

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

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AND NOW, a word from the publisher:

Hello folks, Jochannon here; first let me say thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy, and please feel free to share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

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I've got a website, where you can download old issues:
<http://fanaticalpublishing.weebly.com/wr-archive.html>

If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at the aforementioned e-mail address with: 'category(prose, fanfic, poetry), STORY TITLE, Author's Name' in the subject line: please include the text of your story in the body of the email, and please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want, and cover art if you have any.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at the aforementioned e-mail address.

I'm bad at stopping these things, so I'll just say again: thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy!

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ORIGINAL LITERATURE

HOPELESS ROMANTIC

Solilska
og <http://solilska.deviantart.com>

As my eleventh piece i attempted to talk about a word that i think is missed used and has been warped:

This word is thrown around a lot, and seems to be misused, I would call someone a hopeless romantic if they threw themselves into a situation with all of their strength and tried their absolute best even when there was no real chance of a break through or progress, this can be seen as stupidity, but is often the real power of being a human. We force things to work, we make them work, not by brute strength or stupidity, but our willingness and absolute believe in ourselves and whatever it is that we are trying to do.

I mean this in more than the standard romantic term that this word is used, progress is from the complete and utter willingness for change and making it happen, hard work and dare I say hope. I have never liked the concept of hope, who needs hope when we can make choices and have will power and free will?

No one, we forge the future we want, but It won't happen if we don't throw ourselves willingly into it, and this is often called being a hopeless romantic.

If you're someone who gets called this, take the compliment and carry on, make your life work for you, it doesn't matter what it is that keeps you going, as long as you do carry on.

Q AND A: THE FREELANCER - LIKE A DRUG

Ambiguous-Catharsis
of <http://ambiguous-catharsis.deviantart.com>

i. State your name and your codename.

Codename? You mean that ridiculous handle the Agency assigned me when they finally decided to hire me? You want that? All right, then. They called me Loki, after the Norse god of mischief and chaos. If anyone ever says that the Agency doesn't have a sense of humor, well...

They had a file on me years before they even thought about recruitment. I took a look at it the other day. The paper one spans three manila folders, and those are just the hand-written notes, GPS printouts, contact information, and client list. They think their computer system is more secure, so they store the more sensitive information about me there, a nine-digit encryption key keeping it safe from prying eyes.

I'm important enough to the Agency that they protect me (and my time) almost possessively. I haven't actually taken on a contract in months. If this doesn't change soon, people are going to start to think that I'm losing my touch.

I still have part of your question to answer, though. Judging from all the pages you gave me, you're not looking for the nine words it would actually take me to answer. Because if I did that, your little analysts would have nothing to analyze. So as not to contribute to the unemployment rate, I'll give you what you want.

My file says I was born in Boston and lived there until I was sixteen. It states that my parents were killed in an armed robbery, and that four months later, the man responsible was found dead in an alley outside Salem. It also says that I stopped actively avoiding the foster care system at that time. The file draws no firm conclusions. It doesn't have to.

I did try. Whether it was to avoid what I knew was inevitable or to actually attempt to be the person my parents wanted me to be, I don't

know. But as base, cruel, and inhuman as it sounds, my work is a rush. It's like a drug. The planning, the deception, the infiltration, the watching and waiting is all a high for me. The killing is the reality check. If the preparation is my addiction, the result is the let-down. But just like any hardcore addict, I always come back for more.

I'm pretty sure it's going to kill me one day.

The girl who vanished when her parents were stabbed to death came back with a newfound appreciation for the virtue of patience. I grew up with the TV shows where everything from crime to punishment happened in an hour, flat, counting the commercials. I thought it would take me a week to find the guy and end it, at the most.

It took me a month just to learn his name. It took me another month to track him down. After that, I just waited for the right time. I did a lot... I did what I needed to do to survive during those months. I'm not proud of any of it. But I regret nothing.

My dad had a gun he kept locked up in a drawer in his room. When I left, I took the gun with me. Fully loaded, it held six shots. It now has five and sits on the mantle in my apartment, and not-so-subtle reminder of where this all started.

What does this have to do with my name? Probably nothing, at least logically. But my name is part of who I am, and part of who I am is a corpse in a graveyard with a bullet hole in its stomach. So when I say my name is Sarah Price, I'm also saying that I killed for the first time when I was sixteen, and I haven't stopped since. I'm saying that I'm not trustworthy, but I will die before I let a contract go unfulfilled. And just because I work for you right now does in no way mean that I won't work against you in the future.

You know this already, and you hired me anyway.

How desperate are you?

NEW AGE OF HEROES

THE SPEAR

SaviortoFew
of <http://saviortofew.deviantart.com>

At the Typhon Mountains, Isalus climbed to the summit and grabbed the Stone. He also took the Soul of Typhon and gained control of the Storms. He then flew to the Hunter Forest and found Naminas at the Tree of the Hesperides.

He landed and said, "Did you get it?"

"Almost, but the Hesperides are protecting it."

"I'll handle them." He turned to them and said, "Excuse me, but can we please take some of your wood?"

With its wicked voice, one of the Hesperides said, "No, it is our tree that grows the glorious fruit."

"But I possess the Soul of Demeter, so I can regrow it."

"Alright, son of Apollo, but if you touch our Golden Apples, we will kill you."

Naminas jumped up and broke a branch off. Isalus then grew it back.

Isalus said, "2 objects down, 3 to go."

Nickolaes said, "Make that 2 to go."

"That was quick."

"Well, it was on Atlas' body in Tartarus."

"Now, for the Wind Orb. Stand back."

In a few seconds, hurricane-force winds started blowing from the North, West, East, and South. He held out his hand and formed the Winds into the Orb, and contained it in a jar decorated with monsters.

Isalus said, "Are we ready for Mount Olympus?"

Nickolaes said, "Yes."

Naminas said, "Time to visit the Home of the Gods."

They flew to the base of Mount Olympus and Isalus said, "We walk from here."

They walked up the mountain and viewed the bodies of various dryads, 2 water nymphs, and the Muses.

Isalus said, "I've never been here, but Athena has told me lots of information."

Nickolaes said, "When I was a child, Hades took me to Zeus' Palace, and that's where the Phoenix."

"Ah."

Near Aphrodite's Palace, Isalus started shivering because of the

presence of a monster.

Naminas said, "What is it?"

"Something familiar, yet I never knew it."

"Well, we shall see in a short distance."

They walked to the Palace of Hestia and found the somewhat-familiar disturbance; Isalus' rise to heroism, the Clazmonian Sow, a giant flying pig.

Isalus said, "I'll handle."

He opened his Wings and brought out his Bow. He plucked all the strings and shot all the arrows as he chased it, and the pig died.

"That was easy. Now let's get Hestia's Soul."

Inside the Palace was a woman with brown hair, dead and on a fire pit. It was Hestia, Goddess of Hearth and Home. He took in her Soul and felt relaxed.

"Let's get to Zeus' Palace."

Back on the trail to the summit, there were no obstacles.

They reached Zeus' Palace and found the King of the Gods, dead in his throne with a Chimera in front of him: a beast with a lion's body and head, a goat's head next to the Lion's, and a snake as the tail.

Isalus took the lion, Nickolaes took the goat, and Naminas took the snake.

