Runaway Guide 4 - The War

by Joan963z

Summary

Set in an alternate Sentinel universe. Covert resistance against the new Guide laws and The Initiative are not working. The Hive must go to war.
Warnings: This is a war fic there will be violence, Highly emotional situations, explicit sex. Slash and het.

Notes

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Chapter 1

Gibbs voice came through the hive link loud and clear. “Covert resistance is over. We’re at war with The Initiative, bring all the intel you have on Washington Genetics. Hive meeting tonight at the nesting house, nineteen hundred hours, to form a plan of action.”

“Did I hear that right?” Abby asked.

“Yes,” was Tim’s one word answer as he pulled Abby into a hug and gave her arm comforting rubs.

“Hear what?” Sentinel Morgan asked. “I didn’t hear anything.”

“Need to know,” McGee said as he let go of Abby and got back to work. “I’ll need everything we have so far put on a thumb drive. Oz, have you made any progress on tracking down those shell companies?”

“I’ve made some progress on one of them,” Oz said. There are some big names that have come up.”

“I’m not surprised.” McGee said. “Keep working on that. My gut is telling me they’re involved with these abductions.”

“Do you want the shell company info on thumb drive or wait till I have more,” Oz asked.

“Give me everything you have so far,” McGee said. “Gibbs wants it by end of day.”

Sentinel Morgan watched and listened to Major McGee. Something had changed. McGee was smart and professional. He had no problem working under him even though his Guide was a bit unconventional. His own Guide, an eidetic with a doctorate degree, was also unconventional. Still something had definitely changed, or rather something in McGee had changed. It wasn’t that McGee had been soft or lacked an edge, he had always had an edge, but now that edge seemed harder as if McGee had suddenly changed from honed steel to titanium. Somehow McGee had kept that part of himself hidden; or maybe a better description was under control. Control...McGee seemed to have it in abundance. His first impression of McGee had been that he was an ordinary Sentinel, than he began to see McGee and Abby work together and realized that their team was nowhere near normal. He had never met anyone that could keep up with how fast Spencer’s mind worked, but both McGee and Abby had no problem following the connections Spencer made from the raw data. Now McGee had suddenly become...more. A stray thought suddenly entered Sentinel Derek Morgan’s mind. **Ask Major McGee to be my second.** It was an odd thought, the Major outranked him. He quickly pushed the thought out of his mind. Still something important had changed. Morgan wanted and needed to know what that was. He made a decision, it was time to speak up.

“All of this evidence we’re collecting,” Morgan began, “is showing we’re dealing with a deep state agency. There’s also strong evidence that Washington Genetics is involved with these new laws, as well as the Guide abductions.”

McGee looked at Morgan. “Do you have a point?”

“I believe all this is about bringing down the deep state agency that is abducting guides and planning to genetically engineer them against their will,” Morgan began. “From the way your
acting some heavy shit just hit the fan. Spencer and I have full clearance. We want to be read in and we want to be part of this when you bring down the bastards responsible for the new forced reproduction laws.”

McGee didn’t see any point in trying to lead Morgan in a false direction. Hetty had recommended the Sentinel and his Guide. Morgan was a high quality Sentinel, one who’s trust it would not be wise to betray. “You’re already part of what we’re doing here. Whether or not you’re read in any deeper is General Gibbs’ decision,” McGee said. “I’ll talk to him tonight.”

As soon as Hetty got the message that the hive was at war she smiled, not a smile of happiness but one that told of malicious intent. She was committed to saving her people from the evil that called itself The Initiative. She started making calls. There were a lot of people around the country that were ready to start public protest about the new laws and she knew how to get them organized and how to make the best use of the protesters. She also had some media people that were sympathetic to the Guide’s cause. She didn’t contact them yet. It was a bit early, but she would, oh yes she would.

Ducky sat at a table in the hotel bar talking with Dr. Aaron Shamus, a doctor that worked for the Department of Guide Proliferation and who gave testimony to a Congressional Committee in support of the new laws. He sipped his white wine and did more listening than talking. The trick was not to ask questions but to be subtle and direct the conversation with comments.

“I’m surprised you haven’t claimed a new Guide,” Dr. Aaron Shamus said.

“Guides are a bit… Well suffice to say I’m an old Sentinel and with the Guide shortage I don’t feel I should be claiming one,” Ducky said.

“Have you considered a temporary Guide?” Dr. Shamus asked. “One with low empathic abilities. I hear the bond is easy to break.”

“At first I considered it a betrayal to Gerald’s memory to claim a new Guide. Later, when the grief settled, I thought about it,” Ducky lied, “but the scent of a low empath Guide didn’t appeal to me. It’s a shame the government didn’t do something about the Guide shortage earlier. It’s not as if they couldn’t see it coming,” Ducky added putting an angry edge to his voice.

“May I ask how you lost your Guide?”

“It was in the line of duty,” Ducky told him while gazing into his nearly empty glass. There was no need to lie about his loss of Gerald, but he still had to hide his feelings. Gerald’s memory was sacred to Ducky and discussing him with the likes of this man, that had betrayed his Hippocratic Oath, made him feel sick. Still this was war, so he swallowed his disgust and did what he needed to do. “A foreign agent managed to sneak into the NCSIA building. He hid in the morgue... He shot Gerald.” Ducky drained his glass.

Dr. Shamos picked up the wine bottle and poured more wine into Ducky’s empty grass. “Tragic,” Dr Shamos said. “I’m sorry for your loss.” The doctor paused for a moment. This was an unexpected opportunity. An opportunity to bring a respected doctor into their fold. “It is sad to think how often such a thing happens. I’ve heard that some Guides have a high degree of danger detection. One of the things we are trying to do at the Department of Guide Proliferation is to catalogue special abilities and locate the genetic component. Hundreds of Guide and Sentinel lives
a year would be saved if we can breed danger detection into a Guide's abilities.”

“Really,” Ducky said letting some of the grief he felt for loss of his Guide slip from his voice and interest replaced it. “I thought the DGP was only interested in increasing Guide population.”

“That is our primary goal of course,” Dr. Shamos said. “But what’s the harm in increasing the quality of Guides while we’re at it?”

“I attended the seminar about Crisper, the gene cutter,” Ducky said. “The science of gene splicing has advanced quite far.”

“Yes,” Dr. Shamos said. “In the past there was very little we could do to improve the gene pool. Now… It’s become imperative that we do it. What if we could insure that ninety percent of newborn guides would be suitable to Bond with Sentinels. Think of it… ninety percent of the Guide population testing at level four to ten. Now only sixty percent of newborn Guides are suitable. We can do it, we can make a superior gene pool.”

Ducky was disgusted. He had seen first hand what these ego-maniacal men had done to Xander and Abby in their selfish attempt to ‘improve the Guide gene pool’. He schooled his face and didn’t let the doctor see his true feelings. Yes this was what he had hoped for, someone who knew what was going on and willing to talk about it. Ducky took another sip of his wine. He would get the information he was looking for.

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Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Important Note:
Thank you to my new Beta, TimeVortex

Thank you, readers, for your kudos and comments; all are appreciated.

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NCSIA Holding Facility

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“Spike,” Angel said as he saw Spike and another man approach his cell. “You brought your thrall with you.”

“He’s no thrall,” Spike told him. “This is General Gibbs of NCSIA.

“Internal Affairs, I suppose that makes sense.” Angel said. “Except you know it was Angelus that was the head of security at Washington Genetics, not me.”

“You’re here until you can prove we can trust you,” Spike said.

“You told me you needed my help,” Angel said. “I came here to help. The light ball told me I could be reborn clean, on some earth that doesn’t have Sentinels or Vampires. I chose to come here to help you.”

“You must have asked her a question if she told you that. Did She also tell you that abandoning us to the darkness would leave a huge stain on your human soul? Your a champion for the light, give us the information we need and I’ll see what I can do about getting you out,” Spike said.

Angel took a deep breath. “I can tell you there’s a black ops group that calls themselves the Initiative. It’s funded by at least three governments, I don’t know which ones. I only know that our government is one of them. I want to help. What do you need to know?”

“Are the abducted Guides being held at Washington Genetics?” Spike asked.

“Most of them are there,” Angel said. “A few were sent to small labs that do research.”

“Where are the labs located?”

“They’re scattered,” Angel said. “One north of Boston another south of Houston. I don’t remember where the other three are. Let me out of here and I’ll get you everything you need.”

“That’s not going to happen, Angel, at least not yet. Is that all, just five small labs?”

"That's all I know about, There could be more. Angelus didn't care about that stuff, but if it's in the WG computers I can get the info for you."
Gibbs tilted his head as he looked at Angel evaluating what he saw and what Angel had said. He had no gut feeling that Angel was bad news. He slid a pen along with a clipboard with pad of paper attached through the bars of Angel’s cell. “We need your computer passwords and all your access codes,” he told Angel with a look that only Gibbs could give.

Angel took the clipboard and pen. “I’ll give you what I have, but this won’t help you if you’re planning to break the abducted Guides out. They’re three levels underground. Do you know about the entrance on the north side of the mountain? That would be a better strategy. If you want them out you’ll need to take me with you. These codes will get you off the ground floor. But they won’t get you into the north entrance. From the Main entrance there are two more levels to get through. One requires a retina scan, and the other requires a palm scan. We had it upgraded after a female Sentinel nearly escaped. Right now we’re not doing any biological experiments on the abductees, just forced insemination. I know the other shit they have planned. Jesus, Spike, You’re on their short list. They plan on using your sperm to impregnate a Mindwalker. They’re going to experiment on babies. I want to help shut these bastards down. One other thing, getting rid of Miller is a priority for them, as soon as he’s gone Guide abductions will pick up again. The Agency is nearly fifty percent Initiative.”

“We already know about the genetic experiments,” Spike said, leaving out that they knew the Agency was compromised. No use giving up everything they knew.

Angel handed the clipboard back to Gibbs. “Don’t try to get them out with a search warrant,” Angel said. “You won’t get one and you’ll only tip your hand. Most of the judges versed in Sentinel law have been compromised. Spike, the Initiative is entrenched in the government. An all out attack isn’t going to work. It would be no more than a nuisance. If you really want to hurt them you have to attack their financing and shine light on what they’re doing. This isn’t a new organization. They’ve been underground for a long time, WG is the tip of the iceberg.

“What about this north entrance?” Spike asked.

Angel sighed. He wasn’t sure Spike believed him. “It’s camouflaged so you can’t see it by air, the entrance looks like a shear cliff. You reach it through a gated back road, tree covered so you can’t see it by air either. It uses voice recognition. Security is notified immediately every time it opens. Still, if you’re committed to breaking the abducted Guides out that’s the way to do it. It’s how we get them in. Getting sixty three Guides up an elevator that holds five or six people isn’t going to work. Security will shoot to kill. They have to go out the back or they won’t get out.”

“Are they in cells?” Spike asked.

