

# Guardian Chronicles

## Timescape

### Prologue from the Author

If you've made it this far, you think you know my writing pretty well, don't you? Boy, are you in for a surprise. We've journeyed through time, and other realms. We've seen massive battles against mech-beings, zombies and weird creatures. You've seen our hero's, set on fire, fight thier own clones and recently become part of a murder mystery. You've even seen the real story behind many of earth mysteries and lore. But you haven't seen anything yet, I was just getting warmed up. I'm making a personal challenge to all of you out there. I'm challenging my insanity against yours. Hang on for an action packed ride of multi-universal proportions. As we traverse the Timescape.

### Second prologue by Matt

Ahh, don't let that blow hard scare you. As long as you keep feeding him Mexican food, he's a pushover. But, he is right about one thing, this can be a confusing story but I'm going to help you out. When were talking about our own universe we will call it universe zero. The others will be numbered, according which order different universes began interacting with ours, universes 1, 2, 3 and so on. Again, were universe Zero, got it, don't forget it. (whispers) By the way, I'm not supposed to tell you this but Etan is based on the Author himself and Reaper is based on his brother. In fact several of the major characters are based on real people. Go figure. Well, here he comes, so I got to go. Have fun.

### Third prologue by Etan

Now that those two have totally confused you, let me catch you up with recent events. It's been nineteen years since the heart of darkness mission. We never did find the heart. But even before the mission, chaos agents were scarce in our galaxy and now it seems like they're all gone. It's like they've pulled out of every known galaxy at once. Whatever their up to it must be big but at least for now, they're not bothering us. On the Reaper news, He and Drax finally melded enough to work together most of the time. Although they still argue for the fun, sometimes. Also I'm teaching at the school in between mentoring my three young silvers. They each got silver status last year. Anyway let's finally get to the story.

# Part one

## Life as usual

Universe Zero

250 years until doomsday. Guardian year 5644 Earth year 1644 Etan age 224

Nineteen years after heart of darkness mission

### Etan's normal day

In between major catastrophes, life as a Guardian isn't bad. I mean, who wants to spend everyday expecting some galactic conquest, or thinking that today you might have to see a guy split in half. Well, I know one guy who would. But any modestly sane person, certainly wouldn't. Overall though, while there are always minor natural disasters to deal with, for the most part day to day activities for Guardians aren't bad. Of course no one wants to hear those stories. Stories like how I survived a six hour protocol ordeal from a race that brings new meaning to the term Ocd. All of that was just to get them to agree to attend a peace meeting. The meeting itself was another matter. I'm glad Reaper wasn't there for that. Sometimes I envy him in his constant adventures.

I stated all that to say, when we are needed for major events, things can be more exciting than you want. After awhile you look forward to some down time. Mostly I look forward to the calm, dull, boring times when the galaxy is not falling apart. The first fifty years after the elemental mission was such a time. Today for example, I had a slight annoyance to deal with but other wise it was just a normal day. After last school year, Master Leo decided to step down from teaching. He wanted to enjoy some retirement time. He said he always wanted to do planetary research. Going on one of the pioneering teams that search new planets and discover what potential they have. He could go along, work at his own pace and enjoy new sights. I wish I could go with him. But for now I was filling in for him.

The annoyance I mentioned was a guy from GNN, the Galactic news network. He followed me around all day. I tried to explain what I was doing was not exciting right now. If he wanted exciting there were other Guardians working on bigger projects. Even my three young silvers were doing something kind of neat this week. They were about to split a mountain range so that the ocean rich air on the other side would pass through the opening and finally bring water to the nearby desert. The land was fertile but was to dry to grow much.

“So tell me Etan, what it like being a Guardian?” the news reported asked. I told him the truth.

“It’s kind of like being a parent at times. Parents look out for the welfare of thier kids, work to provide for them, and get onto them when they do something they shouldn't. Though often times they just take you for granted and rebel.”

The reporter looked bored. This was not the answer he was hoping for.

“Look, you asked.” I said “I told you the other day when you called me I'm not doing anything exciting right now. I'm filling in teaching at the school until a suitable replacement can be found.”

### Reporter Odel's view

Well, exciting or not I had a job to do. We had taken a poll of what Guardian most people wanted to know about. Our audience wanted to know about a Guardian’s personal life, daily routine and such. This guy was one of the ones chosen. I've heard of Etan of course. But he's old news now. He hasn't done anything big in years. Now that Reaper guy, he would make the headlines. To be honest I was hoping to run into him soon. So how do I take this dullard and make him exciting. I mean so far this guy is about as exciting as the gardening telecast, my grandmother watches.

## **4th year student**

Today Master Etan is showing us about fire form change. We've been practicing channeling our energy. But now was the day we would get to become flames for the first time. We were all excited until he told us about when he first tried to change to fire and set himself on fire instead. He spoke with authority as he taught. He was well known as an expert form changer.

“Now close your eyes and look inside, yourself. Pick a cell in your hand, any cell. Now look at the light energy being used by the cell. The nucleus of the cell is what controls the whole cell. Focus on the nucleus. Will it, to heat up the light energy.”

He waited until we all had that part. Then he continued

“Now you see the energy inside that cell is a small fire. Expand it to other cells. Try several at once, after a few times you should easily be able to do a whole group of cells at the same time.”

I had it, my hand was glowing.

“Now carefully keep expanding until you've given the command to your whole body.” he finished.

It was an exhilarating feeling. The annoying reporter kept asking everyone how it felt to be fire. Master Etan reached over and turned the reporter into fire. He looked down at his flaming body, screamed and ran. Well, he wanted something exciting, I guess he got it. After he calmed down, he seemed to enjoy the experience. Though later, he politely excused himself. I think he had, more than enough of Etan's boring day.

## **Reapers normal day**

So there I was, standing face to face with a beast nearly the size of a mother ship and what did I do? I stabbed it in the foot of course. It had a soft spot between its toes. I mean how else was I going to get at it? With my tech arm's energy nearly depleted and me standing alone against this creature, I had to think fast. I couldn't have gone through its massive body; its skin was as hard as a rock. Both heads oriented on me, ready to cut me in half. My class was on edge for this one. I showed them one of its seven foot long teeth I had kept

I knew what I had to do next. When the beast roared in pain, from my stab, I jumped into its mouth, and it swallowed me whole. I began cutting gashes in its throat on the way down just to keep it in pain. When I got its first stomach, I saw my prize. There was the king's ruby. My tech arm may have been no help but my normal arm's aim was all I needed. I took the small lasso I brought with the claw and grabbed on to the gem.

I looked and saw I had about five minutes of air left on my breather. I knew I had to hurry. I climbed back up the esophagus and found a tender spot, and cut my way out. It seems that in the end he just couldn't stomach me. One student looked doubtful.

“We know you like to exaggerate, how do we know what's true?” I was glad he asked so I said.

“I'm glad you asked. Look here.” Then I teleported in the twenty foot tall egg I got from it. I had been told by the locals that the eggs lay dormant for twenty years before hatching.

“Ok kiddies story time is over, it's time for the simulations” I told them.

Selar had asked me to begin training an elite group based on my tactics and combat styles. My first response was no, but after he said when the first group graduated he would have a statue of me put at the school. How could I resist? I had ten students eager to learn how to be awesome. All of them already knew how to fight in many martial art styles and had some basic espionage training. They had extensive training on many kinds of vehicles, including a gold status on piloting fighters. Supposedly they were the best the Guardians had to offer. But they were not Reaper ready.

The first day of class I actually had started out with thirty students. First I took them on a ten mile run, second a climb up a mountain cleft then lastly we swam across a raging river. All but ten dropped out that first day. Now I was down to the ones who might be tough enough to survive me. Of course if I wanted too, I could push the others hard enough to make them to quit, but I wanted my statue. Today's assignment for my class was to infiltrate an enemy stronghold and obtain a data disk and get out. First up was one student I called whiny baby. I was terrible with names so I called them by characteristics I could remember. He liked to complain about my style so I called him whiny. I started off with a standard set up made for this practice. Later I planned to introduce them to death traps like acid sprays, and spikes. But for now it was a matter of getting past normal alarms and security. This was one of my warm up programs.

### **Student's perspective.**

I took a long look at the layout of the building. It was designed to look like a standard office building. Reaper had infiltrated several exact situations as this, so we knew this was a real possibility for us. I got to carry along the standard ops stuff. Arm gantlet computer, grappler, and smoke bombs were some of the equipment we carried. I scouted out the place before making a move. I knew how sneaky Reaper could be, a trap could be anywhere. Three stories up was a window that was cracked open. I wasn't falling for that. I found an air duct to crawl through. I got shocked when I set off the alarms. So I had to start over. I took three times just for me to make it inside. I made my way to a secluded spot in a supply room. On my first run through, the guards had pistol weapons, but when I got caught by a camera and traps went up I had to do it all over again. I thought, Ok I got them now. But he had changed the program.

Now they had laser weapons and motions sensors too. Three months later when every student had gone through the program and made it to the disk and had gotten out, he announced we all had failed the assignment. He said we had obtained the wrong disk. We had picked the disk he had said to get. But then he stated what if a clerical error had occurred or they labeled it wrong on purpose. After that he brought in a whole new set up and we started all over. Man that's just not right. Reaper looked at me, obviously reading my mind

"If life was fair then I would be the emperor of the galaxy, and I'm not, though I should be." That was the start of the worst five years of my life.

### **Mistek's normal day**

My little dears were still out searching the universe. I'm so proud of the way things turned out. Many of my children were still around in this galaxy of course but for the most part things were quiet so they weren't needed as much right now. I kept myself busy with a few projects. It was surprising the number of planets with run down technology. Selar would give me a list of planets to help and what I could do to help them with. Some species were still too aggressive to give them tech that could be turned into a weapon against their neighbors.

Today I was on a mostly agricultural planet. They had gone through a long drought and several natural disasters in the last few years. They had been able to trade with another planet, for some supplies. But now they wanted to be self sufficient. I was here to upgrade some of their tech. With a little tech boost the next growing season should be much better. My part was simple. I would inject the tech they already had, with my own special type of Nanites and presto a few days later, they would have new tech. My Nanites could be programmed to heal biological life forms or fix and upgrade tech, whatever was needed. I was on my way to my third appointment when I got a call from a man from the first site. It seems that after I left, some local thugs stole a small piece of the equipment. I could guess why.

They wanted to get some of my Nanites to study. They were designed to alter the tech then break down, but they would still be active right now. In the wrong hands my Nanites could be very dangerous.

Once I got back to the spot, it wasn't too hard to track down the bad guys. I mean come on, I could track heat, pressure, bio samples, almost anything you could think of. I was like a mobile investigation lab. I tracked them to an old warehouse in a nearby city. When I scanned the place it seemed empty. But I could see the missing item inside. Really, do they think they can spring an obvious trap like this, on me? I am Misteeek, queen and the mother of all Mistles.

I left an illusion of myself standing outside while I tunneled underground. Ahh, there they were. Hiding and waiting to spring thier surprise on me. I could see they held some kind of dark energy weapon. I had learned how to compensate for that along time ago. Unless I was hit with a massive amount, I could deflect it. But even that wasn't necessary here. These were humans not chaos guardians. I created a knock out mist and waited a sec. In no time at all I had them all delivered to the local authorities for theft of property. Another day saved, by my pure awesomeness.

### **1's normal day**

Now remember class, if you're going to serve jalapeño poppers, make sure you always have a large amount of cold refreshment to go with it. That got a good laugh. Then the buzzer rang, School was out for today. Drax, loved Mexican food so I had learned to cook it long ago. It turns out I loved it too, who knew? And since I am a mom now, I've even won two cooking contests for my unique recipes. All I did was download them from earth but hey a girl can have a few secrets cant she? One day I hope earth can join the galactic community, it has a lot of interesting things.

Now that class was over I had to hurry. I was going to a meeting to show my new invention. Originally I had made a scythe sheath for Drax to use. This one would not allow blood to soak in to the material. It was as soft as silk but very tough to rip or cut. After he showed it off, it became a popular item.

Other people working in jobs where they got muddy or wet found it useful. Undergarments could be made that would allow them to stay dry and comfortable all day. Without intending too, I had started a clothing craze. I was actually quite proud of myself for the materials invention. Drax was always coming home with his clothes so dirty and sometimes bloody I decided to do something about it. I had made it by adding a drop of Misteeek's essence to a silky material. I got her to help me program it to alter the fabrics atomic structure. It took some experimenting but we finally came up with an effect we liked. I heard her and Reaper worked on another material later that was resistant to bladed weapons, yet wore like a regular garment. Though I do enjoy my cooking classes, another part of my life makes me even happier. My son Lum is the joy of my life. I see a possible diplomat, in his future.

### **Selar's meeting with Regents.**

As you know, there has been a haze to future events until now. The dark Guardians have hindered our sight with thier interference. With them gone, I have begun to see disturbing events. I see images that don't make sense, things past and present that do not conform to our history. There are more questions than answers right now, but know this something big is coming. I will let you know, when I have seen more.

## **Reapers bet Etans view part one**

“You think you’re so smart don't you?” Reaper asked.

He had bragged he could do any job as well or better than anyone. So I set up an appropriate test. Something I knew he would absolutely hate. I set up a test in a Hol-room. Misteeek helped me fill in the details. I programmed it to simulate an office job in New York City. He had to drive in heavy traffic and work a regular job all day long, and see if he could do the job as well as a human.

I programmed it to give him all kinds of frustrating tasks to perform. He was supposed to do this for three days consecutively. I was betting he didn't make it past the first day. His whole ship was interested in what would happen. He wanted to prove he was the best at everything. When it came to fighting he was. But simple things like tying shoe laces stopped him. I had given him a pair of expensive earth shoes. He seemed to like most things from earth, so I thought he would like them. But he couldn't seem to get the hang of tying laces. He just threw the laces aside and said I don't need laces; my shoes are too sacred to come off my feet.

He also had to perform all tasks all three days with no enhancements or help from any non human tech. He could only use stuff humans had. He would start out in an apartment in queens. Misteeek and I even programmed in random events like attempted robbery and street cons. The first morning he reacted as expected. He didn't like having to make his own coffee. You should have seen him fighting with the filter. He didn't know it was the wrong size. The correct one was in another drawer in the kitchen. He decided he was going to get a cup on the way. But one of his requirements was he had to fix himself his own breakfast at least on the first day. The milk was spoiled, the cereal was stale and all the dishes were dirty. He wasn't used to having to take care of all of this, himself. He ended up eating the dry, stale cereal out of the box. He did not look happy. Score one for the home team.

I programmed it to be winter so he had to shovel the snow out the way and warm up the car. He made a trip to the local coffee shop. I made sure to have a few unseen potholes so he would spill his coffee on him. Getting to work was another matter in itself. He grumbled all the way on why it was called rush hour when people were moving so slow. And of course there was a wreck for him to get stuck behind. He was experiencing a few of the frustrations that humans face everyday.

## **Reapers comments**

I'll get him, that dirty no good, trickster. He'll pay for putting me through this. Even if I lose my mind, I'll make it through the next three days, but I won't give up. I can't believe the traffic in this city. How do these people deal with this everyday? Parking was a headache, and then they had the nerve to make me go through something called a metal detector when I entered the office building. Etan knew, very well my tech arm would set that thing off. Instead of an efficient tube lift system they had something called an elevator. It was slow and crowded, and the music playing was made to torture my ears. The whole situation was made worse by me having to wear an office suit. What harm would it have been for me to wear my usual robe? It was comfortable, and easy to fight in, the perfect balance. But it got worse. When I got to my floor, I was shown my area called a cubical. I had to sit on a chair with a squeaky wheel hunched over an outdated computer that that forever to boot up and figure out how to use. It was almost an hour into the day before I could get any work done.

## **Etan comments part two**

Well, he made it ok so far. But he was obviously upset. We made sure the coffee in the break room would be gone. I figured he would try to get more since he had spilled most of his in the way here. All this so far was just the warm up. The good stuff was yet to come. I had lined up a two hour long boring meeting for him to attend. A bunch of papers to sign and organize afterwards, and having to use the copy machine. He was already livid by the time the meeting started. The meeting was on the agricultural out look for the near future, and how it would affect this company's

financial growth. I made sure the speaker was drone and as dull as possible. Reaper fell asleep a few times so I had one of his fellow workers wake him up each time. He was on the verge of a mental break down already. It shouldn't take too much to push him over the edge. Reaper hates doing paper work of any kind, actual paper work or just computer records. He was set a task to fill out a few hundred papers. He had to look up and list countless addresses, and financial records.

He had already decided to cheat and not fill them out right, when he got to one form that required him to make multiple copies and fax them to a particular business then wait for their response back. He went stomping through the office, pushing people out of the way.

One of my favorite details was the possessed copier. It would eat the paper most of the time and smear the copies all the other times. That was all it took. Reaper grabbed the copier and threw it out the office window. He looked around and knew he had lost the bet. So he proceeded to take out his anger on all the simulated people. After five minutes the office looked like the something from a horror flick. I almost laughed myself hoarse. Too bad he didn't make it to writing the memos, being assigned to answer multiple lines on the companies' phone, or filing his taxes when he got home for the night. I still had a long list of torments I never got to use. Oh well, he got the point I'm sure.

## Part two

# Life disrupted

**200 years until Doomsday Guardian year 5694 Earth year 1694 Etan age 274**

### **Selar's report**

The timelines are becoming blurred. Not covered or cloaked like when the dark guardians are involved but something else entirely. I suggest we send out all available Guardians to look for time instability fissures.

### **First sign of trouble**

#### **Etan's view**

I should have known something was coming. The counsel called me in for a progress report. They looked over my missions since I have been a sergeant; they started with the elemental mission. I was not faulted for the heart of darkness mission as it was more powerful than expected. They gave me high praise for the progress of my silvers and all the diplomatic assignments I've had, as well as teaching at the school. In consequence I was promoted to captain's rank. Reaper was captain rank too, but mine superseded his. If I gave him an order, even on his ship he had to follow it. Though with Drax in his head, getting him to cooperate was a little easier now. Not only that, I now outranked my friends Celestial and Vortex. They were at my promotion ceremony too.

"See I told you we would have to call him boss one day." Celestial told Vortex. They weren't jealous though, we all got along well, and I didn't let rank be an issue. Rank was really only employed in times of averting emergencies or times of war.

I was assigned to take my ship called the shield and look for time fissures. I was given a type of chronoton emitting orb to seal the breach. Selar explained that usually breaches would begin at a specific spot in history and create unstable waves into the future. Matter and energy were able to pass from past to future and back again. This fissure bypassed the timelines tendency to eliminate unnatural events and reset. Normally when a break happens, it is because of someone using unrefined time travel tech. But this was something quite different. We were assigned not only to seal the breach but track the cause if possible.

Reaper and I were assigned the quadrant, earth was in. That was probably because if there was a breach we could recognize changes in earth's history. Selar detected over twenty fissures popping up nearly at the same time galaxy wide. Sure enough one eventually showed up around earth. This one looked nearly identical to the fissure I saw when I was on the elemental mission years ago. If that one was just the first of many to come, that could be a sign of something much bigger. Just then the fissure actually split into two different ones. Oh great, just what I needed, twins. Fortunately Reapers ship was close. I reminded him that he needed to go into the other fissures and place an orb at the sight of the instability, but to keep from messing up the timeline, not to talk to anyone or be seen. This end of the fissure was the past manifestation. Normally fissures start in the past and send out unstable waves to the future but this one was backwards. The troubled spot was in the future and sending the waves backwards. How strange.

## A few quick fixes

### 1's Accidental fissure

#### 1's view

While the boys were on assignment, I decided to pay a trip to Argaria. Lum was going to school there. He had already gone through many basic classes and now was continuing his education. I had not pressured him to have to leave so fast, but he wanted to go. In many human societies they had to get the kids out of the house and working because thier society was based on acquiring money or power. But Argarian society was not this way; it was based on personal growth. By no surprise he wanted to be a diplomat. Drax hated that of course. But he still loved his son, though he didn't like to show it in front of others.

I was on my way to the home world when a fissure opened up right in front of me. It was too late to avoid it. When I came through the fissure the shuttle was approaching a planet. The sensors showed the other end of the fissure here in space. Most of the officers working for the Guardians had been given an orb to seal the breeches. Fortunately I did have one in this shuttle. I sent it to the fissure but nothing happened. It didn't work. I messaged Selar through the breach. When I did get in contact with him, he said he had just gotten messages from several others having the same trouble. He said we may have to find out what's being disrupted and set things back on course in history to repair the breach. It was like giving a ball a push down stairs. It needs an initial push then gravity takes over from there. If we could get time events in the right direction, the timeline should continue in the same direction, reorienting itself to its former state. I checked with the star locations to determine the exact date.

This was in fact a famous date in history. It was just over six thousand years ago. I needed to go find a man named Adon. He was a good leader and the strongest of any Argarian in his time. Argarians had always been blessed with fast healing and high intelligence. But a few decades ago prior to this time, they discovered some new abilities. They realized they were able to channel energy into and through their bodies. Once the initial shock wore off, this new ability was quickly manipulated into a weapon. After many years of war, a peace treaty was signed that neither side would use thier powers to kill the other. One small nation couldn't settle for peace so they secretly developed a missile with the power to wipe out an entire continent at one time.

I cloaked and landed on the planet. A famous battle outside one of the capital cities was supposed to happen today. It was the turning point for my people. Cronos Adon made a speech and then mind linked with several people and the link grew. The link reached the rival nation just moments before they were to launch thier weapon. Some say he got his idea on the link by studying communal insects. His parents had been naturalists.

I could see on the monitor the other nation preparing its attack. Adon didn't have long. This history was taught in school, so I knew right now he should be at the capital building making his famous, all for one speech. Children were taught to memorize this speech in school.



I teled down but he wasn't there, Instead I found him a short distance from the capital building preparing a group of men for a raid. I popped in, and he looked very surprised.

“What are you doing here?” He asked.

“You need to be uniting our people?” I told him

“I don't know who you are, but you need to leave.” I couldn't take no for answer. I explained about the time fissure and the enemy nation's eminent attack.

“I see” he said “Well, I don't know anything about insects, my parents died years ago. Just go away we'll do this our own way.” He argued. I went on to explain about the link and how it would change our people. He didn't believe me, until I linked with him. It took a moment for him to take it all in. But I showed him enough of what our people would become for him to agree to create the link.

I explained further how, if we fix this event, the rest of the timeline should fix itself. After that we proceeded down to the capital building bringing a crowd with us. Adon made his way to the steps of the capital building. He raised his hands in a welcoming manner and spoke these famous words.

*“My fellow Argarians, I speak to you now in the name of peace. For too long have we fought pointless battles, for too long have we brought only misery to ourselves and others, for too long have we only destroyed when we should have been creating. I ask you now, to join me in unity as one mind, and one voice. I propose a link of mind and spirit. Together we can end all this pointless fighting, rebuild our world and bring order from the chaos. We must live all for one and one for all. United we stand, and divided we fall.”*

Although I could have created the link easier, for the timelines sake it needed to come from him, not me. He was a strong and powerful leader, so he eventually was able to focus enough to start the process. He started with his generals. They were all older and reasonably wise men, so it didn't take long for them to get it either. The more people joined the link the faster it grew. This was exciting see history in action.

