**Chapter Five**

She stayed in the tallest high-rise in the Diplomatic district, the same place Frost had given chase to Ridge; and again thoughts of how the powerful the Griffoth possibly was nagged at him. Frost was one of the best Guardians there was and he had always seen himself and Ridge as equals but now, knowing that Ridge could’ve easily taken care of anything they had faced so far made Frost feel a bit inferior and it wasn’t a pleasant feeling. Pushing the troubling and distracting thoughts from his mind the Guardian kicked his speeder into high gear and headed for the one hundred and thirtieth floor; the one that belonged completely to one Senator Jenteal Eight.

He knew there would probably be at least three guards besides the two Illithon and possible Assasa bugs if his guess was correct so Frost spent little time thinking of the bill the building managers were going to drop on the Guardians. Besides, Cyranda owed him one and then some. The glass building grew before him rapidly as his speed increased and Frost loosed two shots from the front mounted cannons on the bike; enough to give the weather proofed glass a hairline crack, a crack big enough that enough force could shatter it. Frost ducked his head as the window exploded around him.

The room was an entertainment room and two of Jenteals’ bodyguards had been there when the first shot hit the glass, stood to see the second and had just enough time to dive away as the speeder and its rider came crashing through. The guards; both highly expensive cyborgs drew their weapons as Frost rolled away from crashing vehicle; the speeder blasting through the closed doors and into the third unsuspecting Cyborg, folding him cleanly in two.

Frost felt the first laser just skim his left shoulder and the Wolfen grabbed a toppled couch one handed and let fly. This was something the Cyborg had not expected and was so stunned that he forgot to duck as the piece of furniture crashed into his plasta-flesh face. Both went tumbling out of the window a second later.

The remaining guard fired repeatedly but Frost dove and twisted in an acrobatic display that sent the Cyborgs’ mind reeling. Yet as impressive as he was Frost was equally stunned when the Cyborg caught his foot in its downward arch and launched him across the room to crash thru the marble stone bar. Not wanting to give away his advantage the bodyguard rushed forward but was caught by surprise as the Wolfen exploded from the ruined bar and drove ten long, razor sharp claws through his plasta-flesh abdomen and sliced upward. Normally he would’ve laughed off such an attack but the icy cold that assaulted his systems as well as the fact that the razors cut deeply into his vibranium encased entrails rocked the Cyborg.

Frost grimaced slightly as the bodyguard grabbed his wrist and desperately squeezed but the Guardian wasn’t about to loose, especially since he could see his speeder being pushed away out of the corner of his eye; meaning number three was up and probably pissed.

“What the fuck do you want Guardian”, the Cyborg growled?

“Believe me…I’d rather be at home”, growled Frost in reply as he reversed his grip painfully, spun and dropped to the ground while pulling the Cyborg over his body, kicking him between the legs and hurling him towards the open window. The throw was just short as the Cyborg tumbled and rolled to his feet, the toes of his boots just over the edge and his arms out desperately keeping his balance. Just when he thought his was safe two thudding shots pounded his back and sent him flying away; the whole time cursing the unknown assailant though in truth it was the remaining bodyguard who had shot him; just missing Frost as the Guardian dove out of the way.

“Fuck!”

The Guardian smiled at his luck and the Cyborgs’ poor aim as he reached behind his back, drawing forth two concealed blades forged of metals rare to only Khruss and stronger than any others found in at least a hundred systems. Turning behind his meager cover he could hear clearly the footfalls of his attacker and he prepared himself.

The Cyborg began to run, firing all the way but Frost was better and flipped over the broken bar just as the bullets tore away the ground where he had just stood. Looking up the Cyborg regretted the action a moment later as one of Frosts’ blades took him between the eyes, severing his CPU and killing him instantly.

At a run Frost tore his blade free and dashed towards Jenteals private office; where he could hear the agonizing groans; one human female and two Illithons by his measure. He slipped into the infra red spectrum and could see the young earthling writhing on the ground, the two Illithon slumped against the walls on either side on the door, Jenteal behind her desk and a human male next to the female, though he looked as if he were trying to help her. From his distance, though it was quickly shrinking, Frost saw the horrible events unfold.

Jenteal had her fingers plunged deep into her sex, one naked leg splayed across the desk as she happily sucked on one of her thick nipples, her big firm breast heavy in her hand when the earth girl, who had her own legs high in the air with the young male plunging his revitalized sex deep into her depths suddenly cried out in horrifying pain, grasping her swollen belly as if someone had stabbed her. It was hard to differentiate between her lustful moans and those of the prostitute until she began screaming wildly; her voice full of terror and pain, begging for him to get off her while pleading for help. Jenteal stood, concerned and scared as her two bodyguards began to move forward but then her worst fears came true as both Illithons loosed their own gurgled moans, black ooze spilling from the mouth of one as she fell back against the wall, grasping her once flat belly.

From beyond the door Jenteal heard the thunderous crash and the ring of gunfire but her attention was focused on the events before her and a cold chill of fear rushed down her spine. The earthling planted her feet and hands on the floor, her eyes wide with fright; along with Jenteals’ and the prostitutes for the poor girls already swollen belly had begun to balloon forth at an alarming rate, quickly doubling its already ample size. For his part the prostitute tried to soothe her as the young female gripped his hand, tears flowing over her cheeks.