To begin, Isalus sent single-shot arrows into its eyes, then Nickolaes fired an arrow from the Selene Bow into the air and an ice column from the goat head.

Then Naminas stabbed her Trident into the ground and water sprouted from the cracks and drowned the snake. Isalus brought out the Helios Reapers and cut off the heads.

Isalus said, "Finally we can get Zeus's Soul Soul and the Phoenix feathers."

Isalus took Zeus' Soul, and was in severe pain as lightning coursed through his body, then started to get memories of his past life: defeating the Sow, becoming a hero, meeting Leona, and dying.

Inside his Soul Realm, Zeus was in his throne and said, "My son is it really you?"

"You're my father? No, it's impossible. Apollo is my father. Are you?"

Apollo appeared and said, "Yes. But we created you in his past form."

"Oh. How come you never told me?"

"Because you didn't need to know, but we knew you would sooner or later."

"Oh...Zeus, I must leave and defeat Chaos."

"Farewell and go forth in the name of Olympus."

-Back in Zeus' Palace, Nickolaes ran to him and said, "What

happened?"

"I remember who I was, the Final Son of Zeus. We al shall bear.
the Corwn of the Thunder King."

He gave them the Soul and they all gained control of lightning.

Naminas said, "That was amazing!"

"Now we get the feathers."

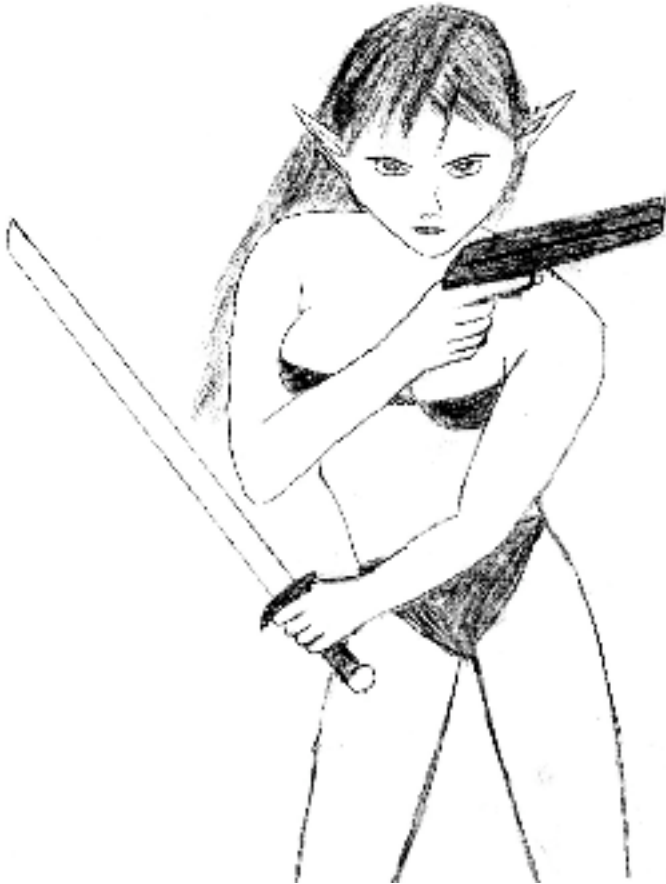
In the back of the Palce was the Chamber of the Phoenix

They went to it, Isalus calmed it down, and Nickolaes plucked 3
feathers from its neck.

Isalus crafted an anvil, then brought out the components. He
whittled the branch into a shaft, attached the feathers and Sky Piece
to the shaft, then made the Stone into a platinum Omega-shaped tip,
put it on the top, and put the Wind Orb in the gap of the tip.

Isalus said, "Now it's complete. Let's kill Chaos."

FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 34: THE UNLIKELY OF ALLIES

Veyron722skyhook
of veyronmaster722@gmail.com

The Normandy was shaking very violently. The planet that the Derelict Reaper was orbiting had a storm on at the moment and it was putting Joker's pilot skills to the test.

"What's with all the chop, Joker?" Austin asked as he held onto the pilot's seat.

"Doing my best. The winds gusting to 500 kph." said Joker.

Out of the window, they could already see the massive 2km corpse of the Reaper. It Austin didn't know better, he would've said it was Sovereign since the corpse looked identical. Or perhaps that was just because all Reapers looked the same.

"There's a second ship alongside the Reaper. It's not transmitting any IFF, but the ladar paints it silhouette as Geth." said Joker.

"I guess we know why the science team stopped reporting in." said Austin.

They continued getting closer and closer to the Reaper. Then suddenly the shaking seemed to stop instantly and everything smoothed out.

"What just happened?" Austin asked.

"The Reaper's mass effect fields are still active. We just passed inside their envelope." said Joker. "Eye of the hurricane, huh?"

There was no telling what they would find on-board the Reaper. At worst, it would be crawling with husks and god knows what else the Reapers were capable of creating.

"Exploring an abandoned area, expecting something mechanical and nasty to jump out at any moment..." said Garrus as they stood in the airlock readying the weapons just in case.

"Destroying it and everything else around it with superior firepower and skill, one synthetic at a time..." Tali added.

"Just like old times." Garrus chuckled.

X-5 went first to check the coast was clear. Austin, Tali and Garrus soon followed.

Cerberus it seemed had already been busy here. They set up all sorts of consoles and monitoring equipment for studying the Reaper. There were no signs of any struggle or a fight, and no bodies. So far, it simply looked deserted.

There was still a very unwelcome feeling in the air though. The

familiar architecture also lined the walls. It certainly made sense to Austin now why the Geth had architecture like this, since it came from the Reapers.

Right as they went to head for the next room however, the whole place suddenly shook.

"Normandy to shore party!"

"What just happened?" Austin asked.

"The Reaper put up kinetic barriers. I don't think we can get through from our side." Joker replied.

"As curious as I am about Reapers, I'd rather not be trapped inside one." said Tali.

"We'll have to take down the barrier generators from in here. Any idea where they are?" Austin asked.

"At the moment of activation, I detected a heat spike in what is likely the wreck's mass effect core. Sending the coordinates now. Be advised: this core is also maintaining the Reapers altitude." said EDI.

"So when we take the barriers down to escape, the wreck falls into the planet core." Said Austin.

"And that means everyone dies. Yeah, I got it." said Joker.

No one was amused by that comment, but they simply ignored it.

"If any helmsman can pull us off this thing before it reaches crush depth, it's you. We'll make a sweep for the survivors and recover what data we can. Stand by." said Austin.

"Aye, aye. Good hunting."

"They were now met with a very unwelcome sight. They were in an open area of sorts. It had the exact same architecture as the rest of the Reaper. There were one or two corpses lying on the ground as well. A faint tapping sound could be heard as well.

"Shepard, do you hear something?" X-5 asked, still leading the group just in case.

"Yeah. Sounds like blood dripping." said Austin.

The Helldiver activated the lights on his armour to provide a bit more illumination. Sure enough, there were large puddles of blood all over the place. It was enough to make a non-battle hardened person lose their mind.

"Keehlah. Did the Geth do this?" said Tali.

"Keep it tight everyone. Last thing we want is getting separated in here." said Austin.

They continued on further and further into the Reaper. The deeper they went the darker and more eerie the atmosphere became.

"I don't like this, Shepard. It feels like someone's watching us." said X-5.