“It’s like a high security prison, but there’s no yard. During the day they have access to a common area and a gym; at night they’re locked up in a cell. The Guards are mostly Betas with one Alpha per block. We have them divided into two blocks. The female Sentinels are kept isolated in a third block. Their guards are all mundane. Neither Sentinels or Guides like to get near them. If you go after the Guides out right the Initiative will come after you. You’ll have to go into hiding. I’m talking about out of the country. Nowhere in the states will be safe. What we did in L.A., attacking the Black Thorn, was wrong. It only got Wes, Gunn, and me killed. The only reason you made it through is because they didn’t want you here. I don’t know how you got here Spike. Lindsay told Angelus you were still in L.A. with Illyria.”

“I was never in L.A.” Spike said. “The Spike you knew in L.A. was a clone.”

Angel listened to Spike’s and Gibbs’ footsteps as they walked away. He sat in his cell and thought about what he had learned from their questioning. The most surprising thing was there non-reaction to his mention of a female Sentinel. That meant that they had a mole in W.G.. Except for the few
minutes that #4 had escaped the three female Sentinels were kept in a isolated area of the facility. Potential guides were brought to them. The staff that worked in the area were all mundane and didn’t know that the women were Sentinels. There wasn’t much he could do about keeping Spike’s mole safe while he was locked up here. They’d be back as soon as they checked out his passwords. He’d repeat the offer to work for them then.

The other thing he learned of interest was that the Spike he knew in L.A. was a clone. That meant that the Powers were putting their trust in Spike. It’s the only thing that made sense. Spike was the key to bringing down The Initiative. Angel was sure of it. That meant he had to be protected at any cost.

Hetty’s Safe House

Sam and Callen sat in very comfortable chairs watching Hetty at work. This safe house surprised them, it wasn’t typical. Case in point, these chairs and the food in the kitchen... fresh fruits and vegetables. Usually safe house duty consisted of canned goods and uncomfortable cheap furniture. But this was Hetty’s safe house. She probably had the old food taken out and new put in every week.

Hetty spoke quietly into the phone. She had had a secure line put in when the Guide Guild acquired the house. Right now things had to be done, Things she was best qualified to take care of. She hadn’t given up her covert connections. Over the years she had done a lot of favors and collected a lot of markers. Now she was going to call them in, all of them if that’s what it took. She had known for some time this was coming. She was not going to rest until those sons of whores were stopped.

A car drove up and stopped in front of the house. Sam and Callen pulled their guns and moved to take up defensive positions.

“Relax, gentlemen,” Hetty told them, “they’re technicians. I called them. It’s time for us to go.”

“Go where?” Sam asked, without putting away his gun. He wasn’t about to holster his weapon until he checked out the techs.

“To the nesting house,” Hetty said.

The technicians had finished putting in the secure phone line and a secure server for the nesting house. They also left encrypted cell phones for all the Sentinels and Guides in the hive as well as a few extras. Hetty felt much better about the security of their communications now. Not that the hive’s ESP wasn’t secure. But she had many contacts that could not be brought into the hive and now that General Gibbs was heading up their war plans he would need communication with all of his troops. Case in point Dr. Mallard.

The first thing Gibbs did when he got back from questioning Angel was to text Ducky with a pre agreed upon code for him to turn on his burner phone.

Ducky was packing to check out and return to D.C. when he received the call from Jethro. It was quite a surprise, but he knew Jethro wouldn’t call for nothing.

“Jethro, this is unexpected, is there anything wrong?” Ducky asked.
“Aside from the fact that we aren’t making much progress with the task force, at least the abductions have stopped, for the time being anyway.”

“A small blessing, but an important one.” Ducky said.

“Will you be returning to D.C. today?” Gibbs asked.

“I’m taking the red eye out of Logan,” Ducky told him. “I’ve made a new friend, Dr. Shamos he’s a Guide specialist.” Ducky knew Gibbs would pick up on the subtext. Ducky had made contact with the enemy.

“That’s wonderful, Duck.” Jethro said. “Speaking of friends, Hetty stopped by.”

“Business or pleasure?” Ducky asked.

“A combination of both,” Gibbs said. “Aside from catch up she’s given us encrypted phones and a secure line to the Nesting House. I’m sending one to D.C. for you.”

Ducky knew what that meant. Jethro had started using encrypted phones and he needed one to receive secure calls from Jethro. Things must have gone pretty far south in Cascade.

“No Sentinel in his right mind will ignore Hetty,” Ducky said. Has she met the hive?”

“She has,” Jethro said, looking over at Hetty who was watching Jim and Spike with their heads together. They were sharing a computer going over task force data.

“Jethro, I want you to know,” Ducky said, “I now believe I was wrong to question the hive’s truthfulness.”

“Not wrong,” Jethro said, “just mistaken.”

“I’m not sure I understand the difference,” Ducky said.

“You had every right to question,” Gibbs told him. “You’re only human, Ducky. We all make mistakes. There is a reason I called, Duck. I’ve just got some intel that there is a bio lab running experiments on Guides north of Boston. If you can find out anything about it, without endangering yourself, it would be helpful.”

“The doctor I’m having dinner with may have something to do with that,” Ducky said. “I’ll see what I can do.

“Just don’t take any chances,” Jethro said. “I want you safe.”

“Will do, Jethro. I have to get packing. Then I’m meeting my friend for dinner and drinks and a ride to the airport. Don’t worry Jethro. As the young people say, this isn’t my first rodeo.”

“Give me a call as soon as you get the phone,” Jethro said and turned off his phone.

Ducky ended the call and took his burner phone apart. He removed and destroyed the sim card. Three thousand miles away Jethro Gibbs did the same thing.

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Nesting House 7:00pm Hive Meeting

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Seventeen Sentinels and Guides sat around the living room. There hadn’t been enough chairs in the house so some volunteered to sit on the floor. General Gibbs sat in an upholstered arm chair with Tony at his feet. Jim sat on Gibbs left as was his right with the meeting taking place in his personal territory, Blair had no problem with dropping to the floor. Spike sat next to Jim with Xander on his lap. McGee, being next highest in rank sat on Gibbs’ right. He decided to use a kitchen chair, Abby sat at his feet. Alpha Prime Graham Miller was next in the circle, Riley sat happily at his feet. Hetty was next in the circle. She sat in a loveseat with Sweet beside her. Next to Sweet, Clint sat in a kitchen chair. Sentinel Prime Peter Wall sat beside Clint with Wesley at his feet. Sam and Callen took the last two seats. The hive had grown since the first days when Graham and Peter had joined. Jim, not for the first time, was thankful that his pack had decided to buy a bigger house.

“We have a lot to go over,” Gibbs said. “Spike and I talked to Angel today. He gave us information he didn’t know we already had as well as some we didn’t have. Before you ask if he can be trusted I had Abby, Sweet, and Xander watch the security tapes. Abby and Sweet are both sure he is telling us the truth and Xanded didn’t detect any hazards. Spike and I also got the impression that he was genuinely willing to help. We need a man on the inside. I think we should ask Angel to do it.”

“I think that this is the perfect time to exercise that old saying…‘trust but verify’,“ Hetty said. “Jethro is right we do need someone on the inside and the head of security on our side will be advantageous.”

“I wouldn’t feel comfortable sitting in a strategy meeting with him,” Graham said. “You say that this is a different man…I’ll take your word for it, but I don’t want my pack near him.”

“I don’t want Sweet near him either,” Clint said.

“I’ll deal with Angel,” Spike said. “I know him. He can’t lie to me.”

“He’ll be working undercover so our contact with him will be limited,” Gibbs said. “We’ll let him out first thing in the morning. Let’s move on to...”

“I don’t think so,” Xander interrupted. “I just got a huge hit in my danger detection.”

“Are you saying we shouldn’t let him out?” Gibbs asked.

“No, that’s not it,” Sweet said. “Xander didn’t feel any danger until you said you’d do it in the morning. Maybe that’s too late. What if you go tonight? ...Xan do you get the same warning if we let him out tonight?”

“No,” Xander said. “It just dissolved.”

“Okay, that’s solved,” Gibbs said, grateful that the problem was so easily taken care of. “We’ll go tonight after the meeting. Next on the agenda is the intel that McGee has brought us. There is a lot to go over and we’ll need everyone to do their part. From what I’ve seen of it so far Guide Reid has it well organized. We need to figure out what to do about it. Among other things ... Oz has found three shell companies affiliated with Washington Genetics money trail. He’s working on tracking them down. McGee feels confident that he’ll be successful.”

“I’d like to deal with them once you find their source,” Hetty said. “It’s the kind of thing I can take care of with the contacts I have. That will leave you free for the things that require Sentinels.”

“Thank you Hetty,” Gibbs said. He knew Hetty, although an empath, had no empathy for anyone that hurt Guides. She took it personally. Whoever was bankrolling The Initiative was, figuratively
and perhaps literally, living on borrowed time.

“Angel told us that W.G. is holding sixty three Guides in their underground facility,” Gibbs continued. “Currently they are not conducting any genetic procedures other than insemination. He told us they plan to experiment on the babies. He also told us of an entrance on the north side of the mountain. We may be able to get them out through the back door. We need to look into it.”

“I have military experience with that kind of thing,” Sam said, “If it’s okay with you, Hetty, I want in on this. Perhaps Clint and I can pair up?” Sam liked Clint and he was one of the few that weren’t already paired up. He also knew the reputation of the Sentinel family name Barton. He knew that Clint lived up to his family’s reputation, even if his family didn’t recognize him as a Barton Sentinel since bonding with a Mindwalker for a Guide.

Clint was mildly surprised that Sam would invite him to be his partner. He knew Sam had been a navy seal before becoming Hetty’s bodyguard. But Sam was in every way a high quality Sentinel and one he would be proud to call friend. “I’m in if it’s okay with Gibbs.”

Gibbs looked in their direction. “You’ll need to work with Angel on this. He has all the information about the facility.”

“It’s not a problem for me,” Sam said.

“I feel confident with leaving Sweet here when we meet with Angel,” Clint said. “I know she’ll be safe with any Sentinel in the Hive. I just don’t want her anywhere near Angel.”

“Eventually it may be necessary for me to work with him.” Sweet said. “If that happens you’ll have to let me do my part.”

“If it’s necessary to win this war,” Clint said, “I’ll let you do what you have to do, but short of an absolute necessity you’re not getting anywhere near him.”

“Angel won’t hurt her, not now that he’s human.” Spike said. “She’s my Childe that makes her blood kin to him. The same goes for Peter and Tim.”

“What about you?” McGee asked. “Does that go for you too?”

“Angelus had plenty of chances to kill me,” Spike said. “I captured Angel and had him tortured. He could have come after me and killed me but he didn’t. Yes, it goes for me too.”

“My Guide, my choice,” Clint said. “Sweet will do her job as our Mindwalker. But I’m not putting her in any unnecessary situations.”

“All of us feel that way about our Guides,” Jim said.

“I agree,” Gibbs said. “Now if there’s nothing else?”

“I have…” Hetty and McGee said at the same time.

“Lady’s first,” Gibbs said. “What do you have for us Hetty?”