Just then a missile from the other country came into my sight. It was still high in the atmosphere. I only had a moment to stop it. Adon was supposed to have made this speech and link over half an hour before. So the missile hadn't been launched originally. I was a fairly powerful Argarian, if I do say so myself, though I probably had gotten a little rusty in the last few years of being a mom. I launched myself high in the atmosphere and grabbed hold of the missile and pushed with all my strength. I barely was able to redirect it in time to hit the ocean and not the capital. Lesson learned, when I get back home I'm restarting that exercise class. Then a wave of dizziness hit me, and I was back in the shuttle headed toward Argaria. Well, that was exciting, but I hope I'd never have to do that again.

## **Etan's bad day**

I took my ship through the fissure and set it down in a clearing. This end of the fissure was in a nearby ravine. I didn't sense anyone around for miles. Could it be this easy, just place the orb and go? But as my usual luck dictates it was not going to be that easy. The orb did not work on the fissure. After conferring with Selar, He gave me the answer I was expecting. I would have to figure out what had changed in the past and change it back to set things right. I looked and this was 1959 near Hawaii. This was the time and place at Kilauea that my parents died. My gut wrenched with the realization.

By the look of things, the fissure was affecting the magma flow to the volcano. If I let things go as is, my parents would not die. But if they lived the timeline would be messed up. One on hand I had a job to do, but on the other hand how could I not try to find a way to save my parents. I was now two hundred and seventy four years old, I stopped thinking of myself as human some time ago. Through constant meditation and Guardian teachings I've been able to rid myself of emotional outbursts. I still have feelings but I am disciplined enough to keep them in check most

of the time. This however was a special circumstance. The most efficient thing I could have done was simply place the orb at the site of the fissure and leave.

I let my crew keep an eye on the fissure while I took care of the eruption. I cloaked and flew up to the summit. My parents were there taking samples. My father was a volcanologist. Dang! I hated to do this. I just stood there for a long moment starrng. Maybe if I took them with me, it would still look like they died.

I remembered all the Christmases and Esters afterwards and how lonely it was. I regretted never really spending enough time with them. But I didn't want to do all the traveling they did. I decided to do one thing before I let them die. I changed to Argyle form so they wouldn't recognize me. I walked up and told them I had heard of them and it was an honor to finally meet them. I told them I had meet Etan a year ago. My father said

“Oh you meet Etan. He's a good son. Were so proud of the man he became. He tries so hard to help people.”

My father had always been a private man who showed very little emotion. I don't ever remember him saying he was proud of me. I responded with

“He says he misses you very much.” After a few minutes of talking with them, I had to force myself to leave before I started to cry.

“Wait” my father said " Will you see him anytime soon?" he asked.

“Yes,” I told him. “Well give him this.” He handed me a gold watch.

“This was handed down from my father to me, now to him.” I was astounded.

“Why didn't you give him this before?" I asked.

“I had been saving it for a special occasion. But our schedule is so busy now; I haven't had time to give it to him.”

This was a great gift. “Mr. O Brantley I'll be glad to give him this.”

With that I had to go. If I didn't go now I would change my mind on fixing the timeline. I left, and then dived down into the magma chamber. The flow had been slightly altered by the fissures presence. It wasn't hard to redirect. When I was young, I felt guilty about their death like it was my fault, now it really was. Maybe when this was all over, I could find a universe where they didn't die and visit there. As I emerged from the opening the ground began to crumble. A small hole appeared and my parents tried to scramble out the way. Then a larger gap opened up. As they fell they clawed at the air, trying desperately to grab a hold of something, anything. I can still see the look of horror and shock on thier faces. I couldn't help but cry out as they plunged into the void.

“Mom, Dad, I'm so sorry, and I love you.”

Of all places and times, the fissure could have sent me why did it have to send me here? I stood there and mourned for them all over again. In spite of growing older and wiser, I could still be hurt by this kind of thing. I looked inside the watch's front latch. There was one of our family pictures inside. After a few minutes I returned to the ship. I went back to my cabin to be alone while we waited for the fissure to heal itself. Fortunately the crew left me alone to have some quiet time. In a few moments we were back to our own time again. I expected the watch to disappear but it didn't. It stayed with me, anyway. I had always feared my parents were disappointed in me, because my life was such a failure. This situation was bitter sweet. On one hand I got to hear them say they were proud of me, but on the other hand I had to cause thier death.

## Reaper making history.

### Reapers view

My ship had just entered the fissure when Etan called me explaining that the orbs didn't work. He said I needed to find out from history what was not right and see if I could fix it. Fortunately that's what I had underlings for. After a few minutes of scanning we discovered the problem. We were on earth in the year 1347 in a place called Brandenburg Germany. There was an odd looking ship, hiding in a foggy area. It was emitting a heavy mist. According to the scans it could have been a byproduct of their propulsion system. Whoever or whatever they were was not supposed to be here. This mist was killing everything in the area. Not only people but trees and animals too. It also seemed to be destroying some of the bacteria in the ground, making it become infertile. We opened communications with the vessel but they didn't answer. Either they were so alien as not to recognize our communications or else they simply refused to answer.

I didn't care which; it was my job to stop them. We fired our main weapon, but they only sustained minor damage. We tried several different ship to ship attacks but none of them worked. They never fired back; I guess they didn't see us as a threat. That was fine with me, it gave me an excuse to get out and take care of them personally. I used my dimensional cloak and proceeded over to the alien vessel.

Inside was like nothing I'd ever seen. I've seen bio-tech before but this was different. Most bio-tech was made for humans but this was like an insect colony. Then I realized what was probably happening here. This could be an advanced group of **Terraformers**. The mist could be something they used to Terraform this planet to their needs. If that's all it was, I could take of this problem easy enough. As I went along I planted small charges along the bio-power conduits in the hall and rooms I encountered. I could plant the charges then re-cloak and no one even knew I was there. I saw one of the creatures. It looked like a cross between an ant and a preying mantis, but it was over seven foot tall. I knew of earth insects because Etan had showed me these forms. They were formidable fighters for their size.

I planted a few bombs in the control and engine rooms. Those rooms were trickier since the creatures were present, but I managed none the less. As soon as I finished I left the ship and found a good spot to watch the show. It should be a fairly big explosion. Sure enough after a moment the ship exploded with a very loud blast. Three of the creatures from the ship, had been scanning the area, and came running up. I had to have at least a little fun before I left.

I uncloaked and challenged them. They spit acid at me, but it wasn't anything my armor couldn't handle. I could have taken them out instantly but decided to chop off their legs first. Once they were grounded I could take my time finishing them off. After a few moments of their torment, I stabbed the last one in the chest and said

“The Reaper has come.”

Suddenly I heard screams in the back ground. Some of the local citizens had seen and heard me. I cloaked to avoid more interference. They went on to discuss how the Reaper was here to claim the souls of the Black Death victims. Later I learned that my appearance here had started the black cloaked Reaper legend in the first place. So In a weird way I created the legend that later I would become. Etan would appreciate the irony in that I'm sure.

I took one last look around town before I left. I wanted to make sure that no other creatures were present. I was still cloaked but one small child saw me anyway. He was a small boy about nine or ten. He was just standing in the window of the house staring at me. But I know he saw me because his eyes moved as I did. He never spoke a word he just stood and stared with those empty eyes. Maybe he had the sickness and being close to death gave him altered perception. I don't know. I'm not sure why but he made me feel uneasy.

## **Matt comments**

For the next fifty years there were other fissures off and on, but eventually we patched them as they appeared. The strange thing is, there was no detectable source.

**150 years till doomsday Guardian year 5744 Earth year 1744**

## **A few updates**

### **Etan's comments**

Although the galaxy was at peace for the most part, we kept busy, constantly tracking down the fissures. They were only fissures in the general sense. Normally, time fissures acted in specific ways and predictable patterns. A normal fissure was like an eddy of swirling water in a flowing stream. When some new time tech came along, sometimes it could alter the flow. Fortunately, the time stream self corrected many of the issues, but occasionally we had to step in to assist some unbalanced part. But these new fissures were different. Quite often they defied logic. Sometimes multiple timelines would meet in one place. It was like the timeline had become confused on what was real and what wasn't. Not only that, but often whoever went into one of these, the fissure would change to fit them. We monitored one fissure for example that was set to a specific time and place, but when one of the Guardians entered it, it changed. Somehow this phenomenon changes to match the person involved. I guess this is why mine took me to my parents.

Today, I would get to see something unique. Selar invited several hundred silver and blue guardians to watch him fix a problem. It seems the inner rim of the universe had developed a tear. We took a long range vessel to the place of eternal light. Selar pulled us along in the light field, so we could get there faster. Once again it was easy to forget just how powerful he really was. When we got to the edge, we could see the obvious tear. He showed us how he repaired the breach. This wasn't the same as the time fissures we had been fixing. I couldn't imagine what it would take to create a tear in the universe. Even though the phenomenon was different could this and the fissures somehow be related? With this new problem we began making and sending out probes to others layers of the universe to monitor any other occurrences.

In other news, Reaper is now teaching a class for advanced Guardian agents. He calls them his Paladins. He had started out with just teaching the one class that Selar had asked him to do but now had turned into a regular thing. It turns out he enjoys training others in his style. He designed all the obstacles courses and battle simulating classes. A few of his past students, who did survive him, are now some of his teachers. I guess I didn't have to worry about it going to his head since he was already full of himself. I swear that man's ego never ends. He has pictures of himself in every room and statues in the corridors. I runs the business end of things as Reaper can't even keep up with his socks much less the schools records. Lum did indeed go on to become a successful diplomat. Better him than me. I don't like long meetings that drone on for hours anymore than Reaper. Over all we just kept doing what we do. Trying to keep the peace and stop any major disasters from happening.

**100 years till doomsday Guardian year 5794 Earth year 1794 --Etan age 374**

### **Etan's comments**

“Good mourning Captain and happy birthday”. Security chief Dred stated. He was the first crew member I ran into this mourning. I had been a Guardian for 300 years now. Boy time flies. Dred was one of Reapers former students. Once when we got boarded by a militaristic opponent, he took care of it quicker than I could respond. I had been away from the ship trying to diffuse a possible war. The leaders of a local planet were threatening to send apocalyptic weapons to each other.

By the time I got the call, excused myself from the meeting and returned to the ship, chief Dred had everything in hand. The invading soldiers were already in confinement waiting for me to decide what I wanted to do with them. I'll say one thing, Reaper trained him well. I'm glad I had gone with Reaper's suggestions. All my officers were now people that had once served on his ship. They were efficient and professional in all that they did.

We were still in a time of over all galactic peace but there were always smaller assignments to do. More cracks in the Rim, occasionally appeared but the Regents were able to repair them each time. Then another strange phenomenon occurred. According to Selar the Rim of the universe had now hardened to become impenetrable. Even Selar could not get out at the moment. Even under normal circumstances exiting the universe into the intraverse was a dangerous thing. Each time the Rim was punctured it caused a weakness that had to be repaired. As a consequence Guardians only went to the intraverse when necessary. But now that they couldn't get out, this indicated the problem could be coming from the outside of the universal bubble not the inside.

We had, been given several hundred years of relative peace and tranquility in spite of the fissures and tears, but all that was about to change. There was a strange disturbance going on at a local planet. Someone masquerading as me was claiming to have the rights to rule the planet. I was on my way to the ships bridge to announce our next mission. I just rounded the corner when I ran into Reaper, but he was definitely not my Reaper. He was wearing Aries armor and carrying his sword and shield. He had the same chocked look on his face, as I had. He raised his sword and shield and declared.

"You will not take me emperor." To be honest I was too stunned to say anything for a moment. Then I scanned him and saw only light energy. This was the first of a great many shocks to come.

## **Part three**

### **Universal History**

#### **Universe One**

##### **Adon's All for one speech.**

##### **Commentary**

"General Adon, the Kelts are attacking, and their coming in the south and east gates." His first lieutenant reported. Adon took on a look of determination. "Well then, now is the time to begin the domination initiative." Adon stated. He made his way to the steps of the capital building, bringing a crowd with him. He then raised his hands in a grand gesture and spoke these words.

*"My fellow patriots, I speak to you now, in the name of order. Too long have we been a divided people. Too long have other nations and other planets interfered in our ways. It is time to take a stand against the chaos. We will create order where destruction now lies. I propose a union as one mind and one voice, a link of will and determination. We will build a mighty empire that no one can destroy. Join me now we must live as one nation, one people, and one empire. All for one and one for all, united we stand divided we fall."*

**December 2012**

**Etans view**

Here I was, lying in a hospital, soon to die. I had gotten shot during a robbery. I would have rather seen that no good bank manager shot instead of me but what can I expect with my luck. I was about to write a goodbye note to a friend when I looked over and saw a man dressed in purple and gold sitting on the chair beside my bed. I turned to him and said

“I guess you’re the Reaper and have come to claim my soul.” He laughed.

“Not quit, but close enough. Being mortal is no fun at all is it? How would you like to become immortal?” He asked. I responded with “Sure who wouldn’t.” He put his hand on my shoulder and we flew up and out the window. He showed me the world below. He took me to a battle field in Sudan.

“You see Etan, your world like many others, lives in chaos. But I am a leader of a group called Guardians. We bring order to chaos. Your world is next on our list. We need someone like you to join us. Someone who will keep the order, this world needs.” Anything was better than dying like this. “Sounds good, tell me more.” I told him.

**Several months later when the counsel disappeared in the intraverse.**

**Etans view continued**

“I am the guardian core.” it said to me. I knew immediately what was really going on now. Now, while the counsel was vulnerable, was the perfect time to take control. And bring in a new order, my order. When I take my rightful place I will take on a new name and a new title. All will bow to the emperor. But what name should I take? Let me think, I’ve always admired the Roman Ceasers. Yes, I will rename myself as Augustus the new emperor of the Galaxy.

But I needed help. I had been working secretly to stage a coup. I brought Aries and few others with me. I timed it, so that right before I shut down the intraversal bridge that Aries and few others attacked the counsel while they were weakened. Officially Aries took control of the empire from there. I let him continue to rule until I was ready. I still had the prime matrix so I was actually more powerful. I told him that I couldn't un-bond with it, but that he had my support. I was just waiting for the right time to take full control myself. In order for my rule to be absolute I needed support from all planetary generals. I was from earth, and if there was one thing we knew well, it was war. My only real challenge was a rebel Guardian. His name was Drax but they called him the protector. He leads a small rebel faction against the Guardian sovereignty.

**Present day**

Kane has failed me yet again. Can’t he kill this one man? The protector must die. I have no other choice but to go after the protector myself. When he is gone the rebel threat will end.

# Universe Two

## Drax's 10th birthday commentary

"I'm sorry Drax, I'm sorry your mother died." Loki explained. "I know you've had a right to be mad at me. But you're old enough now to understand what happened. Your mother was captured by the dark guardians. They wanted to combine dark and light in the same person, you. If you get angry at the Guardians then they still win. I'd like to encourage you one day work for the Guardians. By working for them, you can hinder the dark guardians." Drax looked up at Loki.

"I'm still mad, but I guess it's not really your fault." he said.

## Etan's first year of school

### Drax's view

Some new Guardian came to school this year. It took a while for me to get over being mad at Guardians. One was partially responsible for my mother's death. Later I realized it was the dark Guardians who really were responsible and that I couldn't really blame Loki. I talked to the new guy Etan a few times. He is a little odd, but others wise he's ok. I'm sure if he was chosen for a Guardian, he must be a good guy.

## Terrocian planet incursion

### Selar's report

All the dark guardians are dead, and the all thier bases destroyed. I still plan to send scouts out to make sure that there are not others in hiding but I believe we got them all. If they hadn't committed all thier forces we might not been able to do that. Lokie's battle ship was able to capture the queen. All lesser agents are being deprogrammed from dark Guardian brainwashing. Keeping a lasting peace is now possible.

# Universe Three

Earth, December 2012

## Etans comments

Here I was, lying in a hospital, soon to die. I had gotten shot during a robbery. I would have rather seen that no good bank manager shot instead, but what can I expect with my luck. I was about to write a goodbye note to a friend when I looked over and saw a man dressed in black sitting in the chair beside my bed.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?" he said. "I turned to him and said" I guess your the Reaper and have come to claim my soul."

He laughed. "Not quit, but close enough." Tell me Etan, how would you like a chance to live your life over and this time obtain power, and influence? "He asked.

"Sure who wouldn't," I answered. He stood up, and said "let me show you something." He put his hand on my shoulder and we flew up and out the room. He showed me a battle field. There was a conflict going on in Sudan at the moment.

“Throughout your planets history you have war and conflict going on all the time. And look how much it has accomplished. You’ve have advances in weapons, defense and even medicine. Violence and death are just as much a part of life as birth.” He explained.

“Yeah so what are you getting at?” I asked. “Misery and chaos bring change. What's often called evil is just another word for natural. Is it evil for a predator to chase and kill and its prey? No. It’s just hungry. In fact it’s promoting the over all flourishing of life by getting rid of the sick and lame. I'm part of an organization that does the same thing but on a bigger scale.

“It sounded interesting. “Tell me more” I said.

### **One year later during the intraverse incident**

“Master Kane I present to you the Guardian core.” Thantos Etan said.

“Well, well, well, I am most pleased. You've done very well indeed. “With the counsel dead no one can stop us. Signal the fleet we are ready to initiate full scale landing. I predict that with in three days we can secure every populated planet”

Etan asked “What about earth?”

Kane nodded “Don't worry I'm still going to let you rule earth, were just leaving them for last. They have a higher population than most planets well need all the troops we have to secure it. Have you decided on the manner of execution you will use for any rebels?”

Etan nodded with glee “They will die the same way my parent’s did. I will have any rebels pushed into a live volcano. So there will be nothing left to mourn.” Kane was most pleased with his new apprentice.

## **Part four**

### **Universal trades**

#### **Thantos Etan from universe three**

##### **Present day**

I found myself on a strange planet. The Guardians are relentless. Master Kane has taught me well, though. Actually with him he has taught me well, well, well. The locals called me by old name but for some reason they didn't fear me. They thought I was a Guardian, how dare they defile my dark name. I’ll show them my true rage, and my true power. Don’t they know the true power of the dark? If they don't, they will soon. I had just begun terrorizing the public when some copy of me showed up.

## **Universe zero**

#### **1's comment**

A very odd thing happened on my way home today. I went to the local market to pick out some fresh fruit and veggies for dinner. Although Lum had been gone from home for awhile now, I had gotten used to eating freshly cooked meals. Replicators were ok, but they could not match the taste of fresh grown and cooked foods. Usually once a week when nether Drax or Etan was gone on a mission he would come over to have dinner with Drax and I.



You would think Drax would get tired of telling the same stories over and over. But he and Etan would usually reminisce for a few hours before Etan had to go. As I was saying I was on my way home when the market suddenly took on a new look. Argarian markets are always open and cheery places, lively and full of activity and color.

I felt dizzy for a second then the whole market changed to a dark and unfriendly look. It was more like a military base rather than an open market. There were guards in uniforms on every corner scanning people as they passed. When I looked around I noticed that all the business now had bars on the windows and force field projectors around their perimeters. My first thought was I was either being drugged or this was a complex illusion of some kind. I found a crumpled poster on the ground. It said "The history of the Guardian empire, being played on the community Holo-doom." What did they mean Guardian empire? We've never been an empire. Then, just as suddenly everything changed back to the way it was. Except that I still had the poster. What just happened?

### **Drax the protectors view**

"You will not take me emperor." I told him.

But instead of fighting, he just stood there. I looked at him. He seemed different. He usually wears that over the top black cloak. He calls himself death incarnate. I mean really who does he think he is the real Grim Reaper? I bet he thinks he looks scary with that scythe on his jeweled emperor's staff. This Etan was very different. He was wearing Guardian robes and was carrying no staff. I also noticed that he did not have his usual haughty sneer.

Maybe this was a failed clone. Clone or not if he worked for the emperor I would have to take him out. The real emperor thought he was untouchable with his prime matrix but I had a secret weapon. I had Aries sword and shield. He had willed it to me right before he died. I promised him the fight would go on, and that I wouldn't let the fight die no matter what. But this Etan just stood and stared at me for a long moment.

"I don't know who you are but I'm not an emperor. I'm Etan and I'm a Guardian." I sensed him and he was different. I know the emperor's energy signature and this was not him.

### **Etan's view**

This new Reaper and I talked for a few minutes. He called himself the protector. The best I could figure is, he was from an alternate timeline or alternate universe, a universe where he was the good guy and I was the bad guy. I can't wait until my Reaper finds out about this. He is going to freak. I must say though this protector looked epic. He's got Aries armor and sword. He warned me about the emperor from his reality, that he had the prime matrix. If the version on the planet was him, then I would need to be prepared.

I was old enough now to be more cautious than I used to be. I scanned him long range. And I saw his energy signature looked quite different than it should have been. It was the emperor. With the prime matrix he should be glowing like the noon day sun. But then I realized why he wasn't. I bet he can't open the life stream. It doesn't just take power, but emotional balance to access it. That's why; neither the dark Guardians nor regular Mistles can open the stream.

Dark guardians are far from balanced and Mistles have no emotions, except for Misteek herself. If this other me is as ruthless and dark hearted as the protector says, then he wouldn't be any different than a dark Guardian. I linked with the protector and got the basic history of the other universe. They had started out wrong in the first place. They ruled with an iron fist, with enforcement of law rather than by principle. They confirm the old earth saying, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. True balance is a choice not an accidental arrival. It was amazing how our Guardians have been able to stay pure and not fall prey to that kind of thinking.

I couldn't let the emperor get a chance to take prisoners or use any one as leverage. Before going down to the planet I opened the life stream and filled up as much as I could hold. I knew myself and I had a feeling how I could be, if I were corrupted. Right now he is trying to show off and gain a following out of fear. The only way to truly deal with him would be a head to head fight.

I teled myself down and walked up to him. I knew he would reject my offer but for the sake of the people I had to make the offer anyway, or else I would get accused of being no better than him.

“Surrender your weapons, leave peacefully and you may live. Fight and I will take you out.” I said with confidence.

He looked shocked to see me. “Don’t count on it,” was his response. But he did look confused. He must not have had the same experiences of dealing with doubles as I have. Good to know.

He might have the prime but I seemed to have some experience on him. Matt chimed in “His prime matrix is not much more than a planetary matrix level. They haven't accumulated the knowledge ours has.” Even better I thought. So they must have spent most of thier time at war instead of learning and self growth. I just needed to prod his ego a bit to make him do something stupid. I had, plenty of practice with that tactic fighting Reaper.

I got a few feet from him opened my arms and said

“Ok emperor. Take your best shot.”

He responded just as I figured. “No, you take your best shot.” I feigned like I was straining and sent a quarter of a blast at him.

He cringed slightly and said “Is that he best you can do?” Then he hit me back with a powerful blast. Instead of using a light shield like he was probably expecting I used a plasma based shield much like a ships, then redirected the flow outward. I was able to redirect most of the energy. It was a large blast, so I know it drained him greatly. Then I returned with a concentrated energy blast. I opened the life stream and let my power flow. He thought I had been almost drained and now he was vulnerable. It only took a few seconds to get through his shield. His hands began disintegrating, then his arms and feet. He was down to the stump when a wave passed through us and he was gone.