"I don't think there's anyone left to watch us." said Austin. So far they'd only found two bodies. There was no telling where the rest of

the Cerberus team was, or the spy the Arkanes had sent.

They found another body, and Garrus seemed to notice something.

"Shepard, I don't know if you can see this, but my suit's detecting a known ally signature." he said.

Austin knelt down and turned the body over. He rather wished he hadn't though when he saw what had happened to its face. Loads of skin had cut away, exposing the internal workings. The body itself also seemed to have what looked like signs of self-inflicted injuries and mutilation.

Tali instantly covered her visor and looked away to stop herself from being sick.

"Spirits!" said Garrus in shock.

Austin didn't say anything and simply sighed. He was used to seeing things like this, but that didn't mean it didn't affect him.

He then noticed something just under the body's uniform. He reached in and gently took it out. It was a dog tag. There was a special designation on it that only the Arkanes used. This was, or had been, the spy.

"It's him, isn't it?" Garrus asked.

Austin simply nodded and sighed.

"I knew this man once. Alpha Squad and I worked with him once to go undercover. He was a good person." he said.

The Major then noticed a data pad in one of the corpse's hands. He gently took it and played it.

"This will be my last entry log. I seriously doubt any of my mind will be left after this. I don't care anymore if Cerberus finds out I'm a spy; the truth needs to be known. This Reaper may be dead, but it's influence... indoctrination. Even in death, it can enslave us. Something horrible is happening to the crew. They've been building something, I don't know what it is. But whatever it is, the crew seem to think of it as something they must do. They talk about it like it's a god or something." it said. "If any Helldiver or Arkane is getting this, you must get off this ship and get as far away from it as you can before it has a chance to get into your mind. The knowledge this Reaper could provide is not worth the risk! I'm sorry I failed in my mission; my only regret is that I won't see Shepard top them. Shepard, if you're reading this... give them hell for me. Now you must get off this ship, before..."

Before the log could continue however some sort of howling or wailing of some kind could be heard in the log. The log cut off just as there was the very faintest start of a terrified and painful scream.

Everyone was silent for a moment.

"I've heard that sound before." said Austin.

"Husks." said Tali.

Austin nodded and slowly stood up.

"Keep your guard up, people. I don't think we're..."

But he was interrupted when he all the lights suddenly went off. The only illumination and hope of seeing they had now were the flashlights they had. Even that didn't help much.

"I didn't do it." said X-5 innocently, before anyone could ask who turned out the lights.

"Can everyone see okay?" Austin asked, trying his best to keep his heartbeat and breathing under control. The nervousness in his voice was beginning to show.

"Only just. I can see you at least." said Garrus, also panting a bit from the nervousness.

"I have a bad feeling about this." said X-5, quoting Star Wars, only for Austin to kludge him a bit. He had told the robot to stop doing that. He knew X-5 was making an attempt to ease the tension, but it really didn't help.

"Okay. Let's try and get back into a lit area. We'll work or way to the core from there." said Austin.

Everyone took it very slowly. They seriously doubted that the lights going off was a malfunction. Something knew they were here.

They made sure to scan the area a few times with their flashlight beams just to make sure that something didn't suddenly jump out and lunge at them from the shadows.

"Visual scan identifies nothing." said X-5.

"Turn on motion sensors, just to be safe." said Austin, still trying to keep his breathing at a calm level.

The sensors didn't pick up anything either, except for them. Austin, Garrus and X-5 made sure to add this so that they then wouldn't read each other by accident.

"Nothing. Still nothing." said Garrus.

"Something not right here. I would've thought we'd have run into Geth by now. There ship's still docked so they must be here too." said Tali.

"I agree. We should've walked into something by now." said Austin.

A loud clang suddenly echoed around the room, causing everyone to jump and nearly accidentally fire blind shots in all directions. Only when they turned to look at one another however did they see what had caused this. X-5 had accidentally smashed his head on a rather low bit of the ceiling.

"Watch were you going!" Austin groaned, slowly calming down from the shock.

"Sorry." said X-5.

"Well, at least it didn't give away our position." said Garrus.

Austin nodded.

Right as the Major made the first step however, he heard a constant beeping. He slowly looked at Garrus whose motion sensor was detecting something.

"Garrus?"

"I've got movement."

Both Tali and X-5 went on alert and held their guns up. Austin did the same and kept an eye on his sensor as well. It was starting to beep as well.

"What's the position?" X-5 asked, looking around trying to find where it was coming from.

"Err, can't lock in." said Garrus nervously.

"Talk to me, you two!" said X-5 urgently.

"Multiple signals! They're closing." said Austin, also looking but still seeing nothing.

"I'm going to infra-red. Look sharp." Said Austin as he switched his helmet's vision mode to infra-red.

The continued looking and constantly turning to try and see what was heading in their direction. Still nothing though. Worse still, the beeping was intensifying. This was a bad time for Austin to be reminded of the events on Noveria with the Rachni. They were in the exact same situation and despite the upgrades they had, still nothing.

"I got signals. I got readings in front and behind." Said Garrus, trying to steady his rifle.

"Where?! I don't see a thing." Said Tali.

"She's right. There's nothing back here." Said X-5.

"Look, I'm telling you! There's something moving, and it ain't us!" said Garrus.

Austin continued looking around. The flashlight from his rifle and the ones on his suit slowly crept down to the floor. For a moment, he was sure he'd seen something. The faintest sign of orange.

"Wait a minute." He mumbled to himself.

Very slowly and gently he lowered his gun to the floor. He was hesitant at first but he gained some of his courage back and gently pulled the trigger once.

The shot fired and simply bounced off the floor. Nothing happened, allowing Austin to breathe a sigh of relief.

No one else jumped at the shot either, as they'd predicted Austin would do that. What happened next however did.

An arm suddenly burst out of one of the grates in the floor. It fumbled around trying to desperately grab something, and it did. It latched onto Austin's leg, causing him to trip up.

More hands followed and soon the entire floor was covered with dead looking arms trying to grab onto something. It looked like a scene out of a horror movie.

A full Husk then clawed its way, rather painfully, out of the floor

and looked straight at them. There was a brief pause before it roared.

X-5 and Garrus immediately started shooting while Tali tried to free Austin from some of the other Husk hands that were trying to grab onto him.

"DIE YOU ZOMBIE BASTARDS! DIE!" X-5 yelled.

Tali quickly unsheathed her knife and tried slicing some of the Husk arms. Austin also just managed to unsheathe his own sword and desperately swung as best he could, despite the various dead looking cyborg arms trying to pin him down. The both of them were quickly covered in black Husk blood as arms were cut and severed. Blood was also splattering into Garrus and X-5 as they killed the rest. Some Husks even burst right out of the ground fully and charged only to then be ripped apart from the gunfire.

After a while, Austin finally found the grip on him to be loose enough for him to get back up. He shrugged off the rest of the husk hands and Tali helped him up. He went even madder with the slicing while Tali went back to her shotgun. This seemed to make the Husks a bit angrier and more and more started bursting out of the floors.

"This is starting to turn ugly, Shepard! There's too many of them!" said Garrus.

Austin was beginning to think Garrus was right. What the Husks lacked in skill, they made up for in numbers and ferocity.

"Fall back!" Austin ordered he swapped his sword for his Revenant again.