She looked so ripe, so horribly innocent at that moment, her belly towering above both her and her male counterpart; the flesh shiny with fullness; quivering on the verge of explosiveness. Sweat rolled off her as if she had just stepped from the shower; only adding to her frightfully ripe appearance and even Jenteal; as ruthless as any creature alive, felt a sickening sadness for the girl but fear soon superseded such emotions as two big bulges formed on her monstrous orb and then pain suddenly covered the poor females face like a mask.

Her belly was impossibly huge, covered in thick veins, shiny with tightness and sweat and even as blood and bile filled her mouth the dying girl could hear the awful stretching in her ears; she knew what was about to happen despite how unbelievable it seemed and then came the first horrendous cut from within. She was hacked apart from inside out and died only moments before her brood erupted from the tight confines of her gravidity.

The girl gasped and blood spurted from her lips as her eyes rolled back into her head and the scythe-like blade of an Assasa bug burst thru her too tight skin and proceeded to rip open the gravid flesh of her pregnancy with sickening, horrible violence; her back arching impossibly as the creature within nearly tore the poor pregnant female in half, the Assasa bug emerging from her rent open body only to immediately kill its next victim, taking the male prostitutes’ gore covered head from his shoulders just as Frost exploded through the door!

Jenteal felt a mix of emotions; elation, fear, horror, rage; not one powerful enough to dominate her thoughts as she watched her former lover, former hunter and now savior (she silently hoped) splinter her door.

Frost crashed into the room just as the human birthed her wicked young. The male human was dead a breath later but Frost had two other concerns and he smoothly reversed his grip on his blades, reached out and stabbed backward; each blade slicing through the already swollen and taunt flesh of the Illithon bellies. He felt the blades cut deep; penetrating the soft flesh of the two bodyguards until he felt something a bit firmer; the underdeveloped armor of the bugs. He drove each blade home; breaking through the still weak protection and into the meaty insides of the bugs, twisting each blade and then yanking them out with such force he heard the soft wet pop of the females’ swollen guts.

The Guardian took a hairs breath of a moment to see the outcome as black Illithon blood along with the acidic ooze of the unborn Assasa bugs begin to eat away at the two females partial swollen bellies; each looking nearly eight months along with twins as they crumpled dead to the floor, their flesh sizzling and burning with a sickening aroma.

Frost dove forward, for there still remained one deadly creature and it stood between him and Senator. It turned as it felt it’s’ brothers die and hissed angrily at the unknown assailant. The Guardian looked at the creature and knew what he had to do.

Wolfen clothing was designed for two things; protection with high maneuverability and to be easily removed to allow any of the species to quickly take on their more natural form. Frost loosed a roar that shook the room as he tore off his cassock; the deep purple in his eyes seemed to glow with the intensity of the change. Frosted black fur erupted over his body, his bones broke and reformed, his muscles stretched, tore, reshaped themselves as he took on his true eight foot tall Wolfen form.

The Assasa bug, not understanding fear but knowing a threat when it saw one quickly scuttled over the torn corpse of its host and leapt angrily at the hulking wolf like creature that had only seconds before stood as a man. Again the Wolfen roared, this time far more loudly than before, the windows; designed to withstand winds greater than any knew; cracked beneath the force.

Frost growled eagerly as he accepted the attack; catching both whipping scythe like appendages just behind the blades while immediately slamming his foot into the eyeless featureless face of the creature, just above its’ pincer wielding mouth, his padded feet pressing hard against the bone like armor. Though trapped the creature managed to score a painful hit on the powerful Wolfen; one of its knifing blades finding the flesh between forearm and bicep, slicing so deeply it punched thru the elbow, which only managed to piss Frost off.

Tightly he gripped the chitinous arms, pulling with all the strength in his body as he pushed against the ravenous creature with his foot, planting the Assasa on the floor as he yanked upward. The bug screamed his hissing cry as muscle ripped, senu snapped and armor cracked against a foe it had not been prepared for. Blackish ooze began to spill free and melt away at the insectiods flesh, its wild flailing tearing even further away at its wounds; as Frosts’ muscles flexed even further, bulging beyond anything Jenteal had ever seen, his fur bristling with fury as a growl erupted from the core of his being, his body seeming to double in mass and the Wolfen finally ripped the scything blades free from its core, spraying the blackish ooze onto the floor; burning the cloth and the flesh of the bodies as Frost; all eight feet of his monstrous body went tumbling backwards, crashing into the Senators’ personal bar, the wood and marble exploding around him in thousands of chunks and splinters.

The Assasa bug squealed and screeched as its blood spread about the room and over its body, adding even more injuries to the dying insect as the black ooze burned the floors, the chitinous armor growing holes as the acidic stuff melted its body. Jenteal cowered behind her desk, smelling the burning wood, the flesh of the two humans, her furniture, her own urine and then seconds later her own vomit as she threw up on herself.