## Universe two

### present day

#### Drax's view

A few of us were going down to the local planet. It was told they had a few places where the beaches had great waves. Etan had taught me about surfing, which was a lot of fun. We always tried to find new thrills to seek. Working for the Guardians was pretty boring. A long time ago they had, some enemies called dark Guardians but had managed to wipe them out. Now they mostly just kept the status quo. Many years ago the Guardians had been in a major offensive with the dark Guardians and the war could have gone either way. If some of them had survived then they could have been a threat later. But several battle ships had been sent to wipe out the bases at the same time. So mostly, those of us who worked for the Guardians were just baby sitters to the populations, now. I used to want to be the best assassin ever but without a real enemy to fight I just left that dream behind.

Etan, didn't get his dream either. He had wanted to be a master form changer. But now he mostly kept busying with governmental politics. He worked for the Guardians though he never actually became a full Guardian. He says he hates his mediocre job and boring life as much as me, but what can you do, when there's no enemy to fight. He feels like his life could be much more than filing papers and going to long meetings. After while, Etan stopped thinking of himself as Etan, and just went by the title the clerk. I guess he didn't feel worthy of thinking of himself as even a potential Guardian anymore.

But today I got my first taste of excitement in a long time. First Etan disappears and then when I teled to the planet I ran across someone who looked just like Etan but it wasn't him. He had on a black cloak and carried an interesting looking bladed weapon.

“well, well, what do we have here?” he asked. I was still good at snappy comebacks

“Ok Mr. over the top, dark cloak, who are you?” I asked. “I am Thantos Etan, second in command to my Dark Master Kane. But you can call me Master Blood moon” he responded. I knew he had to be lying so I said

“You can't be working for Kane. He was a dark Guardian and all of them are dead. I was at the battle where he died. He and many others all died at the Terrocian home world.” He smiled in a creepy way, as if he were death himself.

“Ah yes I remember that battle well. We dark guardians won a great victory that day. The counsel was wiped out, and with them gone it was only a matter of time before we conquered the rest of the galaxy.”

### **Thantos Etan's view**

Well, well, I m not sure how I got here but this could be a great opportunity. After reading this creature's mind I realized how the dark Guardians were wiped out here. I would need to stay in secret at first building up a following but soon I would have my own army. I would make my own agents. But first, I need to deal with this Drax.

I engulfed him in dark energy. He tried to fight back, but he was no match for my power. I split his mind into two parts the new part that served me and the original dull part. This was a normal procedure for creating agents, that way they seemed perfectly normal and honest until we needed them. For a second he snapped out of his programming and swung a blade at me. Then he grabbed my arm and tried to take me down. Out of nowhere a strange wave swept through us but we were unaltered. I had been on my ship before getting transported here, but I was still here with him on the planet. I had an idea of what just happened, and if so I could use it to my advantage.

## **Universe one**

### **Clerk Etan's from universe two in universe one**

#### **Comments part one**

Drax and I were about to tele-port to the planet when I got transported away. I wanted some excitement in my life but I didn't expect this. I found myself on a regal looking ship orbiting earth. Just then the door bell chimed. Before I could decide if I wanted to answer it, a man dressed in a servants style uniform came in. He bowed himself to me and said

“Emperor, I have great news. We have located the last of the rebel Guardians, though the protector wasn't with him.

“Then he glanced up at me and looked confused.” Emperor where is your regal cloak and staff?” He asked. I had been in plenty of diplomatic meeting. I knew how to be subtle and unassuming, as well as how to play a part good enough not to stick out. I looked at him with a haughty glare.

“With or without my robe, I am still the emperor?” He stammered in fear

“Of, of course your majesty. No offense **meant.**” Good he was buying it.

“Not to worry” I said in a condescending tone “It was a test. I’ll let you live this time.” He quickly excused himself while I searched through the closet for a new set of clothes. I never made it to full silver Guardian but I wasn’t without some skills. Plus, I still had Matt. I asked Matt to scan for anything useful. He linked to the computer in my room and I down loaded everything on the emperor it had. From what I could see I was in another universe and the Etan here was the emperor. I saw a long history of military oppression. The computer showed one more useful thing. There was one large matrix left in storage. I guess he kept it just in case something ever happened to his. That would be very useful.

By no surprise he had it locked up in his private chamber. One other person knew the code to get in, his second in command. I read it from his mind. Now I wish I had kept my powers up, but I would have to get back in shape quickly if I wanted to survive. I merged with the matrix. It used to be this universe’s matrix for Selar. Now I was at least as powerful as a normal Guardian. He had been murdered by this Etan.

The matrix also contained the same knowledge as the other prime had. My first thought was how do I get rid of this corrupt government in an acceptable way? Using the matrix I had an idea within a few minutes, but I would need some help pulling it off. I got my mind warmed up for the part. I would have to be enough like the emperor so that the others would not suspect. I scanned several minds on the ship of people who knew him. He was hateful, condescending and intolerant of anything that goes against his will. I used my ex- wife on earth as a point of reference. Matt laughed and said that’s mean, but I guess it’s true.

### **Matt’s comments**

Ok, here we go. I planned to keep scanning everyone’s mind and keep Etan updated on how they think the emperor will act. We entered the control room and everyone bowed.

I told Etan to say “As you were.” to let them know it was alright to continue thier duties. Etan asked to see where the rebel faction was. His crew showed him they were hiding out in an abandoned mining colony. Take us there, he commanded. The emperor had been hunting for them for some time, so this was expected. Then I picked up a stray thought from a crew member. I had forgotten to see how the emperor’s hair was kept. My Etan’s was a little different. Several people had noticed. But Etan played it up well.

“Here is a test” He began” To see who is loyal and who is not. I’ve changed a particular thing about myself. Do you know what it is?”

They all chimed in that he had changed his hair. They were all happy they knew the right answer. “Is that all?” Etan asked again, this time with a stern look of impatience.

One man held his hand up to answer.” “My emperor I am the most loyal person here and I know you better than anyone. Not only did you change your hair but you usually get a cup of coffee from the replicator then sit down on your throne before listening to the mourning reports.”

Now I picked up something from his mind that this Etan would say. “Good because either I rule all or I rule nothing.” He stated. They responded with

“Blessed is your reign.” Etan looked at the man and said.

“I will speak to you in private.” And he turned around and proceeded back to the conference room.

“Now” Etan said “That I know you are the most loyal servant I have. I will give you a reward and promotion.” This had the officer’s attention; it was probably very hard to earn the emperors favor. Etan continued with his ruse. He was doing well.

“What I’m about to tell you, you must never tell anyone. You know what I do to traitors?” Etan said sternly.

“Yes” the man said

“They are put to a slow death.” He told the man that his prime matrix had been poisoned but the effect would eventually wear off. But that it made him forget small things. He said he wanted the man to remind him of anything he forgot until the effect completely wore off. The man was proud to have the emperor’s trust. Etan also explained that along with an attempt on his life that the rebels were probably trying to put a double in his place. And that he was sure there was a traitor on board. Then he sent the man on a mission to use the computers to search through everyone's files to find out who the traitor was. That should keep him busy for awhile.

### **Clerk Etan's comment part two**

When we arrived at the planet, one officer showed me on the screen where the rebels were. I told him that I wanted to deal with these trouble makers myself. The whole bridge suddenly went silent; they were thinking I would torture the rebels in some awful way. I told the cell block to stand by for prisoners. I teled down in the mists of the camp, I was immediately recognized and in a moment surrounded by the whole group. Well, at least I had thier attention.

“You shouldn't have come here emperor, because now you will die.” the nearest man said. Out of the shadows Argyle appeared. He had walked up to me, the others backed out the way." I don't like being a violent man, but you have to die." I was expecting this kind of response. I calmly stated

“Look into my mind and tell me what you see." He looked at me suspiciously but was willing to do it.

After a moment he realized who I really was. He ordered the others to lower thier weapons and told them what he had seen, that I was an alternate Etan from another universe. Argyle always the practical minded person asked

“So what are you doing here?” I told them my plan. They would come back with me and pretend to be brain washed by my power. After a few days I would begin putting them in places of influence then we would begin changing the empire. We would guide things in the same direction as my Guardians did. They were hesitant until I mind linked with the others, and then they knew I was telling the truth.

I explained to them they would have to act loyal to me at all times, even if I told them to do something crazy. I needed to establish myself and them as my loyal servants before we could act. But in a few days we could begin making our moves. I also found out from them, most of the population hated the present government and would be glad to see it gone. There was a lot of work to be done, but with thier help I believe I could pull it off.

## **Universe two**

### **Chaos Guardian Thantos Etan**

I have found a group of people willing to do whatever it takes to gain power. It amazes me how cooperative thugs can be when you give them a little taste of dark Guardian abilities. Now I will secretly build my army. The Guardians in this universe have become complacent and will be easy to overthrow once I'm ready.

# Universe Three

## Augustus Etan's from universe one in universe three

I was caught off guard with that attack but that won't happen again. It took an hour for me to grow the rest of my body back. He can't do that to me and get away with it, I am the emperor. The motto my old master had taught me was either rule all or rule nothing. There is no room for second place when it comes to domination. After I was whole I sensed around for the nearest ship and found mine. I teled to my room. I looked around, I was back in my room but this wasn't the way I left it. Something was different here.

Some stupidly dressed lacki entered the room and said "Master Thantos, your back. You disappeared and we didn't know what happened."

"I didn't know who this sycophant was but at least he was showing me my due reference." You can call me the Emperor." He bowed

"As you wish, but Master Kane is demanding you contact him immediately." So there was a Kane here too. And he was my boss in this universe. I knew how to grab power from others. I could go along with a program until I was ready to strike; I was well versed in that song.

I was led to the control room. The communications link was opened.

"Well, well, well where have you been? I thought you deserted your post." Kane said.

"Not at all" I replied sounding innocent. "I was teled away by a powerful new enemy. But I defeated them." He nodded his head

"Very well then. Though I can't say I like your new attire. It's too reminiscent of the Guardian style." This is just a trophy from my defeated foe." I explained. His mood changed to a commanding tone.

"I am ordering you to sector six. There is rumor of a rebel Guardian faction hiding out there. Find them. You know what do."

So, there were Guardian rebels here too. Very good, I can prosper here well, I think. Then he said a phrase I didn't quite get but I read its response from the mind of one of the crew members. He said "As the light is extinguished." And I was supposed to respond "The darkness rises." I was guessing it was thier motto or creed. What a bunch of gibberish. Light, Dark who cares there is only power.

# Universe four

## Protector Drax's view

This Etan was powerful. It was amazing to see him take out the emperor. I could have done it myself but he wanted take care of it himself. We flipped a coin to see who would get to take him out. I lost the toss but if he failed I was there to finish the job. Then we were transported out but apparently not to the same place. Many times I wanted to get rid of the Emperor, but the coward always kept his distance. He was too scared to fight me one on one. Now he had been tele- ported away and so had I. This wasn't my universe or the one I just left, so where was I?

I looked around and the town I was in was a real dump, there were dead crops in the field, and all the buildings were old and run down. The streets were filled with beggars and littered with trash. The entire town seemed this way. I made my way to the biggest building in town, which turned out to be the town governmental complex. The computers were old but I was able to tie into their network. This planet was listed as Argaria. It was a normal bio-diverse planet that was part of a small collection of planets which were not at war with each other. According to the records this galaxy contained just over two hundred populated planets. In my universe there had been over three hundred populated planets. Only ten of the planets here were relatively wealthy or stable all the others were poverty stricken.

I tried to find any records of the Guardians but there were none. It was as if they never existed. I did extensive research on the planet the emperor was from, it was called earth. I heard a saying from his planet "In the land of the blind the man with one eye is king." There were no Guardians here but also no dark Guardians. I would be the most powerful person in the galaxy. If fate would grant me the opportunity to kill the emperor and set things in the right direction in my universe then I would like to come back here and get things started. I could find a few honorable people to begin training as this universe's first Guardians.

## **Universe five.**

### **Etan from universe zero**

A few minutes after my fight with the emperor, I got transported here. Where ever that is. I've been here now, for two weeks. It was nice. My parents were alive here. They had been granted long life by the Guardians and allowed to work with planetary researchers. The Guardians were able to keep the peace and there are no wars on any planet. Our universe only wishes it were half as great as this place. Only one thing really bothers me. Everyone here knows me here by the same name. So where is this universe's Etan? Did he get switched with me or is he somewhere else? A moment later everything around me fuzzed and blurred and I was returned to the place on the planet I had been before. That was a strange experience, had it even been real?

### **Matt's comments**

Ok, Matt here. I'm here just to make sure everyone gets what's happening. The Emperor Etan from universe one is now stuck in universe three. The Dark Guardian Thantos Etan from universe three is now in universe two with the wimpy version of Drax. And the protector from universe one is in universe four where there are no Guardians. Also our Reaper is still around he is just out on regular missions at the moment. Finally when my Etan returned home he came back to the exact point in time he left. Like no time had elapsed.

## **Universe zero**

**50 years till doomsday Guardians year 5844 Earth year 1844**

### **The Super glue and Duct tape solution Commentary**

Most of the time the Guardians have kept very busy the last fifty years just making sure the universe didn't fall apart. But a considerable amount of resources had been channeled into a helpful solution. Selar explained to Etan that their plan was two fold. One was to find a way to exit this universe and see what was going on in the Intraverse, and the second was to create a universal graft to shore up the weak spots. The first had been an on going project for some time now. But they had finally managed to find a spot where the rim could be breeched. Once in the Intraverse maybe they could determine the cause of all this.

One on hand the rim was cracking like it was weak, but on the other hand there was a force preventing anyone from getting out. The spot they needed to exit from was in a lower layer of the universe. This was something only Selar or the other regents could handle.

While this was going on, Etan and Reaper were to assist in the second project helping to create a rim graft. The guardians treated the universe as if it were a life form. The Rim was its skin, the life stream its blood and the fabric of the universe as the blood vessels. As a universe gains more living creatures, more fabric is grown and life stream is directed toward the life forms. For some time, the Guardians had been taking many non populated planets and seeding them with basic life such as algae, fungus and bacteria. These life forms populate quickly and many can handle many harsh environments. When the fabric is fully developed from this seeding it can be harvested.

### **Etan's view**

I told reaper what we were doing. His ship would be used to store some of the harvested material. It had been adapted for this purpose right now. He didn't like the idea of his battleship being used as a transport but he'll get over it.

“So wait a minute” Reaper said “You’ve grown this material and now you’re going to stick it on the weak spot?”

I laughed and said “well, I didn't grow it myself but yes, essentially correct.” I told him.

“You realize what that means right?” I was afraid to ask what. He cracked a sarcastic grin

“You're about to duct tape the universe. Think about it. You’re using a sticky substance that is made of fabric to fix a problem.” Only Reaper would think of something like this being like duct tape. But of course he has always had a weird obsession with duct tape, and bubble wrap. Give him a duct taped bubble wrapped mirror and he would be entertained all day. “No” I told him. “It's more like taking a skin graft with super glue than duct tape.” He continued to argue the point as we made our way to the ship. Harvesting the fabric turned out to be amazing. Several high level guardians engulfed the whole planet in a glow. It made the fabric light up. Then I got to help take some of it for the graft. It looked like a ribbon waving in the wind. Silver Guardian Tarus was there, he showed me how to cut small amounts of the fabric. Small bits of Guardian crystals were used for this purpose, which made sense. They were made out of collapsed universes themselves, and as soon as it was cut it condensed into a solid mass. Now it looked and felt like cotton candy.

Since the rim had been disrupted and Guardians need to go there more often now a new transport had been made. One a little bigger and faster than the train style I had first rode in. Selar and other Regents were at the rim making the patches. From what I could tell it looked like the Rim was no longer expanding. What could create that much counter force? Reaper looked out the window of the transport, yawned and said

“So many Guardians, so little excitement.” I tapped him on the shoulder

“I guess you were right” I told him. “Now they’re using actual duct tape.” That got his attention.

“What where?” he asked.

“Got you” I told him.

“Awe man, that would have been cool to see.” he whined. Eventually all the rips got fixed.



## **50 years till doomsday**

### **Update on universe one Clerk Etan's view**

I've been in this universe for 50 years, hard to believe. I was highly anticipating today's results. It had taken some time to change the governmental system that ruled the entire galaxy but we did it. People wanted freedom so getting them to agree to less government involvement was the easy part. The hard part was doing it in a way so that others powers like gangs didn't take over.

I started with the major cities, by changing the rules so that they had elected officials. I helped them to establish their own security forces and governing law makers. With all my friends help though we were able to start each planetary government out on the same book of rules. Those rules were based on the governing principles of the Guardians from my universe. It gave me great pleasure to see each planet begin to prosper. We weren't without our problems though. After being freed some planets wanted to immediately go to war with others. This is where my experience as a negotiator and diplomat came in handy. In secret Argyle and I started a true Guardian core here. We had thirty young trainees almost ready to become silvers. They were working with the populations already, although we had to act subtle about what we did. In my old life I was just a paper filling middle man. Here I could really make a difference. I do miss my friend Drax, and I hope I get to see him again one day, but I'm glad I was brought here.

### **Two months later**

War has broken out. Some of the Guardian generals were not willing to give up their power. I knew this wasn't going to be easy. The worst part is sometimes a planet will have one country on one side of the fight and on one the other. I fear this will get very bad before it gets better.

### **Update on universe two Dark Guardian Thantos Etan**

Although I hit a few bumps in the road, I finally have gotten to the point where the dark Guardians will rise again. I found a plan that the old dark Guardians had kept in secret. It was plan to allow them to covert the whole galaxy at once. It was actually quite brilliant. I plan to continue their work. It will take a hundred years or so to finish what they started but when complete I will be supreme. One day darkness will rise, and the Guardians will be no more.

### **Update on universe three Augustus Etan's view**

Dang that Kane, This Kane was more obstinate than mine had ever been. I staged a coup much like I had in my universe but this time I wasn't as successful. Now we had a dark Guardian civil war. It was worse than fighting rebel Guardians. They at least were predictable because of acting with honor. Now I didn't know who to trust. Kane's army is larger than mine, but I am way smarter than that empty headed oaf. Either he dies or I do. Either I rule all or I rule nothing.

## **Update on universe four**

### **Protector Drax**

In my universe by the time I was born Selar was already ancient. But after extensive research I found out not only was I in this alternate universe but far back in time too. Selar was around 100 years old. Still young for an Argarian. His parents were rouge, they didn't follow the Argarian way and neither did he. It took awhile for me to teach him some manners but eventually I did.

He was the first person to become a Guardian in this universe. The first couple of years were rough. Every time I helped one planet another would come along and try to take what they had gained, it was a losing battle there for awhile. The whole galaxy was in a mess. After I recruited some help it only got worse. Some planets banded together to begin an all out war with thier neighbors. They figured we couldn't stop them all. I had to create Guardian agents. Not many people could pass the test to become a Guardian but I could give a few limited powers to many human solders and have them fight with us. We have a long way to go, but now the war is finally turning in our favor.

### **Young Carlo's view-(future Selar)**

So there I was just minding my own business. Times were hard so I was doing what I could to survive. I was pretty good at fishing. I could catch enough to eat and few extra to sell. It wasn't much but anything helped right now. Some dopey looking guy in a white dress walked up wanting to talk to me. With my luck he was probably some cultic nut.

“You're Carlo?” He asked me.

“Yeah what of it?” I asked. “Your life is being wasted. Come with me and you can help yourself and your people.” he stated.

“Why should I believe a guy wearing a dress?” I asked. He wasn't provoked though he said

“It's not a dress it's a Guardian robe.” He went into this spill about being from another universe. And that this universe needed Guardians. That in the end things would be much better for everyone. I told him I might not have a great life but I was getting by. He looked at me considering, then let out a big sigh.

“Let's take a walk.” he stated. He put his hand on my shoulder and we flew up above the clouds. I'm not afraid of heights but this freaked me out. He showed me several other towns on my planet. He explained that it wasn't just my planet that most of the others were in the same shape.

He continued “With things being as they are. Many planets will be completely desolate of life soon.” I shrugged “That is sad, but like I said, I'm doing ok.” He sighed again “I see your going to be hard headed about this.” He landed and showed me a recording of the Selar from his universe. He had been killed, but before then he had been very powerful. He showed me what I could become. This got my interest.

# Universe Zero

## Matt's comments

With all that has been going on there are a few side stories that have been forgotten. One was all this time Lum never married. He was good friends with many girls but never really dated much. I think he was afraid of how his dad would traumatize any potential wives. His mother, **1** eventually got tired of waiting for a grandchild and took things into her own hands. She started looking for a suitable mate for Lum. He was hesitant of course. He said he could find his own wife when he was ready. She wanted to speed things up. She wasn't getting any younger. She found a young lady that was a ships pilot. She was confident and strong. Since she had some military training she could handle Lum and Reaper both. Her name was Andorra. She was a lot like **1** in many ways.

## **1's** view

I love my son but he is going to have to learn to be more aggressive when it comes to relationships. A girl won't just fall in his lap. I been around for centuries, I know the kind of girl he needs. My son is a dear. He is kind hearted and calm of spirit. In a way he is a lot like Argyle used to be. Sometimes it was almost as if Lum was the son of Argyle and mine all along. He didn't have much of Reaper in him. The only thing that he really got from Reaper was the love of Mexcian food. As a child he was always obedient and trustworthy. It was like he was born grown up. But right now he was my little boy who needed my help.

## Lum's view

I know mom means well, but I don't need any help. It's not that I can't talk to women; I just haven't met the right one yet. I'll know her when I meet her. Of course the hard part will be keeping father from scaring her off. Mother set me up to meet this woman at a local restaurant. I could sense her coming before she ever entered. We were on a planet that was populated almost entirely by humans so her Argarian energy signature was easy to pick out. Mother thinks my powers are weak. I don't go around using them flamboyantly like her or father does, but it does not mean that I don't have them.

Mother looked in my mind one time and I let her see what she expected to see. She thinks I only have half the power of a normal Argarian. She is fully Argarian and father is half Argarian and half Dark Guardian. But I can shield my true thoughts and abilities from most anyone. My power is in my mental abilities. I know what everyone is thinking. I am also very good at projecting a sense of peace in others. I can see further and detect better than most any other full Argarian that's what makes me a great diplomat. I learned the peace thing from uncle Etan. He and I are a lot alike, though I hear he used to be much different when he was young.

I introduced myself to Andorra when she entered the restaurant. She was nice but could be a little pushy. I think mom picked out someone like herself. We spent most of the evening exchanging stories. I didn't have any war stories of my own but I had plenty of what dad had done. We spent time together for the next few weeks but we didn't really hit it off. Mom was disappointed but she didn't say much about it.

Two years later I found my lady to be. I was helping with an evacuation team. The country I was in was experiencing tectonic tremors. The Guardians were working on fixing the major issues in the galaxy but that still left millions of people on various planets with problems of their own. We were evacuating this population to a safer location until the tectonic activity could be dampened. I was in one of the office buildings when another tremor hit. The building was well made but it could still be dangerous. I could see there were only a few individuals left in the building. I teled to the upper floor and grabbed a few people and teled them out then I went back for others. On my third trip back in I noticed an energy signature I hadn't seen before. I saw a woman on the floor above me.