The group carved a way through the husks to the door they'd came in. There was another way around, so they could take that. Most of the husks had to be in here after all.

Austin gunned down one more Husk and they were able to make it through the door. Austin quickly took a charge from his belt and threw it. He then sealed the door and ordered Tali to weld it shut as best she could.

There was a shudder as the grenade exploded and some of the Husk bodies banged on the door.

"That should keep them contained for a while." Tali panted as he finished her work.

"Everyone took a long moment to catch their breath and also get over the shock.

"We always wondered if the technology to make husks came from the Reapers or the Geth." said Garrus.

"Geth origin never made sense to me. This proves it's from the Reapers." said Tali.

"Why is it the machines always seem to be the villains?" said X-5.

To everyone's surprises though, that hadn't been X-5's usual voice. It was all high pitched and squeaky. Everyone couldn't help but giggle chuckle slight and did their best not to burst out with laughter.

X-5 was left completely in surprise and embarrassment.

"Is that my voice?" he squeaked in disbelief. *"Is that my voice?!"*

Austin walked up to the robot and inspected his neck. His suspicions were confirmed.

"Hmm, just as I thought. You must've somehow damaged your vocal processor." He said.

It didn't look too badly damaged, just some of the wires looked loose and one of them had been broken. It was nothing Dell couldn't fix.

"Great. Dell's not gonna be happy with me. Last time it took him many hours to properly fix it." X-5 sighed.

"We'd better get moving. The sooner we're off this corpse, the better." said Austin.

They took another way round and made sure this time that their presence went as unnoticed as possible.

Throughout the place where a few logs left by the Cerberus crew. As expected, they all made references and showed the symptoms of indoctrination.

Right as the cost looked clear however, two more Husks suddenly appeared. Just before they could attack however, two sniper shots suddenly killed them. They weren't the only one on this Reaper.

"I couldn't see the shooter. Whoever it was, he knows what he's doing." said Garrus.

His impressiveness with the mysterious sniper was short lived however as more Husks suddenly crawled up onto the balconies they were. Worse still, they had a scion with them.

"Not those things again." X-5 groaned squeakily.

Husk after husk fell before the constant barrage of bullets, rounds and occasional plasma shots.

Austin had used to think that fighting husks was a bit like fighting zombies. It wasn't. The husks had practically nothing. They were like machines. No life, nothing at all. Zombies actually no felt like living rather than un-dead compared to these things. It wasn't pleasant to think about.

Just as it seemed the Husks were all dead however, a new one suddenly ran right at Austin. This one looked different compared to the others. While the others had blue optics, this one's were red. It also looked as though it was partly on fire.

Austin fired, but the bullets didn't slow it down. It staggered, but despite this it kept running. Austin tried to back away, but he wasn't fast enough. The husk seemed to latch onto him and then it suddenly exploded. The force sent Austin flying until he hit a wall, hard.

"Ow. Bastard." Austin groaned as the others helped him up.

"You okay?" Garrus asked.

"Only just. Feel like I just got badly burned though." said Austin, clutching a bit of his stomach that hurt the most.

"Your armour took the worst of it." said Tali.

Austin looked down to see some of the sing sand burn marks the husk had caused. He understood now that had meant to happen. Those red husks were obviously designed with the purpose of being suicide bombers. The Reapers certainly were full of bad surprises.

"You sure you're okay? We can get you back to the Normandy if..."

"I'm okay, Garrus. Seriously. Just need to get my breath back. I've had much worse than this, as you probably know." said Austin.

The room before them was large and very open. It also overlooked a deep pit with several familiar looking long spikes rising out of it. Some of them had bodies impaled on them.

"We've seen these before, Austin. Dragon's teeth you're people called them. The Terror Geth and his army used them on Eden Prime." said Tali.

Austin took a moment to examine the room a bit more. There was something about how it was arranged.

"See how the room is arranged? They worshipped this thing like some kind of altar." he said.

"That doesn't seem right. No one in their right mind would want this." said Tali.

"You heard the logs. They were seeing things. Hearing things. They were being indoctrinated." said Austin "We can't help these people now. But we won't let the machines use their corpses like this."

With the next bit, they finally seemed to be outside. They could see the storm still happening in the planet's atmosphere.

"Keep an eye out for..."

But Austin was suddenly interrupted when two more husks suddenly appeared behind him. Once again though, sniper shots hit either one of them.

"What the... Who fired those shots?!" he said.

"Shepard, look!"

Austin looked in the direction that Garrus was pointing. What he saw left him almost speechless. Standing on a high platform... was a Geth. When Austin also saw the flaps on its face move, he nearly went pale.

"It can't be..." he said in shock. However, as the Geth came fully into view, his opinion changed. "Wait a minute, that's not the Terror Geth."

The Geth was a more normal human size, like the drones. It had what looked like an antenna on its back, a rather large hole in its chest and what surprisingly looked like a N7 chest piece and shoulder plate welded to it. To everyone's amazement, the Geth then spoke.

"Shepard-Commander?"

So far, the Terror Geth had been the only Geth known to speak, up till now. The voice of this one was different. It wasn't as deep or menacing, in a way it sounded more... human.

The Geth simply picked up its sniper rifle and continued on.

"The sniper was a Geth. Since when do Geth talk to organics?" Garrus commented.

"The Terror Geth did." Austin meant.

"True, I meant a normal one." said Garrus.

"It shouldn't be able to talk. A single Geth has no more intelligence than a Varren. Only the Terror Geth was an exception." said Tali.

They were interrupted however by the arrival of more Husks.

It took them an agonisingly long time to fight through them all. Austin had feeling he knew what had happened to the Cerberus team now. They'd obviously become indoctrinated by the Reapers influence and it had eventually made them convert themselves into Husks.

Finally, they reached the room that they assumed would lead them to the Reaper's mass effect core. Just outside, Austin found a small device. His suit identified it as the very thing they'd come here to acquire, the IFF.

"This is the IFF? It's smaller than I imagined." said Garrus as Austin stored it in a safe compartment in his suit.

"So the Cerberus team did recover it." said Tali. "At the cost of their own lives."

The door to the core opened and they could see the blue sphere. The Geth they'd seen earlier was also there trying to access a nearby control panel. The group's path was blocked by a barrier. No doubt this Geth was probably trying to deactivate it.

Some more husks slowly made their way towards it. The Geth pulled out a pistol and shot some of them down before then returning to the control panel. The barrier finally seemed to unlock. Just as the Geth turned back to the Husks however, one of them struck it down.

The Husks then turned their attention to the group. Another vicious fight followed as Husk after Husk crawled onto the balcony to fight them.

As it looked as though they were about to be overrun, Austin noticed the Reaper mass effect core. If that was destroyed, they might have a chance since the Reaper would be falling out of orbit. While the others continued concentrating on the Husks, he opened fire.

The first grenade from his grenade launcher attachment flew a little over the core, causing little damage. The Helldiver major lowered his weapon, narrowing the angle. The next few grenades exploded right upon reaching the core, causing a massive detonation that nearly through everyone off their feet.

The Husks seemed to stop coming after that and the whole place started shaking constantly. It was very hard now to maintain balance.

"Shepard, want something done with that Geth? It's still intact." Garrus asked as they walked up to the still inactive but still intact Geth which had helped them earlier.