Frost pushed himself up, his purple eyes glowing intensely as he looked at the creature dying before him; the torn limbs splayed out by his feet and a fearsome smile grew over his animalistic face. The Assasa bug was only twitching now, the last of its life’s blood bleeding out as his feet curl up under its body and it grew silent and fell still. Standing to his full height the Wolfen stepped up to the fallen assassin and he took the its armored body and ripped it in half; its entrails splashing on the floor as the two halves landed on either side of the room with sickening thuds. It wasn’t the justice the two humans deserved but it was all Frost could give them. A low growl rumbled from him as the Guardian examined his arm and watched as the deep cut was rapidly mending itself. Satisfied it would heal properly he went to the task of unburying his clothes.

Jenteal was still gagging when the human version of Frost pulled her to her feet quickly and abruptly; her eyes wet with tears grew suddenly clear as they locked onto the almost angry stare of her former lover. But it wasn’t the anger in his eyes that sobered her so quickly, it was the small tinge of concern that held her and brought Jenteal Eight, the Senator, the crime boss, the powerful women who existed in a world not meant for her to exist in, back from the fear, the death and the carnage.

“You made an enemy a long time ago, do you understand?”

She nodded, waiting for the Wolfen to explain in more detail.

“Who put the hit on Goll?”

Jenteal was caught by surprise with the abruptness of the question but she immediately remembered the meeting between herself, Lady Sophinya and Blind Jack nearly century and half ago. Frost jarred the memory even further.

“Who put out the hit Jenteal,” his voice rising but still not becoming as angered as she expected or felt she deserved.

“I did; along with Lady Qualarr and Blind Jack. We all had made the decision when Goll introduced the bugs,” her head nodding towards the still smoldering puddle of black ooze, “and his plan to wipe out the Guardians and unite the families into one. It had been Sophinyas’ idea originally. Jack new the experts in explosives and I fronted the bill; not fully in charge of a family then, Jack helped me take care of the boss and put Lucus in the position as front man for me. Lady Qualarr gained her own family and Jack got peace without the threat of war from myself or the Quintarins. It was perfect.”

The Guardian shook his head.

“Who confirmed the kill?”

She shrugged and this time Frost did yell.

“WHO CONFIRMED THE KILL!?”

For a moment she said nothing. The purple eyes bore into her and she couldn’t stand to look at him any longer.

“B…Burt the “Butcher” Rose”, she managed to stutter.

Frost almost laughed. It all made sense now. Use an unknown who Jack later brings into the family. Burts’ first hit and the stupid kid never confirmed the kill and that’s why the Guardians never found a body, there wasn’t one to find. That’s why Goll picked Burt, not because it was random choice but because the clone, even as a kid, failed to finish the job and Goll knew who he was, but worse, hated failure...one of the few facts that was known about the old mob boss. Alora had just been in the wrong yet perfect position and Goll used her like a time bomb; just waiting for the opportune moment…when all the houses were so content that a hit on a minor boss would spark the seed of war and war would force the bosses together. The perfect trap.

Frost began pacing as he thought things through. If Goll could impregnate women so easily then why off the Senator… because the three bugs here weren’t meant to kill her and then Frost stopped in his tracks?

 “He wasn’t planning on killing you…not like this anyway. Three bugs is excessive, even for a cunt like you,” and though hurt Jenteal didn’t speak, she truly had no ground to stand on, “He was going to impregnate you with those fucking things and have you deliver them…but where?”

Jenteal gasped even as the words slipped from her mouth, “The meeting!”

“What meeting?”

“I invited Lady Qualarr and Blind Jack to a meeting at a neutral territory to discuss the recent attacks. There hadn’t been a war in almost a hundred years and none of us wanted one. We were going to try and figure out who was muscling in on our territories in Chns.”

Frosts’ smile sent a shiver down her spine. The answer was right in front of her face and she was too blind to see it.

“I can answer that for you Senator”, and she didn’t miss the hint of hatred in his voice for her, “it’s the same son of a bitch you all tried and failed to muscle out!”

Jenteal Eight almost fainted at the realization, slumping back as she began to remember so long ago, her first experience with the Assasa bugs and their creator. She was shaking her head slowly and placed her face in her hands as the Guardian watched her; noting her trembling form and for the first time in almost twenty years, he actually felt sorry for her.

Moments later they where airborne in her fastest air car, a sleek black vehicle and Frost was weaving them dangerously through traffic and straight towards the PPC. It was fully into the evening of Rhsk and in Chns that meant a dizzying display of lights and colors; made all the more nauseating by the wild, frantic driving of the Guardian.

Even as he put them in a spin that sent her still queasy stomach churning the Senator managed to get the question out without vomiting.

“Why did you save me?”

Frost was silent, narrowly missing two hover trucks. She waited patiently but it was soon apparent he wasn’t going to offer her anything. Jenteal refused to give up so easily.

“You hate me Frost. You despise me with every ounce of your being!”

“No argument there”, he said coldly, side spinning the air car and putting it into a high climb. The clone couldn’t help but shiver slightly at the ease he expressed his distain for her. But she wanted answers.

“So why? The bugs could have taken me and I would have died soon after, much like that poor girl or worse. So why save me?”

“Because the only person I will let to kill you Jenteal is me and when that day comes…you’ll know it!”