“I’ve spent a good part of the day reconnecting with friends and contacts I’ve made over the years,” Hetty began. “I’m going to start a public outcry about these new laws. It will keep The Initiative’s eye on me and allow you more freedom. I plan on starting small with social media and grow it from there. Eventually we’ll have public protests, TV appearances, and round table discussions.”
“Are you planning to be the public face of all the dissent?” Gibbs asked.

“There are a few in other parts of the country that have volunteered to help,” Hetty said. “But I will be the primary face in the Northwest Territory. I’m not naive, Jethro, I know that this will put me in The Initiative’s sights. I’ll take precautions, one of which will be limited one on one contact with the hive.”

“You were planning this all along,” Spike said. It was a statement not a question. He hadn’t known Hetty long, but she had a core of titanium.

“I was only waiting for a time when it would do the most good,” Hetty told the group.

“Anything you can do will be very helpful,” Gibbs said. “Keep in touch, we may need to coordinate with each other. McGee, what did you want to add?”

“Sentinel Morgan has figured out that the computer house isn’t just about the guide abduction. He wants to be read in. He knows we have evidence of a deep state organization that’s behind the new laws.”

“Sentinel Morgan will be a strong addition to your hive,” Hetty said. “I’ve worked with him on FBI cases and I know he, and his guide, can be trusted.”

“You’ve been working with him McGee,” Gibbs said. “How do you feel about reading him in.”

“Morgan’s a top quality Sentinel,” McGee said. “I think we should bring them into the hive.”

Gibbs looked around the circle. “Is there anyone here that objects?”

The room was quiet for a moment and then Blair raised his hand and started to speak. “We can’t invoke the ritual to bring them into the hive. Dr. Reid has Asperger’s Syndrome having eight strange Sentinels lick his Guide gland will be too much for him.”

“We need to bring him into the hive so he can hear our ESP communication,” Gibbs said. “We’ll have to ask him to bond Sentinel-to-Sentinel. McGee, you know him best, you’re the logical choice.”

“No way,” Abby said jumping up and taking up a defense position in front of her Sentinel. “No Alpha is going to claim my Tim.” She growled and looked around the circle. If she had been a Sentinel it would have been taken as a challenge.

McGee stood up and stroked Abby’s arm and encircled her in a hug. He leaned in and whispered in her ear. “It’s okay Abbs, he’s not going to claim me, It’s just Sentinel-to-Sentinel. I need to do my part.”

Abby pushed his arms away and turned to glare into her Sentinel’s eyes. “I know what I saw,” Abby said with a stamp of her foot, “the way his energy danced around you, trying to take your energy for his own.”

“Abbs, except for shaking my hand on the first day he’s never tried to touched me,” McGee said. “You must be misinterpreting what you saw.”

“I’m not,” Abby growled.

“Tell me exactly what you saw,” Sweet said.
Abby turned to look at Sweet. “Morgan’s energy was wrapping itself around Tim,” Abby said, “as if it wanted to occupy the same space.”

“And you think he could have been trying to absorb Tim’s energy?” Sweet asked.

“Yes,” Abby said, “He wants my Tim and he can’t have him.”

Spike tilted his head and looked at Abby. “Maybe it’s not Tim he wants. Maybe he wants to be like him, like me.”

“That’s a possibility,” Jim said. “Sentinels that want to claim Spike can’t keep their hands off of him.”

“I have to meet him to be sure,” Spike said, “but from what you’ve said about him it’s possible. He’s bonded to an atypical Guide, one that has exceptional needs.”

Hetty was watching all the goings on closely. She was fascinated by the hive and the interaction of all the Alpha Sentinels. She had met both Sentinel Peter Wall and Sentinel Major McGee before they had become Spike’s childe. She could sense their change, feel their healing energy. In her experience Sentinel’s weren’t healers. She wanted to know why they would choose to change.

“Peter isn’t bonded to a atypical Guide,” Hetty said. “Wesley’s a classic guide. Granted Abby is extraordinary and Xander has survived the fires of hell, but why would you think Morgan’s choice of Guide would make him want to be like you?”

“He’s a caregiver, not just a protector like most Sentinels. He chose a guide that needed care. I was sent here to bring Sentinels to their next level of evolution,” Spike said. “It makes sense that the Powers would make sure I meet Sentinel’s who are ready to evolve.”

“All our Guides need care,” Sam said.

“Hey!” Callen said. “I’m no high maintenance Guide.”

“All Guides are High maintenance,” Sam said.

“This is a topic for another time,” Gibbs said. “Spike and I will meet with Morgan, he needs to know about our hive. If he is agreeable Spike will take him for his childe. If not I’ll take him in a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond. Is there anything else?”

All the Sentinels stayed quiet.

“Dismissed.” Gibbs stood up and looked at Spike. “Let’s get Angel, I’m driving.”

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Chapter 3

A very big thank you to my beta, TimeVortex.

Chapter 3

A black van circled the residential block where Sentinel Graham Miller lived. It was late evening and the neighborhood was quiet. There was a soft flicker of light from T.V.’s coming from the living room windows of most houses. The van pulled over in front of a dark house around the corner from the Miller home. The side door slid open and two men, dressed in black S.W.A.T. gear, and carrying dart guns, got out of the van and silently crept into the backyard of the empty home. They passed quickly from backyard to backyard, bolting swiftly over fences until they came to the Miller home. One hid in the shadow keeping watch as the other walked to the front of the garage and placed an electronic device over the keypad. A few seconds later the garage door opened and the two Initiative Sentinel’s ducked in. The garage door closed behind them and they took up hiding places behind Sentinel Peter Wall’s car. Now all they had to do was wait until the Miller Pack returned home.

Angel’s apartment

Angel walked into his apartment to find three Initiative Sentinels in his living room. The two standing were dressed in S.W.A.T. gear and held hand guns with silencers by their sides. The third sat in Angle’s easy chair and wore a General’s uniform. The General held a glass of red wine and a nearly empty bottle sat on the end table beside him. Angel wasn’t surprised by their presence. Spike had warned him that he was in some kind of danger.

Angel had come to this reality to help. He didn’t want to rack up any more bad karma by turning his back on people who needed him. Moloch was gone, that made Angel dispensable. He knew he would have to do some fast talking to stay good with the Initiative. Angel’s inner self smiled, this was what he was best at. He let his demon senses expand, mildly surprised he could call on them. His eyes flashed yellow for a moment, but he turned his sight dial up all the way and his pupils expanded to the point that his eyes appeared black.

“General,” Angle said without a trace of surprise in his voice. “I see you heard about the loss of my Guide.”

“You don’t seem too affected by it.” the General said without bothering to introduce himself.

Angel shrugged. He walked to his closet and hung up his coat before turning back to answer. “The bond was new and not deep. He was here to do a job. Being my Guide was meant to be frosting on the cake for me. Unfortunately… well no point in keeping the frosting when the cake is moldy.”

The General took a sip of his wine. “I was told the death was an accident,” he said giving Angel an evaluating look.
“That is the story, on the off chance that I needed plausible deniability,” Angel told him.

“I need to know what actually happened.” the General commanded.

Angel walked to a chair and sat down.

“I didn’t give you permission to sit,” the General snapped.

“I didn’t ask for it,” Angel said with a diabolical smile. He knew these men did not tolerate what they perceived as weakness. He leaned back in the chair, making himself comfortable. At the same time he evaluated the two soldiers with guns. He knew if it came to it, he could kill both of them before they saw it coming. Of course he hoped it wouldn’t come to that. It would ruin his plan to be the eyes and ears within Washington Genetics. “As for my Guide...I gave him two jobs to do, he failed me with both of them and was punished. He knew if he failed me for a third time I would kill him, or make him wish I had. He chose not to give up in his attempt, it killed him.”

“And what was his assignment?” The general asked.

“He was told to locate the resistance,” Angel said.

“Using hocus-pocus,” the General spit out with disgust.

“And how is that any different than the hazard detection we’re so focused on acquiring?” Angel asked. “Is it more palatable for you to hear that he was told to locate a known hazard and failed?”

The General glared at Angel. This wasn’t going as planned. He had expected Angel to squirm before he killed him, not to sit so relaxed with a Mona Lisa smile on his face as if they were old friends having a casual conversation. He should have killed the bastard outright as soon as he came through the door. He’d considered it, even decided on it, but then, with what he thought was reason, decided to get what information he could from him, if the idiot had been compromised he wanted to know it. When hours passed and Angel didn’t return to his apartment he had begun to rethink again. He was about to give the kill order when Angel came through the door. Somehow Angel had snuck up on them. They didn’t hear his footsteps in the hall, only the surprise of a key being turned in the lock.

“All this metaphysical bull shit is over,” The general said. “The Initiative is fully in charge now. I... am fully in charge! We’re taking a scientific approach. Genetic manipulation of Guides and Guides only. Alpha Prime Miller and his Guide are off limits.”

“You don’t want him replaced?” Angel asked.

“He disappeared about ten minutes before you got home,” The General said. “He and his Guide are on the way to the north entrance. The brat Harris and his Sentinel are next on the list.”

“I wouldn’t use darts on Harris,” Angel said. “It could cause a synaptic cascade. He was overdosed the last time he was abducted.”

The General took out his phone and gave the stand down order. They’d have to wait. The team didn’t have assault rifles with them.

“‘How do you know that?’” the General asked. “Miller had all the brat’s records sealed.”

“Miller sealed all the Agency’s records,” Angel told him. “A.P. Harris had duplicates sent to W.G. before his unfortunate incarceration.”
“I want copies of all the A.P.’s records sent to the Initiative,” the General ordered. “I have new orders for you. Miller and the slave Guide Riley will be arriving at the north entrance tonight. I want you to take care of it personally. I want them isolated from the rest of the abducted population. Dr. Tu will begin genetic work in the morning.

The General stood up. “You have your orders.”

Angel went to the door and saw them out, he locked the door then retrieved the encrypted phone Spike had given him. He waited a moment with his hearing turned up listening to the three heartbeats until they got onto the elevator. There was a chance that the Initiative had bugged his apartment, but he didn’t think so. They had come to kill him, he was sure of it. Spike had good intel. It never occurred to him that it was Xander’s hazard detection that had saved him. He’d have the tech’s from W.G. sweep his apartment for bugs in the morning. He turned on some music and then went to the bathroom and turned on the shower, just in case they had bugged him. He sat on the toilet and dialed Spike’s number.

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A Restaurant in Boston
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Ducky sipped his wine and listened to Dr. Shamus talk. The man could talk. It was obvious to Ducky that he was trying to recruit him. The conversation, to this point had been pretty one sided with only occasional comments by Ducky. He showed the proper interest with subtle injections of enthusiasm and watched as more and more of Dr. Shamus’ fanaticism made itself apparent.

“I’m working at a lab north of here, we have two guides, a male and a female.”

“Then your working on increasing fertility,” Ducky said as a statement.

“Not exactly fertility,” Dr Shamus said. “We’re working on an alternative womb.”

“That would seem quite a problem,” Ducky said. “I didn’t think we had the technology for an artificial womb.”