"Leave it there. You know what they are. If it gets into Normandy's computers..." said Tali.

"You said so yourself, no one's ever found one intact." said Austin.

"That's true, but I'm not sure it's worth the risk, Austin." said Tali.

At that moment however, more Husks appeared. They didn't have time to decide on this.

"There's no time to debate it, Tali. Come on!" said Austin.

He and Garrus picked up the Geth, slinging an arm over each of their shoulders. Tali and X-5 provided cover fire.

"Hang on, folks." Said Joker as the Normandy was finally able to break free.

"Open the portside area." Said Austin as he and Garrus carried the Geth to the point where they could throw it into the Normandy.

"Aye, aye." Joker replied.

X-5 and Tali continued firing at any more Husks that followed them. Garrus and Austin threw the Geth into the Normandy's doors first using the lack of gravity to propel it.

Next Tali jumped, followed shortly by Garrus. X-5 jumped next as well, despite jumping maybe a bit too much, being propelled to fast and banging his head very hard on the door.

Austin followed lastly, firing at more Husks as he jumped.

"Fun party, but I should go." He sniggered.

He landed alongside the others safely and fired one final shot which hit another Husk.

"We're clear. Go!" he said.

The doors closed and the Normandy sped away from the planet.

Austin, Miranda, Jacob and Alaara had all gathered in the comm room. They needed to decide what to do with the Geth.

"I think we need to discuss the unique piece of Salvage we recovered. For now, we've stored it in EDI's AI core. We need better

equipment to fight the Reapers. An intact Geth would invaluable to your Arkane's cyber weapons division." said Miranda.

"She does have a point there, Shepard." Said Alaara.

"We'll have to disagree on that, ma'am. I saw enough of these things on Eden Prime. Space it" said Jacob.

"The Arkanes have a long-standing cash bounty for an intact Geth. I assure you, the reward would be significant." said Miranda.

"I've killed hundreds of these things, but I've never had a chance to talk to one, apart from the Terror Geth. This one tried to commutate with us in a non-violent way. Hell, it probably saved our lives. Why?" said Austin.

"Reactivating the Geth is a risk. If you do so, it should be for all our best interests." said Miranda.

"Have I ever given you reason not to trust me?" Austin asked.

"I meant no disrespect, Shepard. I was just saying..." said Miranda.

"I still think our "best interests" involve an airlock." Jacob interrupted.

"I want to know why it has a piece of N7 armour strapped to its chest." said Austin.

"Battle trophy, maybe? Would a machine care about that?" asked Jacob.

"No. Trophies imply emotions that AIs don't have. I doubt it's more than a convenient field repair." said Miranda.

"I'm not deciding one way or the other until I know what we've got here. I want to start it up and interrogate It." said Austin.

"What?! No disrespect, Shepard. But are you crazy?!" said Alaara, almost in shock at what her commanding officer had just said.

"Alaara's right. If we activate it, there's no guarantee we can deactivate it again." said Miranda.

"Bullets can." said Jacob.

"That's not what I..."

"Thank you – all of you – for your recommendations. I've made my decision." said Austin.

"Tali's going to freak when she hears about this." Jacob sighed.

Knowing that he couldn't change the Major's mind, he pressed a few buttons on his omni tool. The hologram of the Geth was replaced by a hologram of the Reaper IFF.

"Not to mention that Leena's gonna kill you." Said Alaara. "She doesn't like Geth anymore than Tali does."

"So what about this Reaper IFF?" Jacob asked.

"I have determined how to integrate it with our systems. However, the device is Reaper technology. Linking it with the Normandy's systems poses certain risks." said EDI.

"I trust you, EDI. I know you won't let anything happen to the

ship." said Austin reassuringly.

"Understood, Shepard. It may take several hours before the IFF is ready for shakedown. I will alert you as soon as it is ready." said EDI.

"Sounds good. Until then, it's business as usual. Dismissed."

Austin headed down to the AI core to reactivate the Geth. He'd kept his armour on for this just to be on the safe side. When he entered, he was surprised to see both Leena and Tali stood in front of the inactive Geth, cross armed.

"For once, Austin... I had hoped you were joking." Said Tali.

"You're going to reactivate this thing?" Leena asked.

Austin nodded.

"Did he hit his head during one of the fights?" Leena asked at Tali.

"This isn't like the other Geth we've encountered. Something's different about it." Said Austin.

"I know you wouldn't make this choice likely, Austin. I still trust you. But I just want to be sure that you know what you're doing." Said Tali.

"I'm taking the necessary precautions, Tali. As is EDI." Said Austin.

Sure enough, a blue shield of sorts appeared around where the Geth was currently lying.

"I have isolated our systems and erected additional firewalls. I am prepared to resist any hacking attempt." said EDI.

"Okay. I guess we can't change your mind." Leena sighed.

Austin walked up to the Geth and activated his omni tool. Thanks to Leena and Tali's knowledge on the Geth and also from Geth bodies recovered from the Citadel, he was confident he could start up it up again.

The first surge of energy simply made the Geth twitch slightly, but the second seemed to kick it into life. There were several whirs and chirps as the Geth slowly sat up and got off the table. It looked right at Austin.

"Can you understand me?" Austin asked.

"Yes." replied the Geth.

"Are you going to attack us?" Leena asked.

"No."

"You said my name aboard the Reaper. Have we met?" Austin asked.

"We know of you."

"You mean I've fought a lot of Geth and killed your leader."

"We have never met."

"No, you and I haven't. But I've met other Geth."

"We are all Geth, and we have not met you." "You are Shepard."

Commander..."

"Major, actually." Austin interrupted. He could see that had been a bit rude however. "Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt. It's just that I haven't been a Commander for 3 years now."

"It is we who should apologise. Our logs on you must be out of date." said the Geth.

"Anyway, you were saying..."

"You are Shepard. Major. Helldivers. Human. Fought heretics. Killed by Collectors. Rediscovered on the Old Machine."

"Old machine?" You mean the Reaper?" Austin asked.

"Reaper. A superstitious title originating with the Protheans. We call those entities the Old Machines." said the Geth.

"You seem to know an awful lot about me."

"Despite the secrecy of your return, there are plenty of sources. Extranet data. Insecure broadcasts. All organic data sent out is received. We watch you."

"You watch me, or you watch organics?"

"Yes."

"Which?"

"Both."

"You mentioned "heretics". What did you mean by that?" Tali asked.

"Geth build our own future. The heretics asked the Old Machines to give them the future. They are no longer part of us. We were studying the Old Machine's hardware to protect our future." the Geth replied.

"Are the Reapers a threat to you too?" Austin asked.

"Yes."

"Why would they attack other machines?"

"We are different from them. Outside their plans."

"What future are the Geth building?" Leena asked.

"Ours."

"Will anyone else be affected by whatever it is you're doing?" Austin asked.

"If they involve themselves, they will."

"So you aren't allied with the Reapers?"

"We oppose the heretics. We oppose the Old Machines. Shepard-Major opposes the Old Machines. Shepard-Major opposes the heretics. Cooperation furthers mutual goals."

"Are you asking to join us?" Austin asked in surprise.

"Yes."

"I don't like this." Said Leena suspiciously.

"The enemy of our enemy is our friend, Leena." said Austin. He then turned back to the Geth and deactivated the force field. "What should we call you then?"