## **Nalya's view**

I was supposed to be out of the building already. But there were a few items I didn't want to lose. Ironically the company I worked for kept paper and items secured from most natural disasters like fires and floods. Our country had never had problems with earthquakes before so this was unexpected. I had to go back for some of my precious memories. A few items were all I had left from my father and mother. I was on my way out when another quake hit. The floor gave way and I fell through. I fell into the arms of a quiet but endearing man.

## **Matt's comments**

That's right she literally fell into his arms. To make a long story short they fell in love after sometime, though they decided not to have a child until all the universal disasters were over.

# **Part five Life changed**

**1 week till doomsday   Guardians year 5894   Earth year 1894   Etan is now 474 years old**

## **First responses**

### **Matt's comments**

Normally when a person says, my world is about to change they are referring to something that is happening to them personally. It could be something like a change in jobs or marital status. But usually they don't mean the entire world much less the universe. Or might I say multi-verse. But today, reality as we know it broke down. All the Regents and commanders from all known galaxies had been on alert for some time.

The Regents were going to and from the rim of the universe on a regular basis now, which that in itself is unusual. I couldn't imagine a threat big enough that it was taking all the Regents combining their power to handle. It's not like this was a onetime event. An event that needs a Regent's powers multiple times, what could it be? All these problems with fissures, rips and tears had been going on for over 200 years now and seemed to be getting worse. The graft that the regents had done 50 years ago had helped but I could sense they were all worried about something. Etan and I continued to teach at the school periodically, though mostly we kept busy with missions. An hour before the chaos erupted we got the call.

## **Sector 3**

### **1st class monitor Gesh**

I've been doing this job for five years. I've never had a day like the day chaos erupted. We get individual disaster calls from a planet or colony all the time. They might be experiencing some natural disaster like a hurricane, earthquake, even a meteor hurtling toward their planet. That's what we are here for, to help coordinate all the Guardians in the galaxy. So any planet that needs it gets the help they need. But suddenly, we got calls from every planet in our network at the same time. People were panicking and didn't know what to do. On some planets the governmental structure had already broken down and some cities were experiencing rioting and looting. How they thought that would help their situation is beyond me but they did it anyway.

## **Matt's comments**

Before you ask, yes that was the Guardian version of 911. You should see the Guardian's version of a post office.

### **Sector 7 Guardian patrol squad Corporal Hem's view**

“Sir we got incoming.” I reported. Everything had been fine a few minutes ago. I was patrolling sector seven near the keshi badlands. I was in one of the newest Sythe class escort shuttles that Reaper had helped to design. The dark Guardians had been gone from the galaxy for some time but that didn't stop smaller groups of bandits from attacking. In spite of the danger the badlands contained, it was a popular trade route for many runners. Now, without warning an entire fleet of both large and smaller attack craft came barreling in towards us. These ships were similar in design to dark Guardian vessels but the colors and weapons were different. The smaller ones were fast and were shaped like a predatory bird. They were quicker and more maneuverable than ours. As they zipped in and out our lines of defense we couldn't help but wonder where they had come from. The Guardians kept a close eye on any military trying to gain a decisive advantage over others.

I tracked a fighter that had drifted away from the lines. He was trying to make a sneak run and get behind our defensive position. I'm not sure what his actual goal was but I wasn't about to let him out of my sight. He weaved in and out of several other stray vessels trying to lose me, but I was an expert pilot. He laid down a series of quantum mines which I barely avoided. Then unfortunately we were close enough to the asteroid field for him to use that to his advantage. He dodged through the field and I lost him after a few minutes. I headed back to the mother ship. I got one last look at the enemy ships destroying the Atlantis. I had many friends on that ship. We had been caught unprepared for this attack.

### **Emergency Response Team in sector 5 Private Hent**

I steadied myself and gave the directives I had been trained for this “Ok, everybody just stay calm and keep moving. Don't grab anything you don't have to have right now. Find a seat, and make room for others.”

The intercom activated and announced “thirty minutes until planetary breakup.” Several people screamed and that made the others freak out. Great that's just what I needed, more reason for them to panic. Silver guardian Celestial poked his head in the ship.

“This ones full, you're ready to go” then he teled away.

I just can't understand how this could happen. Our planet is in a stable solar system. We had been told a small brown dwarf star was heading our way, and would get close enough to destroy our planet. Why had some one not detected it years ago heading our way and deflected it. And why weren't the counsel here fixing it? My home, I can't believe my planet is about to be gone. But no, I have to be brave, help everyone cope and stay calm that's what I am trained to do. Half an hour later I watched as my planet exploded wash of color. As I spun around to return to my seat, I got dizzy. As I got another glance out the window the universe seemed to blink as if all the stars were turned off and back on at the same time. Then I also noticed my planet was back. What the heck?

## **Sector 8**

### **1's view**

I was being called into action again. We were going to move some of our fleet to sector 7 where a mysterious enemy has made themselves known. My dear Drax was on his way there now. I knew he would have a fast response. He had all fighter and battle ship communications routed to his ship so he could be apprised of any changes. He didn't want to miss any opportunity to fight.

Several years ago a small group of our fighters took down a large group of hit and run bandits and he missed it. He pouted for days. Selar wanted me on a mother ship directing the third fleet. We would get back up from the Mistles later but for now they were needed in helping to evacuate an entire planets population in a matter of minutes. It was doubtful that everyone could be saved but we would save as many as we could.

### **Etans view**

Well this is it. Galactic Armageddon I suppose. I haven't seen chaos in the galaxy like this since my first year of training. The anomaly that circled the galaxy back then made quite a mess. But that wasn't it, this time. Several silvers were present helping with the evacuation. "15 minutes until planetary destruction" came the announcement on the loud speaker, if we only had more time. It was then I noticed a strange looking child sitting on the ground in the distance playing with blocks. I started to go over to him and take him to a transport but something stopped me. I sensed dark power at work around him. I decided to let it go for a moment and concentrate on my task. I would try to grab the child on my way off the planet in a few minutes. A bright flash appeared and a tall man dressed as a Guardian appeared. I didn't recognize him even though he seemed familiar. "My name is Retan and I'm here to help."

### **Selar's view**

Our worst fears have been realized. We found instability in the intraverse. This has never happened before. The universe as a whole works in much the same way an atom does. An atom must maintain a steady balance of energy in order to be stable. This is true for so many things in the universe. From stars to weather, balance is what makes life possible.

Most of what Guardians do is try to restore a balance when something goes wrong. We've never experienced an imbalance in the intraverse like this. We've known about this imbalance for some time and have been trying to restore it. What we have in the intraverse is similar in principle to a black hole. What is happening here in the intraverse is on a bigger scale. Several universes have fused into one and are creating a gravitational effect on the others around it, including ours. The fissures and tears were symptoms of this.

Our universe is being drawn into the mix. Ours has begun to merge with several others around it. I saw events such as this coming and have taken steps to avoid it. Normally collapsed universe crystals act as a counter balance to the gravitational effect of an expanding universe like ours. When we take these kinds of crystal we only take a small amount. We are very careful not to upset the balance, but now something has upset this balance. With all the crystals gone from our region of the intraverse, the universes began fusing together. We had been collecting small amounts of crystals from a wide area of the intraverse to bring them here to restore the balance. It had been working. The patch we created before was just to buy us more time to implement this plan. Now it was like everything we had done had been undone. This should not be happening.

## **Emperor Augustus Etan's view**

My fleet was on its way to intercept Kane's. Now was the time to take my rightful place in this universe. In my universe I had been emperor now I would be again. But the fleet I encountered wasn't Kane's. After a few minutes I realized my whole fleet had been transferred to yet another universe. They were only a small group so they would die just as easy. I didn't care which universe I ruled.

## **Etans view**

I looked at the new guy. "Retan, you say. I've never heard of you." I told him.

"Sure you have." He responded "I'm you, well you and Reaper both actually. I'm from a universe where we stayed linked too long and now we can't separate. I also still have the prime matrix. Don't worry I'm here to help."

I wasn't sure how to respond to that, after a moment I simply said "What's your plan?"

Let's get all the silvers back to this spot and I'll show you, I am going to save the planet. He was interested to see what this Retan could do to help. When the time came Retan opened the life stream and placed a protective shield around the entire planet. The brown dwarf would only be close enough for fifteen minutes to cause the planet to break up but he held it much longer, some before and after to cut down on tectonic stresses. I knew Selar could do such a move. I was getting stronger every year but I wasn't even close to that level. As Retan was powering up I noticed the child I had seen before was intently watching us. After Retan powered down the mysterious child stood up grabbed his blocks and disappeared.

# **Universes One and zero combined**

## **Clerk Etan's view**

Argyle looked at me "Oh emperor I think we have a problem."

Even though we had been working on changing around the entire governmental structure I was still technically the emperor. Mostly Argyle called me that in jest this time he looked worried. I looked out the view screen and there before us was a most peculiar sight. We were about to meet the rival generals in battle. A good number of the planetary generals refused to give up their power. Most had banded together to fight us.

Each general had enough followers and ships to be a threat. Though they were called generals in this universe they were as powerful as any normal Guardian. When the view screen was activated I was a bit confused. Instead of a battle ship on the screen I saw a pirate ship in front of us.

The people on it looked more confused than we were. Half a dozen questions came to mind like how did they get here? Why did someone bring them here? And how come they weren't dead? After all they were in the vacuum of space, unless they were machines or Guardians they should be dead. Later I found out more about the whole universal merger situation. A small piece of another universe or time must have drifted through ours.

A few of the pirates must have been drunk enough not to care how strange the situation because they fired on us. Several of the cannons fired in our direction. They couldn't hurt us but I found it funny. Then just as suddenly they disappeared. Then whatever invisible anomaly brought them here, took us else where. Now we were caught up in some kind of battle. The other ships that were with us didn't get brought along with my command ship. We got hit a few times from the cross fire. I directed the ship pull out of the middle and get where we could see what's really going on. There was a distinct difference between the two sides. Some of the ships were obviously of Guardians design, the others were not. I had one of the Guardian ships hailed. Some woman who claimed to be name **1** was in command. I linked with her for fast communication. The opposing force was a dark Guardian fleet. We helped the Guardians here with the fight.

## **Doomsday Universe Zero and others**

### **Alsesea's comments**

Being a counselor I have to keep a careful watch own my own mental state. After all if I'm upset or not balanced how can I help others? But today I saw something that made me wonder if I need a brain scan. I had been sent to one of the many planet suffering natural disasters at this time. This one had several coastal cities that were flooding. I was in the intake section helping people that were taking refuge during the storms. I had finally got to sit down for a minute and take a lunch break. I heard a noise behind me and I thought I was having hallucinations. There was a mural on the wall depicting some of the history from this planet. Two characters walked off the pictures and began fighting between themselves. It had been a depiction of two ancient warriors locked in combat. I wondered what could cause me to be seeing such illusions. They fought for a few moments knocking over a few tables in the process. Then just as suddenly they jumped back in the picture and stayed there.

### **What Vortex saw**

A soon as the Retan guy showed up I could see I wasn't needed there so I quickly made my way to the next nearest disaster zone. The neighboring solar system was experiencing the effects from a time fissure. It was causing things past and present to appear. The capital city for example was being over run with tribal warriors from that planet's past. In another city some form of giant insect was causing problems. A swarm of them was eating anything green. If we didn't stop them in a few days there wouldn't be a bush, tree or blade of grass left. I swear the whole galaxy was going crazy at the same time. Later I had a hand to hand combat session with an evil version of myself. That was weird.

### **Command ship Commentary**

“The right wing is flanking us Mam.” The nearest tech reported. “We’ve got alpha and beta squads on the fastest runners. But delta squad is still close enough to circle back.”

**1** could see on her screen this was not going well.

“Then tell delta do a Tsm and then rejoin the fourth division protecting the transports.” What she would give to have a few silvers in this fight. But they were busy with major disasters right now. The tech reported the command for the Tsm, which stands for temporary speed maneuver. It was a short burst of warp speed. It was dangerous inside of a solar system especially during a fight but was used when necessary. If the enemy fighters broke through the defensive line now, some of them might get to the slower more vulnerable cargo carriers.



The command ship took a sudden hit. I looked up. The biggest battle ship she had ever seen was looming right in front of them.

“Fire all weapons on that monstrosity” she commanded. Thier shots didn't even make it through the ship's outer shield. The enemy vessel returned fire and took out the power to her command ship with in minutes. As the engineers rushed to return power a monitoring tech was using a hand held scanner to keep her updated. Now they are preparing to dock. Looks like were going to be boarded.

I looked over to the first officer who was helping with the control station repairs. “Officer Nam you have the command of the control room I'm going down to meet our guests.”

“But colonel,” he stammered. As she was running out the door she gave the command

“You stay here and try to regain control of the ship. They want a fight; I'm going to give them a fight.” She quickly made her way down to the docking room. The ship had security measures but she had a feeling it wouldn't be enough.

### **I's view**

The door burst open and in came mech suited warriors. A dozen or so filled in. The leader's suit slightly bigger than the others. That was the one I wanted. He saw my uniform and apparently had the same thought. He took a few big steps and got right up in my face. His face mask slide up. It was Argyle, or at least some other version of him.

“It's payback time slag.” he said.

Slag was an Argarian term for a loose woman. I looked at him and said

“The feelings mutual, you good for nothing coward.”

He growled “Coward am I? We'll see about that” Then he teled us out side the ship on the hull.

“This is better. Now where were we?” he asked. Then the low life blasted me while he was releasing some kind of fighting probes from the suit. He couldn't even take me on by himself. I punched him in the chest all the way through his suit and caused it to short out. He could see it wasn't going to be of any use so he quickly discarded it.

Now it was just down to him and me pure and simple. That's the way I preferred it. He threw a few standard grenades at me. I caught them and threw them back. By this time the fighting probes circled around me and blasted me from behind. They knocked me down to my knees but didn't knock me out.

“You'll have to do better than that little boy” I told him.

He responded with “And so I shall.” He pulled out a dark Guardian weapon. Now that was dirty. Now it was time for a move of my own. I pulled out Aries dagger that I still had. “Touché” I told him.

He laughed. “Seriously, you think you can hurt me with that?” He was over confident, he was making this way to easy.

He spread his arms wide and said “If you think that will hurt me come and get me.” With pleasure I thought. I cut off his arms before he could filch, He didn't expect that, a normal dagger wouldn't have done anything but this was no ordinary dagger. Next I went for each leg until he was just a screaming stump. I left his limbs to float off in space while I pulled him by his ears to the docking bay and tossed him at the others Mech guys. The whole bay stopped and starred. I said “ok whose next?” Some of them decided not to push it any further and ran. They few that stayed weren't too hard to defeat. Within a few minutes the ship was secured. By the time the last two Mech warriors were

down for the count the power was restored. The Argyle stump was taken to the medical bay so he could be healed enough to survive. I wanted him alive to face sentencing.

### **Selar's view**

We didn't have much time left. Every available Regent from nearby universes was coming to help. Our universe was now caught in the middle of a mass of quickly melding universes. Even though universes seemed infinite in size on the inside, comparatively speaking they were about the size of an average size planet on the outside. That is where we came up with the idea of spatial compression technology. The commander and I were helping to direct the effort to unbind the universes that were still on the outside of the mass. This situation was much like a black hole grabbing up stars. From what we could tell several universes in the middle had already completely fused as one. At least a dozen universes were spiraling around the central point and getting closer. I felt a group effort taking place. Many Regents were working to free the spiraling universes first. No less than four regents per universe were pulling on the outside ones. I flew in to help the nearest group, while the commander continued to direct. There were three other Regents encircling a smaller universe. Rarely do I need to use my entire focus or strength to complete a task, but this situation would test me today.

I closed my eyes and channeled everything I could. My essence was being stretched to the limits. Ever so slowly the bubble began to move backwards. A microscopic tear formed. We had to stop and repair it before we could continue. We had to keep linked with the each other to coordinate enough for this to work. We started again, but this time just as we began, another universe flew in and slammed into the one we were moving. Fortunately it was knocked to the side and not backward. A few of the other Regents were having better luck but not many. Most were experiencing similar problems.

### **Cast in the past**

#### **Etans view**

After talking with Retan a few minutes I had to go help with other emergencies. I got a call something was happening near earth. Some kind of fissure opened up just outside earth's solar system. I checked it out. There was another fissure. Great! That's just what I needed. The ship I commanded had to be sent to another emergency while I looked into the earth situation. I had a mid range shuttle but hopefully it will be all I'll need. I entered the time fissure then scanned. The scan showed non human life forms on earth. The year was 700 AD earth time.

As I got closer I could tell the life form reading was coming from the northern part of Greenland. I teled down and cloaked. At this time Greenland was inhabited by primitive Eskimo ancestors. At least I didn't have defensive technology to have to worry about. The life form readings were coming from the wilderness area. The reading suddenly looked very familiar. It looked liked the Aquarians. What were they doing here? Then it struck me, this might be Aquarians from another universe. Maybe earth is not off limits in thier universe. Well, they couldn't stay here. I turned into an Aquarian and approached thier camp. Several of the soldiers noticed me. But these were not the intelligent, human sized people I knew. These were twenty foot tall brutes. I could see in thier minds that they had the intelligence of an earth primate. None of them spoke very much they mostly used grunts and squawks to communicate, though I did hear the words for food and hunt spoken. Hmm maybe this would make it easier. I could tele them out without having to debate them. I just needed to find a suitably cold planet where they could dwell.

My shuttle wasn't big enough for everyone but they had to get here somehow. Maybe they had a ship. But then that got me thinking. How did they have space faring tech when they were brutish. After some searching I found evidence of a ship landing but there wasn't a ship anywhere. Perhaps someone else who was advanced wanted to get rid of them and dropped them off here. So earth just got ice babies dropped of on its door step. They weren't babies of course but the analogy was still the same.

I took the shuttle back through the fissure and retrieved a big enough transport pod to deliver them. Matt laughed "So let me get this straight, now you're going to deliver the ice babies." Long ago Matt had picked up a sense of humor from his link to me. He got my bad puns side I guess. I shook my head but refused to egg him on.

"Don't worry" he continued "They'll warm up to you." Here he goes again, I thought.

Matt continued "Of course when they do, all the ice babies will have wet diapers."

"Let me guess" I said to him. "You've been watching those comedy films while I slept again?" I swear sometimes he was as bad a Misteeek. Can we get serious here? "Only if you don't give me the cold shoulder." he finished. I didn't respond to that one. I didn't want to keep encouraging him.

From what I could see there was only this one settlement. I counted thirty within my sight but there could be others. I suppose I should just make this simple on myself. Knock them out and take them to an alternate sight. No Mess no fuss. Fortunately for me because I had been an Aquarian before and I knew how thier elemental bodies worked. I tried to power up but something was blocking me.

It was then that I noticed that the fissure was now close to earth, They usually don't move. Selar had told us to expect strange interactions between our universe and others. After meeting Retan I guess this was mild. Could it be that this fissure was not just in time but to another universe? Maybe this wasn't even my earth. When I tried to access the life stream I couldn't. I could still do form changes and affect the elements but not much of anything else it seems.

Just then Reaper showed up, or at least a Holo-clone of him did anyway. "What are you doing here and how are you here? I thought Reaper could only do Holo-clones within a certain range of his tech arm." I asked him.

He leaned back against a snowy tree and said. "I'm here to spy in you. You know he hates missing interesting things and those kinds of things always seem to follow you. As far as how, I have a mobile Holo-Emmitter. All the other clones go back into non existence when not needed. But I made an agreement with him. I get to stay out all the time with the emitter as long as I don't betray him."

He looked too relaxed and peaceful something wasn't quit right here. "You're not as annoying or aggressive as Reaper you can't be a clone from my Reaper." I told him. "Oh yeah, that. Reaper didn't want another clone trying to take over again. So he designed me after Drax. Matt chimed in and spoke out loud to the clone. "Ah so your Reaper lite." He smirked "Correction, I'm Diet Reaper, all the fun, and half the killer-ies." Great! Now I have two comedians to contend with here, Matt and Reaper.

As I was watching the ice giants I asked the clone "well are you going to help?" He continued leaning on the tree. "Nope I'm just going to watch and harass you." Matt thought that was funny of course "Yep he's a Reaper alright."

I could still control the elements and change form even if the life stream here was being thrown off. Since they were animalistic in their behavior maybe I could corral them. It took a few minutes of searching to find the few individuals out roaming around then I formed an ice wall around the outskirts of thier camp.

Using myself as bait I was able to trick them into going back to camp. After that it was a simple matter to finish the wall.

"That's not going to hold them." Reaper said. "I don't need to hold them for long, just long enough to make sure there are not any others on earth." I told him. But as soon as I got those words out they realized they were caged. The males took off thier own heads and threw them at the wall, bashing large holes in it.

"That's using their" I muted the clone. He pushed a button on his gauntlet. "heads." he finished. Reaper knew you would do that and found a way around your muting.

“Yeah well Reaper and I will have along talk when I get back. But for now I still got work to do.” The Reaper clone chipped in

“Why don't you pull thier water out, make them too weak to fight.”

I had already thought of that. “If I have to I will, but thier from another universe. If I do that I could kill them or get unwanted results. I just need to hold them temporarily.”

As they were getting thier heads back on straight I considered a second option. This time I would try fire. I created a fire wall in the same place as the ice wall had been.

“That wont work either” Reaper replied non helpfully. As soon as the fire started they backed up.

“See its working” I told the clone. I spoke to soon. This time both the males and females decided to put out the fire, the old fashioned way. They all gathered in one spot and peed on it. I could keep the fire going but then I wouldn't be able to go out and search the area at the same time.

“Look your really pissing them off this time.” the clone said. I had a feeling he couldn't resist that one.

“Yeah” Matt added “I think your plan has sprung a leak.” Will you stop helping him, I thought to Matt. You're supposed to be helping me not him.

“Ok your right.” He said “I'll be serious now. But just remember it's your sense of humor that attached to me. I never had a sense of humor before you.” Now that he was through being silly I needed a better plan.

We both came to the same conclusion. I should have just started with a metal wall. Use the earth around me to make a large metal wall. That would contain them long enough to let me finish this job. I took a few moments but I managed to build a wall. They sat on the ground and watched with interest. They seemed easily amused. After the wall was finished they realized they were trapped again. This time they pounded at the wall but to no avail. But then they did something the other Aquarians never did. They all combined into one. The mass of them was at least a hundred foot tall. They grabbed a large rock just outside the barrier and used it to knock down my wall. The creature turned around and eyed me. Apparently its intelligence was boasted a little in its present form.

“Who are you?” It asked. I told the creature my name and that I had come to take the whole group to a better place. This place would not be good for them, long. This time it broke up into four slightly smaller individuals.

“Then you must fight for right.” the biggest one said. He meant I had to fight and beat him for the right to lead them.

I wanted to make sure I didn't hurt them. But I needed to beat the leader or a least equal him without making him look bad. I formed a hammer from the earth and used it to fight him. We fought back and forth a few minutes. I was careful to knock him down without busting him up completely. In the end the leader acknowledged my superior ability. The leader looked at me and said

“I am frost, I am leader, but I follow you.” Good now he would lead them to do what I needed. Even in thier primitive state they still had a basic tradition of sorts for assuming leadership.