“Not artificial, alternative,” Dr Shamus said with an enthusiastic look on his face. He leaned across the table and whispered. “Do you remember that Washington Genetics had a breakthrough a few years back with inserting human blood into a swine’s genetic makeup?”

Ducky nodded, he got a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. “They were looking to use them as a guaranteed clean blood supply for humans. As I remember it wasn’t well accepted by the populace. But even if you were successful with in vitro fertilization a pigs gestation time is very different from a humans.”

“That’s what I’m working on,” Dr. Shamus said. “If we can find the correct hormonal balance and extend the pigs gestation time we would be able to speed up our genetic projects.”

“Have you been making any progress?” Ducky asked.

“We’re up to twenty seven weeks. If we can get a consistent thirty two weeks than we will consider the project successful. From there an incubator can take over with very small risk of infant mortality.”

“I can see where that will solve our guide shortage problem,” Ducky said.
“Yes and no pesky parents to interfere with our plans for genetic enhancement,” Dr. Shamus smiled.

Ducky looked at his watch. “Oh my, I’ve completely lost track of time. I need to get to the airport.”

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The Nesting House
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Gibbs and Spike hadn’t been home long when Peter’s voice came through the hive. “Riley and Miller have been taken. They had dart guns and knocked us out. I’m going after Riley now.”

“We’re coming,” Spike said. “It’s most likely they’re going to the north entrance of W.G.. Don’t approach them until we get there.” Spike turned to Jim and Gibbs. “I’ll take Clint,” Spike said, “I have a feeling his bow and arrows will come in handy. It’s better for the rest of you to stay here and protect the Guides.”

On one hand Jim hated to let Spike go without him, but Spike was right it was more important that the Guides be protected. Jim knew what Spike could do, but this was the second time in only a few days that Spike was heading into a very dangerous situation. It took all of his control not to put up an argument. He was Alpha Prime of their pack. It was his place to go into battle and his second’s to either have his back or protect the Guides.

“Spike,” Xander said. “My hyena just told me someone’s in the tree across the street watching the house.”

“We’ll have to take him out before you leave,” Gibbs said.

“It might be best to call NCSIA and have our agents detain him until morning,” McGee suggested.

Gibbs was on the phone and hung up. “ETA three minutes,” he said.

The house became a flurry of activity. Spike and Clint went to change into their black clothes and get their weapons. Jim followed and stood silently watching as Spike changed. This Sentinel, his second and his Guide had just chosen to partner with another. He pushed the thought aside. This was war. He couldn’t afford to give even a second’s worth of energy to such thoughts. They were all soldiers in this war and they all had to do their part to fight it whether it was on a back road on the north side of a mountain or at their own front door. Jim went to his draw and took out a canister of camouflage paint. “Here,” he said, “You’ll need this.”

Spike turned and took the paint. “Jim…” he whispered, understanding what his Alpha was feeling. “Arrows are silent. It could give us an element of surprise…and I need…there’s no one I trust more than you to protect Xander, Blair, and Sweet. I can’t afford to be distracted with worry about them.”

Jim stepped forward and put his hand on Spike’s neck. He brushed his thumb over his cheek as he spoke. “Just come back to me.”

“I promise,” Spike said understanding exactly what Jim felt, “I’ll lay on my back and tell you I’m yours.”

Gibbs stood in the bedroom doorway unwilling to interrupt what his gut was telling him needed to be said. He was close to both these Sentinels, brothers, an Alpha himself he understood only too well what Jim was feeling. He felt it himself. “Spike,” he called softly, “It’s all clear.”
“Take the truck,” Jim said tossing Spike the keys. “The assault rifle and bowie knives are in the back.”

Spike left the bedroom and Gibbs began to follow but Jim grabbed his arm. “Brothers?” he asked.

Gibbs looked at Jim. “Sometimes I wonder what keeps us from killing each other. All those Alpha Sentinels in the room tonight. There’s something about Spike that makes this possible. We form alliances and we keep them. Even in the Marines they keep Alpha’s separated. I came close to claiming him for my own.”

“I wouldn’t have let you do that,” Jim said.

“He’s my brother, and so are you,” Gibbs said. “I won’t disrespect either of you.”

Jim nodded and the two Alpha Sentinels left the room.

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A few minutes later

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Everyone in the nesting house was on edge, but no one more so than Xander. He paced and gave subsonic growls. Blair tried to calm him to no avail and Jim was getting increasingly uneasy seeing his guide in distress. Everyone was startled when the encrypted phone rang. They all looked at each other, but it was Gibbs that picked it up on the third ring.

“Gibbs here,” he answered in his clipped no nonsense voice. All the Sentinels in the room turned up their hearing.

“It’s Angel, I need to talk to Spike.”

“Spike’s not in,” Gibbs told him, “you can talk to me.”

This time it was Angel that was speaking in a direct tone, “The Initiative took Miller and Riley tonight. It happened before I could stop it. They’re taking them to the north gate of W.G.”

“They’re being tracked,” Gibbs said. “They won’t make it through the gate.”

“Spike’s tracking them,” Angel whispered. All was quiet for a moment, Gibbs had an odd sensation, as if he could feel Angel thinking. “I’ve got to get there and try to disable the north gate. If the team makes it through you won’t be able to get your people back.”

“No,” Gibbs said signaling to McGee. “I’ve got people here that can do that, we’re already into your system.” he said with a pointed look at McGee. McGee nodded and went to call Oz on their secure landline. “We need you as eyes and ears on the inside. We can’t risk you for this.”

“There’s one more thing,” Angel said, stifling his surprise that I.A. was already hacked into W.G. “There’s a new General he’s taken over the Initiative now that Moloch is gone. He was planning on taking Xander tonight, I told them they couldn’t use darts on him. That stopped them, but they’ll be back, most likely tomorrow, with guns and bullets not darts. There’s probably someone watching your house, but you need to get out of there and get to a safe house, one the Agency doesn’t know about. It’s not safe for anyone there anymore. The general also ordered me to turn over all records AP Harris had on Xander. I have no choice, I have to do it to keep my cover. If you don’t want him to have them you need to erase them tonight.” Angel ended the call, He needed to
get to W.G. and do what he could to make sure Spike’s rescue attempt didn’t go sideways.

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The drive to the North Gate

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Spike was driving fast. More than a little too fast. Ordinarily Clint would have told him to slow down but he was handling the car well in spite of the speed and they did have some ground to make up.

They had turned off the highway and onto the back roads about ten miles back. Now they were driving on a dark rural road. Clint turned up his sight dial and could see two tiny tail lights ahead.

“There’s a car ahead,” he said. Clint could see the lights steadily get larger.

“That’s Peter’s car,” Spike said. Spike slipped into hive mind and told Peter to pull over. Less than a minute later Peter and Wesley got into Spike’s truck. Within minutes, with headlights off, speeding down the road they were close enough to the abductor’s vehicle to see the brake lights as it came to a stop in front W.G.’s high security gate.

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McGee had called Oz and asked him to disable the the North Gate. Oz was more familiar with the security system and had used Angel’s passwords to give himself and several others fake W.G. employees complete access to Washington Genetics. He also added a backdoor access in case it would be needed in the future.

The Initiative and W.G.’s security system were one and the same so it didn’t take long for Oz to locate and erase the voice ID that would let the abduction team through the gate. He told McGee it was done. He had hoped to get back to binge watching his favorite detective show, Numb3rs, but McGee had another assignment for him. Oz listened carefully. He was being called on to save a friend. He remembered how all this started for him. He had been asked to recover Xander’s Guide School records for the good guys. Now he was being asked to keep the bad guy’s from getting Xander’s medical records and to leave no tracks. Oz smiled, he’d have to pull an all nighter but, man, this was going to be fun!

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Nesting House

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Gibbs hug up the phone. “Hetty doesn’t have a safe house big enough for all of us. She suggested we go to the Rainier Guide Hospital and check in as a Pack under an assumed name. It won’t seem suspicious if the staff refuses to give out patient information.”

“The suites only have one nest,” Blair said. “We’ll need four suites. Won’t that look odd?”

“The Staff at Rainier are all Guides that Hetty trusts, that’s why she’s sending us there instead of Cascade,” Gibbs said. “She’s making the arrangements now. We need to get packed. We can’t use Spike’s car, the GPS can be tracked. Sam and Callen are on their way with a van. You have until they get here to pack, so move.”
Blair grabbed three suitcases from the closet. He gave one to Jim and one to Xander. They began stuffing clothes into them as quickly as possible. It really wasn’t difficult to fill them up quickly. Jim was military neat and Blair had learned that anything else agitated his Sentinel. He finished filling his suitcase and grabbed another for Spike’s clothes. He started to help Xander pack when a question occurred to him. “Jim, what about your truck? It has a GPS.”

“I’ll report it stolen,” Jim said. “Then you can call in an anonymous tip on an abandoned truck. It’ll be impounded. The only thing I’m worried about is Simon. He’ll be worried that something happened. We can’t let him know we’ve gone to ground. Let’s get our personal items and then we’re out of here.”

Blair knew all too well how worried Captain Banks would be when he found Jim’s abandoned truck. He was their close friend and Jim trusted him with their lives. “Maybe we should leave a message, tell him we’re going to Peru so he won’t pull out all stops looking for us? Maybe the Initiative will believe it and they won’t look either?”

“Leave a false trail?” Jim said. “I like it.” Jim made the call.

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Spike turned off the truck’s engine and let it roll as close as he dared to the Initiative van. He could hear the soldiers discussing what to do about the malfunctioning gate. The fence and gate were 12 feet high and electrified. Even if they did short circuit it they would have to get an unconscious Miller and an uncooperative Guide over it.

Clint slipped into the Hive mind and told the group that he had a clear shot from the top of the truck. Spike told him to go. The first arrow severed a soldier’s spinal column at the base of his neck. He died instantly and fell to the ground. The two remaining Initiative soldiers turned when they heard their brother in arms fall. Two more arrows flew in quick succession each penetrating into the brain through their left eye. Neither soldier had the time to pull the dart guns they carried.

“Well,” Peter said, “I see why you brought him.”

The group approached he van slowly, Peter listened for the heartbeats of his pack mates while Clint retrieved his arrows and checked for a pulse on the three dead men. “There’s only two heartbeats,” he told them. “It’s Miller and Riley.”

Peter opened the car door and found Riley bound and gagged, he quickly cut him free. Miller was zip-tied and unconscious. Peter cut him free and tried to wake him but he couldn’t even get a groggy moan from him. Since they couldn’t wait for Miller to regain consciousness Peter decided that he would have to claim his right under Sentinel law, and quickly cut off the three dead Sentinel’s genitalia and crushed them under foot. Peter picked up Miller and took him to the truck while Spike turned the Initiative van to block the gate. When Peter came back Spike and Peter rocked the van until it fell on its side then everyone rode back to Peter’s car.

Getting back to their Hive brothers and sisters was less complicated than Spike thought it would be when he was told the Hive was going to use the Rainier Guide Hospital as a safe house. Hetty, had
everything planned out. Peter and Wesley took Graham and Riley back to their home to pack some
clothes before going to the Guide Hospital. Sam was there waiting with the van and Peter simply
left his car in the driveway. Hetty told Spike to abandon the truck under an I-405 highway overpass
and to wait for Sam to pick him and Clint up.