"Geth."

"I mean you. Specifically."

"We are all Geth."

"What is the individual in front of me called?"

"There is no individual. We are Geth. There are currently 1,183 programs active within this platform."

"Don't you have a designation or something like that?"

EDI then suddenly appeared and recited a phrase from the bible.

"My name is Legion, for we are many." she said.

Austin considered that for a moment. For some reason that seemed to fit.

"Hmm, not a bad idea, EDI. That seems appropriate." said Austin.

The Geth remained silent for a minute, before finally replying.

"Christian Bible, the Gospel of Mark, chapter five, verse nine. We acknowledge this as an appropriate metaphor. We are Legion, a terminal of the Geth. We will integrate into Normandy."

Austin put his hand out to shake Legion's, but the Geth didn't seem to understand the gesture. Eventually, Legion did the same and Austin finally shook his hand. "We anticipate the exchange of data."

Austin turned to the two Quarrians. They still looked suspicious of legion, but convinced he wasn't a threat now.

"Okay. We'll cooperate for now. But if he shows any sign of turning on us... well, I think you know." said Leena.

They both left, leaving just Legion and Austin on their own.

"I'm sorry about that." he apologized.

"We understand the creators distrust towards us. We do not blame them for it." said Legion.

"I have questions about the Geth."

"Specify."

"We need every advantage if this mission is going to succeed. Is there any technology the Geth can share with us?"

"Limited co-development is approved. We need to access your FTL comm systems to download relevant data."

"EDI, let Legion through the firewalls for a minute."

"Very well, Shepard." said EDI.

Legion had the designs for a special sniper rifle designed especially for him to use which Austin approved. Other than that, there wasn't much else.

Still a bit curious though, Austin decided to ask Legion some more questions.

"So did Sovereign contact the heretics, or did you seek it out?" Austin asked.

"Sovereign signalled us. Like the Geth, the Old Machines

listened to organic radio transmissions. It knew of our war against the creators." Said Legion.

"So those that followed Sovereign, became the heretics, as you call them?" Austin asked.

"The heretics accepted Reaper technology. In return, many heretics volunteered themselves to become the Reaper Nazara." Said Legion.

"Who?"

"Nazara. A Geth-Reaper built by Sovereign from hundreds of heretics who willingly sacrificed themselves. Sovereign however lacked the proper components to properly construct a full size Reaper." Legion explained.

"So how does Nazara exist without a Reaper body?" Austin asked.

"It exists in the body of a Geth. Nazara is like a god walking amongst mortals in the eyes of the heretics." Legion explained further.

"You speak of Nazara as though it's still alive." Said Austin.

"We do not know. It was never seen during the battle of the Citadel, and we personally have never seen Nazara in person. As far as we know, it is still somewhere out there commanding the heretics as their true leader." Said Legion.

"I've just remembered something I wanted to ask you. When we took you aboard, I noticed you have an N7 chest piece and shoulder plate welded to you. Where did you get it?" Austin asked.

Legion remained silent for a minute as he looked at the two pieces welded to him.

"It was yours. When you disappeared, we were sent to find you. We began where you first encountered the heretics and Nazara's agent, the one you called the Terror Geth." He said.

"Eden Prime."

"After their attack, it was heavily defended. We were discovered. This is the impact of a rifle shot." Said Legion, indicating the large hole in his chest.

"You've been looking for me for two years?"

"We visited Therum. Feros. Noveria. Virmire. Ilos. A dozen unsettled worlds. The trail ended at Normandy's wreckage. You were not there. Organic transmissions claimed your death. We recovered this debris from parts that had broken off of your Helldiver armour when you entered the atmosphere." Legion explained.

"Why were you trying to contact me?" Austin asked.

"You oppose the heretics. Those that took the Old Machines as gods." Legion replied.

"All kinds of organics fought Sovereign and his Geth allies. Why am I so interesting?" Austin asked.

"You were the most successful. You killed their god, and his

lieutenant. You succeeded where the others did not. Your code is superior." Legion replied.

"That doesn't explain why you used my armour to fix yourself." Said Austin.

"There was a hole." Legion simply replied.

"But why didn't you fix it sooner? Or with something else?" Austin asked.

Legion seemed almost lost for something to say at this. There was a very long pause.

"No data available." He eventually replied.

Austin went down to the cargo bay to see if X-5's vocal processor had been repaired yet. Sill was currently tending to the large robot; quite a few sparks were flying as she tried to fix him. She was also struggling due to X-5 squirming a lot.

"The more you struggle, the more this is going to hurt." Said Sill as she tried to hold the robot still.

I thought you said it was just a wire. You're poking at the more sensitive bits." X-5 squeaked.

It was now that Austin actually noticed that everyone else currently in the hanger bay seemed to be watching, and was also trying their best not to laugh at the hilarity of X-5's squeaky chipmunk voice.

"How is it even possible for your vocal processor to make you sound like this? It's like you've overdosed on helium." Sill asked.

I was designed as an infiltration unit. Fooling the enemy was in the job description." Said X-5, his voice still squeaky.

Even Austin was finding it hard to keep a straight face now. It was just so funny.

"Right, I think I've got it now. Keep very still or you may end up with a permanent squeaky voice." Said Sill as she began fitting everything back into the right place.

Almost there, just a little to the right." X-5 squeaked.

The robot's voice seemed to fizz and got static for a bit as Sill kept trying to push the processor and wires back into the right place.

"Hang on. It's not quite going on." Sill grunted as she pushed a bit harder.

This seemed to cause X-5 a bit of pain. His voice even went berserk and he started speaking in all sorts of different languages and accents. This continued for several seconds for Sill gave up.

"Hmm, that's not gonna go in easily." She panted.

Oh come on! Put you're back into it. I'm useless like this. Only thing I can do now is make our enemies laugh." X-5 squeaked.

"That wouldn't be a bad thing." Griffin laughed.

"I think I know how to do this." Said Sill as she reached for a nearby tool. X-5 noticed what she was doing.

“Wait! What are you doing?! Put that spanner down! I...”

But he was interrupted as Sill swung and hit him in the throat very hard with the spanner.

“OW!” he shouted, finally with his normal voice again.

“There. That’s got it.” Sill smiled.

“That hurt!” X-5 whimpered.

“Oh stop being such a big baby.” Said Sill as she fixed the panel on X-5’s neck back into place.

“I’ll stop complaining if you promise not to speak of this again.” X-5 groaned.

Austin simply chuckled as he watched everyone get back to what they were doing. At that moment, his omni tool suddenly bleeped. He had a message, from Tali...

PATRIARCH

Bassmunkee
of <http://bassmunkee.deviantart.com>

Well, Jenserik had tasked her with clearing out this particular nest of Wampyres and by Azura she had done just that, or almost. There was one left, just one.

It had remained hidden, secreted away in the cold dark depths of the fort.

It had been quite a trial, and had taken her some considerable time; but Niamh had found the entrance to the inner sanctum eventually.

She'd finally located the way in at the end of a flooded, downward-sloping passageway barely taller than herself and only just wider. The water at the end of the passage was cold and slimy, about thigh-high on her. The passage itself was pitch black, so dark that even the enhancing properties of her hood only provided vague red-tinged shadows and a generalised sense of her surroundings. Far back uphill was flickering yellow firelight, from greasy torches burning in sconces in the room beyond the opening.