“I am Etan I am a Guardian I lead you to better place.” I stated in thier way. They all cheered “Etan, Etan, Etan. After that it was a simple matter to get them in the transport. Sure enough there were a few stragglers out roaming around. Within a few minutes I had everyone secure and we were on our way.

## **Matt's comments**

What we didn't know was there were a few Eskimos that had seen the fight between the ice giant and Etan. In Etan's defense he was focused on the matter at hand and it was an easy thing to miss. I have a feeling the Reaper clone might have brought them there and kept them hidden. He never admitted to it, but he never denied it either. The story was passed down and changed over time. It became the legend of the Asgards and the frost giants.

### **Three Reapers walk into a bar Reaper's view**

So I get this report that on a desolate planet, a town seemed to appear out of nowhere. I mean that literally. One day you got a lifeless planet and the next day expansive city flourishes. It must be more of those universal cracks. I didn't care either way until I learned the entire town of was populated by other versions of me. That sounded like my kind of place, but I wasn't going for a vacation I was going there to give them the boot. I don't care how big this universe is, there's only room for one me. They needed to go back to their own universes and do what they do.

The planet now called Reap-tar, was located in a swirling eddy of life stream that seemed to have a permanent presence. How did it get its name? Come on, do you really have to ask? What other brilliant, awesome agent of chaos, err I mean greatness could have come up with such a great name. Getting to the planet was the easy part. I had to send my battle ship away on another mission but I still had my trusty dark Guardian fighter. I had gotten it years ago after Etan and I had gotten captured on a mission.

When I beamed down I immediately felt comfortable. I purposely beamed to the outskirts and walked in so I could get a feel for the place. It reminded me of some of the western movies I had seen. Rugged men on horses gunning down anyone they liked. That was my kind of fun.

Before me lay a dusty dirt road lined with old wooden buildings along each side. At the end of the road it had a court house with stockades and a tree with a hanging noose still tied to it. The first place I passed was the back smith shop. A dirty, muscle bound version of me was busy hammering out weapons for another me dressed in plated armor. As I did a quick scan of the local area. It seemed to be a conglomeration of various clashing styles. Besides the western areas, I scanned medieval, tribal, ancient eastern and several others I couldn't identify.

A moment later two Reapers decided to have a shootout. They pulled out their weapons, shoot each other then both fell dead. A few moments later they revived and did it all over again. They argued the whole time on who shoot who first. I'd love to have gotten in on that but I was here on business. When I was done I would show them who really was the real Reaper, me.

I heard music coming from the saloon down the road. Just as I was approaching the entrance the two Reapers who had been in a gun fight pushed their way past me. Once again I decided to finish my goal before showing them who is best around here. When I walked in the Saloon I saw a whole room full of me's. A few Reapers glanced up and then went back to their activities. Four were at the poker table. It looked like each one was trying to out cheat the others. Two were on the side throwing darts at each other. They each had a target on their chest. That looked like fun too. There was even a pirate version me wearing a hat from the time. He had a tech peg leg instead of a missing arm.

Most of the others were just slight variations of me, except for two individuals. One was an old man sitting at the bar and a small child in the corner playing with wooden blocks who was being guarded by an ogerish looking version of me. For some reason the child was humming a tune to himself but totally ignoring everyone in the room. I couldn't understand why all of them didn't stop. Didn't they know I was the real Reaper? Apparently they didn't but they were about to.

“Attention all of you fakers, I am the real Reaper from this universe. I need all you to leave before I have to throw you out.”

The Reaper playing the piano stopped and said “Give it up you bum. I'm the real Reaper.”

Several others gave him a deadly stare. “You've got to be kidding. I'm the real one. All of you are the fakes.” The bartender version of me said.

The two playing darts took the darts off their chest and threw them at the bartender. That started a fist fight between several other Reapers. Well this was getting me nowhere.

The old man at the bar looked at me and said. “It wouldn't do you any good anyway. There's a fissure outside. Reapers come and go every day or so.”

I walked up and saw he was a version of me too but a much older. He looked absolutely ancient. He had several medals and a strange pendant. The pendant seemed to be an amber bubble with a creature inside.

“So what's the pendant for geezer?” I asked politely.

He explained “This is one of my most prized possessions. In my universe there are very few Guardians or dark Guardians left. So it doesn't take much to tip the balance. I perfected this creature. I call it a Drax beetle. It is a cross between several insect species. It has a queen and drones like that of an ant colony. They grow to the size of a grown man's spread hand and they can eat almost any bio matter. They like to get in machines and make nests, chewing through the machines wires in the process. The queen can produce a variety of drone forms to adapt to most any situation. And best of all I can control them. I use them to keep the dark Guardians at bay. They spend a lot of time trying to eradicate them. And unlike me they can't control them.

“If it wasn't for me the dark Guardians probably would have taken back control of the galaxy by now. This one in the pendant is long since dead that's why I got it preserved here but it was my first successful prototype. It took me another decade after this one to perfect the method of control but now their my own little secret army.”

I was a bit shocked by all of that but I knew immediately that I needed those beetles.

“So what will it take to get one of my own? I asked him. “I'm not giving one to you; you have to earn the knowledge for yourself. Only then will you be able to really control them without causing a disaster.”

I pulled out my scythe. I hated to kill an old me, but I guess it had to be done. I had to have one of those beetles. As soon as I pulled out my weapon it was teleported away.

“No weapons allowed in here.” The bartender said. I decided to wait until the old man wasn't looking then I'd swipe it from him. I noticed one more strange thing, about the old man. He had a scar on his right cheek. I wonder why he couldn't heal it.

The child was still sitting in the corner playing with those same blocks. He can't be any version me., he didn't even look like me. I strolled up to him and said “Hey kid what's your deal? Are you a failed clone or something?”

The little twit ignored me. I tapped him on the shoulder but he still never looked up. He can't ignore me, I'm Reaper. He had a drink sitting on the floor next to him, so I kicked it over. All the other Reapers in the room stopped what they were doing and looked at me with disbelief.

He continued what he was doing but the guard said. "You got five seconds to get him another drink before he has to get up."

Is here serious? This kid couldn't take me when I was in a dead sleep. The bartender came running over and handed him another drink.

"Here's another drink for you. Don't worry I'll have talk with this one. He's just stupid, he doesn't know any better." He never looked up from his blocks. The bartender pulled me by my shirt out of there fast.

"Now hold on a second. Just because you are a Reaper doesn't mean I'm going to let you get away with this" I told him.

He held me tighter and said. "What are you trying to do get us all killed." I couldn't believe it, they were all afraid of this child.

"What's your problem" I asked.

"That" he said pointing to the child "Is Reaper prime." He is the most powerful version of us in any known universe. Where I come from is a cross roads to thousands of universes, and I'm telling you don't mess with him. He is as powerful as a Regent guardian."

I told him I'd leave the kid alone and the bartender went back to work. I saw the old man was passed out from his drink so I decided to swipe the pendant.

I sat there for a few more minutes just mulling it over. I don't care what they say. I'm the real Reaper and no one is going to show me up. I marched back over to the kid and kicked his blocks this time. He stood up his eyes glowed and my tech arm fell off. Once again the guard spoke for him.

He said "You're not even a mild challenge for me right now. If you ever get powerful enough, I'll know. You won't have to find me, look behind you because that's where I'll be."

He sent me a vision of a night mare figure. It was a demonic looking creature with bat like wings, claws for fingers and horns on the forehead. The creature grabbed a hold of me in the vision and extracted out my life essence, leaving only an empty husk. I came out of the vision a little shaken.

The guard spoke for him again "That is what I'll do if you don't leave right now." The child sat back down then glanced over to the others. Several Reapers came running up to me grabbed me and threw me out of the saloon. They refused to let me back in. Later I watched the recording of the event and noticed a few things I didn't notice before. The old man had a claw on one of his medals that looked like a claw from the creature in my vision. Secondly the child had no feet. When he stood up his legs ended in a dark mist, and lastly when I stole the Drax Beetle the old man saw me doing it. I also crossed referenced the image of the kid. Apparently he has a tendency to show up when major disasters happen.

**Well, well, well**

**Kanes training many years ago**

**Commentary**

Kane's dark master found out that he was afraid of small places. Kane became so terrified he would freeze up entirely. They couldn't have that. A dark Guardian cannot be afraid of anything. Dark Master Arcesis placed Kane in an old cave system underground. He stripped him of all his powers. By the time he could get out, he would have overcome his fear of tight places.

**Kanes view**

I had been training as a dark guardian for nearly twenty years now. My master said I had shown great skill and cunning, but that wasn't enough. I needed to overcome my fear. I liked wide open spaces but definitely not enclosed ones. This was like my worst nightmare come true. Master Arcesis teleported me down into a deep cave system, with just one small light to show the way and I didn't have any food, water or tools to work with. A rope would have come in handy.

As soon as I materialized I was frozen in fear. I was standing in a confining tunnel that was obviously part of a cave system. I closed my eyes and tried not to think about where I was. After an hour of just sitting and shaking I realized if I didn't start moving I would die here. If I couldn't overcome this then I wasn't worthy to be a dark Guardian anyway. Obviously there was a way out; I just had to find an exit. But every time I looked up I became nauseous.

I decided to hang the lantern over my neck and crawl on the ground. This helped some. I looked at the ground and imagined I was outside on a dark night. As a dark Guardian I was taught to embrace the darkness. In darkness all are equal. The dark is the true nature of every being. Those who embrace the light are just denying their own true desires. Only in darkness can the galaxy have true order.

I looked forward to see if I could see a path out and got light headed, Dang this fear. I closed my eyes and listened. This time I could hear the sound of dripping water and cave bats. One step at a time I crawled toward those sounds. I practiced looking forward as I crawled. After awhile it did get a little easier. Soon I was in a larger part of the cave so the walls and ceiling weren't just right there in my face, thankfully. By the time I made it through the first two large caverns I was able to keep my head forward without getting sick.

While I was laboring with this, my mind wandered. Master Arcesis had a powerful catch phrase that he used to get everyone's attention. He would look at you with those glowing red eyes and say "Your end has come." It wasn't just the words but how he said it that caused others to fear him. I wanted to be like that. I wanted to incite fear at my very presence. I had thought about different sayings. Some of the ones I liked was "Your death has come", but that was too similar to Master Arcesis. I liked the "darkness will envelope you" but it didn't seem powerful enough.

Unexpectedly there was a screeching sound up ahead. It sounded like a vulture bat. They were about 200 pounds of wings and claws. They would prey on anything their size or smaller that they could catch. I needed a weapon to defend myself. I didn't have any powers or tools but I did have the lantern. It had a glass cage that contained it. I smashed one side to create a glass shard. I used it to cut a few strips from my clothes. Next I broke off one of the braces from the same side of the lantern. I used the cloth to wrap the glass shard onto the brace. Now I had a basic knife.



I finished just moments before the screeching got louder. One or more of them must have gotten my scent. When I looked up I saw clawed toes standing in front of me. Its beak came down hard and almost struck me in the back of the neck. I couldn't afford to stay on the ground anymore. If I did, it would have the advantage. I slowly stood up for the first time. Now I wasn't afraid. I put my entire focus on the creature. It stared at me, its eyes glistening in the faint lantern light. As I prepared myself for the battle then two more landed behind me. All my life I've loved to fight, so this was no different to me than the bar fights I used to get into. For the next half hour I dodged and weaved in and out their attacks. In the end I was badly clawed up and bloody but I was the victor. I even cooked and ate one in a victory celebration. I looked around and realized I was no longer scared at all; I had conquered my fear as well as the vulture bats.

Just as I was preparing to continue my journey a three headed vulture bat landed in front of me. This one was several times larger than the rest. It eyed the three lying dead on the ground. I was guessing it was here to get revenge on my killing its kin. But it surprised me. Instead each head spoke one word in turn to the others. It had a low growl to its voice that sounded like an avalanche.

"Well, well, well, little morsel what do we have here?"

I readied for battle and said. "I took these three out I can take you out too."

It laughed and stated. "I am not like the puny creatures you have slain here, dark one." It obviously knew my true nature.

"My name is Triune and I am an immortal. I can become whatever form pleases me at the moment." If it expected me to be impressed by this it could think again.

"Yeah what do you want?" I asked.

"I want knowledge." It answered "It is not what you know now but what you will know that interests me. With my help you could become a powerful dark Guardian."

It went on to explain that each head saw time in a different way. The first could see the past, the second the present and the third head which was blind but got glimpses of the future. It wanted to form a permanent link with me. I would gain its knowledge and it would gain mine. Each time one of us learned something the other would know it too. Triune was neither light or dark; good nor evil. It was true neutral. Its purpose was simply to gain knowledge. With the joining I would get glimpses into the future and be able to anticipate many of my enemies' actions. It was a good deal for me.

The moment we linked my mind was blown. It was incredibly ancient and wise. It had seen the rise and fall of many civilizations and empires. It knew how those civilizations grew strong and why they fell. With this help I could led the dark Guardians to greater victories than they ever had before. In the sharing we each had gained small piece of the other. After this experience it would seek out pleasures of the flesh. It also developed a taste for strong drink. Coming out of the mind link I gained something entirely different. "Well, well, well, that was illuminating." I said to Trine. It nodded its approval at my enthusiasm then gave me a ride out of those cursed caverns.

I can't believe I am finally free of that fear of small places. I was a small child when my father locked me in an animal cage as punishment. I had tormented a few dumb animals, so what? They were just animals they didn't have real feelings. He locked me in the cage for three days. I had water and some bread but that was it. The cage was just big enough for me to fit but not to stretch out. After I was let out I began to have nightmares about being locked away. Now that I had overcome this fear, nothing could stop me now. It also gave me new purpose in life. I would bring others their fears. If they over came them and embraced the darkness then all was well. But if they were too weak to overcome them or stayed with the light then they deserved to die.

## **Commentary present day**

While Etan and Reaper had issues to fix, Misteeek had problems of her own. She and the other Mistles had been given the task of protecting the populations from any unexpected attacks. Several times now, Dark Guardians from other universes came flooding through the fissures and caused trouble.

She got a call from a neighboring planet. A dark Guardian commander was causing panic. When she arrived on the scene it wasn't hard to find him. She just followed the sound of the screaming. Even better, she realized it was Kane or at least some version of him anyway. At this moment he was holding some women and children hostage and letting the husbands watch him torment them. He was obviously a sick man in any universe. When he saw Misteeek come flying in, he stopped what he was doing and turned his attention to her. Kane started to say something but Misteeek beat him to the punch.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" Misteeek asked. Kane had the strangest look on his face. Now he didn't know what to say. After a second though, he regained his composure "Since you want to take my lines, would you like to take over the torture too? There are plenty of these pathetic creatures to go around." She batted her hand and teleported the people in the area a few miles away. "No I'm here to get rid of you. Whichever version, you are anyway." He shrugged and said "I was wondering how long it would take to get someone's attention. I was hoping for Etan, but I'll settle for you right now. I suppose you'll be a good warm up."

## **Misteeeks view**

So he didn't really consider me a threat. That was good, it would make my job all the easier. He started off, as expected with a few basic blasts. I've trained against Etan and Reaper, that tactic would never score on me. Then he divided himself into six parts and surrounded me. So I split into twelve parts and surrounded him back.

"You can divide but I can multiply" I told him. Not to be outdone he created a hundred duplicates. I copied his number. This went on, up and up until the whole town looked like a clone convention. At this point I could figure he probably wasn't our Kane. This guy seemed more interested in simply outdoing me than promoting some dark Guardian plan. I could use that to my advantage. I strolled over to the original Kane and stated "stop playing around and show me your real power."

He of course could not turn down such an invitation.

"Well, well, well, what do you have in mind" he asked.

So he was taking the bait. "I bet I can destroy a larger area of this planet than you." I said matter of factly. He looked at me curiously.

"What are your terms?" He asked back. "You see that mountain over there? I bet I can take out more of it than you." I told him. It was just a dead rock it had nothing but a few shrubs and weeds.

"Ok you're on" Kane said. "I'll go first" I told him. I purposely shot a quarter blast at the mountain. One building sized chunk came flying off.

"That was pathetic little girl." Kane laughed. "Let me show you how it's done." He powered up and focused greatly. This is what I wanted to see. I needed to know just how much power he could channel. When Kane was fully powered up he let loose a powerful blast that burned the mountain leaving a gapping hole in it. This Kane though similar in personality wasn't nearly as powerful as our Kane. This one was less than half as powerful as ours and I just tricked him into using a significant portion of his energy.

If I could get him to use a little more he would be easy pickings. Kane was breathing heavily but proud of himself.

“Well there you go. I told you I could beat you easily.” Kane stated.

I looked at him with derision and said “That was very sloppy. You grazed a few other hills on the way, and the chuck you took out it just a misshapen hunk. You’ve got no style at all.” This made him very angry.

“You little twit, Ill break you into a thousand pieces. “ Kane said.

“Save it for the mountain, big boy.” I told him. I had him really worked up now I just had to finish him off.

“How about a test of raw power that doesn’t need skill or accuracy at all, we can see which one of us can pick up the biggest portion of the mountain.” I stated. He pushed me out of the way and said “Fine but I’m going first this time. “ He focused everything he had. He picked the top half of the mountain and began to lift it. He had it about a hundred feet in the air above where it normally sat.

“There” he said while he was straining with all he had. Let’s see you beat this.” I let him almost get it sat back down when I put my hand to his chest and blasted him. The mountain came down with a thud. It caused a good sized tremor but it was a necessary evil. Kane on the other hand had used up all his energy he had nothing to fight with. I drained him then tied him up tight.

“You’re not very bright are you?” I asked him. “I’m not supposed to be bright, I’m a dark Guardian.” He came back. That’s not what I meant but I let it go. I loved the look on Selar’s face with I came in with Kane as my prisoner. He seemed as pleased as I was. Today was a good day.

## **Apocalypse now**

### **Matt’s comments**

The last few days have been very busy. We’ve gone from one disaster to another and no matter what we fix some other problem pops up. Today everyone had a bad day.

### **Who bugs the bugs? Part one**

#### **1’s view**

When doomsday came I was directing yet again another battle. The problem was we were dealing with enemies from other universes besides ours. Sometimes we got help from other Guardians but it was random when they would be there too. Today’s battle wasn’t ship to ship, it was on the ground. There was an insect invasion of a sort; it was a large creature half the size of an average sized adult human. They had claws and pincer jaws. Like most insect species they could reproduce fast. It didn’t start out as a battle but more of relocation. We had hoped to take the queen and a number of drones and relocate them to a suitable planet. Guardians tried to respect all life, but we had to get them away from the human populations here. After the queen was relocated the rest of the mass of creatures could be contained until they died of natural causes. Locating the queen was easy but for some reason the ships scanners couldn’t lock on to tele her out. I decided to just teleport down and get her myself.

The queen was of course heavily guarded. Some of my troops created a distraction on the outlying areas so many of the fighting class creatures would clear the area and then I could capture the queen myself. I appeared in an empty tunnel. It was amazing how quickly they had created an entire labyrinth of tunnels and rooms. The design was similar to ant tunnels but they were covered with a grayish sticky coating. Some kind of glowing fungi covered parts of the walls and ceiling. There was even a complex network of bio-pipes that were used to supply water and fresh air to various rooms. Given what I could see, it suspected they were fairly intelligent. That could either work with or

against me depending on their mood. I kept cloaked as I made my way through the interior. I could tell by the scans that three different tunnels converged on a massive room several levels down. The scans also confirmed that the queen seemed to be there. Suddenly a large group of the beasts came rushing past me. One of them bumped into me, it looked back momentarily then continued its journey out.

After a few more moments I made it to the queen's chamber. There she was. As expected she was quite massive. The drones in the rooms were taking eggs out one by one as she laid them. I shot the carrier drones with a sleeping serum and went for the queen herself. Her black eyes focused on me for a moment and then glowed red. My ability to cloak was gone and in a moment I was surrounded by several fighting drones.

"I've been expecting you." The queen said to me mentally.

I told her back "I haven't come to hurt you. We are willing to help you. We need to move you to better planet, one where you and human life forms won't have to fight for resources."

She nodded "You will help us. You will become one of us soon." Several of the drones standing next to me injected me with some of kind of poison.

### **The queen's comments**

This one was strong. She didn't know that the world I came from I had already incorporated some Dna from a creature that was a Halfling of her type. It was taking over a thousand drones to suppress her but it would be worth it. After a few moments I could feel the Dna injection beginning to take effect in her. In less than an hour she had become my newest child. "Stand tall my child you will add much to us." I told her.

### **Matt's comments**

While **1** was dealing with bugs, MisteeK had bug problems of her own.

### **Shattered mirror part one**

#### **MisteeK**

I got a call that a mother ship was going haywire; it seemed to have a mind of its own. All attempts to repair it or even shut it down have failed so I was called in to assist. I can literally get into the machine and see what's going on. The mother ship was Guardian Neru's although he wasn't there at the moment. He was out trying to fix some disaster I'm sure. Everyone except the most necessary personal had already been evacuated from the ship. No one had been killed yet, but if the life support systems failed it would be bad.

As soon as I entered the ship I could see a great many things wrong. All the ship's critical systems were locked out from the controls, the lighting was not working and the life support system was offline. The few remaining crew members were all in space suits. Fortunately for me I didn't need such things. Even though the controls were locked out, the ship was traveling at low warp. It had taken a little maneuvering to catch up and then attach myself to the outside of the ship. After that it was only a matter of making my way to the nearest air lock.

As soon as I linked in with the computer the problem was obvious, there was some kind of advanced virus disrupting everything. That usually didn't happen. The Guardians had very sophisticated computer systems that could recognize those and eliminate them without much problem. This one must be of a special kind or from unknown technology. I sent my Nanites in to find the specific codes for this virus. After a few minutes I nearly had it wiped out. I was about to contact Selar for my next assignment. I had gotten all the systems back online and the ship headed back to the nearest base. Suddenly the whole ship went dark again. I could see that this virus was going to be quite stubborn.

A monotone voice spoke in my mind. "My name is Mistan and you cannot eliminate me that easily." It said.

"Mistan "What are you" I asked. I had a hunch what it was from the name but was hoping I was wrong.

"You know what I am. I am you or at least an alternate universe version of you anyway." He said. That's what I was hoping it wasn't. "Look" I told him. You can leave peacefully and I'll find a good place for you to live, or I'll force you to leave. But either way you can't stay here."

He laughed "I'm not going anywhere." he said. I was afraid he was going to say that. "While we've been talking I infected the few remaining crew members. I have my own version of Nanites too." Mistan said.

### **Commentary**

Misteeek fought valiantly with Mistan for the next few minutes. He was just as powerful as her but she did have one advantage that he didn't. She had more information on Guardian tech. She had many files he didn't. She was able to use that to begin taking back control of the Mother ship. No matter what she did he wouldn't form into a solid form where she could fight him one on one. He stayed protected in the computer core or others systems. Finally she had him down to the computer systems in the medical bay before he ran out of room to hide. Now he had no choice but to take solid form. All this time she was teleing out various crew members to the escape pods. By the time Mistan was stuck in the medical bay she had all but four members of the crew safely gone.