Clint sat quietly in the truck while Spike reassured everyone in the Hive that everything had gone
smoothly and they would be back soon.

“Xander’s been nervous about this,” Spike said when he had finished his conversation.

“I think the whole hive has been on edge,” Clint said. “I could feel the uneasiness.” Clint got out of
the truck and began looking for Sam’s van.

Spike followed him out and gave his hive brother an evaluating look, “You seem a little uneasy
yourself. Is there something on your mind?” he asked.

“I didn’t know how strong you were until I saw you and Peter turn over the Initiative van,” Clint
said. “It should have taken ten men a lot more than rocking a van that size five or six times to get it
on it’s side. Is Sweet that strong?”

Spike didn’t see any point in trying to lie to Clint. “Strong enough to help me roll a van? Yes. Does
that bother you?”

“I’ve known for sometime now that she can do things with her mind, she’s always had a strong
moral compass so I’ve accepted that Sweet is Sweet.” Clint told Spike. “But she’s never let me
know how strong she is.”

“You think she’s lying to you?” Spike asked. “I’ve never used my strength against anyone in the
hive. Not even Gibbs when he beat me bloody.”

“Gibbs beat YOU bloody?”

Spike shrugged. “It was the right thing to do at the time.”

“For Gibbs or you?” Clint asked.

“Both of us,” Spike answered.

Clint was silent for a moment, letting his thoughts coalesce in his mind. “I love Sweet, and it really
doesn’t make a difference to our bond,” Clint said, “but it’s a bit of a blow to my Sentinel ego that
my Guide and the love of my life is stronger than I am. At least now I understand why the Tribunal
insisted we live with you. If she were to fall into darkness there’s not a damn thing I could do about
it.”

“She’s not going to fall,” Spike said. “We need to get the things from the back of the truck. Sam
will be here in a minute.”

Clint didn’t have to ask how Spike knew that Sam was close. Peter was with Sam and Spike knew
exactly where Peter was.

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Chapter 4

Spike came in the door of the healing suite carrying a duffel bag full of gear from the back of Jim’s truck. He put it down inside the door and opened his arms for Xander.

“Abby and Sweet wanted to stay together,” Xander said as he stepped into Spike’s arms. He knew that Sweet would be on his Sentinel’s mind. “There’s not enough room in the nest for all of us. Neither of us got any hazard warning so we let her go.”

“It’s okay, Xan. Clint and Tim will take good care of her.” Spike looked at Gibbs, “Did you fill them in on what happened with Morgan and Reid?"

“I haven’t had a lot of time,” Gibbs said. “Angel called right after you left and told us the Initiative was going to abduct Xander. We had to find a safe house and get packed. This was the best option. By the time we got here I thought it was better to wait until you got back. How did it go at the gate? Oz disabled it but we weren’t sure if it was in time. We thought it best not to distract you with hive mind communication.”

“It was disabled,” Spike said. “They got out of the van to see what was wrong and Clint killed all three in less than three seconds. Peter and I turned the van over in front of the gate in case the Initiative figured out something was wrong and sent someone out, they wouldn’t be able to get through.”

“Angel told us they have a new General in charge of the Initiative,” Gibbs said continuing to bringing Spike up to speed. “He wants Xander’s medical records. W.G. has them. Angel said AP Harris sent all his reports to W.G. before he was incarcerated. I’ve been in contact with Oz. He’s in the process of destroying W.G.’s Guide records. He said something about shutting down the cooling units. He assured me that all saved records will be swiss cheese by morning, along with, to quote OZ, ‘a shit load of computer problems.’ McGee assures me that shutting down the cooling units will cover the tracks of anything Oz does to the computer.”

“I trust Oz,” Spike said. “He wouldn’t lie to us.”

“It’s after one o’clock. We need to get some sleep,” Gibbs said. “We can hash all this out in the morning.”

“Come on,” Xander said to Spike, “You need a shower. You still have camo paint on your face.”

Hetty’s Home - 5 AM

Hetty had decided to move out of her safe house and back into her home. Sam and Callen were staying with her and would be until the war was over. She didn’t think she was in much danger yet. But she knew that could change. She was up early talking to her contacts in Europe. Since the Initiative was upping its timetable she felt that she had better get started. She had all the documentation she needed to prove that the guide shortage was due to the armed forces artificial triggering of every man with the Sentinel gene instead of letting them trigger naturally. It was just a matter of getting the information onto the internet in a way that it would get noticed. She knew people that were specialists at that. People that were sympathetic with the Guide’s cause.

By seven A.M. the protest of the new guide laws would be trending on Facebook and Twitter. In a
few days she would be called to appear on TV news round table discussions. She had already whispered in the right persons' ears. Two weeks from now there would be protest marches and demands that the politicians hold town meetings on the subject. It was all set to go into motion.

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Initiative Headquarters
Three Levels Below Washington Genetics 7:00 A.M.
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General Wily was not happy. This was his second day as head of the Initiative and he was damn pissed off. The three men that had abducted Miller and his slave Guide had been killed and mutilated in a way that told Wily that at least one Sentinel had been there. The question was how? The Gate was secret and the soldiers had used anti-sentinel procedures.

“Sentinel Spikeman has the ability to track without scent,” Dr. Tu told the General.

“That’s bullshit,” the General yelled. “Hocus-pocus bullshit. Have you ever heard of Occam's Razor doctor? The simplest explanation is that the Initiative has a mole. They knew to bring enough men to turn the van over and block the gate. One of the dead Sentinels appear to have been stabbed in the back of the neck and the other two were stabbed in the eye with no defensive wounds. That means they knew their killers or they would not have let them close enough to stab them.”

The General turned and looked at Angel. “I want every off duty Soldier brought in for questioning. We have all those damn Mindwalkers upstairs, put them to work I want answers and get the north gate cleared. Push the van over the side of the mountain if you have to. Now, about this damn computer crap. I don’t believe in coincidences. I want everyone with computer access questioned by Mindwalkers. Find out who did this! I don’t believe the cooling towers just happened to break down and erase records right when I take over.”

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Healing Suite 9:00 A.M.
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Jim and Gibbs decided to let Spike and Xander sleep in. It had been a late night, but now the smell of coffee had invaded Spike’s sleep. Spike began nuzzling Xander’s neck. Coffee could wait. He needed to bond with his Guide. Blair and Tony busied themselves cleaning up from their breakfast while Jim and Gibbs talked quietly. Half an hour later a glowing Xander and Spike got out of the nest and took their morning shower. When the pair got out of the shower Blair had their breakfast ready for them.

“So,” Xander asked as he sat down to breakfast, “what are you going to do about Morgan and Reid?”

"I give them a call and Gibbs and I will go over to talk to them this morning."

“This morning?” Xander asked. “How are you going to manage that. We’re in hiding.”

“We still have your hazard detection, our animal spirit guides, and I’m sure Hetty will give us the use of a Guide Guild car,” Spike said. “No one knows we’re associated with Morgan so we’ll be fine. There’s no point in waiting. Things are only going to get worse from this point on. By now the Initiative knows the abduction failed and their men are dead. They’re not going to take that
Sentinel Morgan's Apartment

Sentinel Morgan opened the door to his apartment. “Come in General Gibbs ,” Morgan nodded to Spike, “Sentinel, my word it’s safe.” It was the ritual greeting, but it was required to hold the truth. Of course no Sentinel would knowingly keep his Guide in an unsafe home. All Sentinel’s knew that, so the greeting had become a ritual of reassurance that the Sentinel granting them entrance held no animosity toward the visitors. Ritual was important to Sentinels. No more so than when Two or more Alpha’s met. Ritual is what kept things running smoothly and assured that Alpha’s would not take offence and try to kill each other.

“This is my Hive brother, Sentinel Spikeman,” Gibbs said.

Spike offered his hand, “Call me Spike.”

Morgan shook the offered hand. Gibbs and Spike watched as Morgan’s pupils dilated and quickly constricted back to normal size. No surprise or curiosity showed on his face. Gibbs was impressed. Even Ducky, a Sentinel Gibbs had great respect for showed curiosity.

Morgan let go of Spike’s hand. “Please, have a seat,” he said directing the visitors to the living room. “Can I get you a drink? There’s coffee if you like.”

“Coffee will be good,” Gibbs said and Spike nodded his agreement.

Morgan went to the kitchen and poured three cups of coffee. “Reid is in our privacy room. He’s playimung an online game of chess,” Morgan told them as he handed out the coffee mugs. “I assume that’s okay since you didn’t bring your Guides with you.”

“That’s fine,” Gibbs told him. “Obviously we know about Reid but we can get to that after we fill you in. Hetty told us that you’ve begun to explore the metaphysical side of the Sentinel/Guide bond.”

“Yes, but I don’t see what that has to do with me being read into your resistance activities.”

“It has everything to do with it,” Spike said. “I know you felt the same thing from me that you felt when shaking hands with Major McGee. I know you're a strong Alpha with an extraordinary amount of control. I’m willing to make you my own.”

“Spike,” Gibbs said, “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. We came here to…”

“He asked to be read in. ” Spike interrupted. “There’s no point in small talk.” He put his mug down and bent over to remove his shoes and socks.

Gibbs gave a subliminal moan, the kind a Sentinel gives when his Guide does something too Guide like for the Sentinel’s comfort.

Morgan looked at Gibbs and then back at Spike. Why had Gibbs moaned like that it was weird. Gibbs outranked Spikeman, but they talked to each other like equals. Add to that Spike wasn’t behaving like any other Alpha Sentinel he had ever met. Spike was sending him a message by taking off his shoes and socks. Going barefoot was a sign of submission. No Alpha submits
without a reason. It just wasn’t done. Hetty had called to warn him that the Ellison Hive was unusual and not to be put off by it. The Hive could be trusted. Morgan decided to take Hetty at her word. “I don’t know what you mean by making me your own.” Morgan said as he sat watching Spike. His face was placid, his body relaxed.

“I want to tell you about myself” Spike said as he wiggled his bare feet in the carpet.

Morgan sat quietly sipping his coffee, but now his face showed his curiosity.

“You asked why the metaphysical is important,” Spike began. “I wasn’t born into this reality, I was sent here by a Cosmic Intervention Case Worker named Candle. If you look up my records everything will be in order. I have all the memories of the person that became an English teacher, but everything that happened before I woke up from the coma are lies. I was sent here because there is a darkness rising. It wants to turn this reality evil. I’m a different kind of Sentinel. You felt my energy when you shook my hand. The easiest way to tell you how I’m different is that Alpha Sentinels are hardwired to be an Oak. When the storm comes they stand firm, they don’t bend, they don’t break. I’m bamboo. When the storm comes I adapt. I bend, but I don’t break. I spent a lifetime learning to be what I am. I know how the darkness works. I know how it thinks because for two hundred years I was part of it. I wasn’t human. When I tried to hurt someone I cared about, I saw myself as I was. I turned away from the Dark and fought to get my humanity back. I died fighting on the side of the Light to save that world from the Dark. When I died I was given a choice. I could meld with the darkness inside me, achieve balance, and become the Sentinel I am, or be born as a mundane human.”