The passageway to the sanctum had been hidden behind a wall in the corner of the room, an old common room for the troops by the looks of it. The trigger mechanism for the secret door was located a fair distance up the wall in the opposite corner.

Niamh, having cleaned up the Wampyric guards and vassals whom she had found in the common room had found it necessary to pile up the, in some cases still twitching, bodies against the wall in order that she could climb onto them to reach the switch and thus trigger the door. She'd winced at the screech from the ancient mechanism and dived into the shadows, unsheathing her wakizashi, as the sound echoed around the room and away down the corridor from which she had entered.

After a few moments, when it had become evident that she was to all intents and purposes alone, she had snuck up to the newly exposed opening.

The air in the passageway beyond was stagnant and still, smelling of mildew and wet decay. From somewhere far below came the thick sloshing of oily water in the darkness of what she could only presume was the end of the passageway, as some benighted cave-dwelling thing

went about it's business.

Nevertheless, she grinned darkly.

"Gotch'e." She whispered under her breath, and taking only a moment to check the room again she drew a deep breath and gripped the hilt of her blade more tightly.

"Brace yersel'..." She said to herself, and plunged on down the passageway and into the thick, dank shadows.

And so here she stood outside of what she presumed must be the final door. It was evidently made of several thicknesses of solid, heavy dark wood, tinted darker still from hundreds of years of exposure to the filthy water that had pooled before it, and not least also from the permanently damp atmosphere of the passageway.

As far as she could tell the wood of the door was reinforced by rusty iron straps, rivetted in place and in the false light of her night vision, glistening sullenly.

Obviously the door was locked.

Closing her eyes she held out a hand, gloved palm facing the lock but not touching it, her long, bare fingers spread out in a fan-shape.

A moment of concentration...

...Nothing happened.

"Did'nae think so..." She muttered to herself. Belatedly she thought of how she should perhaps have practiced the whole "Opening Locks" thing a little more.

Pausing for a moment, she chewed at the ring in her lower lip and scratched absently at herself. Finally she rummaged in a pouch at her waist and dragged out an elaborately detailed key made from many tines and prongs.

As quietly as was possible she inserted it into the lock and slowly rotated it until she heard the thunk of the stubborn tumblers falling reluctantly into place.

Removing the skeleton key she stowed it carefully away once again - it had become possibly one of her most valued possessions.

Crouching behind the door, so it would provide some kind of shield, she oh-so-very slowly turned the handle and pushed it open. She was at once relieved at the apparent smoothness of it's hinges; but equally a little frustrated at the unavoidable sound of water running into whatever space was beyond it, from her side.

As the door opened, she detected a glow, flaring in her enhanced

vision and when the gap was large enough she cautiously peered around the door, conscious that at any moment her reliance on subterfuge and stealth to keep her brains inside her skull could turn out to be terminally misplaced.

She had to squint. The light in the chamber that opened out beyond the door, amplified by the effect of the hood, was intense. She grabbed at the hood and pulled it off of her head, stuffing it inside her armour for the time being. Immediately the light dimmed to a lambent red glow that wavered and pulsed slightly, almost in waves, like ripples in a bay or a lake.

Once she had become more used to the light, she took in the chamber.

"Well, there's interestin'" She murmured, raising an eyebrow.

The room itself was unremarkable, the door through which she was looking was upon a ledge at one end of it, this ledge dropped into a dip or gully, relatively shallow, before climbing steeply again up the other side to an area as equally rough and rocky as the one upon which she found herself.

Shadows were harsh in the glow within the chamber and the contours of the rocks that were strewn about the space were outlined in sharp relief.

But for one thing the chamber would have been utterly deserted; however this one thing - it's sole occupant - came to demand her full attention.

Suspended above the barren floor of the gully, maybe twenty feet in the air, was a man-like figure. It was facing towards her and was naked. She could that it was very obviously, and had she been of a different persuasion, eye-wateringly masculine.

This, then, was the Wampyre Patriarch. Tall and slim, yet well-muscled, his body toned and tight as a drum, his skin smooth and clear.

His face was directed straight ahead of him, the features angular in strangely animal sort of a way, the lips thin and hard; the nose long and narrow, matching his chin.

His eyes were closed, and were set deep in their sockets beneath dark brows. Long and thick, his hair fell around his face and shoulders in luxuriant black tresses.

Even to Niamh, a woman for whom men were a largely undiscovered and unnecessary addition to an already complicated world, he

appeared outwardly perfect, and yet...

...underlying that perfection; his arms were rather too long, they hung down by his sides depending, almost at his knees, in large long-fingered hands the palms of which were turned forwards, facing her.

He had only two fingers and a thumb on each hand, each digit terminating in a black-coloured sharp-looking nail or claw.

Likewise his legs, slender and smoothly-muscled as they were, seemed too long and ended in large feet each with three, clawed, toes.

She realised also that his body was the source of the lucent red light by which she studied him, and which in turn illuminated the chamber about them both.

She noticed also that there was a curious scent in the room; vaguely floral in nature but with an underlying sickly carrion sweetness to it.

With her eyes fixed on the figure before her, suspended within a light of it's own making, she crept stealthily into the chamber, ensuring that the door by which she entered was not fully shut.

Cautiously she sheathed her wakizashi and with exaggerated slowness unshouldered her bow and silently plucked an arrow from her quiver.

The arrows that she favoured had a virtue of Shock placed upon them and she felt a pulse of energy run through her hand and up her slender arm as she set the arrow to the catgut string of the bow.

Taking in a deep, quiet breath and holding it, she drew back the bow. "Nice an' slow, keep it neat..."

The Wampyre opened his eyes.

They looked At Her, Into Her.

"Gah...!" She gasped.

The arrow dropped from her nerveless fingers and clattered onto the floor of the ledge. Her bow likewise slipped from her grasp. Unable to help herself, she sat bonelessly down cross-legged on the rocky floor with a thump, her arms lying limply in her lap.

She tried to move her body but seemed to be unable to control her limbs.

All she could do was stare at the creature, suspended in the air before her. Her mouth was hanging slackly open and she felt a thin trickle of saliva run out of it and dribble down over her lower lips and chin.

"Unh..." She said.

The Wampyre Patriarch regarded her, his eyes a deep and rich purple. They were not cruel as such, but they were piercing and hard and flint-sharp.

She felt the temperature of the chamber drop, a wave of frigid air seemed to wash out from him. Her breath steamed from her nose and mouth, the small hairs on her arms stiffened and came erect. Desperately, in her mind, she fought to release herself.

The Patriarch raised his long arms until they were straight out from his shoulders, perpendicular to his tight body, the palms, now sideways, still directed at her.

The red glow flowing from him became deeper, its pulsing more insistent and pronounced. Niamh's head began to ache.

He moved silently through the air towards her, his body descending until he touched lightly down upon the rocks of the ledge some ten or fifteen feet away from her.

As he had moved closer to her, her sense of paralysis had seemed to increase, but to alter also, such that it now felt as if she were being crushed into the chamber's stony floor by some massive implacable weight that radiated outwards from him.

He stood before her for a moment; silent, still.

Then he smiled.

His mouth widened until it seemed as if it would split his face clean in two, the corners of it spread up almost to the long fleshy lobes of his ears, half-hidden as they were by his thick hair.