### **Mistans comments**

She had fought very well, but she wasn't beating me that easily. I had a back up plan.

### **Matt's comments**

Mistan, that no good sorry excuse for a Mistle, used one of the crew members as a bomb. His Nanites used some of the chemicals in her body to cause an explosion. Sadly it was Mia, Etan's old friend from school that died. He threatened to blow up the other three remaining crew members if Misteeek didn't give up this fight. She had no choice but to meet his demands. Mia was fairly old by now, but humans working for Guardians got the benefit of longer life spans. She was the human physical equivalent of a 60 year old. Older but she still had many years left she could have lived

### **Misteeeks comments**

This was awful. I failed this mission completely. I failed to stop the threat, the mother ship will be lost and worst of all someone who I was sent here to protect has died. He allowed me to take the remaining crew members with me but I had to leave the ship and promise not to return. I remember thinking as I watched the mother ship warped away that this was the first mission I ever failed. On the way home I got on final surprise. He had somehow infected me with his Nanites and my systems were starting to shut down.

### **What's in a name? Part one**

#### **Aries**

Today was a bad day for everyone. I was on a world being over run by tribal armies when I got a call that a powerful Dark Guardian had been spotted in my area. I immediately headed out as this could mean big trouble. My silvers could handle the tribal armies by themselves. Finding him was easy enough as his energy signature was strong. Could this be Kane? He usually didn't do any grunt work himself, but it wasn't Kane but he seemed just as powerful if not more so than Kane. He wasn't dressed in their usual black robes. Apparently it was a requirement of the dark

Guardians to be bad dressers and have dull personalities. That is except for Kane, he was a little odd for the type. He was dressed as an ordinary citizen of this planet. He saw me coming from a distance but made no aggressive moves. He was sitting on a mountain cliff just looking out across the valley.

This seemed a bit suspicious to me. I didn't see any weapons in his hands. He was just kicked back against a rock and looking out at the view. Regardless of my first instinct I wanted to check this situation out before engaging him in combat. As a senior Guardian I knew well by now some situations can be misleading. Maybe he wasn't a dark Guardian at all but only seemed like it from his energy signature. Or maybe he was dying and this is where he wanted to spend his last moments. Whatever this was I needed to know before acting. So I casually strolled up close to him and sat on the cliff too. It was a nice view.

We sat there silently for a few minutes. I thought he might say something but he never did so I had to act. Plenty of other places needed me so I couldn't waste too much time.

"I'm sure you know who I am, and why I'm here." I said matter of factly.

He shrugged and said "not really" That wasn't what I expected at all. I was nearly 2000 years old now, not much surprised me anymore but that did. Was he playing coy or was this some version of a dark Guardian that didn't know me?

"My name is Aries and I am the senior Guardian in this galaxy." I said.

"Nice to meet you I guess." He stated casually as before.

Dark guardians know we can sense their energy so why should he be playing innocent?

"For the safety of the people on this planet, I need to know who you are and what you're planning to do." He looked at me for the first time and said

"I used to be a dark Guardian, but I gave it up a long time ago. As far as what I plan to do, you're looking at it. In the universe I came from I led an unsuccessful rebellion in the Dark Guardian ranks. I did what I could to make up for the evil I had done before. I'm dying and don't have long left to live. Now I just want to spend the last few remaining years of my life in peace."

Dark Guardians were hard to read but it seemed like he was telling the truth. But there was one way to find out. I could mind link with him. Of course no dark Guardian would do this as I would know the truth and learn whatever secrets they had. He looked at me knowingly and said

"I'm sure you want link with me and find out the truth. Go ahead I won't try to block you." After a moment I had my answer, he was telling the truth.

His name was Arcesis, he was the one who trained Kane in his universe. It seems the Etan of his universe tried to go head to head with Arcesis before he was ready. The dark Guardians had been contacted by other dark Guardians from other universes and had some unknown tech. It gave them the upper hand against the Guardians in their own universe. Arcesis over powered Etan but right before he died he created a powerful link with him and linked not only a part of his mind but his spirit.

Arcesis just laughed at this feeble attempt. But over time the effect became more pronounced. Etan's spirit became like a consciousness telling him right from wrong. He began to feel bad about torturing people and most of the others evil things that dark Guardians did. Eventually he decided to stop being a dark Guardian altogether and form a rebellion faction within the system. He changed his name to Paul after the Biblical figure that turned from evil to good. Most likely that was Etan's influence again. He didn't bring down the whole dark Guardian system but he had caused enough trouble for them that it gave the Guardians a chance to even the odds. Now I knew I didn't have to worry about this former Dark Guardian. I bid him farewell and turned to leave.

## **Matt's comments**

Ten minutes later Aries was laying on the ground a jumbled mess. His armor was broke and all his power was drained. A dark man stood over him and laughed. He plunged a blade into Aries chest. The last words he heard were "Your end has come."

## **Game over part one**

### **Reapers view**

After all these rescue missions I've been on lately I finally get something descent. I left my first officer in charge of the ship. It was still needed for guard duty of some necessary shipments of food and medical supplies to disaster ridden places. I was headed toward a large city that was under attack from an unknown assailant. He didn't seem like a dark Guardian but someone just as powerful. It was about time I got a minimal challenge. The town in question was covered in a green fog. When I check their records on my gantlet and it confirmed this was not a natural occurrence. So I guess I was on the right track. An unknown type of energy signature was emanating from the middle of the fog. This was getting better and better. Maybe if I was lucky enough it would be something powerful and would be a real challenge.

Just as I was approaching the position I was teleported out. Suddenly I was standing in a dark room filled with mirrors in the background. I saw countless reflections of myself staring back at me. One of the reflections stepped forward laughing.

"You're all so pathetic. All of you are so predictable it's sad. You thought you would just waltz into town and take me out as easy as that huh." It said. I wasn't letting any reflection get away with sassing me like that.

"First of all I didn't do any waltzing. I don't even know how too. Secondly yes, I'm going to take you out that easy so you might as well surrender now."

The reflection shimmered then changed to look like Andrea my wife, though most people still knew her as **1**. She had on a red satin fancy dress and her hair tied up neatly in the back.

"Oh, your going to take me out are you? Whatever am I going to do, seeing you're such a big strong man and I'm just a helpless little woman." I didn't like the tone in her voice. Whatever universe she came from I had a feeling she had some kind of weapon that she thought would give her the advantage here.

"So what makes you think that whatever you have will work on me?" I asked. "Because" She said "it's already working. You're trapped in my virtual world. It's not just your mind that's here but your body also. Think of it as my own private little dimension. Many years ago I meet a creature called a Trine that let me use a section of his space in exchange for knowledge. In here, I am absolute, all powerful and unstoppable." I really didn't like the sound of that at all.

"So what's this all about?" I asked her. If I knew what her motivations and goals were I might be able to find the kink in her armor.

She explained "All of you always ask that question. You should already be able to guess. I was married to you in my universe. He cheated on me then later when I caught him cheating on me he tried to kill me. I spent some time planning my revenge. But he was hard to kill. Between his skills and his available tech he was prepared for most any situation." That made sense.

“Well of course” I told her “Any Reaper is awesome I’m sure.” She continued on ignoring my comment

“One day I was approached by the triune. He was one part of a massive creature made of three distinct beings. He traded me power and the use of their space in exchange for knowledge. They live in their own dimension that borders all others. Their universal watchers that help keep the universe in balance; they are neither good nor evil. Now because of the power I was given I am going to watch you suffer then I’ll add you to my collection.” I didn’t know what that meant but I didn’t like it.

## **Commentary**

She snapped her fingers and everything changed again. Suddenly Reaper was tied down to a chair in a large room. Some kind of dangerous looking machine hung over his head and an audience watched eagerly in the background. Reaper noticed a large monitor on the far wall, and Andrea holding some kind of clip board. She came over close to Reaper and sat down in a chair near him.

“Now Mr. Reaper is it? Are you ready to play answer for my life?” Before he could respond she proceeded to introduction. She looked at the fake audience and announced.

“For those watching at home here is the way the game is played. I will ask Mr. Reaper a series of questions. If he chooses the right answers, one of his bindings will come off. If he answers enough right he will be free, but if he answers them wrong then the special matter disintegrator will burn off a part of his body.” Reaper decided he wasn’t giving her the satisfaction of reacting to that statement. Andrea continued on without interruption.

“Question one why should you be committed to your wife?” Reaper stared at her for a second and said

“What kind of stupid question is that?” A tiny light beam hit him and took off his smallest finger on his left hand. He yelled in frustration.

“Sorry that’s not the correct answer.” Andrea stated with a smile. “Here is your second question. What kind of things do you need to improve on to become a better husband?”

He stopped fighting the ties long enough to answer “I’ll have you know. I’m better than she deserves.” Reaper blurted out. Drax butted in “Shut up that’s not the answer she is looking for” Drax and Reaper had mostly melded as one by now but occasionally they had a difference of opinion. Now the machine took off a second finger.

“Here is your third question. Have you ever been disloyal to your wife?” This time Drax answered “I’ve never been disloyal to her.” Andrea looked at them. She apparently knew about Drax. “You haven’t but in his mind Reaper has. He even has thought about killing her a time or two. Since you operate as one mind his disloyalty is yours also.”

Now he lost a third finger, and so it went for the next half hour. No matter how he answered it seemed to be the wrong answer. By the end he was down to just his head. She then picked up his head put it in a glass jar of clear liquid and placed it on a shelf. The shelf was filled with other Reaper heads.

“Have fun” she told him as she left the room. After she left the nearest head swiveled around and said “Welcome to the club.” Reaper looked at him and said “Don’t get used to me I won’t be here long.” The one from the top row chipped in.

“Number seven is tonight’s winner on guessing the right comeback.” Suddenly number one and number seven’s jar switched places. “I the dark man am now master for tonight. I get the remote.” A small remote appeared in his jar and a screen came on from the far wall.



“Ok you block heads what’s the deal?” Reaper asked. Number one who was now the speaker for the rest explained.

“We are all the same person from different universes. Some of us have been here for years. You are called Reaper but some of us have different names and origins than you. That woman is called Andrea in your universe but the cursed one in many others. She hunts all of us to get her revenge for what her Reaper version did to her. Now we contest to see who gets to do various things like control of the remote and who eats first and so on. But most importantly who keeps from having to hear her nag. She thinks she is picking us in order, but we can change spots when we work together. We don’t have energy for much else but at least it’s something.

“What’s on the monitor?” Reaper asked. The number one explained “It’s a recording of all of our screw ups we’ve had in our lives. No one wants to see their own, so whoever is in first place gets to choose, and since you’re new here and we haven’t seen yours yet. That makes you tonight’s entertainment.

### **Matts comments**

They watched the recording of Reapers mess ups. He cursed each one as they for laughed at him. Only two others had become friends at all with Etan so none of them had fallen for the pink panties gag Etan had pulled early on, or the wooded insect prank. This was the worst fate he could have imagined.

### **Meaningless meaning part one**

#### **Etan’s view**

I was hearing reports coming in from most sectors in the galaxy that there was trouble all over. Nearly all planets were experiencing either some kind of major natural disaster or invasion from some new enemy. Who knows there was probably a few going through both? For once I had had an easy job to do. I was supervising the evacuation of a group of villages near a few recently active volcanoes. It wouldn’t have done any good to plug one volcano as the magma chamber was enormous. It wasn’t a great emergency I still had three days to get everyone away before any of them would go off. I also had my ship crew and silvers under my command to help. Some minor shaking had damaged the roads but we were able to clear them up easy enough. All in all this was one of the calmest assignments I’ve had in awhile. Who knows we might have enough time to collect the crops for the people when the evacuation is done. The ship should be able to simply tele out the crops in the field. I had just left the control room when I ran into a strange creature in the hall. It was made of a grey mist. It formed a face in the grey mist and spoke. “We need to talk.” Then its eyes glowed and I was transported to a dark cavern.

### **Commentary**

The mist coalesced into a solid form and said “welcome Etan it is good to finally get to meet you.” Etan was old and wise enough now not to be startled by such an occurrence.

He simply asked back “What is it that you wish of me?” The mist man nodded his approval. “With violence or fear you did not react. For attack or flee you did not try, impressed I am. Return you to your time and place I will after I speak with you.”

Etan noticed that the creature spoke in a backwards sort of way. Etan didn’t know where he was; only that he wasn’t in normal space anymore. This was some kind of dimensional layer within his universe most likely. “That is correct” the man said reading his mind. “tri-ez my name is and tell you a secret about the universe and your future I will.” Etan didn’t let himself react in a way that would create a problem but simply stated

“You have my attention. Speak whatever it is that you need to say.” Tri-ez explained “Impressed with your neutrality I am, as is our nature.” He seemed to state the last thing of a thought first and the first thought last. That was odd.

## **Matt comments**

After talking with him for awhile this is what Etan found out. When a universe is created three entities are given charge of its care. The first is put in charge of the light energy and it is what creates the Guardians. They maintain the balance in the life stream and inner rim growth. No one knows his real name though often he is called the luminous one. The second entity controls the flow of dark energy and balances the energy of death and destruction in the universe. He is called Chaos. The third is the combined entity of the three grey beings who call themselves the Triune. They try to keep all other minor forces in balance with the light and dark energies. Tri-ez was one of three beings that made up Triune. There was Trimon, Triune and tri-ez that were part of Trine. Trimon was focused on the past and endeavored to revive things from it. He wanted to keep traditions and ways of past civilizations alive. This answered Etan's eternal question of why so many things were similar in various societies throughout the galaxy. He knew earth history fairly well and most societies had a lot in common with various parts of earth's history. Finally it all made sense. Trine was focused on the present and sought out all knowledge, and Tri-ez worked to give things in the present future purpose.

## **Etans comments**

I was taken back by all this. "Why are you showing me this?" Tri-ez spoke once again in a monotone voice. "An interesting future you have. The vision you first received when you were reborn as an Argarian do you remember it?" I remembered it well. I didn't have nightmares about it anymore but I did for a long time at first. The vision I got was me and another person fighting in space. He killed me and sent me hurtling toward a black hole. By the way he was dressed I would guess he was a dark Guardian. Selar told me he had seen the same things but I had plenty of time to change the future. Over the years of being a Guardian I had experienced many surprises but another was coming. The one in my vision was Kane.

## **Commentary**

Tri-ez showed Etan how that in nearly every timeline he lost to Kane. Etan took it well considering. Etan calmly stated "I appreciate you showing me this; I'll just have to step up my game. I've gotten complacent since I've grown past Reaper. Is that all I need to know or is there more?"

Tri-ez was again impressed by the way Etan was handling himself, considering what he just found out.

"Yes" Tri-ez continued "more to show you I have."

He showed him several universes where Etan never became a guardian but they were doing just fine. Then he showed him other timelines where when he died by Kane's hand that the situation gave the dark Guardians an advantage. So much so that millions of people died before the dark Guardians could be stopped. But when Etan died before that time came then Kane wasn't able to gain that advantage from the situation.

"Are you trying to tell me that it's better that I die before that day then be defeated by Kane?" Etan asked.

"Yes." Tri-ez said. Now for the first time he spoke normally. "You have almost no chance of winning and if you lose then millions of people will die because of it. You have been a good Guardian. You are honest, brave and kind but the time has come for you to do the right thing now before disaster happens."

Etan considered and asked "Cant I wait until that day comes then let myself die first?" Tri-ez shook his head and said. "I'm afraid not. If you're alive the day you fight Kane regardless if you die first the damage will already be done. Only if you kill yourself now can you avoid such consequences."

This was a heavy situation. How could he let millions of people die? Tri-ez showed him several different scenarios of their fight. Even though Etan had grown great in power he wasn't anywhere close to Kane's level. Kane was nearly the same power as a Guardian Regent, except for Selar. In some versions Etan died early on when Kane preformed

some kind of power move. In others he made it long enough to die in space as the fight continued. There was only one timeline Tri-ez could see where Etan did not die but that timeline was obscured for some reason. He even created potential timelines for Etan to try where he had certain kinds of weapons or tools but none allowed him to win the fight. Etan could no longer deny what Tri-ez had showed him. He couldn't let all those people die because of him.

“What do you suggest?” Etan asked. “I suggest you return to your place for a few hours and make whatever preparations you need to make. Then I'll bring you back here and let you die in peace. Don't tell anyone what you're doing. If you simply disappear it will be better than them knowing the truth.” Etan knew he was right. He agreed to follow Tri-ez suggestion. Now he had a few goodbyes to make.

## **Universal gathering**

### **Selar's view**

It's been a rough year. On the positive side we had managed to separate over a hundred universes from the jumbled mess. Now we were down to the core concentration which unfortunately included my own universe. Several universes had already melded with ours. I wasn't sure how we were going to fix this. Before all this began no universe had ever melded with another. The only thing vaguely similar was when two universes many centuries ago had bumped into each other and caused a few problems, but this was beyond anything we had seen. If we didn't separate them soon the pressure would fracture the shells of each affected universe. Life in each one could be permanently lost .

Several of us came to the same conclusion we needed to combine our power. Occasionally two or even three of us needed to combine our strength for something major but even that was a rare occurrence. This situation however was unprecedented. We encircled the multi-universal mass. We had gathered over ten thousand Regents and commander level Guardians for this. There were more than that but plenty of others were needed on the inside of the universes to help keep them stable. We each took a moment to focus and then the link began with the eldest of all Commanders who was on the opposite side of the mass as me. I could feel a wave hit me as the link came around. It was creating pressure waves in the intraversial matrix. The space in between universes called the intraverse was a greenish plasma that was the solidified energy that powered the universes themselves. Universes expanded and concentrated but the over all mass of the intraverse was kept in balance.

We focused on the mass of universes. We created gravity like effects on all the sides of it. The mass shook with great force. This is where the high level Guardians inside would be needed. We needed to pull the individual universes apart without tearing them further. The shaking grew and changed frequency into a humming resonance. The mass grew slightly as it was stretched. We were doing it. Soon small bumps appeared along its outer surface. The individual universes were beginning to be pulled outward. But even for Regents things don't always go as planned.

As the individual bumps began appearing some of the harmonics of the specific universes began interfering with others. We were afraid this might happen. I and two other Regents dropped out of the link to correct this interference vibration. It took a moment to lock on to their frequency and dampen them enough for the plan to succeed. While we were having these troubles I found out later most of the other Guardians on the inside were having similar difficulties. At one point a huge crack in the universal shell appeared and nearly tore into. The Regents available were barely able to contain it long enough for us to finish our maneuver. The mass once again began expanding outward. As this was happening a new energy signature emerged.

It was similar in some ways to a Mistle. The ones from my universe were made of Liquid metal filled with silicon bacteria. They were much like living machines in many ways. Most were human sized and were adaptable to most any situation. Their only major weakness is susceptibility to intense heat. After I scanned a few of these new beings I saw these were different in several ways. These were much larger than the ones from my universe. They were about the size of small house. Instead of being filled with liquid metal and bacteria these versions were made up of plasma energy and was inhabited by an aphasical life form. The plasma in their bodies was nearly as hot as the suns surface so heat definitely would not help here. Worst of all by my count there was now over a million of them headed our way

and more continuing to exit a neighboring universe. I could see into the mind of some of the nearest ones. They called themselves the phase. Plasmatic holistic armed sentient eradicators. I sensed the stench of dark energy on them. They were probably another universes version of Mistles created by the dark Guardians.

This was a bad situation all over. The Regents trying to pull the universes apart needed to be able to continue their work unimpeded. If they stopped now it could cause great harm to the remaining universes. The instability could rip them apart. Seven other regents dropped out of the link to help us create a distraction for the coming hoard. If we could stop them then the other Regents could finish what they needed to do. The ten of us formed a shield around the Regents working on the mass. The first volley hit our shield and went through it like it wasn't even there. We altered the shield harmonics for the second volley. This time we were able to deflect just less than half of the weapons fire. But only a small portion of the phase had fired at all. Soon we would be over run with many more.

The first ones to arrive went straight for the shield and touched it. A few of them dispersed. When I looked back I could see the other Regents were about a quarter of the way finished in separating the universes. While the other Regents held the shield I left it and tried to prevent this new enemy from getting to it in the first place. My Prime matrix had been scanning them while we did the shield and now while I fought. It told what it had learned of their nature. These phase weren't susceptible to heat but if I could decrease their temperature enough then their plasma would turn into a gas and they would disperse much like when one hit the shield before. I powered up and created a freezing wake. The first strike took out just over a thousand of them. The ones in the front began to change position to surround the universal mass. I could sense well over five million of these Phase' now and still more on the way. I could slow them down but there were too many to stop all of them before some could get through the barrier. In fact when I checked a few were just coming through right now. The other nine Regents' that had been making the shield stopped and began fighting the Phase hoard.

Suddenly the hoard stopped and retreated. What were they up to now? Groups of Phase began coming together to form larger forms. I could see where this was going. If this wasn't stopped they would have too much mass to freeze then we wouldn't be able to hurt them enough to matter. The mass of universes was over half way stretched by now. We just needed to buy a little more time. I and the other nine Regents decided to do a little combining ourselves. We formed as one. It was similar to what Etan and Reaper had done but on a larger scale. This time we powered up and wiped out over 10,000 individual Phase that weren't combined into the mass. I had hoped that would back them down. They just needed to be programmed with a new purpose, much like our own Mistles had been.

The Phase mass was the size of a small mountain and still growing, while a few of the smaller ones were still going after the universal mass. I felt a change in the local link. Some of the regents were combining while maintaining the pull on the universes. We tried to affect the large one but it had enough mass not to be frozen now. The Regents had their own mass of individuals. We barley managed to keep the smaller ones off the mass while the others combined. Finally the time came for the remaining Regents to join the fusion.

Now we were all one mind and body. With our left hand we keep a hold on the universes. With our right hand we sent out a massive wave to take out the remaining smaller Phase. This would keep the massive one from getting any bigger. Now both of us were about the size of a small moon. It sent out a powerful blast but couldn't do us any damage or mess up our hold on the universes. It sat there in silence for a moment before sending a message to us.

"It said "this is not over." Then it speed off in the same direction that it came and disappeared. After that we went back to work on the universes. We stayed in this state until finished. Slowly the remaining universes separated. Finally I saw mine emerge from the cluster. I was cracked and highly damage but still intact. Two others were not so lucky. Two that had been in the very center had been damaged beyond repair. These had already been smaller weaker bubbles so were susceptible to the stresses; they collapsed completely into new crystals. At least that would help keep balance for the rest. The major disaster was over but now we had much work to do on our individual universes.

## **Who bugs the bugs part two**

### **The queen's comments**

Once she was fully assimilated I could see everything in her mind. She was a person of great importance to the Guardians. If I kept her then they would come to rescue her. She had severed her purpose anyway. Now that I had her Dna I could make as many copies of her as I needed or make drones with partial or full Argarian Dna if needed. I lead her to the outskirts of our territory with the knowledge we would soon leave this planet and find an uninhabited one. Once out of our range I dissolved our Dna from her system and she soon returned to normal. It would take some time to learn the benefits of the Argarian Dna enough to use the powers but in time we would. With such powerful abilities one day we would rival the Guardians themselves.

### **I's comments**

I found myself in a daze somewhere on the other side of the planet. I left to go report to Selar what I had learned.