“What made you decide to come here?” Morgan asked.

“This is what I asked for,” Spike told him. “I didn’t know the word Sentinel, but I asked for this life. Candle, my caseworker, told me I was asking to be a Sentinel.”

Morgan nodded and thought for a moment. He didn’t know how to answer what Spike just told him so he decided to just accept it. He had been told in his meditation that morning that the teacher was coming tonight. “I bonded with Reid because he needed me, but more than that I needed to be needed. I looked at other Sentinel’s and their Guides. The Guides were always there for them. They were strong partnerships, but the Guide’s didn’t need to Bond. They could have just as easily had a good life without a Sentinel. I don’t want to join a hive that can’t understand that and accept Reid and our bond.”

Spike smiled. “My Guide Xander was emotionally abandoned by his family. He was tortured in Guide School. The first night I was with him I spent the whole night comforting him. After I claimed him he was abducted because they knew I wouldn’t let him be used in genetic experiments. When we rescued him he had brain damage from an overdose of drugs. We’re the same you and I. My Guide needs me as much as I need him.”

“There is a Guide in our Hive that was experimented on at conception,” Gibbs said. “They tried to make her into a female Sentinel. She’s a warm and loving person but she also growls and purrs like a Sentinel. Before Major McGee claimed her I couldn’t imagine her with a Sentinel. Now I can’t imagine them without each other.”

“We have a Mind Walker in the Hive that’s a Guide,” Spike said. “She was abducted. They raped her and gave her psychotropic drugs that kept her from laying down memories. When she was rescued the abductors shot her. She nearly died from her wounds. The Alpha Sentinel that rescued her choose her to be his Guide. His family disowned him. The Rangers made him resign. He didn’t believe we’d let him into the Hive.”
“You and your Guide are not going to feel like the odd man out,” Gibbs said. “We want to bring you into our Hive. We know that Reid has special needs, that doesn’t scare us. We know bringing you in the usual way may be too much for Reid. There is another option. If Spike is wrong and you don’t want to be like him you can take me in a Sentinel-to-Sentinel Bond.

“There are a few more things you should know about our Hive before you decide,” Spike said. “We have a Hive mind, an ESP communication. That’s why we want to bring you in. The Hive mind is secure, it can’t be hacked. You can turn it on and off so you’ll still have your personal privacy, but we’ll be there when you need to talk to us. You should also know that I have a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond with the General and I’m Tony’s second Sentinel. Sentinel Ellison, his Guide Blair, my guide Xander and myself are cross bonded to each other. We are fully bonded in every way. If you bond with me it will show up in your blood. You’ll be stronger, you’ll heal faster, and you’ll be able to track your Guide by feeling where he is.”

“Is there a downside to this?” Morgan asked.

“You may meet up with some Alpha’s that can’t keep their hands off of you,” Spike said. “I don’t consider it a down side, but I glow when I renew my bond with Jim.”

“Are you talking about Guide Glow?” Morgan asked. He sounded incredulous.

“It’s not the same,” Spike said. “My glow is golden. I don’t think you’ll glow. You haven’t been Claimed by an Alpha. I didn’t glow when Gibbs took me in a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond.”

“Do you love him, your Alpha?” Morgan asked, “Is that why you let him claim you?”

“My relationships with Jim, Blair and other members of the Hive are complicated and not easy to explain. Xander is my soulmate. To say I love him is inadequate. But Jim and I...We have a link. It’s different than what I have with Xander. Jim is my Alpha, because I chose him as much as he chose me. It’s not the same kind of love I have for Xander but it is a kind of love.”

Morgan nodded. Spike was nothing if not honest. He felt a pull to him. Even stronger then the one he felt toward McGee. “So, just to be clear,” Morgan asked, “if I want to be like you; I take you in a sentinel-to-sentinel bond, if not I take General Gibbs?”

“No,” Spike said, “It’s a different ritual to become my childe. We don’t have sex. It’s a blood bond. I drink your blood, you drink mine.”

“Why are you calling me childe,” Morgan said. “In case you haven’t noticed I’m bigger than you.”

“That energy that you feel the pull to, is a metaphysical being that I’ve melded with,” Spike said. “It procreates by blood bond. You’ll be my childe, I’ll be your sire.”

“Is it safe to drink each others blood?” Morgan asked.

“Dr. Mallard ran blood tests on us. Spike is healthy and McGee, Wall, and Sweet haven’t had any bad side effects. I also had a full body CAT scan after bonding with Spike. I’m still healthy.”

“Can we do this right now?” Morgan asked.

“It’s a ritual,” Spike said, “and afterward you’ll sleep for eight to twelve hours. We can do it tonight. Reid can’t be there until after the ritual is over and I need to stay with you until you wake up.”

“Why can’t Reid be with me?”
“It’s very intense,” Gibbs said. “I witnessed when Spike Sired McGee. There’s no way to prepare you for how profound the ritual is.”

“All right,” Morgan said. “I’d like to do it here. Reid will feel more comfortable and so will I. Do we need witnesses?”

“It’s not necessary. Reid knows Abby, would you like her to sit with Reid during the ritual. It takes about fifteen minutes.”

“That would be nice.” Morgan said. “The thing I’m concerned about is you being with us while I sleep.”

I don’t have to be in your bed,” Spike said, “But I do need to be in the room or you’ll feel abandoned when you wake up.”

“Tonight then,” Morgan said.

TBC
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Note: Thank you to Time Vortex my Beta and story talk buddy
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Computer Safe House

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Morgan and Reid arrived at the computer safe house at 9:55 am, an hour later than their usual time. Oz was already at work, the usual state of things. He was surprised that Major McGee and Abby were not there yet, but he was sure they would arrive any minute. Instead the phone rang. That was definitely unusual. Oz was oblivious to the sound. He was lost in the pursuit of the owners of one of the shell companies funding the Initiative. During the time he had been working with Daniel Osborne, Morgan had come to have a great deal of respect for the small redhead and so did Reid. He was always working when they got there in the morning and when they left at end of shift. The thing with Oz was that he loved it, loved pursuing the bad guys. His knowledge of computers, his devotion to the work, and his dogged perseverance left no doubt in his mind that Oz would crack who was providing the funding for the black ops army. It was only a matter of time.

Morgan walked over to the secure land-line and read the caller ID. It was Hetty. Morgan’s stomach gave a bit of a turn. He had a definite feeling something was wrong. “Yes,” he said into the handset.

Hetty didn’t see any reason to beat around the bush. “Morgan, the shit hit the fan last night with the hive. The Initiative abducted Miller and his Guide. They were going to go after Spike and Xander but they got away. Everyone’s gone to ground.”

“What?,” Morgan said, “I just talked to the General and Spike this morning. They didn't mention it. The Initiative has Miller?”

“No, Wall, Spike, and Barton went after them and got them back. McGee’s underground too. I don’t know when he’ll be back. You’re in charge of the Safe House until further notice.

“Did Gibbs take the abductors into custody?” Morgan asked

“No, Wall was Cross-Bonded with Riley, he claimed his right under Sentinel law.”

Morgan knew what that meant. The initiative soldiers abducted a Guide now they were dead. They got what they deserved. “Spike was supposed to come to my place tonight and bring me into the Hive. Has there been a change of plans?”

“I’m sending a Guild car for them. Spike, McGee and Abby will be there. Don’t let this put you off, Morgan. This Hive is strong and adaptive in unexpected ways.”

“I noticed. Spike has three Guides and he’s been claimed by his Alpha. Add to that that they didn't even mention the abduction. I’ve been rethinking my decision about doing this thing with Spike. Maybe I’d be better off just bonding Sentinel-to-Sentinel with Gibbs.”
“It’s your choice of course. Spike says it can’t be forced, you have to want it. I'm not sure why they didn't mention the abduction maybe they just wanted to stay on point with bringing you into the hive, they knew I would be bringing you up to speed. The abduction is already distracting you. But remember You’ve been exploring the metaphysical side of the Sentinel/Guide bond. You’ve asked for a teacher. I know without a doubt he’s the teacher that was sent to you. I highly recommend you not turn your back on the offer. The old saying ‘opportunity knocks but once’ is often true.”

“Thanks Hetty, your counsel means a lot to me.”

“I’ll be in touch,” Hetty said and ended the call.

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Washington, DC

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The encrypted phone that Gibbs sent had arrived. Ducky took it out of the box and looked at it. It didn’t look any different then any number of smart phones but he knew that it was the software inside that made it different. He didn’t want to think about what he had learned in Boston. It made him nauseous, but he had information Gibbs needed. It was 8 am on the west coast. Ducky knew Gibbs would be up, so he made the call.

“Gibbs.”

“Jethro, it’s Ducky.”

“Duck, glad to hear from you.”

“I’m not so sure you’ll be happy once I tell you what I’ve found out. The lab north of Boston is in a town called Andover. They are working on what Dr. Shamus called an alternative womb.”

Ducky continued telling Jethro all of the disgusting things he learned. It made him angry. He was a doctor sworn to first do no harm. Yet doctors were doing just that and justifying it as being what is best for humanity. Well he had proof in Abby and Xander just what harm was being done. He wondered about the abducted guides. He knew two of them were in the Andover lab having their ovum and sperm collected. He wondered if they knew what was being done to their prospective children. If they did know the emotional pain they were being put through was horrific. Ducky understood that unbridled anger would not serve him well, but he knew how to put it aside and do whatever he had to put an end to this insanity.

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Rainier Guide Hospital

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The Sentinels and Guides were quite upset when Gibbs filled them in on what Ducky had learned. They needed the comfort of their mates. The whole thing was too close for comfort after what had happened with the attempted abductions. Gibbs contacted Hetty through the Hive Mind and filled her in. She assured him that she had contacts in Massachusetts that could take care of the problem.

There wasn’t much to keep the Sentinels and Guides busy in the healing suite. By noon Jim and Gibbs wanted to see if there was anything on the news about the dead Sentinels. They were surprised to see a protest of local law enforcement in Washington, DC. The story was being
covered nationally.

“We’re here in Washington, DC today where a small group is picketing the White House about the new laws intended to solve our critical shortage of Guides,” The reporter said into her microphone. “Sir, Would you take a moment to talk with us?”

“More than happy to do that,” one of the picketers said.

“What’s your name and why are you here today?”

“I’m Chief Philip Bentquest, Chief of Police in Occoquan, Virginia. I’m here today with other Police Chiefs from Virginia to protest the incarceration of every Mindwalker Guide in the country by the Department of Guide Proliferation.”

“Incarceration? Isn’t that word a bit dramatic? After all the DGP was established to end the vital shortage of Guides.”

“Well what else would you call it? The DGP won’t let one of the Mindwalkers out of that place in Washington State to do their job. We need them to help get warrants and to interview suspects. We are hogtied without them.”

“Surely you’re not saying that all the Mindwalkers are being held against their will?”