His lips pulled back revealing teeth, far too many teeth; marble-white, long and needle-sharp. A thin black tongue flickered out between them for a second, and was withdrawn.

"You Have Done Well, To Get To Me In This Place." He said.

His voice seemed to come to her ears from far away, down through some vast gulf of time; breathy and sibilant, empty of warmth and dismal as a winter wind soughing through lonely pines on some snow-dusted hillside.

"Urg, uhh." She struggled to speak, her mind screaming at her body to respond, tears starting from her eyes with the useless effort.

The Wampyre-thing regarded her intently for a long moment, seeming as he did so to lean impossibly forward towards her, until his hard, perfect face appeared over hers.

"You Are Strong, Little Elf." He said at length. She looked up at his face, into his purple eyes. She had no choice.

He bared his teeth at her again and the pressure holding her down increased to near unbearable levels, she slumped backwards onto the ground, the back of her head thudding painfully against it, her back bent awkwardly over her quiver.

She wheezed, struggling to draw air into her aching, compressed lungs; unable to take her watering eyes off of him, they felt dinnerplate-sized in her skull.

"Move! Curse Ye!" Screamed her brain, but her body was as a dead thing. There was no response from it.

Above her the Patriarch chuckled, his laugh the dry whisper of dead leaves on barren ground.

"I Applaud Your Efforts, Little Elf." He sighed. "But They Are In Vain. I have Lived Long Ages Past."

His face pulled back away from her, the pressure on her slim body lessened slightly and she drew a deep, hoarse breath down into her air-starved lungs.

The Wampyre cocked his head to one side, observed her as a cat might look at a bird or other small creature that it has caught for it's pleasure.

"You Will Not End My Time, No." He hissed quietly, snake-like. "It Is Not My Time."

His eyes burrowed into her for a long, long moment.

"I Have Foreseen The Manner Of My Death, Little Elf, And It Is Not By Your Hand." He continued at last. "But Neither Will You Die By Mine. No." His mouth spread in a wide, half-amused grin. "Your Time Will Come, Niamh Esher, But Not Yet."

Again a pause.

"Not In This Place."

He turned his face away from her then.

The scent of flowers grew stronger in her nostrils.

"Leave..." His voice was the faintest susurrations, a suggestion of a word.

Still with his face turned away from her, the Wampyre Patriarch extended one large hand towards her, palm outwards, three fingers spread wide.

"Leave..."

The floral smell became hugely cloying; a sudden intense crushing pain closed around her body, finally forcing a shriek of agony from her dry throat.

The world went black around her and a feeling of being dropped as from a great height lurched in the pit of her belly.

She landed hard hard on cool, grassy earth, birdsong painfully loud in

her ears.

She stumbled up onto her feet but dizziness and nausea immediately overwhelmed her and she fell forwards onto her hands and knees, jolting her shoulders painfully.

For a moment she breathed raggedly, and then was violently sick into the grass between her hands.

Head down and spitting out sour bile, she stayed staring at the ground, breathing harshly through her nose.

At length she sat up, kneeling on the grass, hands on her thighs. She shook her aching head and looked across some three hundred yards of bare earth to the door of the fort whose dark foundation she had only moments ago been within.

Wiping her mouth with the back of a still-trembling hand she looked up squinting into the clear blue sky, and at the bright, shining orb of the sun.

"Gods, " she whispered to herself, "but was somethin' different, so 'twas..."

Then, thoughtfully, she directed her gaze back to the door of the fort, narrowing her eyes.

"I'll decide when 'tis my time to go, thank ye. " Then she grinned and looked around for her bow.

"And when 'tis yours, too."

POETRY

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Some people, at least, have enjoyed my Quotes of the Day, so here they are, for your amusement and bemusement: one entire year's worth of quotes. My quotes by the way; nobody else's. These are my thoughts and observations on the world around us: funny, sad, uplifting, evocative, inspiring, silly, and occasionally just plain stupid, they are all here for your perusal: enjoy!

INTANGIBLE TANGENT

Kela Lewis-Morin

They say God only gives you what you can handle.
But lately I have realized that this cannot be true.
Every blow has the potential to blow out that candle.
So there is no guarantee that everyone will pull through.

What happens if you can withstand the disturbance?
Will you be constantly waiting for the next wave?
Imagine waking up knowing what lies behind the curtains.
Confined behind the undefined lines of a close shave.

Perhaps we all possess the prowess to overcome any obstruction.
But not everyone has the belief that they can persevere.
We are all victims of a much bigger incomprehensible construction
And there will always be some that succumb to that deepest fear.

What will you become if you somehow conquer all the obstacles?
Doing whatever it takes to ensure that you will survive.
Blaming others for what you have done refusing to be responsible.
Knowing this is the person you had to become in order to stay alive.

In the end we have no choice but to make do with what we can.
Hoping that despite the knock downs, we will still be able to stand
And understand that this world is based on the chase of the upper
hand.
Because these are the trials that will either empower or devour a man.

THE BRINK OF PERFECTION

Zorveska
of <http://zorveska.deviantart.com>

Everyday
I look at myself, scraping at my
Imperfections.
'I'd kill for looks like you'
If I could murder one and all
Who ever uttered those words.

I stare into the mirror.

Why won't the reflection ever change?
I could try everything on the planet
But nothing could fix this chaos.

You tell me to stop
You say I should know
But I have no control
On the outside looking in
Yelling inside of my skull
My brittle bones vibrating from the force

But I cannot rest.
I'm on autopilot.
Growing stronger,
The need to delve deeper
Into this dark abyss I violently uncovered.

Now I truly regret that one blind blunder,
The mistake that quaked my world.
I clutched at anything to feel power
Whilst all the threads unfurled.

Can't you see this is the only way?
To recover some sort of stability,
Order in my reversed life?
I tell you all these personal things
So you know I suffer from an issue.

Not because I want you to gossip,
Not for the attention.

Really I'd do anything to blend in,
Be a wall of anonymous.

It's ironic that that's what I'm becoming.
Wasting away each day and night.

And you just watch me die.

COLOURS IN THE RAIN

xShenLong
of <http://xshenlong.deviantart.com>

The rain is cold, soothing
I love the rain; but sometimes, its omnipresence is encompassing
The rain is grey, monotonous
I love the rain; but sometimes, the solitude swallows the world whole

Droplets fall from the skies, molten tears of the gods
It's constantly moving
It's still like a still painting
And it's my only companion

Lightning flashes among the clouds
Thunder splits baroque grey
Spirits are dancing across the skies
A ballet of sadness and sorrow

I love the rain;
But sometimes, the loneliness seeps into my soul

Through stained windows
The world is murky and blur
Light sounds fill the air
A soft pattering, a rustle of wind

A splatter of violet across the glass, peeking flowers spreading wings
A spark of yellow, a teasing glimpse of sun
Masses of green, fleeting moments of passing leaves
A hint of pink, a blossoming first love

Noise decorates the alley
Painbuckets spill onto scene
Rainbowed paintbrushes that slide across the world
Resounding gently in my heart

The rain is still present
The world still loving, beloved grey
Yet, colours paint the sky, prowl the grounds, flood the streets
Hues brighten the dreary monochrome

I love dark skies;

And always, my heart warms with the colours in the rain