparing to secure the planet. Begin final countdown as soon as any Regent reaches orbit. Send a scout to investigate a small craft that entered the system.

Selar's thoughts

This mission was going to be very tricky to pull off. The commander and I are the only ones that can perform the needed skill. I set Etan to be my catalyst in this conflict. Over all I have been very pleased so far with his progress. Minus one lapse, but he will grow in time. It is unfortunate that I could not allow him to keep all the memories of the past two conflicts. We have known both times what the dark guardians were up too. We knew they were planning to activate the wormhole base. We also knew they were trying to change time. The prime matrix was able to guide Etan both times although he was unaware of it the second time. I am confident that one day he will become a powerful Guardian. Perhaps in time even a Regent. The entire council will be needed to complete this task. The dark guardians have set a well laid trap for us. But obtaining this planet is a prize we cannot easily dismiss.

Trick or treat



The council approached the planet. It was a treasure trove of minerals. It was also a good strategic location in the galaxy. The dark ones had bombed the planet with dark energy orbs. From what they could tell if one went off all of them would explode at the same time. What they needed to do was eliminate all the dark orbs at the same time. The problem was there was a large bomb near the core tied in to them and they had sensitive triggers that would go off the moment any move was made. The council approached the planet and formed a circle around the commander. Most problems one regent could take care of by themselves with energy to spare. But everyone once in awhile there was a problem that required two or more of them to work in conjunction. This was such an occasion. Selar and the others felt a massive hyperspace disturbance, the dark guardians were coming. By the massive emanation it was probably at least 100 battle ships. All five members of the council began to focus and open the light stream. Selar sent a message to Etan to move into position.

Etan received the message and headed toward the outer rim of the solar system. As he approached his position, an armada of ships came out of hyperspace. The lead ship immediately tractorbeamed his vessel then he was transported directly to the bridge. He was suddenly paralyzed and had no access to any of his abilities. A man dressed in black stood directing the fleet. Etan could feel dark energy probing his mind. "So that's what they are up to," he said. Send him to the core, that way there is no way he can be used to send any messages." Etan was transported to a room filled with advanced tech. He was in a small cell and still had no abilities. He could see a read out that showed the planet and this room at the center of it. The diagram also showed many lines leading to the surface. One dark man walked by and said casually "Don't worry when this goes your death will be quick and painless." Several technicians went about their work making sure all was prepared. Given the circumstances and his statement it wasn't too hard to figure out their plan. They would use this facility to set off all the bombs at the same time and blow up the planet too. If one didn't kill the council the other should. Or maybe weaken them enough to be vulnerable to the armada. That's why the council needed another Regent to give them the edge. And now he wouldn't be there to send the message. Etan knew somehow he needed to escape.

Matt spoke. "I have now been able to compensate for the neutralizing field, and you have all your abilities back. But don't try to escape yet. "Why " Etan had to ask." Your real task is down here. Selar knew you would be captured. You will be needed in a few moments when the time is right. "He answered. Then he showed me it how I needed to knock out the guards and stop the machines timer, but not destroy it. In a few more minutes the time had come. I easily slipped through the bars as rubber then knocked out the guards with my light energy. Once I had the place secured my matrix contacted Selar letting him know we were ready.

While Etan was getting setup the council had made themselves ready. He was able to monitor the situation from here. Just as they were powering up the armada dropped out of hyper space. They turned and began firing on the ships. A message came in from the armada for each tech to tele out and detonate the core, when no one answered them, they tried to detonate it from their location. But by this time the matrix had explained to Etan how to disable the machine.

From what he understood, Selar's prime matrix was sending him what he needed to know to do this. After half the fleet was destroyed the rest turned and fled. Selar's matrix now sent him a message to get to the machine and wait for his signal to reactivate the timer then tele to Selar. He would keep a protective bubble around him.