Those words spoken with such finality and heartless calm quieted the Senator, but only briefly. Frost twisted the car violently and smiled when the clone vomited a breath later. His COM buzzed and looking down he knew immediately his partner had found and captured Jynor. Frost tapped his wrist on the wheel and the image of a hovering Ridge grew before him.

“Where are you”, the older, mysterious Guardian asked; his voice crisp and direct. Frost wasn’t in the mood.

“On my way to Yssobols’; we have trouble”, his own voice harsh; not so much out of frustration for the man he thought he knew though there was a hint of that, it was more on his attempt at concentrating on the crowded sky before him. He and Ridge would have their words when the time was right.

“I know! I read what you and Carly came up with…and I agree, Golls’ back!”

The Senator threw up again at the mention of the name; this time nerves and fear caused her to be sick more so than Frosts’ frantic driving.

“There’s a meeting that Senator Jenteal Eight has set up with the bosses”, Ridge continued, “Most of them are probably on their way.”

“The Senator is with me. She was just attacked but we made it out before any real damage could be done. These bugs are nasty Ridge…I could handle one in my true form but the other two were luck and timing; killed while in the womb.”

Ridge nodded grimly and was sure he did not want the details of that story. Though he had lived many years and many different lives; Ridge knew one thing about Frost…he always did what was necessary, whether or not if the rules applied.

“How far out are you?”

“I’ll be crossing by the Tower in five!”

“See you there!”

Yssobol smiled politely as Black Tom and thickly built Snarf exited the elevator on the third floor. On both sides of the door stood two Slythins; enormously muscled and each wielding twin edged vibro-blades and armed with heavy repeaters; armor piercing rounds loaded into each clip.

Black Tom, his hair died raven black unlike his deceased brother Burt or his remaining brother Argyle; who were both blondes. The middle brother, Black Tom was the more level headed, though he was also known to spray buildings, rooms, and houses with bullets; whatever Burt or Blind Jack told him too and regardless of who was there. As he stepped through the scanner the Slythin guards picked up his two pulse repeaters. Though the promise of none violence was always required at the PPC, Yssobol normal requested all arms removed but tonight; tonight was different and the more guns the safer she and her people would be…at least she hoped.

The Snarf regarded her hungrily but the icy stares from the Slythin guards kept even that dull witted beast in check. Behind them slithering in was Blind Jack. Currently keeping his tentacles dormant, he looked like a massive slug with a back covered in layered ropes. His four eye stalks looked about but they were milky white, seeing nothing really and it was obvious why he was called Blind Jack. His voice was gurgled and thick but the Slythin princess understood every word.

“Thank you Yssobol for allowing us this meeting and my truest and deepest condolences for the loss of Alora Brightsmile. I am sorry I failed you…and her. She was a friend; true and dear and when her murder does come to light; the whole of my family will be sent to give that person the proper farewell.”

Yssobol smiled and though repulsed by Prengarians in general; she did hold a small place in her heart for the impressively intelligent creature before her and leaning forward she gave him a soft and thankful kiss on one of his eye stalks. It shivered slightly and the Prengarian moved passed.

Moments later entered the seven foot six Cyborg known as Lucus. He was strikingly handsome with a cleanly shaven head, a plate of metal covering one eye though three glowing dots of red, green and blue allowed him to see everything in three different ways. He was thick and well muscled with his black trench coat and leather suit that hide more weapons that anyone one knew.

 With him was another Cyborg, a sleekly shaped female with six arms; upon her long and slender torso were six openly holstered heavy repeaters. She was attractive, even with the skull painted over her face, her body athletic and well toned; small perky breasts hidden in an equally small top exposing a trim waist and low riding leather breeches, revealing a bit of the armor plating of her legs and buttocks. Lucus nodded respectfully towards the guards and as he ducked through the scanner more internal weapons systems that any could imagine could be seen. Killjoy, his partner followed him in.

“Sorry the Senators’ late. I tried to reach her but she was in a meeting last I heard”, there was no hint or worry in his voice and Yssobol had learned long ago of the foolishness in trying read the mind of a Cyborg.

Yssobol nodded and watched as the two Cyborgs walked into the room with Blind Jack and his companions. They were politely cordial; especially because of the four Slythin males posted up at every corner of the rather large room.

The Quintarin arrived next; Rorgin, Sevor and Lady Qualarr. The first two entered; Sevor and his twin vibro-blades and duel heavy blasters, Rorgin and his four heavy repeaters. Lady Qualarr was last and she and Yssobol gave eachother a friendly hug.

“I hope you enjoyed your evening?”

Sophinya purred.

“It was delightful. I hope my driver got them home safely?”

Yssobol did an amazing job hiding the sudden fear in her heart. The girls had never come back and she had felt odd ever since they left earlier in the night.

“Yes…yes he did”, she stuttered softly.

Lady Qualarr nodded, walking away even as the pleasant, implanted memories went to work and yet Yssobol noted the way she rubbed her belly slightly as she followed the two male Quintarin in to join the others. Yssobol hid her tears as she silently mourned, Yssin and Issonol; though she wasn’t sure how, she could feel that her friends were dead; and had died like Alora. Quietly she began her duties as host.