“I’m saying they are being held. I’ve tried going to court to have a Mindwalker work on a missing child case. The DGP won’t let one out even to help find a missing child. You hear that citizens...a missing child! The courts say we have no right to Mindwalkers.”

The reporter was a bit concerned. She had her orders to spin this on the side of the new laws. This wasn’t going as planned. “But you do agree that our government needs to address our societies urgent need for Guides?”

“I think the Guide shortage can be solved without putting our citizens in danger. Word’s gotten out and crime is up. Sure we still have the Sentinels and Guides in our police departments, but the Mindwalkers are a vital part of the team. The law enforcement community depends on them. Our court system depends on them. Mindwalkers are empaths; they won’t railroad an innocent. Something needs to be done.”

The reporter decided she had better cut her losses. “Thank you Chief Bentquest.”

“Thank you, the public has a right to know.”

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“Wow! Where did that come from?” Xander asked.

“Hetty,” both Jim and Gibbs said at the same time.

“Hetty said she was going to organize public resistance to the new laws. I didn’t think she’d get it done so fast.” Gibbs said.

“It was a small picket line,” Jim said. “It looked like no more than twenty five or thirty people.”

“That’s not all, it’s trending on Facebook and Twitter,” Blair said. “Maybe that’s why the news felt they had to cover it.”

“What kind of reaction are we getting?” Gibbs asked.
“Mostly the tweets are in support of the protest,” Blair said, “There are a few here and there that say it’s important to solve the Guide shortage and that Sentinel’s are to blame so they shouldn’t be complaining because the government is doing something about it.”

“Sounds like some people drank the kool-aid.” Xander said.

“If I know Hetty she has the antidote and is ready to serve it up,” Gibbs said. “By the end of the week the Initiative won’t know what hit them.”

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Morgan’s Home

That Evening

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Morgan and Reid brought one of their recliners into the bedroom with a pillow and blanket to make Spike comfortable while he slept. They had just finished arranging things when McGee, Abby, and Spike arrived.

Spike and Morgan went into the bedroom and got undressed. Both of them had no problem with nudity between Sentinels. Morgan dropped his clothes into a laundry basket tucked in the closet, Spike folded his clothes and put them in a stack on top of the dresser.

Morgan pulled down the covers and looked at Spike. He would have preferred to take Spike as his second, but that wasn’t possible. Spike had already been Claimed so he put the whole idea behind him and closed the door on it. “So now what?” he asked. “You said there was a ritual.”

“There is,” Spike said as he walked forward and stood inches from Morgan. He put out his right hand and placed it over Morgan’s heart.

Morgan stood with his arms by his side as Spike’s energy filled him. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. The energy was warm and soothing, it seemed to be chasing away cold that he didn’t know was there.

“You have some doubts,” Spike said. “I know a part of you wants this. Tell me what it is that’s holding you back.”

Morgan opened his eyes and looked at Spike. He was a bit surprised that Spike could sense so much with a touch. “Spencer and I have been looking into the metaphysical side of the Sentinel/Guide bond. We asked for a teacher. Hetty thinks you’re that teacher. But I’m wondering whether I want to learn what you have to teach. Three Guides...and claimed by your Alpha, that’s not me. It’s not what I want for myself or my Guide.”

“Let’s lay down and talk this out,” Spike said. Spike laid on the bed and Morgan laid facing him.

“So that’s what this is about? You think I’m betraying my Guide? I know you may not understand this. From the outside looking in it seems that I’m not true to Xander. I am. I don’t do any of this without his permission. If Xander says no; I say no. Xander knows that I can’t do this with anyone I can’t love. But the love I have for my Childer is chaste; it’s not the same as the love I have for my Guide.”

“You say Guide, singular, what about the other two?”
“I’m not their primary Sentinel. I don’t interfere with that bond. I do love them but not to the depth I love Xander. Xander is my soul mate. I have a bond with them because Xander’s hazard detection said they were in danger. He gave his permission so they could be safe.”

“And your Alpha claiming you?”

“You’re going to find this out sooner or later, so I may as well tell you Sentinel-to-Sentinel. What I say here stays here?”

“Agreed, Sentinel-to-Sentinel.”

“When we got Xander back from the abduction he had brain damage. A lot of his neural pathways had been destroyed. His Sentinel gene had triggered while he was healing.”

"Your Guide’s a Sentinel?"

"An Alpha to be exact. The night it happened Graham was at our home. He couldn’t keep his hands off of me. Xander tried to attack him. I took Xander to the nest, he had fully triggered and was in a Bonding Thrall. He claimed me as his Guide.”

“Whoa, wait a minute, You’re a Guide?”

“I’m a metaphysical Guide. I don’t have a Guide Gland.”

“How could he claim you?”

Spike could feel that Morgan had let his resistance drop. He was fully engaged. “He was in a Bonding Thrall. I don’t think anything would have stopped him.”

“And your Alpha, he would need a Guide Gland.”

“Jim came in and saw Xander Claiming me. He’s the head of our pack. Our pack dynamics are complicated. He had to Claim me to keep our pack in balance. Xander gave him permission. Jim did look for a Guide Gland, but it didn’t stop him from Claiming me as his Guide.”

“And you let him.”

“Let him? I wanted it. I told Jim I knew it would happen sooner or later. Jim and I have a deep connection. I never took him for my Childe, it’s not what either of us want. But there is something very deep between us. Jim and Blair had been exploring the metaphysical bond before I met them. I'm pretty sure that’s why I was sent to them.”

“That doesn’t explain to me why an Alpha would willingly lay on his back without a fight.”

“The Bond is everything,” Spike whispered. “It’s not the position you’re in when you dance, it’s the dance. As for the pack it needed to be kept in balance or it would destroy itself. Blair knew that and so did Xander. We were already Bonded. It wasn’t that different.”

“So you did what you had to do to keep your pack together.”

“Yes.”

Morgan looked into Spike’s deep blue eyes. “I understand now. You didn’t lay down for your Alpha out of weakness. You did it out of strength. It’s what you told me yesterday. You bend but you don’t break. You give without surrender. I think that is something I want to learn.”
Spike’s fangs dropped and he bit into Morgan’s neck. He took three swallows of blood and then licked the wound closed. He opened his wrist and held it to Morgan’s mouth. “Drink and become my own.”

Morgan drank three swallows. Then he pulled Spike into a kiss. He wanted this more than he had realized. Spike returned the kiss. It was the first time a Childe in the making had instigated a kiss. It told him Just how strong a Sentinel Morgan was. Spike was reminded of the lyrics of an old song, “when you see him coming you better step aside.”

McGee felt the ripple in energy. He looked up at the closed bedroom door. Then he heard Spike through the hive mind. “It’s done. Send Reid in.”

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Next Morning

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Spike had been in a deep sleep for eight hours. He woke suddenly with a flash of fear when he realized he wasn't in the nest and Xander wasn’t next to him, but he quickly remembered that he was in Morgan’s bedroom.

Morgan was slowly waking up. He reached for Reid and snuggled in to sniff and lick at his Guide’s neck when the acrid smell of fear hit him. Morgan suddenly sat up, “Sire,” he yelled.

Spike quickly jumped out of the chair and went to his new Childe. “It’s alright, I’m here.”

Reid sat up beside his Sentinel and offered his neck. Morgan pulled him into a hug. “I’m okay Spence,” He told him.

Morgan looked at Spike, “What the hell was that? I just called you Sire.”

“I was disoriented when I wasn't in the nest with my pack. You picked up on it is all,” Spike told him. “As for calling me Sire. That’s who I am.”

Morgan felt a definite Bond to Spike. It wasn’t the same as the Bond with Reid. It had a different feel to it. Spike said his love for his Childer was chaste. The drive to take Spike in a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond had disappeared. Morgan tried to analyze what it was he was feeling. It was hard to define but a chaste Bond would fit. “I didn’t think it would be this strong,” Morgan told him. “Is that just because it’s new?”

Spike wanted to calm Morgan. Waking to your Sire’s fear was not the best way to wake up. “Yes and no,” Spike told him. “It will become less...urgent, but it won’t lose its depth.”

“I can sense a change in you,” Reid said. It wasn’t a bad change, but he could sense an unmistakable difference.

“You’re still my Guide,” Morgan told him. “I still love you.” The last thing Morgan wanted was for his Guide to have doubts about him. As soon as Spike left he would take the time to reassure his Guide that their bond was still secure.

“You’re still first with your Sentinel,” Spike told Reid, “and your still first with me as you would be with any Sentinel you’re not bonded to.”

Reid nodded to Spike, then he looked at Morgan. “We should shower and have breakfast.”
Morgan was surprised that he wasn’t quite ready for Spike to leave. “Will you stay for breakfast?”

“I’ll stay for breakfast.” Spike told him. “But then I have to get back to Xander.”

Initiative Headquarters
Two days later

Dr. Tu stood in General Wiley’s office. He didn’t like the General and if truth be told he didn’t like any of the people in charge of the Initiative. He had taken this job because he wanted to work on the cutting edge of genetics. He would be perfectly happy if he could just stay in his lab and not have any contact with security, but here he was again waiting patiently for god knows what from a man that knew nothing about genetics.

General Wiley finished looking at the papers on his desk. He looked up and frowned at the doctor. “I want cell block C cleaned out,” he said. “Now that Miller is out of the picture we can assign a new Alpha Prime and start abducting Guides again.”

“Cell block C is where we keep the female Sentinels,” Dr. Tu said. “They can’t be housed with the Guides. It would cause them too much stress.”

“I’m aware of that doctor. That is precisely why I used the words ‘clean them out.’ Those bitches are nothing but trouble. They refuse to Bond with any of the male Guides, and the male Sentinels can’t stand to be around them. They’re no good to us, they’re taking up valuable space. Female Sentinel’s were a bad idea to begin with.”

“I’ll see who has room for them,” Dr. Tu said. “It will take a few days but we should be able to transfer them to another lab.”

“You’re not listening doctor,” the General said. “I want their existence scrubbed. This is the most secure facility we have and one of them nearly escaped. If it got out that we’re doing genetic experiments on little girls this whole place would come crashing down around our heads.”

“We can’t just kill them!” Dr. Tu said. “It’s taken us more than twenty years and millions of dollars to successfully develop a female Sentinel.”

“You call them a success? They're useless. You have one hour to get whatever genetic material you need from them,” the General said. “Even that’s a compromise from my point of view. Make sure their files are renamed and encoded.” He turned away from the distraught doctor and to his computer screen. “Dismissed.”

Dr. Tu rushed to his lab. An hour didn’t give him much time and he was sure the General was a man that tended to be on time.

Rainier Guide Hospital

The Sentinel’s were all having an attack of cabin fever. Two days in tight quarters without much to keep them occupied was getting on their nerves. There was only so much Bonding with their Guides a Sentinel could do. Gibbs wanted to get to work. It would help if he had a secure
computer, but the Guide hospital was not set up for work. Hetty was trying to find a Safe House that would hold the whole Hive and could be set up as a secure workplace.