He walked over to the machine to set it up when he realized something. Wait! This will blow up the planet, that's what it was designed to do. It would kill all the people that lived here. This was similar to the test before but this time for real. He tried talking to the matrix again, see if it would talk or be silent. But this time it wasn't silent" This is no test." he said. "You must do this." But how can they ask me to do this, it's the same situation I was in before? Matt tied into selar's to let him know whatever they were doing was to preserve life not end it. He just hoped he was doing what was right. Before he could set the machine, a shadowy figure appeared. He looked like the same one that he had seen before. "Stop there little man, I'm not going to let you mess up our plans." he said. Oh no! Etan called out mentally for selar but he told him to just keep him busy for a moment. Matt told him the council had thier own problems.

It seems the armada was just distraction to let all the dark guardians get into place. Now they were surrounded by thousands of them. If the planet blew now, they would be hit from both sides. If it didn't kill them then they would be weakened to the point of being overtaken. A quick glance at the monitor showed massive amounts of energy being discharged in space. Selar sent him another message. Almost ready, keep him busy for 30 seconds more. The shadowy figure approached the consol. Only one thing came to mind, though it might not work at all. He turned female and pulled up his shirt revealing Aria's cleavage. The man was stunned for a moment not expecting this tactic. He was surprised but it only had bought him a few seconds, it wasn't enough. Etan asked Matt for knowledge of what he wanted to do. He accessed Selar's matrix to learn the skill. He turned into pure light energy and merged with the figure. Thier energies canceled each other out. He thought of it because of what he had done to the man in the test, and thought something similar might work.

Etan coalesced back to human form but now he was practically paralyzed from the effort. He could feel himself dying, Dark energy was like poison to Argarian Dna. The shadow figure blinked a few times then disappeared. Selar sent him a message that now was the time. He could see the consol just few feet from him but he couldn't reach it. If he was smaller he wouldn't need as much energy. He took a small portion of his mass, let his spirit go to that and let the rest of his body die. He needed a form just big enough to push the necessary buttons but small enough to have the energy to getup and do it. He decided on a small monkey. They had hands that were strong for thier size but were small enough to conserve energy and agile enough to getup on the consol. He pushed the button to activate the machine.

Timing is everything

Similar in style to many insect species, the Guardians true strength was thier ability to work together as a single unit. The mental link is what kept them strong and coordinated. The Armada was just a distraction, but they still took out a large number of vessels. This would help in the long run as much as what they were planning. Just as expected the main force, a large contingent of dark Guardians appeared. They had to let all of them get in place for this to work to the Guardians full advantage. They exchanged a few shots trying to buy more time. Selar kept a close watch on Etan through his matrix. He allowed Etan to down load the necessary knowledge from his matrix as he needed it. He called for help but he couldn't afford to leave the battle field right now. Finally the last units of dark guardians were in place. Selar called to the ten planetary guardians, that had been intangible, to come out of hiding. They formed a massive shield around the council. The whole council linked and channeled a massive amount of light energy that was ready to be directed toward the planet. Three of the Regents powered up and sent thier energy to the commander, while Selar had another task to do. After a moment all was ready and Selar sent the message that Etan needed to activate the machine.



It took just over 5 seconds for the energy in the machine to reach critical mass. The dark guardians sensed the build up and tried to flee but there were twenty more Guardians waiting behind them to block them off with another colossal shield. Selar had, told Etan how to disarm the dark orbs so when the large bomb went they would not. The bomb exploded. Both the guardians holding the inside and outside shields dropped them and went back intangible. The council held thier ground and place. The dark Guardians were not prepared in advance for this so was caught unaware. The machine blew creating a titanic wave that reached the nearby sun. Over two thirds of the

dark guardians were vaporized in the blast. This machine had been made to take out the counsel, so was more than enough to incinerate them. There were a few that managed to get away but they shouldn't be a threat now for a long time. The council had to wait another ten seconds after the blast before the wave dissipated enough to finish their maneuver. When they were done the planet and all the people reappeared. The planetary guardians immediately left to go back to their planets just to make sure none of the dark guardians could hide out there. Etan opened his eyes to find himself beside Selar in space. He was whole again and in his human form. "What happened" Etan asked. "The other Regents and the Commander took the planet and themselves out of phase with time just long enough for the machine to blow. I did the same for all the people on the planet including you. "He explained."The earlier battle took out half of their fleet and the explosion incinerated over two thirds of the dark guardians. While we were doing this I sent reaper in the battle ship to destroy their three biggest bases. With all their losses, they shouldn't be a problem for some time." he finished. "So you turned their trap into a trap for them." I asked amazed. "Were guardians, it's what we do." He said with a smile. Master Selar never ceased to amaze me.