No one saw or heard the soft hiss from the seventh guard placed near the rear exit as Goll plunged the dagger through his heart. Though hidden well enough in the shadows the Quintarin had activated his personal cloaking system; a design of such genius it was frightening. He had slipped in through the back using Alora Brightsmiles’ personal key; something he had had stolen the night she delivered his precious bug to Burt “the Butcher”. The guard at the exit died as quietly as this one, not suspecting death from such a clever villain. Everything was going just like he had planned.

  Five minutes later found Frost speeding by the Bureau and Ridge landing easily in the back seat of the open topped vehicle; a thoroughly miserable looking Senator slumped in the passenger seat and Frost fully concentrating on the road skyway ahead.

“The rules were the bosses and two body guards a piece. Yssobol has emptied out the place for the night, except for her own security staff.”

“Is she gonna be there?”

“Has to be! I'm going for her first and then we’ll see if Goll will make an appearance.”

“Think he can get past Torg or the others?”

It was a silly question but one that had to be asked. Frost could feel Ridge nod behind him and put the throttle to maximum.

“When we get there, pass by Yssobols’ room and I’ll get out there; drop off the Senator and come in through the front. I don’t want them to know we’re coming.”

Frost nodded even as the Pregnant Pussy Cat club came in sight.

“By the way, you get Jynor?”

Ridge chuckled and let the wind fill his wings as Frost swung passed Yssobols’ window. The Griffoth lifted out of the vehicle and twisted himself onto the balcony. The Guardian brought the car around back and dropped it low to the ground. The front door was guarded by the massive Cyborg known as Torg; a three story quadruped that would undoable announce his arrival. Not what he wanted. He hoped out and Jenteal, looking pale and exhausted and more than scared turned towards him.

“Far and fast Jenteal! No place you’re used to going to! Disappear and when it’s safe…I’ll let you know.”

She had no doubt he would find her so Jenteal sped off even as Frost entered his personal code allowing him to bypass the security measures. As quiet as night the door shut behind him. That’s when he noticed the first guard; A Slythin, his neck twisted around so horribly it was nearly severed. Quickly and quietly he began to run two steps at a time. Goll was here.

Ridge landed onto the floor as silent as death after leaping down the stairs. Both guards were slightly stunned when he stepped between them and rushed towards the conference room. They were both quick to follow. Yssobol, who was at the entrance of room, saw him and though none knew it, so did Goll. With an angry look and a profound hope that he would’ve been able to see Jenteal deliver as well, the Quintarin activated his hologram and the creatures within Lady Qualarr.

Their voices were raised but calm as they argued over where and why Jenteal eight wasn’t there.

“If this is a set up Lucus”, Black Tom warned leaving the threat open.

“Okay mates, I don’t have a leash on the woman; I just do her dirty work. “

Killjoy was anxiously tapping her weapons when Ridge burst into the room. His nods were almost imperceptible but the four Slythins began pulling back towards the door to join up with Yssobol. The weapons were in her hand before many could acknowledge the movement though Ridge saw it immediately. He raised a hand to calm Killjoy even as Rorgin stood; his guns finding his hands with lightening swiftness. Black Tom was up with guns drawn and the Snarf was already reading himself to pounce on the Griffoth but Blind Jack halted everyone.

“Hold! Let the Guardian speak. We have done nothing illegal here.”

Yssobol, playing her part and keeping the crime bosses happy spoke harshly to Ridge who promptly ignored her. Their love affair was known to few; even at the PPC or within the ranks of the Guardians.

“Why are you here Guardian? This is a private party!”

“Because”, Ridge spoke solemnly as an image of a very healthy, very handsome Goll appeared in the middle of the room; hovering above the grand table, “I think it just got crashed!”

Everyone gasped as the image grew solid and looked as if the old Quintarin was actually there. He smiled; disarmingly and dangerously so.

“Well…almost all of my would-be murderers are here. I apologize that Jenteal could not make it. I suppose she had a prior engagement; with death! And though I will not be there to see her final show…Sophinya, my dear, beloved daughter…I always said I would be there when you had children.”

Her eyes went wide as she stood but then horrible flashing images of the massacre in her car and her impregnation flooded her senses just as pressure gripped her midsection. Both Rorgin and Sevor moved forward but the four armed female pushed them away; trying to clear herself of the room; not for their sakes but the sake of her dignity.

“I think not”, the image of Goll spoke as the poor female cried out; the beginnings of a small mound already growing beneath her fine suit coat. She stumbled and crashed into a chair, fully in the view of everyone present.

“N…no…not like this”, she begged but the image of her father merely smiled.

“Get her out of here”, was Ridges’ command to Slythin guards who quickly began to usher Yssobol from the room, the two lovers’ stealing one last desperate glance before the six warriors moved her from his sight.

“Back, and be ready!”

Every gun present fell on Lady Qualarr and Ridge was about to give the command to fire when Goll spoke.

“Oh…if you think to kill her before my little presents arrive…think again. There is a bomb within this place and if I see one bullet fly to relieve my daughter of her rather painful demise; all of you and the lovely owner of this building will die most horribly. Understood?”