## **Shattered mirror part two**

### **Misteeck's comments**

I blocked the progression of Mistans Nanites as much as I could but they were taking over my systems. He must have done this before. I had a backup plan but I needed to make it back to Selars ship. By the time I made it back I only had fifteen minutes until he had total control, I could already feel myself slipping away. I could do a memory wipe and reload my information files. I had a copy of all my files on a back up crystalline disk but that wasn't the part that concerned me. It was my personality the part that made me, who I am. I had anticipated that something like this could happen one day. More especially like now where time was crucial. I took a small portion of myself and wiped the memory then I downloaded a primitive computer program to it. I had discovered it from earth. It was called Dos. All I needed was a basic program to give my personality something to imprint on. I'm sure later when I told Etan I had used Dos to overcome a Nanite invasion he would think this was really funny. After that it was a simple matter to transfer myself to the portion and let the wipe out program do the same thing in the rest of my body. Once cleared then I could download all my memories from the disk to my body. It took awhile but after an hour I was back to my old self and feeling much better. After I was whole I had to report in to Selar. I was afraid he was going to be disappointed in me.

### **Matts comments**

Selar wasn't upset with Misteeck. In spite of one death she had managed to save the other crew members. He told her she had done the right thing by letting him go and saving them. The ship had a tracking device so Mistan wouldn't get away for long. Selar explained that no matter how prepared you are bad things can still happen. It took awhile for Misteeck to get over the death of the crew member but it made her try harder the next time she faced overwhelming odds.

## **What's in a name? Part two**

### **Aries comments**

I got called out to investigate an incident on a local planet. Apparently the rumor was that I and someone else had been killed. They obviously didn't know about the alternate universe copies of various people. Sure enough there was another me and a man who had been killed. It took some time for me to inspect the clues and see enough in the past to know what really happened. The man was a former dark Guardian but he hadn't been killed by the other me. He had been impaled with a dark charged blade. It was similar wound as the other me had sustained. His armor was nearly identical to mine. What kind of weapon could puncture my armor? I had uncovered some answers but also opened new questions. Who was this new enemy and why kill their own? What kind of weapon did he have? And mostly would they be a threat to us later? There were more questions here than answers.

## Game over part two

### Our Reapers view

I had been here for over three days. I can't believe these pansies have given up, well not me. I looked for any exposed power conduits but didn't see any. The monitor had to have power but there's no telling how difficult it would be to get to its power source. While the others had laughs at my expense watching my life, I thought about what I might be able to do. It was probably my experiences with Guardians and Etan that allowed me to think deeper than the others. None of the others here ever worked for the Guardians. Something had been bugging me for the last few minutes. They had told me they could rearrange the jars by working together, so why didn't they work together to get out of here? But I knew the answer to that already. I wasn't a team player especially to myself. I had learned a saying from Etan, to become more than the sum of your parts. If I could get them to work together then we all might be able to get out of here. I mentioned my idea of working together to the others but they told me to shut up and watch the video. Have I ever mentioned how annoying other me's can be? If I was me, what would I respond too?

I would have to make a bet with them. I spoke up "Hey number one. I bet you I can knock my jar over without it breaking and use my tongue to crawl over to the wall."

He looked down at me. "Yeah what's in it for me?" he asked back.

"I haven't eaten my energy pill yet. Energy pills had been what she was feeding us to keep us alive. You can have it, if I lose." I told him back.

"What if you win?" I knew he would ask. "Since you are master for the night the others have to do what you say. You get them to lift me from the floor to the top shelf by the monitor."

He considered. "That's all?" He asked. "That's all" I told him. He agreed. He had nothing to lose. On the floor was a small pile of our old clothes. Andrea would hold them up to torment us sometimes. But now it would serve as a way to keep the jar safe. I rocked back and forth in the jar. The jar tilted sideways on the shelf. The others stared on with interest now. This was better than another rerun of my life. I carefully nudged the jar toward the end of the shelf and tumbled off. I caught the end of the clothes piles and bounced slightly but the jar didn't break. A little luck was with me the jars lid was nudged slightly loose now. I could tell because some of the liquid was coming out the lid on the ground. I did a head-butt and managed to pop the lid completely open.

Another small advantage I had over the others was my bio-enhancements. I could alter my body just using my bio energy. I didn't need light or dark energy for this. I hardened my tongue and made it so I could grasp the floor, then I walked myself over to the wall. Number one was impressed but this was just a step along the way. He kept his word and had everyone lift me up to the shelf, now for the crucial part. Once again my association with Guardians came in handy. I never thought I'd say that.

I had a bio-tech chip in my brain. It worked like a regular metal chip but was made of bio material so it gave off the same energy as me. Unless you knew to look for it, it was almost impossible to find. I used it to attach itself to the monitor and siphon and store energy. The other Reapers were still focusing on me. Now that I had a little more energy I had a few choices. I explained that I would bring each one of them over one at a time and fill them up with energy. We would all combine and get out of here.

Before I could do anything I sensed Andrea approaching. I jumped down and put myself back in my jar. Now I had enough energy to make it float myself. I was barely able to get back into position before she entered the room.

"And how are my little heads doing today?" She asked. She was coming in to pick who would hear her nag. Now my luck ran out because she picked me, dang it. I'd have to wait until I got back. Talk about bad timing. She took me in her private quarters and spent the next hour telling me how bad her Reaper was and how we were all just alike. I let Drax handle this one. He didn't say much and didn't argue with her. This seemed to satisfy her for the moment. Suddenly alarms went off everywhere. A high intensity beam shot through the door and knocked Andrea out. A full

bodied reaper came walking in the room. The odd thing was he has eyes all over his body, from his head down his arms, torso, legs and feet.

The heads had stolen my idea and combined without me.

“Well don’t just stand there lame brains pick me up so we can get out of here.” I said politely. The collection looked at me with amusement.

“We don’t need to get you; we can do this without you.” They said. “Hey this was my idea.” I told them.

They laughed “So what we pulled it off. But don’t worry were not going to leave you here. We have an idea of how to collapse the entrance to this dimension on our way out. If were lucky she will be trapped here forever by herself, and we don’t want to leave her anything to derive joy from, not even you.”

How come all my clones and copies are so hard to deal with? I don’t get that at all. “Well at least put me on top so I can head this operation.” I commanded.

“Sorry new guy,” he said “There’s only one position available for you to fill.” Then he pointed behind him. He was missing his rear end. I guess nobody wanted to take that position.

“I will not be the butt end of anyone’s joke or an actual rear end” I said defiantly. “You have no choice.” He picked my head up and put me in place. I made two mental notes right there. One was to wash my face very well when I got out of this and two kill all these copies of me in the worst way possible when this was over. We did eventually make our way out without further incident except when someone created some gas on purpose. Belching gas was far worse in this way than you can understand. I just thought being stuck in that jar was the worst fate possible, but becoming my own butt was worse by far. When we were free we found some dirt to use to grow a body. I’m glad I had a spare tech arm in my ship. I didn’t get to kill them this day but there day was coming.

## **Meaningless meaning part two**

### **Etans comments**

The more I thought about it the more it bothered me. Even with all the evidence I was shown there was no way we could know if I would lose to Kane or not. Something could happen to Kane or me in that time. Tri-ez had explained that I had over one hundred years until the day came when we would fight. He wouldn’t tell me the exact date, just that it was more than a hundred but less than a hundred and fifty. That was still along time for me to learn new skills or something could change. Kane could be killed in some way before that day ever came. One thing this whole universal mixing and Timescape had taught me was that, no particular outcome is ever certain. I came to the conclusion I would get back to challenging myself and get stronger. If I still wasn’t good enough in a hundred years then I could kill myself before that day. I couldn’t let millions of people die because of me but I still had time to change that outcome.

### **Matt's comments**

At this point most stories would end. If this was a story about a world wide disease or nuclear holocaust we would be to the part where everyone is celebrating and the heroes get rewarded. But life is not that simple. There's really no such thing as happily ever after. Sometimes you get breaks from the insanity but the fact is life is full of ups and downs. And after a disaster there is always clean up to be done. It took almost a hundred years to get everyone back on track. Let’s take a look at a few of the things that happened. The cause of the intraversal problems had been solved but we were far from finished. Many people and objects had been stranded from one universe or another, a Guardian’s work in never done.

# Life after doomsday

## No quick fix

### Aries Comments

I knew we would still have plenty of work left to do but what surprised me is when a whole planet came up missing. A planet called Terraca. It was the planet we had won from the dark Guardians many years ago. Ours had switched with another version of itself from another universe. Ours had been full of primitive tribes throughout the entire planet. This one had the same kind of tribes but also had two large fairly advanced nations. They had gotten changed around when the universes overlapped. Now they were stuck where they were. Opening a door big enough to move a planet from one universe to another was not practical. It would most likely rip the universal shell. So we transferred any individuals who wanted to be in one universe or the other. It wasn't a perfect solution but it was the best we could under the circumstances. The only ones really affected were the advanced civilizations; the primitive tribes really weren't affected at all so we let them be. The next one hundred years we were kept busy everyday trying to undo all the damage and chaos done in the mergers.

### 1's comments

I can't believe these people. We save them from disasters and what do they do afterwards, they fight amongst themselves. Misteeq and I kept very busy the next few decades putting out political fires. One nation was mad because resources and boundary markers had changed. The dumbest fight was over the fact that some ancient tree from one nation had been moved to another nation's borders during the universal overlap. The tree was the oldest tree on the planet and was considered sacred and priceless. I hope one day we can get everything back in order because I need a vacation.

## Strange sightings

### Etans view

### Ship wreck

I was checking out a wrecked ship. It wasn't one of our mother ships but just as large. It has crashed in an uninhabited forest just a few minutes ago. I had hoped to catch it before I crashed but I missed getting the distress signal in time to stop it. I half way expected there to be some strange energy signature in the atmosphere that would obscure my reading but there wasn't. That would have been my usual luck. Finding the ship was easy. There was a large section left intact but no life readings. The inside was just a smoldering collection of fires scattered about. There must have been an explosion some time before the ship crashed. From the size of the ship it probably held a crew and complement of at least a thousand people, perhaps more. This was sad but unfortunately there was nothing to be done here. I would send for an investigation to collect the remains of anyone for burial and the necessary information to contact the families of those aboard. It was just another sad reminder that though Guardians are powerful we are not all powerful. I turned to leave and sitting on the ground playing with his blocks was that child that Reaper had told me about. He had showed me the holo-recording so I knew what he looked like.

He looked to be about eight or nine in human years old. But he was just sitting there on the ground stacking wooden ABC blocks, like the kind a two year old would play with. They even had the earth alphabet on their sides. As he stacked them they would morph into another shape. I could see he was making a replica of the crashed ship. I didn't trust this situation at all. Reaper had told me the child was called Reaper prime in Reaperville but no one knew who he really was or where he had come from. What I did know was that all the Reapers in town gave him a wide berth. I decided on an indirect approach. I sat down close to him and made my own wooden blocks out of the dirt. I set them out to spell hello. He looked up at me and then at them but he showed no emotion. A small explosion happened just behind me I turned to look. When I looked back he was gone.



## **The town**

A few days later I intercepted a meteor heading toward a planet. It was simple enough. I do that kind of thing all the time. The thing that made this one different was it was phasing in and out of reality. It was probably another anomaly left behind from the universal merger. We've had a lot of them to fix since it happened. Everyday we got calls from all over the galaxy where the laws of nature seemed to have broken down. Selar said the universe was trying to fix itself and to regain equilibrium but until that happened we would be very busy. So goes the life of a Guardian. I wonder if it's too early to put in for vacation time. A remote place like Alaska would be nice. No people or disasters just peaceful nature. Who am I kidding? I wouldn't know what to do with an easy week. The meteor was just about to enter the atmosphere when I lassoed on to it with a grappler beam. It bucked and kicked like a bronco. All that was missing was a ten gallon hat and I would have had myself a space rodeo.

I knocked it back on an exit trajectory and looked back. Sure enough it wasn't alone. A few of its smaller brothers and sisters had come along for the ride. I quickly picked them off and was about to call it a day when I felt something familiar. The child was somewhere on this planet. I waited a minute and sure enough ten more big pieces came out of nowhere. They weren't there before they just appeared from nothing. If he was causing this I needed to let Selar know. I created a massive blast that blew all the incoming meteors off course.

"Heads up, a big one on the other side of the planet." Matt advised. Just as I got around the planet the meteor was already impacting the ground. I zoomed in at top speed and got close enough to help contain the blast. I had to surround it with a large force field. I was able to stop eighty percent of the blast from continuing on. But a lot of damage was already done. The meteor had hit an urban area that held just over two hundred thousand people. The blast would have taken out many more cities in its wake, but this was still bad. Nearly the entire city had been vaporized. But few people survived in the parts that weren't vaporized anyway.

My heart sank low. I hate when this happens. If I had been able to get to it ten seconds earlier I could have prevented this from happening. I was four hundred eighty years old now, and by earth terms was practically ancient. It had been a long time since I had something to truly mourn. After a moment I regained my composure and flew off to help the survivors in the cities outskirts area. There he was again, the child, sitting on the ground just like before playing with the blocks. This time I felt angry. If he was causing this he had to be stopped.

Before I could act my Guardian training kicked in and once again I restrained myself from over reacting. In the old days I probably would have gone over and kicked over his blocks, and see what kind of reaction that produced. This time I bent over and asked if he knew anything about this. He ignored me completely as if I weren't even there. Matt could feel my anger swelling up again.

"Easy Etan, we don't know anything about this child." He advised. I went to grab for his arm but my hand went right through him as if he were a hologram. But he wasn't a hologram he was real alright. It was probably some kind of matter phasing tech. If I could find the right frequency I would get his attention one way or the other. As soon as I thought that he disappeared. Ok, that's it. Next time I won't take the subtle approach. He is either causing these disasters or in some way is benefited by them, either way this stops now.

## **My first visit to Reaperville**

### **Etan's view**

I knew from what Reaper had told me that this child liked to hang out in Reaper town so I decided to give it a visit. Ever since the merger, the town had become a permanent fixture. The fissure above the town wasn't causing a threat, except for the appearance of the Reapers. Selar had specifically let them know what would happen if they tried causing problems in our universe. The deal was they could stay as long as they remained on this one planet, unless invited on a mission from Selar himself. Once again a reminder of how powerful Selar was. He could back down a whole town full of Reapers at once. "Yeah" Matt laughed "So you still want to wipe the floors with Selar?" "Shut up" I told him in jest "I told you never to remind me of that." That was still one of my most embarrassing moments.

## **Matt's Comments**

If you don't remember that time go to the story called Home world. Look up the section the meeting with the council. It's really funny and worth the look.

### **Etans view continued.**

Matt are you talking to the readers again? You know, your really not suppose to let them know we know they are there. Let's continue on with the story please.

I found my way down the planet. The town was protected by a force field that kept unwanted visitors out. I could have teled through but there was no reason to be rude or start trouble. One Reaper was enough to deal with. I approchaed the gate but I was refused entrance. I was told I couldn't come in except by invitation of a Reaper. Again I could have forced my way in, but it was better to cooperate than have a town full of enemy Reapers.

I contacted my Reaper who quickly joined me. He looked quite pleased to show me around. I'm sure he had been looking for an excuse to brag to me about a whole town full of him. He had always been full of himself but this was a little to literal for me. He explained there was a ranking system in town, that any Reaper could challenge another within two ranks of themselves for their ranking status. The top ranked were on the ruling council.

"So how do you rank?" I asked. "Are you kidding? I am Reaper, I run this joint." He said back. That was the answer I expected. As soon as I walked in it was like something out of a Hollywood back lot. The town was sectioned off with different styles of buildings. It had four main sections, medieval, western, oriental and high tech. I guess that was to accommodate all the differing taste from each Reaper present.

We passed a crop field on the way in. There was a Reaper using a scythe to cut the crops down. Several other reappears mocked him.

They were yelling "Hey man don't you know that's not what that's for." Even had I corrected them I think the irony would have been lost on them anyway. First my Reaper led me to the main square. In the middle was a large, heavily constructed fighting ring. All around it were various spots for fighting practice and obstacle courses for training. Several non raking fights were going on in the area. One Reaper was controlling the elements to fight while the other was a shadow that kept appearing and disappearing.

Then I saw something pretty funny. Three Reapers were doing a round by round contest, each one conjuring a different item each round. The first round one summoned a car sized boulder. He was holding it up for all to see. The second had a large twin blade. The third held a large flat material that apparently caused harm. I watched them for a moment. They used their weapons on each other then the round was over. They each conjured another item. This time it was two boulders and one twin blade. Then I realized this was Reapers version of rock, paper, scissors, that figures.

Reaper tapped me on the shoulder and said "Hey look." A giant Reaper at least twenty foot tall was strolling by. He looked absolutely ogerish. He carried a battle ax that was bigger than my whole body. Reaper said his name was Titan. Wow! What a monster. Several other Reapers gave him space but not my Reaper. He purposely stood in the way as Titan came by. Reaper couldn't officially challenge him as Titan far out ranked him, but that didn't stop him.

Titan was ranked seventh place. "Get out of my way little man." Titan growled. His voice sounded like a lions roar. Reaper used his arm to levitate and of course got in his face.

"You may be big but you aren't so bad. I could take you." He said with pride.

Titan laughed. It sounded like an avalanche. Reaper shot him with a plasma blast that would have taken down half a mountain. It just bounced off him harmlessly.

“That the best you got?” Titan taunted him. Reaper assailed him with some of his best weapons but nothing seemed to hurt him. He tried poison gas, grenades, and even psi pressure waves but nothing seem to affect him.

Until now I never thought I’d see the day when Reaper was so useless in battle. After Reaper had exhausted some his best stuff Titan held up his battle ax. It glowed brightly with power. Reaper was frozen in place. Then Titan split him into with his ax. He walked off and laughed to himself. In a few moments Reaper was able to pull himself together but I think he was shaken up. By the time he was whole again Titan was far down the road.

Reaper still got off a cutting remark “Yeah you better walk away. Next time you’re going down big man.” He loses and still acts like he won. Some things never change. Reaper took me to one of the counsel members in the central governmental building. He got me a badge showing I had permission to be here. Later Reaper bragged it was his celebrity status that got the badge. But I think it was because I was a Guardian more than anything else. As we existed the building we heard a commotion. A number of Reapers were running to the same spot. What was going on? There was Titan and the child.

A small park had been made for him. He was in the sand box with his blocks. Titan was bent over and yelling at the child. One of the council had explained they’re ranking system further. The child and the old man from the Saloon were considered equal in first place. Guardian Reaper called the protector was second place and so on. Titan was in seventh place but he wasn’t satisfied with that. He wanted to be number one.

“What’s the matter little boy” Are you afraid of me? You should be. I am the greatest.” Titan bragged. I had a feeling this wouldn’t end well. But the child never reacted. It was like Titan wasn’t even there. Titan turned to leave then stopped and looked back at the blocks.

If all the other Reapers thought he was in first place then he must be something special. Titan probably shouldn’t be provoking him. With one swipe of his hand he knocked the blocks over. The child never looked up. With his right hand he reached out and touched Titans knee. I black dot formed where he touched the knee. Titan screamed in pain. The black dot expanded to a spider web network all over his leg. It continued to travel up his body covering the entire surface. His body crumbled to dust leaving only his head behind. It was petrified with a look of horror on his face.

The child stood up and produced a spike out of nowhere. He placed Titan’s head on the spike. This was the child I had been chasing. Now I’m glad I didn’t knock his blocks over. But the show wasn’t over yet. A female Reaper exited the crowd and told the child it was time for lunch. He obediently got up. She told him that he needed to wash his hands before eating. He signaled to my Reaper who was wearing his usual black fighting robe. Reaper thought this was his chance to make a name for myself here. When Reaper got there the child grabbed his robe and wiped his hands on it, then showed them to his mother figure. Reaper was so both shocked and mad but somehow contained himself, a miracle for him.

She slapped the child’s hands and said “No that will not do at all. You will come with me and wash them properly.” The crowd watched on with astonishment as she held his hand and led him away like a mother. Her name was Siren. She was in tenth place on the ranking list. She could scream in such a way it nullified most others abilities. Ironically she was completely deaf. She was powerful but nowhere near the child’s level. I guess since he saw her as a mother figure is why he obeyed. Maybe he had even asked to her to be like his mother. That would certainly make more sense.

My Reaper came out of his stunned stupor and said “You little twit. How dare you rub your hands on me. Don’t you know who I am?” He child stopped for a moment and threw Reaper a block. The block said your time will come, and sooner than you think. I got Reaper out of there before he made things worse. We visited a few shops in the area. The first was a souvenir shop. The owner was already making a Titan head on a stick to sell. My Reaper ordered two. Since I was an outsider none of the shop owners would talk to me. Maybe none of them had an Etan, how sad. I went to the saloon to sit down and think for a moment. A familiar presence came near. It was the protector, the Guardian

Reaper. He sat down next to me and gave me some advice. "Stay away from the child. No one knows where he comes from, only that he is very powerful." After what I had seen and our discussion I decided approaching the child wasn't a good idea. The protector and I visited for a while then I was on my way.

## **He is always watching Reapers view**

I kept the block the child threw at me, I don't know why. That stupid kid killed Titan before I had a chance for a rematch. He was tough but everyone's got a weakness, everyone except me of course. That night I had a terrible nightmare. I dreamed that a giant demonic looking creature picked me up and drained all my life from me and there was nothing I could do about it. In the morning the message on the wooden block had changed. Now it said enjoy your life while you still can.

The second night I had a similar dream about the same creature. This time he dismembered me and I bleed to death because I couldn't put myself back together. The third night I woke up in a cold sweat. I got up to dry off and I saw the child in the mirror. I turned around but he wasn't there. During lunch the next day the cheese sauce from my nacho's evaporated before my eyes. This kind of thing went on for a week. I wanted to go back and tell that kid a thing or two but I was hesitant. Why would I be hesitant? I am Reaper, everyone fears me. I made up my mind to go see him and have this out. I went into town but he wasn't there and suddenly I felt a sense of relief. Man this stupid kid was messing with my mind. Part of me wanted to leave before he got back, but somehow I couldn't quite make myself do it. After all I've never been afraid of anyone or anything. I am death, I am Reaper.

I sat there for nearly an hour staring at the lone block left behind in the sand. I was hesitant to pick it up. All of a sudden a hot breath came to the back of my neck. I turned around but I was alone in the square. The thought hit me that there were more productive things I could be doing right now, after all I still worked for the Guardians. So I quickly left town. My nightmares continued night after night for the next few weeks. Everyday he would follow me in some way. Remind me that he was always there. I decided right there if I was going out it would be in a blaze of glory. I would set a name for myself. Distinguish myself from all the other phonies in town. I still had my death blade that I had gotten while gone for the five years. It stayed locked up most of the time.