Left over's

As before, I got congratulations from the council. Really they did all the work, but apparently I did pretty well with a difficult situation. Now that things have calmed down Reaper and I started talking to each other again. Reaper, of course strutted around for the next few weeks like he owned the world. I had to endure several discussions about who did more, him or me. It was mostly one sided as he kept trying to prove that taking out the three bases was a bigger contribution than saving one measly planet. There was one challenge however that I was interested in. With the problems of this year Reaper and I had not spared since before the vacation. I told reaper I had learned to do many animals now and I had some surprises for him. Reaper wanted to invite the whole school to see this epic match, all the better.

On one of our first meetings Reaper had said he always wanted to fight a tentacled monster, well today I was going to give him one. I had had practiced a number of animals and combinations of animals. We both walked toward the ring side by side, and Reaper gave me a curious look. "I see a very confident look in your eyes today. I guess I really did finally make a man out of you after all." He said with pride. "You and Alsea both" I told him. Alsea was there at the front to give me one last hug for good luck. I entered this year timid but now I felt strong, confident and full of courage. I had asked the fighting arena be put outside so I could access the ground.



I gave Reaper what he wanted a giant tentacled monster. First I turned to rock and assimilated enough of the ground to grow to over 30 feet tall. I must have weighed at least 10 tons. Then I changed into a reptilian form. I made sure I was heavily armored with a full mouth of teeth and long sharp claws. I had matched the overall form of a raptor but with a longer neck, and I added thick armor like scales. Also tentacles coming out of each of my sides. Each with razor sharp spikes. Lastly I grew huge bat like wings to finish the effect. I looked much like a dragon from myth. Reapers eyes got glazed over, partially out of excitement partially out of respect. I roared and many spectators on the front row backed away. Just for a little extra pizzazz I created some fire inside and spat it out as a 20 foot flame. Reaper looked like he had died and gone to heaven.

Just to make sure I had plenty of time to have some fun, we eliminated the prior time limit. To my surprise all five members of the council showed up to watch. For the next half hour we put on a show like no one had ever seen. None of reapers bladed weapons would even dent my armor. He jumped on my head a few times and blinded me but I grew them back within moments. I wrapped a tentacle around his neck and choked him, and then he cut through it with a blade. I could have made the skin thicker but I wanted to let him cut it so I could bleed purple blood. He saw it and I think he almost cried. This was a dream come true for him. In this form there wasn't much he could do to me. I let him go on until he began tire.

When I had let him play enough I used my tentacles to pull his arms and legs off his torso. Before he could call them back to himself I swallowed them whole. Now his leftover torso was just lying there. He looked shocked. Afterwards I was awarded the winner. I spat his limbs back out so he could put himself back together. They didn't taste good anyway. A little like really old greasy chicken. I thought he would be mad but he just stood there stunned then eventually said "That was the most epic thing I've ever seen. This was the first match I had ever really won against

reaper. After the match reaper and I had dinner together and talk over old times. "Remember the time when I took out five guys with just box of donuts?" Reaper asked. "It was four guys and the last one stunned himself" I laughed. "well I also remember how you keep getting pushed in volcanoes, why is that?" he responded. "It was only once, the first one you pushed me in at my promotion. That doesn't count. "I stated. "I can become fire now, but I still hated volcanoes. And by the way I'm still going to ask for an ice planet of I ever get to be a planetary guardian. We laughed and talked well into the night.

Without my friends I would not have made it through this year. The irony was my friend who loves death taught me how to live. The friend, who never got upset, taught me how to be passionate. And it took two women to show me how to be a man. Although this year had been the single most stressful year, all the other years were full of thier own challenges. But that is another story.

The End

List of credits

Brett Youngblood my brother for his support and encouragement

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