Ridge glared at the image that seemed to stare right back at him, coldly. It smiled and turned to watch the horror unfolding before them. Sophinya was crying as she felt her body change and the first hints of the beasts within her; the memories of her Slythin lovers bursting before her eyes still flooding her mind.

The Snarf, already anxious to fight leapt at the image of Goll; only to crash through the plexi-steele window thunderously.

“I could’ve told him it was a bloody illusion!”

Even as the Snarf recovered Killjoy took aim as did Lucus but Ridge held them with a stare that sent a cold chill down their servos. He would not risk the chance that Goll was bluffing…not with his lover or his children; and as he looked all were ready to fight; only Black Tom was urging Blind Jack closer to the door and though the others were ready for whatever was about to free itself from the female Quintarin…none were ready to see this.

Sophinya gasped and moaned as her coat tightened about her growing belly. Already she looked as a human in her eight month, with triplets. Her flesh could be seen through gaps in her fine coat, the buttons straining to hold together but it was becoming too uncomfortable for the female, too tight for her to breathe. All four arms grasped the jacket, flexed and pulled it open, the buttons pinging off the table while revealing her large firm breasts stuffed snugly in a too small bra and a belly; growing bigger and rounder with every breath.

The flesh of her swelling waist was smooth and tight, though veins were quickly mapping its surface and stretchmarks already marred the growing sphere as it pushed down at her pants, the seams soon splitting as her gravid middle quickly looked as if she were fully into a normal pregnancy of a Quintarin but she just got bigger; the massive orb was nearly towering before her; covered in tight veins and stretchmarks. The arms of her chair groaned as her bloated sides pushed against them; her four arms trying to soothe the tightening flesh as Sophinya spread her legs as wide as possible to allow room for the monstrous orb.

Goll smiled, looking on the painful concentration etched into his beautiful daughters face. Her eyes were closed tight; her breathing came in heavy, labored gasps as the weight of the creatures within settled on her lunges and internal organs. Wet hands gripped and stroked the too taunt flesh of her dangerously swollen fecundity. Sweat rolled off her by the gallon as her too big, too tight belly soon reached its limits. She slipped from the chair with a heavy thud; leaving a great mountain of bruised, throbbing flesh above her, crushing her body beneath its incredible weight.

Sophinya grimaced as they moved within her, the face of the young Slythin still burning her memory; the fear, the anguish as the creatures matured, as her flesh grew so tight it felt as if it would split at any moment, the pressure; throbbing and constant pressure sending waves of pain through her too taunt skin; then the cutting, the hacking away of her insides until the birth. The Quintarin mob princess saw it all; felt it all as the beasts inside her still growing womb began to make their way to freedom; thru her.

“Bloody hell”, was all that anyone could say. Even Ridge was speechless, looking at the horrible perversion of a state in which woman were to be their most beautiful, their most sensuous. Sophinyas’ belly was nearly twice her height; almost twelve feet of tight, translucent flesh rising like a pulsating tower, quivering on the verge of bursting. So tight, so taunt was her skin that Ridge could nearly see through it to the deadly creatures within. So swollen was she that her belly looked hard to touch, only the constant shudder of her skin begging, aching to rupture would prove that it was flesh and not a shiny, solid mass.

Sophinya took one last look at her monstrously bloated body and then to the wicked image of her father, the last desperate grasp at forgiveness but his wink stole the light from her eyes and the hope from her heart.

“Oh no…” Ridge whispered.

Sophinya could barely breathe but she loosed one final plea, even as she felt them churn within her and the beginnings of a painful birth. The cutting had already started and her mouth was filling with blood and bile when she spoke.

*“K…ki…kill…m…meeeeaaaahhhhh”,* were her last words as blood spurted from her lips; the creatures slicing apart her insides. The massively swollen belly started to undulate and quiver violently as they came, poor Sophinya arching her back as all four arms pushed against the solid floor, her hands clawing the carpet as sharp edged bulges appeared here and there on the vast globe of her gravidity when suddenly the moment arrived and stole the breath of those present. The first ebon scythe erupted just between her heavy breasts, splitting her heart and slicing down the full arch of her womb; a spray of blood gushing skyward until finally cutting her in half at her sex.

“Good bye dear daughter.”

Then they came out! Other blades emerged from the still tight flesh, cutting and hacking until they reached freedom; the orb continuing to swell as they forced the too full womb to expand beyond its means.

 Ridge was moving, even as her belly exploded in a disgustingly violent mess; blood, gore and the brood she had been carrying, then suddenly the room was alive with gunfire, the hissing of the Assasa bugs; all six of them; the screams and cries of those present and yet through all of that Ridge heard it; the angered cry from elsewhere in the club and the distinctive roar of a Wolfen.

Frost reached the top of the stairs and slipped into the heat sensitive spectrum of light but something was different. He no longer saw the heat of those before him but the variations of cold that surrounded them. He could see the creatures begging to tear themselves from who he could only guess as Lady Qualarr. It was easy for him to make out the six Slythins escorting Yssobol to safety, and the remaining mobsters who were now rallying behind Ridge along with the brightly cold blooded Snarf who was already leaping back into the fray. Frosts eyes then focused on the brightly cooling body of the Slythin just beyond the door, the dark blue glow of his icy blood was far more detailed than anything he had ever seen with his heat sensitive eyes and though completely unsure of what was going on Frost suddenly realized that he could see the object of their search. Part Quintarin, part Cyborg…either way, he wasn’t ready for this!