The Guardians usually only let me use it on very important missions. If the dark guardians got their hands on it, that could be very bad. It was attuned for my use only but they could be very industrious when they needed too. Very few people knew its origin, and none of the other Reapers seemed to have one. It was made from the crystal left behind when a universe completely collapses. This one was from a universe that was saturated with dark energy. It was probably the single most powerful weapon in this universe. The real question was how to stab the child with it, without him stopping me. I may be egotistical but I'm not stupid. He obviously has a lot of power for all the other Reapers to fear him. If I could think of a way to use my blade I could get rid of him forever, and since there was only one of him, all the better. I could think of only two outcomes to this either I would get to plunge it into him and he would eventually die or else I would use it as a bomb and we would both die. Whichever way it went I would make a name for myself. I had to admit it. I was slightly afraid of him, and I will not live in fear.

When I approached the gate the others must have sensed my resolution because they back out of the way. Just as he had attuned to me; I had attuned myself to him. I knew he wasn't in the direction of his sand box. He must be in the Saloon. Sure enough as I approached I could sense him in there. Steady Reaper, I thought to myself. This is it. This will be the crescendo of my life one way or the other.

The bartender had some kind of machine that teleported tech weapons out but this was no ordinary weapon. I decided to keep it hid however until the last possible second. As usual the child was over in the corner playing with those stupid blocks. If I killed him first I'll have him buried with those idiotic things. Normally when I walk in the saloon no one gives me much of a look. I guess I'm considered pretty average among the Reapers, but not after today. But this time when I walked in everyone stopped what they were doing and stared. How did they know I was coming for trouble?

Several Reapers at the card table got up and excused themselves. Everyone else just stayed out of the way. Now this was more like it, finally the respect I deserved. The bartender came around to face me and stated

“I told you before I don’t want any trouble in here.” I stared at him as seriously as I could and stated back

“Look into my eyes. Do I look like I care?” He stared at me and then at the child, sighed then backed away. Now the question was could I get close enough to use my weapon? I was a mere ten feet away from him now and still no reaction. My sword hand was twitchy. I wanted to pull my death blade out now but I needed to wait a few more feet. Five more feet and now I was close enough to slash at him, but I wanted to plunge it into his chest just to make sure he did die.

On this planet normally anyone who dies gets resurrected by the local life stream. The planet is in the middle of a life stream eddy. It is very powerful and concentrated. The child somehow had the power to counteract that. What he killed stayed dead, permanently. Even if he takes a single digit like a finger, it can’t be re grown or healed. My blade was the same. Most life forms would die instantaneously with even a single touch from this blade. Some very powerful beings could survive scratches but whatever was damaged stayed that way and could never be healed biologically. If I could impale him in the heart he would die, even if slowly. All this time he never looked up or spoke a word. At two feet I called for my blade but it didn’t respond. Don’t tell me my gantlet would choose to jam up right now. This was the most important moment in my entire life. A voice came to my head from the gantlet.

“The Guardians forbid you to access the blade for revenge or hate.” How dare they do this to me?

The child grabbed a block and handed it to me without looking away from what he was doing. The block had scrolling print on it, it said you’re nullified. If you want your abilities back you’ll have to earn them back. I would still rather go out in a blaze of glory than this. I called forth a normal blade and plunged it in the child. It went through him like he wasn’t even there. He looked up at a few of the other Reapers who quickly grabbed me and took me away.

### **Matt’s comments**

Poor Reaper he’s learning a hard lesson, life is not always fair. They forced him to dress up in a frilly pink dress and do servitude tasks for the next week. He was harassed by all the other Reapers around. He can be a pain in the butt however I like him anyway. I hope he can get his honor back soon. He couldn’t have won that fight right now this child was incredibly powerful. I found out later the child was once again near a disaster area when the dark queen herself came to check him out. She made the mistake of kicking over his blocks too. If she had checked with any of the Reapers first she would have known not to do that. He touched her and quickly drained her to ashes. Etan too had one final accidental run in with the child. He was checking out a report that someone had bombed a school. Unfortunately he got the call too late. The school was just cinders when he arrived. Somehow we had to find a way to stop this child for good. Now let’s jump ahead to fifty years after doomsday.

### **Return to Reaperville**

#### **Etans view**

I was a long time before I returned to the Reaper planet. Things were finally settling down in the galaxy. We were getting fewer reports of unnatural events. It wasn’t a vacation but we weren’t as rushed as before. I had mentioned the child’s presence to Selar. He told me that all things would be dealt with in the proper time. I knew that Selar knew what he was doing but every time I saw the child I felt angry all over again. I had never witnessed him causing the events but there had to be some connection. This time I was going back to practice with some of the more powerful Reapers. I only had fifty years left before I was close enough to the Kane fight that I would endanger millions of people.

I talked to the protector and got his blessing to challenge other Reapers for a sparring match. I tried to initiate a match but everyone ignored me. Even though I had permission to be here that didn't mean that they would cooperate. This was after all at town full of Reapers. The protector had given me the gift of sight. He showed me how to see all the Reapers ranks. I could see their rank on their right shoulder. My Reaper was ranked at 22 out of the top 100. I could also see there were multiple people on the same ranking level. The room I was standing in had three level 19's for example. I could beat my Reaper easily enough now But I wasn't ready for the protector, just yet. I decided to try out one of the level nineteen's.

Maybe a direct approach would help. I approached the nearest one and stated

"I would like to challenge you to a fight. I believe I can beat you." He looked at me with disgust and said

"You're not a Reaper or even worth my time." I knew my Reaper enough to know what I needed to do. I was in their town I had to play by their rules. I hauled back and punched him in the face. In Reaper terms this was politely asking.

"Well I think you're wrong. I can take you, not only that I'll embarrass you in front of everyone here." He looked around and everyone was starring at him intently. He couldn't afford to lose face now.

"Very well, but don't cry when you lose." We walked out to one of the practice areas near the ranking ring. We had a whole crowd follow us out. They wanted to see me get beat. I had one thing that might give me a slight advantage here. I knew my Reaper very well, and chances are some of this guy's reactions and tactics would be similar. But he didn't know me at all. He didn't know what my strengths and weaknesses were.

This Reaper didn't have a tech arm, instead he was fully biological but he obviously had something to his advantage. His name was dark Mind. He gave one of his abilities away on the way to the park unintentionally. He short ranged teleported using dark energy. When he preformed the maneuver I felt a psychic surge in the area. So he had no tech just psi- enhancements. That was good to know. I had some experience with this kind of attack before. I knew that since everyone was resurrected here I would be expected to make a kill shot at the end of the match assuming I could beat him.

Even if I didn't win if I could put up a good fight I might be accepted in the group anyway. Simply winning wasn't my goal here, but learning new skills and getting to where I could win against kane is what I wanted. This Reaper called dark mind started off with some smart aleck remarks. What I gathered from the other Reapers here they considered insulting an enemy just as important as beating him.

"Are you scared yet, little man?" I shrugged and said calmly

"Oh yes I'm terrified cant you tell?" It wasn't what they expected, a Reaper would have just come back with an insult but it got a chuckle from the crowd anyway.

Dark mind started off with basic energy blast just to see what I would do. It was easy enough to dodge. He continued pacing in a circle eyeing me the whole time. I realized he must have never fought a Guardian before. He didn't know what to expect from me. He was waiting to see how I reacted. Just then my Reaper showed up to give his support.

"I bet anyone here that Etan whips his butt." My Reaper mouthed off. Several reapers took the bet. Great, just what I needed more pressure. Everyone was eyeing me. Since dark mind had made the first move I was expected to make a move back. This wasn't just a test of power but if I could be accepted as an equal in their eyes. I created a grey mist to cloud his eye sight. He changed to all psychic sight to compensate. I created a psychic image of myself walking toward him, He readied for a strike. I had teled right behind him. I caught him off guard and formed a light blade to puncture him in the neck. I sliced him all the way through and separated his head. For a lower Reaper this would have been enough but this one much stronger than that. This got a surprised look from the crowd though; they didn't expect that kind of move from me. My Reaper wasn't surprised he taught me that move many years ago. Although my Reaper didn't have psychic enhancements yet, he had helped me train against those who do.

“Hey dark dud, what’s the matter losing your mind?” I taunted him. That got a modest applause.

“I let you have that one.” He said back. No insults, that means I got him frustrated that was good. This time it was him that got the strike on me. By this time the grey mist had dissipated. Without much flair he blasted me with a psychic force while swinging at me with a large sword. He quickly lobbed off my arms before I could move.

“Now you’re the one that needs a hand I think.” He said. That got a bigger applause. I put myself together and then grew to over twenty foot tall. I purposely made myself to look like titan. If I was right he would match my size. He starred at me for a moment then did just that. I threw down my sword and held out my hands in a grasping measure.

He took it like I had hoped. He threw down his weapon and grasped my hands. Now was far as he was concerned it was a test of strength. We battled back and forth muscle against muscle but after a few moments he over powered me. He stood over my defeated body and gloried in himself. Then a part of my essence burst out of him in one punch. While he was battling most of my body I had slipped inside him and infected him like a virus. He was so busy focusing on the bigger battle he didn’t even realize I was there. Now he was just puddle of Reaper goo on the ground. I was declared the winner. My Reaper looked justifiably proud, and collected his winnings. Then he realized I just beat someone higher than him and got irked by it.

I was expected to make some kind of victory remark so I looked at the pile and said “Pull yourself back together, your polluting the ground with your stench.” That finally got me a decent response from the audience. With that this match was over.

From then on getting a match was easy. Several of the reapers wanted to beat the new guy. They gave me my own rank. I didn’t want one, I just needed to challenge myself but they gave me one anyway. After a few more victorious matches I was deemed an honorary Reaper by the counsel. They figured since I had learned so much from my Reaper, I must have a good bit of Reaper in me by now so that was good enough for them. I think they didn’t like the idea of being beaten by an outsider so making me an adopted reaper made it alright in their minds. Besides in the past I had gotten a sample of Reapers dna and could copy him anyway. So I could actually be Reaper genetically if I wanted too. I never refused a match, even by those much lower than me. When I won a match I would show my opponent what he did wrong so he could improve. I became very popular after that, my time was full. I went from one match to the other. Over the next few years Reaper and I both progressed. He got to be 17<sup>th</sup> and I had made it to 12<sup>th</sup>. It still made him mad that I was higher than him. Two more place rankings and I could take on one of the counsel that would be interesting.

## **Matts comments**

Etan got to spend a good bit of time in Reaperville when Selar reassigned him from leading his ship. He had a number of random assignments he wanted Etan to have the time to do. While Etan was busy with these things some unusual things occurred. A massive change out of governmental officials took place on many planets. The men taking over the new positions seemed ok, so the Guardians didn’t get involved but they knew something was going on. Also several silver Guardians came up missing. This time it had nothing to do with the past universal merger.

Now let’s jump ahead a few more years. Now we are eighty years past the universal merger and only twenty years left before Etan needs to sacrifice himself to save millions of people.

## **You're the one that I love**

### **1's view**

As usual he was nowhere to be found. I know this isn't Mex night but I fixed dinner, the least he could have done was show up. My potato casserole wasn't that bad was it? I didn't expect him to be here when he was on mission but right now he wasn't on one so he didn't have an excuse. He and Etan were probably in that awful Reaperville again. I've never been there but Drax and Etan tell me about it all the time. One is bad enough but a whole town full of him gives me a headache. But this was the third night in a row he didn't show up on time for dinner and I was getting a bit perturbed over it. I decided to show up and embarrass him by letting them know I was his wife and had come to bring him home. Yeah, maybe after that he would pay more attention. That's just what I'll do.

### **Matt's comments**

She showed up all right and got a rude reception. The guard let her in because he recognized her and knew some of the other Reapers would want to get their revenge. A few of the Reapers were some of the ones that the alternate Andrea had captured and put their heads in jars. She had gotten to the middle of town when she was surrounded by a crowd of Reapers. Two of the Reapers present recognized her and began firing. She knew she was hopelessly outnumbered. A chase quickly ensued. She had thought Drax was in the town but in fact neither he nor Etan was there though fortunately they were close by. They got her distress call.

Reaper and Etan were giving a tour of his battle ship to a few of the other Reapers. Fortunately most of the crew was not on board at this time. The ship wasn't needed for any major offensives right now, so he had let most of the crew take vacation time. Reaper saw 1's distress call and teleported her aboard, then five other Reapers teleported themselves on board behind her. A real fight ensued this time. Etan, Reaper and 1 were against the five attacking Reapers. The few that was already on board didn't get involved they just watched on with interest. In the midst of the fight the power core was damaged and the battle ship nearly destroyed with it. In the end they were able to defeat the Reapers but my Reaper had lost his one true love, his battle ship. Later on Etan explained to the Reapers that this Andrea was not the same as the one that had captured them.

### **Reapers comments**

I can't believe my ship is gone. The damage can be repaired but the power core was special. It will be awhile before it can be replaced. First I don't get any respect from my own people, and then Etan gets named an honorary Reaper and passes me up in rank, and now this. My life sucks.

## **And a child shall lead them**

### **Etans view**

Reaper was really depressed over the loss of his ship. I planned a surprise party for him in Reaperville. First I had to get ready. After I was accepted as an honorary Reaper they picked out my Reaper clothes for me. It was leather armor studded with spikes. It looked like something out of the eighties back on earth. I was required to wear my Reaper attire whenever I came to town, and I abided by all their odd traditions. For example instead of a hand shake they punched each other in the face as a greeting. A farewell was an attempted stab in the back.

The higher ranks had to show disdain for the lower ranks, though everyone knew my disdain was just for show. Being higher ranked did have its benefits though. If there was a line for an item or activity the higher ranked person got to break in line and get served first. They even made me recite a Reaper oath.



“On my dishonor I will do my best to lie, cheat and steal. I will kill whatever displeases me and tolerate the rest. No one is as good as me, or ever will be. Everyone in the universe is here to serve me. Battle is my life, my purpose and one true calling. Fight me, serve me or get out of my way.”

Of course they knew very well I couldn't keep this oath outside of town, but inside I was to be a Reaper. I have to admit it after a while I got to enjoy my time in Reaperville. It was certainly different than being a Guardian.

The party I planned didn't cheer Reaper up. I explained to him I would make it a priority to help find another core for the battleship. It was powered by a collapsing universe. It was held a few seconds in time before total crystallization happened. It was very dense and very powerful. It had literally been one of a kind. It would take awhile before another one of sufficient properties could be found.

We were in my Reapers favorite spot in the saloon when an unexpected event happened. The child appeared out of nowhere in his corner. He didn't come walking in or teleport in, he just appeared. I tried to ignore him, but every time I saw him I felt angry. All of the sudden the lights flickered and the whole place shook. We looked back and the child was staring straight at me. Most of the other Reapers cleared out of the place. The few that were left got off the line of fire. The child motioned with his index finger in the way that means come over here. To be honest I was stunned. I didn't know what I should do. I still remember what he did to Titan. Well, at least if he killed me I didn't have to worry about Kane killing me later. What would a Reaper do here? Ahh, forget Reaper this time, I'm just going to walk over there.

Anger and courage swelled up inside of me. I still didn't know how he was involved in all those disasters but obviously he was in some way.

I strolled over there as big as life as said “What do you want little boy?”

Well, I guess that was a Reaper response after all. They must be getting to me. Oh, no much more of this and I'll be sleeping with a sword and showering with a plasma gun. Three more Reapers ran out of the Saloon and the bartender ducked behind the counter. The child looked at me with slight amusement. Three different Reapers took turns being the child's servant and spokesman. They spoke whatever words he wanted to say. No one in town had ever heard him speak for himself.

The guard looked at me and said “come over here and sit on the floor beside me.” If he was trying to scare me I wasn't buying it, so I said

“If you want to kill me, I'm sure you can do it from right there.” Reaper was in awe of this. A large crowd had formed outside the Saloon; they wanted to see what the child would do to me. He looked at me emotionless but did not move. Fine, I thought whatever this is lets get this over with. I sat down beside him.

“Do you need help with these blocks?” They can be pretty complicated.” Strangely he ignored that statement. All the other Reapers outside were having a fit. How was I getting away with talking to the child like that? No one and I mean no one disrespected him. He looked at me as if he were doing a complete scan of me. He stood up and looked at the guard.

The guard said “Come with me.” The guard teleported the child and I to the edge of town. Once again my life was about to change. The guard told me something that would alter my future.

## **Reapers view**

I saw them teleport out. It only took a second for me to see where they went. I tried to get in close, but when I drew near I felt a strong force pushing me back. It was then I saw a line in the sand. I could see Etan and the child talking. Technically Etan was called by his Reaper name now, the grey death. But I still called him Etan. He was my friend but he wasn't a Reaper. I don't care what those other fakers have to say about it. I think they called him the grey death because of the mist he created in the first match. Anyway I couldn't hear everything they were saying just bits and pieces. I heard something about Kane and Etan's future.

I needed to get closer. I pushed my way closer to the line. I wonder what kind of force field he had on the line itself. I poked the front of my boot at the field. The whole front of the boot and my big toe disappeared. I pulled it back out and tried to re-grow my toe but I couldn't. I'd have to get a tech toe I guess. I edged up to the line without touching it. I heard them say gift and owe him a favor later. Etan refused but the child offered the item anyway. Whatever it was small enough to fit in the hand. Etan was insistent but the child was more insistent. The guard said something that caught Etan's attention then he reached out and took the item of his own accord. So whatever the child gave him would greatly affect his future encounter with Kane, and that Etan would owe the child a favor in return someday. I can't imagine what the guard could have said to convince Etan to agree.

## **Matt's comments**

Well that was weird and unexpected. I just hope that creepy little child's so called gift doesn't come back to haunt us. At least we got to ask him to leave Reaper alone, as a bonus. Maybe things will settle down for awhile. I still think it's funny that Etan was named an honorary Reaper.

## **A better battle beetle**

### **Reapers comments**

This child, not to mention all the other Reapers were really getting on my nerves. I needed to gain some advantage over them. It had taken awhile working in secret to clone the Drax beetle that I stole from the old man. He had taken his beetle back a few days after I stole it but by that time I had plenty of samples to go by. He asked me if I had taken samples so of course I lied and said no. I think he knew I was lying but didn't say any more about it. Now after years of secretly hiring some Argarian scientist to work on it I had a controllable prototype of my own. Up to a few hundred yards I could direct them and program in specific tasks I wanted them to perform. There were still a few glitches as after a few generations they would stop being controllable. But it would be enough to carry out specific missions. I planted secret sleeper colonies around Reaper town that would be my eyes and ears. I had a way to see what they see and hear what they heard.

My new minions would learn secrets and show them to me. I had device that I could hide that would keep them in suspended animation until they were needed. I could send out a few at a time to spy then return to the device for storage. It was perfect. I even learned Siren Reaper's one weakness. I would have to work my way up the raking before I could challenge her but now I knew I could take her. She has the ability to sonic scream. It's an attack that nullifies out almost any enemies power or ability for a few minutes. She usually screams for about seven seconds to completely nullify an enemy's attacks. She is deaf normally anyway but while screaming she is blind also.

I had implanted a few of my spy bugs with psi abilities. I wanted them for myself but Selar won't let me have them yet. He said I would have to show I could be responsible then he would give me great Psi abilities. But this didn't stop me from putting that ability into my new bio- weapon, the Drax beetles. I took several large colonies working together to gain enough power to pick up random thoughts from some of the higher Reapers but now I could. My only set back was when I had set other sleeper colonies around the galaxy also. I set them in critical spots that I thought would be useful. What I didn't know was one of them had been found and the beetles accidentally freed. Without me there to direct them they went about their basic programming. That was to increase their numbers and

destroy all technology they came across. They were able to multiply and spread out before the original freed colony could be eradicated. A few years later that I heard several star ports had been infested. Maybe if I get the time I'll figure out a way to take control of the wild colonies too.

## 95 years after the universal merger

### Goodbye to old friends

#### Selar comments

For the good of the galaxy I have a sad duty to perform this day.

#### Etans view

Reaper came by and let me know that Selar wanted to see both of us. I didn't know what it was about but by Reapers tone it must be something serious. We entered and I could tell by the solemn manner Selar was projecting that this was serious. Misteeck and I were already there. He looked at us first and said

"My dear boys." On no! When he used that phrase it was a big deal. He continued "over the years you both have given so much. You deserve so much more than you have received for your services to the Guardians."

Fortunately Reaper did not interrupt him with a smart aleck remark.

Selar continued "Instead I have to ask something of you, something which brings me much grief to ask. I need to erase your memory of each other and send you both on very different assignments. When all is said and done I will return your memories, but that could take a few years. The timelines have begun to shift in a very bad way. As you know there has been no sign of any dark Guardian activity in several centuries now but darkness is coming. Many timelines show the counsel being killed and the galaxy overrun with a dark enemy. There is much we do not know but what we do know is disturbing. If we had more time we could solve this problem in other ways but we don't have that much time. Most timelines show these events taking place between five and ten years from now. As I say I'm truly sorry to ask this of you."

We were too shocked to say anything. To not even be able to remember my best friend that was awful.

"You've been my friend for along time now. It's hard to think of life with you." I told Reaper. I half expected some egotistical statement but instead he said

"while I was gone those five years I did miss you ole buddy. But At least I had good memories to take with me. Even if you did steal my name and identity your still the only real friend I got."

Selar went on to explain that everyone who knew Reaper very well would need to have their memory erased. All records outside of the Guardian core would be erased too. Not just his name and identity but everything relating to Reaper had to be erased. No one outside the counsel would know about the battleship, or Reaperville or even the tech arm. Everything had to go. It would be as if he were a legend or myth. He said most of the people who had worked for or around Reaper had already been taken care of.

"What about the dark Guardian's knowledge of him?" I asked. He responded with "were going to let a rumor leak out, that Reaper is dead. Most of the people that worked with him already have a slightly alternated memory, same events just a memory of a different person who did them. The general public on most planets have heard of Reaper but they just know the name and the cloak but don't know him personally."

Selar looked at Reaper "I'm afraid I must ask you to go on a few of the most dangerous assignments yet. You will be sent in alone with no backup and just what you can carry with you for protection. Anyone of several things we need you to do could be your last mission."

Reaper was quit serious when he asked “Then why ask me? There are more powerful Reapers in Reaperville than me.” Selar put his hand on Reapers shoulder in much the same way he had done me many times. He does this when a person needs encouraging.

“Reaper there are more powerful versions of you in town. Some of them can do amazing things, but none of them posses a quality in abundance that you do.” Selar said. “This had reaper confused.

“Ok I give up what is it?” Selar explained “You posses a full abundance of courage. When others would give up you don’t. When other would run in fear you stand and fight.

Others are more powerful but when they meet opposition more powerful than themselves they cower in fear. You never back down, you never quit, no matter what the odds. Your stubbornness and courage make you unique among the Reapers. Just as you have helped bring out the best in Etan he has helped bring out the best in you.”

I saw Reaper shed one tear. That was unbelievable. “You really mean that?” Reaper asked. “Have you ever known me to lie or exaggerate?” Selar answered back. Reaper had been so down lately because of not having top status in town. He thought he deserved more respect. Now this made him feel better.

“And I’ll tell you a secret you’re the only Reaper in town who has the ability to become like the old man, the one that rivals the child. “ Selar said.

Reaper just sat there in silence taking it all in. Selar looked at the girls and said “Your memories will not need to be erased but I will have to send you far away from this or you will die too.” We all said goodbye to each other for a long time to come. In fact we didn’t see each other again for another five years. What happened next you might ask? Well, that is another story.

**The end**