

# Guardian Core Chronicles

## Darkness Rises

### Note to readers

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

### Prologue by Matt

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

## The Interim years

### One week after being sent away

#### 1's comments

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

#### Matts comments

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

#### Misteeks comments

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

#### 4 years later

#### Reapers comments

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

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

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

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

### **An unwanted promotion**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Matt's comments**

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

## **Part one Secret Guardian**

### **Getting started Commentary**

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

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

### **Etan's comments**

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

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

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

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

### **Matts explanation**

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

### **The auction Commentary**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Reapers comments**

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

### **Matt’s comments**

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

### **Day one the auction**

#### **Algeria’s view**

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

### **The lead guard comments**

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

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

### **The first meeting**

#### **Etan's memories**

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

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

### **Algeria's view**

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

### **Matts comments**

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

## Algeria's comments

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

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

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

## Tantrums and Conniptions Commentary

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

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

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

### **Matts comments**

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

### **Intangible**

#### **Algeria's view**

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

### **Commentary**

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

### **Algeria's comments**

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

### **Etan's comments**

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



## **The first break Commentary**

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

## **30 years ago in the Morrigan tribe.**

### **Algeria's memories**

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

### **The next day**

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

### **2 days later at the funeral**

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

### **Etans memories**

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

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

### **Agent of the swarm's report**

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

### **The first concession A few days later**

#### **Commentary**

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

### **The beginning of the change**

#### **Algeria's view**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Etan's report**

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

### **Etan personal journal**

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

## **Journal addition**

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

## **Interview with the first officer**

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

## **Etan's thoughts**

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

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

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

## **The revelation part one**

### **Algeria's view**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Dark swarm’s command to Terracan agents**

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

### **One hot mess**

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

### **Etan’s thoughts**

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

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

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

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

## **The Revelation part two**

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

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

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

## **Algeria's comments**

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

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

### **Matt's explanation of Tribal conduct**

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

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

### **The trip to the tribe Commentary**

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



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

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

### **Etans comments**

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

### **The trip to the tribe Algeria's view.**

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

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

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