Goll had planned for many things; one of which was the fact that most species could see in the infra-red spectrum of light; thus his camouflage was designed to cool his body to such an extent that he would be invisible to such creatures; Slythins and some of the more infamous Guardians, along with many security systems. He could not have planned for an evolved Wolfen; one whose vision now saw the reverse of heat read spectrum, one that left Goll as naked and clear to Frost as if he were standing alone in the desert. It was one of many things Goll could not have prepared for. As such, he ignored the Guardian as he stepped through the door; too enthralled with his daughters gruesome demise but his attention fell fully on the Wolfen when he turned just in time to receive the full brunt of the table Frost had easily hurled his way. As Goll crashed painfully into the furniture nearby; his cloaking device failing with the sudden disruption, Frost roared; allowing Ridge to know the trap had been sprung.

Goll sat up; pushing free of the tumble and mess.

“I am not quite sure how you saw me Guardian…but you’ll have to do better than that!”

Frost answered with a smile. He rushed forward as Goll tossed the crumpled table off to the side and eagerly met the charge. The Quintarin was slower than he used to be but he made up for it with skill and power as Frost cartwheeled out of the way of his first two swings but was just a hairs breath too slow as the third hit connected. The Wolfen was launched backward; crashing into a pole on one of the many stages about the room; the metal bending against the force of the impact and tearing free of the ceiling.

Goll charged forward, his servos whining as he pushed them faster than normal; the red optic glinting as his Quintarin half looked on in anticipation for it had been over a century since the old mobster had fought hand to hand. Unfortunately it was Frosts’ turn to reply. He kicked up to his feet and spun himself in the air; landing an incredible double kick to the unsuspecting Quintarin only to follow it up with a round house that sent Goll reeling.

Pressing the attack Frost went into a blur of motion; his hands and feet moving rapidly and accurately as he forced Goll towards a nearby window. Then with speed even the Guardian was surprised by, Frost dropped low and leg swept the Cyborg, popping up suddenly and launched himself into the Cybernetic Quintarin; sending both of them crashing thru the third floor window!

The ground rushed to meet them as the duo continued to punch and beat one another. The impact was so great that windows shattered for nearly a block in every direction, the ground shook violently and yet there was no pause to the furious fighting. Stone and steel exploded around them as they broke through the solid surface of the street and fell in a heap; smashing their way down to the lower levels of the sewer system; leaving a massive whole in the street above.

To the others in the room, it seemed that Ridge's body blurred, then swelled. Black and silver wings exploded from his back, larger than ever before. His fore limbs become longer, more massive as eagle like talons appeared at the ends of his fingers. His hind limbs became more muscular, black, as they took on a form similar to that of a mighty lions. His face elongated, eyes becoming deeper, more intense and eagle like, and a beak filled with sharp teeth came into existence. In moments, the Guardian all knew had been replaced by a creature of legend. Into the mix of Assasa bugs leaped at the mighty being part man, part eagle and part lion. A shrieking roar of challenge filled the air as the Gryphon leaped into the fray.

Ridge's attack took the Assasa bugs by surprise. Slightly disoriented from their birth, they moved slowly for a moment, gaining their surroundings. Ridge knew that, unlike their predecessors, these would not self destruct in a few moments. Goll would want them to survive so they could wreak as much havoc and pain as possible. He had to kill them all, and quickly, or the others in the room would die.

Even as he realized this, the two cyborgs attacked the Assasa bugs, only to find that their servos and robotic limbs were no match for the impossible speed and scalpel sharp blades of their foes. Lucus unloaded a payload of munitions into the swarming black mass but the lasers bounced off the thick armor of the bugs, Killjoy suffering from the same problem. She was reaching for her heavy repeaters when the bugs reached her. The Cyborg didn’t even get the chance to scream out as the bugs scything blades cut her in two.

Lucus turned to see his friend fall just as two blades erupted through his titanium plated chest and then sliced outward, his upper torso spinning away as cybernetic fluids sprayed out over the ground, his lower body dropping to the floor with a thud.

"Get Jack out of here!" Sevor yelled as he drew his blaster from its shoulder holster. He quickly switched the setting to full kill, then added an attachment to his gun, one that fired a spinning, razor sharp, disk of steel at the same time as the laser. He hoped the monofilament edge would be enough to cut through the armor like hide of the Assasa bugs. He glanced back, and saw his boss cowering behind some concrete pillars, Black Tom before him, weapons drawn and ready, and he nodded to the clone to be ready, then turned to face the writhing tossing mass before him.

Ridge was facing a test the likes of which he had rarely faced before. His speed and strength were equal to the task, but, in all his 1500 years, he had rarely encountered a foe so close to his own abilities. His claws lashed out, ripping armored hides, claw like talons tearing an arm of one bug, even as his leg kicked out and ripped open the chest of another. Yet, even as he struck, he was struck, a sharp, red pain slicing across his shoulder and making him roar in pain. He spun about, a closed fist lashing out with such unbridled strength that he literally tore the head off his attacker, the limp, headless body flying through the air to crash against the bar before collapsing to the ground in a loose, boneless heap. Another slash; this one from the side, made Ridge snarl in pain again as another cut was scored deeply along his arm. He spun about, his wing flashing up in a wide blow that knocked the Assasa back several feet. It fell to the floor, then rose up, scythe like arms ready for an attack, only to have its head burst open in a flash of blue white energy as Sevors’ blade and laser combination killed it from behind.

"Thanks!" Ridge snarled, giving the underworld bodyguard a quick nod before turning back to the fray.

"Two down, four to go." Ridge muttered as he faced his attackers again, one of them had already lost an arm, and another who was bleeding from the deep cuts on its chest.

"Let's dance!"

He leapt at them again, focusing on the two wounded, and quickly ripped the one armed one in half with a roar. The others backed away, moving to three opposite sides of their foe. Ridge looked about him, seeing what they were doing, and knowing what they intended. Even as the three rushed in, he bent low, his wings folding around him as they started to take on a silvery sheen.

"Get down!" Ridge shouted to Sevor as the bodyguard started to take aim. Without hesitation, the big Quintarin threw himself behind a concrete stand that supported a large vase of flowers.

The Assasas rushed in, mindless of the odd posture their victim was taking. They were almost on top of him, arms raised to strike, black blades gleaming along the edge, when Ridge struck.

With a roar that shook the building, the mighty Gryphon surged to his feet, wings swinging out to flare wide in a flash of silver. As he did so, feathers of razor sharp steel flew from his wings, slicing through the air like a torrent of deadly rain, they slammed into the attacking Assasas, impaling them many times over and, in several cases slicing right through their bodies as though their armor did not even exist. In an instant, all three bugs lay in dead, limp heaps on the ground. In their midst, eyes flashing gold, body bleeding from a multitude of cuts, several serious, stood Ridge Griffinson, the Gryphon, triumphant. Without a word, Ridge walked over to one of the limp, black bodies, put his clawed foot on its neck, threw back his head, and opened his beak in a roar of triumph that echoed and re-echoed throughout the club and the city around it.

As his roar ended, Ridge slowly reverted back to his more human form, and fell to his knees, chest heaving for breath, face twisting in pain as adrenaline faded and he became much more aware of the pain.

"Ow...", he said softly as Sevor and Blind Jack came over.

"Are you okay", gurgled the Prengarian crime boss.

"I will be. Just have to have time to heal."

 Even as Ridge said this, and as Yssobol pushed her way to her lovers’ side, Ridge felt himself pass out. He had a moment where he felt himself lifted by the Slythin guards Yssobol used, felt his lover kiss him on the face through her tears, then passed back into peaceful oblivion for a time.

The fight continued as Goll pounded into Frosts’ sides; at such a close range it was impossible for the Wolfen to use the dizzying acrobatics of his martial arts. But Frost was as much a brawler as he was warrior and he brought his knees up between them, flipping himself backwards as he connected fully with Golls’ chin. The Quintarin fell back into the wall. He spit blood as he grinned.

“Well…I do hate to run boy but I have an appointment to keep; I think my friends will just have to keep you company.”

Frost glanced about quickly and saw the ghostly forms of four Raiths emerging from the shadows. Normally the assassins would be hard to see but with his newly acquired vision the Raiths were quite visible and unsuspecting.

He rushed Goll but the Raiths were faster, still Frost saw them coming. His blades were out in an instant, the first Raith loosing its screeching, hollow cry as the thin edge pierced its gut; Frosts’ entire fist punched up into the aliens’ belly. The milky white icor of its blood spilled over his hand as he tossed the thing aside without so much as a glance back.

The other three paused at the suddenness of their companion’s death and immediately moved to surround the lone Guardian. He took a quick look to catch Golls’ retreat and then put his full attention to his three attackers. Frost smiled and launched a spearing tackle into the Raith in the center of the trio, sending them both crashing thru a stone wall and into another chamber.

Both remaining Raiths looked to one another and moved to follow their companion until the deafening roar of a Wolfen filled the deep halls of the sewer. Then the torn and broken corpse of their companion was tossed from the hole and it was filled with the massive form of the Frosts’ true form. He had changed though, his once frost fur was now an icy blue, steam rolling of his hulking body as his temperature was colder than that of the stifling heat of the lower tunnels.

“Hi fella’s…shall we”, his voice was a low, deep growl that rumbled even in their bones. They looked deep into the burning purple orbs and it was not a pleasant sight. This time they saw the rush coming but it was he who was the quicker, barreling into one of the Raiths, smashing them both into the stone wall. The other Raith drove himself into the furred monster but realized his mistake as the Wolfen turned and chomped down, his huge maw catching both shoulder and neck. It screamed in the blinding pain as Frost hoisted him up and viciously began to shake and tear his head from side to side until the Raith fell limp in his mouth.

The last of the Raiths was still dazed by the bull rush and truly lamented looking up as Frosts’ clawed hand clamped over his skull like face. There was a loud, resounding crack as the creature fell dead seconds later. Frost roared and not far away Goll felt a cold shiver run down his spine.