The Hive hadn’t heard from Angel since he had notified them of Xander’s imminent abduction. When the encrypted phone rang and Gibbs answered it, Angel asked for Spike. Gibbs handed Spike the phone.

“There’s a lot of changes here,” Angel told Spike. “General Wiley is convinced that Miller’s abductors were killed by moles in the Initiative and that it was a mole that caused the computer’s cooling units to shut down. He’s having the Mindwalkers question every soldier that was off duty the night they were killed. He’s also having all the computer techs questioned.”

“He hasn’t figured out we were there?”

“He doesn’t believe you can track without scent. He calls it hocus-pocus."

“That’s good for us, I guess,” Spike told him. “But it still doesn't get us out of this Safe House.”

“As far as I know, he thinks you and Miller have left the area. He’s put a new Alpha Prime in charge of the Agency and he plans to start abducting more Guides. He ordered the female Sentinels killed today. I couldn’t save them. They were dead before I knew he gave the order. Spike, I know you have a mole here. I can’t keep him safe unless I know who he is. It’s just a matter of time before the Mindwalkers find him.”

“Thanks for calling, Angel. If you know of any abduction plans let us know.” Spike ended the call.

Angel looked at the phone in disbelief. Spike had someone in the Initiative, he had to. It was the only way that he could have known about the female Sentinels. It wasn’t like Spike to abandon his people. There was nothing more he could do. The ball was in Spike’s hands now.

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If you comment I will answer. Thanks for reading.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note: My thanks to TimeVortex who was co-writer of this chapter. She came up with the Starbucks idea and wrote a good part of that section as well as contributing to other sections of this chapter.

This chapter takes place in or near Boston, Massachusetts. Since our boys are in Cascade I choose to have the Leverage team take care of the problem. They are not going to be totally integrated into the story. I just called on them to solve this one problem and maybe give a little help to Oz and McGee on following The money. I hope you like the chapter.

Hetty had taken over the organization of public resistance against the new Guide laws. She didn’t mind at all. She was pledged morally and legally to save her people from the injustices that the Initiative wanted to perpetrate on them. Now this thing in Boston. It had to be stopped. There was one team she could trust. She picked up the phone and called Nathan Ford.

Leverage

Nate Ford ran a group called ‘Leverage Consulting & Associates’. He had been the top insurance investigator in a company before starting Leverage. Nate was married with a young son who became ill with pancreatic cancer. The health insurance division of the company he worked for refused to cover his medical needs. Nate tried to speak out but his cries went unheeded. Nate resigned from the company and turned to alcohol after the death of his son. His wife, Maggie found the double loss of her son along with the loss of her husband to the bottle too much to cope with and divorced Nate.

Hetty was listening to Nate’s out cry and had taken personal interest in what she considered to be a scandal. The same insurance company covered the guide school, Hetty knew that what the company would do to a child it would do to the students in the school and it bothered her a lot. She pulled Nate out of the bottle and went about finding a team that could bring down the insurance company that had put profit above a child’s life.

Eliot Spencer

Eliot Spencer was a rare Sentinel who's abilities triggered in childhood. His parents died in a van accident one rainy evening in Boston. The stress of losing both parents triggered his abilities. With no relatives willing to take the eleven year old boy in, Eliot was put into the system. A young child with sensory spikes was too much for most foster parents to handle so Eliot was passed from foster home to foster home. He was labeled a difficult child and had the added misfortune of not being a
good student so ended up going to a trade school and majoring in culinary arts. He flourished there
and cooking became his first love. Eliot’s Sentinel abilities faded as they often did when
manifesting in childhood and life became better for Eliot. He graduated with highest honors and
worked for several years as a sous chef at a Michelin Star restaurant in Boston.

When Eliot’s Sentinel abilities resurfaced at 24 it impacted his ability to cook. He could no longer
reliably season food. It was devastating. Eliot wanted nothing more than to control his out of
control senses so he enrolled in The New England Sentinel Academy. Once again Eliot
distinguished himself. He took to bodybuilding and hand to hand combat with a passion. He
became a champion and won the National Games. He brought the trophy for hand to hand combat
home to the New England Sentinel Academy for the first time. Although the written classes were
not easy for him he did work hard and graduated with a B- average.

One of the things he learned during his year at the Academy was that he needed a Guide if he
wanted control of his wayward senses. Finding a Guide became his first priority.

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Alec Hardison
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Alec Hardison was a black man that grew up in Roxbury, a suburb of Boston. He was brought up
by his grandmother with whom he had a very close relationship until her death in his Junior year in
high school. He was placed in foster care and being a smart and personable child stayed there until
his high school graduation.

In some ways he had been lucky in his education. Alec had been bused. Although he spent two
hours a day on a school bus he was bused to a school that taught computer science. Alec had an
aptitude for math and computers. But his plans to work for a high tech company were derailed
when the mandatory blood test in high school revealed him to be a potential Guide. Earning a
scholarship to college would have to be put on hold. Four years of Guide School was mandatory.

Most of the first year of Guide school was testing. IQ testing revealed that Alec had an IQ of 197
well within genius level. If what he had heard about Sentinels was true they tended to choose
Guides within average range of intelligence. All he had to do was spend his four mandatory years
in Guide School, after all it was free room and board, then off to college.

That was the plan until Senior year and his meeting with his Senior Counselor.

“Minimum IQ for membership in Mensa is 132,” his counselor told him. “Ordinarily empaths with
such a high IQ have a low score in EQ and empathic abilities. However your EQ is 120, also very
high, and your Empathic rating is 7.2 again above average. We feel it will be difficult for you to
find a compatible Sentinel to bond with but not impossible.”

“My understanding was that Sentinel’s wanted Guides that can act as partners in their police career.
I don’t have certification for police work, and I think you know my feeling about carrying a gun.”

“Yes I am aware of that. However you are very advanced in Computer Science. The instructor has
given you work in that area for extra credit. I shouldn’t be telling you this before graduation, but
you’ve earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science. You could easily get a job in
the Cyber Crime Division of any large police department or even the FBI. We are looking for a
placement for you when you graduate.

“I was planning to continue my education,” Alec said. “I am grateful that I was able to earn my
Bachelors Degree, but I want to go on and get my Masters and maybe a Doctorate.”
“I have no doubt that you are capable of earning your Doctorate, Mr. Hardison, but you are legally obligated to attend one guide meet a month for one year after graduation or until you’re claimed by a Sentinel. As I said earlier we believe that it will be difficult for you to find a compatible Sentinel bond. We are red lining you. Due to your high IQ, your refusal to take classes in firearm safety, your poor marks in personal defense, and your lack of certification from the Guide Police Academy, You have been designated High Maintenance.

And that was that. Now Alec was sitting in his ninth Guide meet. Three more after this and he was home free and could get on with his life.

******

Eliot’s one obsession was finding a compatible Guide. He had no plans to go into police work. He wanted to go back to being a chef. He needed control of his senses, but that is all he needed. He heard that some potential Guides were red lined simply because they didn’t want a life in police work. Well neither did he.

Sentinel Eliot Spencer walked into the Guide meet and began walking around the room scanning the cards sitting on the small table in front of each Guide. This was the sixth meet he had gone to and none of them had a red line Guide available for claiming. Then he saw it, the card with a bright red line running through it. He looked up and saw a slim black man wearing ear buds, eyes closed, and head bobbing to music.

Eliot walked over to the table, picked up the card and read the list of reasons the Guide was designated high maintenance. No police accreditation. No certificate of gun safety. Mark of C- in personal defense. Eliot reached over and yanked an ear bud out of the young man’s ear.

Hardison looked up at the broad shouldered, brunette Sentinel.

Eliot held up the card, “Is there anything else I should know?”

“I’m a whole lot smarter than you,” Alec told him.

“Smart’s good. I can use smart, let’s go.”

“Hey man. You don’t want to do this,” Alec said as he grabbed all his stuff. “I don’t want to work for the police. I can’t be your partner.”

Eliot walked to the registration table and handed over his card and the Guide card. “I’m claiming this Guide,” he told the clerk.

The clerk looked at the Guide card, “Your chosen Guide is red lined. You’ll have to sign a waiver.”

“Just give me the waiver. I’ll sign,” Eliot told him.

“Look maybe you didn’t hear me, so I’m going to be really blunt,” Alec said. “There is no way in hell you’re going to get me to carry a gun.”

“I’m not interested in police work. I’m a chef.” Eliot told him. “All I want from you is to keep me from having sensory spikes and zone outs. You can work wherever you want as long as we live together.”

“Okay,” Alec said. “I can live with that.”
Parker never gave anyone her first name because she couldn’t remember ever having one. She was kidnapped at age 8 by a thief called Archie Leach. Her childhood was spent learning how to be a pickpocket, cat-burglar, and safe-cracker. She was very good at it. Parker had a soft spot in her heart for disadvantaged and forgotten children. She became known to Hetty when she brought an abused Child Guide to her. Hetty got Parker away from Archie Leach, got her her own place to live and introduced her to Nate Ford. For the first time in her life Parker felt free to come and go as she pleased and to make her own decisions. She did however have terrible social skills. But what endeared her to Nate and the team was her overwhelmingly good heart.

Sophie Devereaux

Sophie was the one member of the team that Nate brought in himself. Nate met her when he was investigating art thefts. He knew that Sophie was not her real name, but it was the name she used with the team. Sophie wanted to go clean and become an actress, but she was a failure in that regard, although she was the very best at playing a part in a con. Sophie had a good heart and was more than happy to join the team. It brought a level of stability to her life she hadn’t had before.

Leverage Conference Room
After Hetty’s Call

“Hetty needs us on this,” Nate said. “Are we all in?”

“I’m a Sentinel,” Eliot said. “I can’t stand by and let those bastards enslave and abuse Guides. I’m in.”

“Damn straight,” Hardison said, “I’m in.”

“They want to make babies without parents.” Parker said with an angry scowl on her face. “What makes them think they have the right? I want them stopped.”

“Sophie?” Nate asked.

“I’ll do what I can to help,” Sophie said.

“Okay,” Nate said, “Hardison you’re first up. We know that Dr. Shamos is head of the Lab. We need intel on him. Hetty gave me his phone number.” Nate slid a piece of paper to Hardison. “Can you hack it?”

“Does electricity travel through wire?” Hardison asked as he got busy on his computer.

“We need to locate exactly where this Lab is. We know it’s in Andover,” Nate said. “As soon as Hardison locates him we need to set up a meet.”

“I’ll see what I can find out about him,” Hardison said. “A prominent doctor like him probably has a lot of information online.”

“Eliot,” Nate said. “Check our inventory. I want this place brought down. I don’t want it up and
Eliot nodded and left. He knew exactly what Nate meant, the building had to go.

“Got him,” Hardison said. “Now let's see what’s on his phone.”

“He won’t be able to tell you’re looking?” Nate asked.

“Oh ye of little faith,” Hardison said as a list of the doctor’s phone calls came up on the screen.

Finding the exact location of the Lab was a problem. They could tell from Dr. Shamos’ cell phone records several approximate locations but they needed a way to get a tracker on his car. The problem was the doctor lived in a gated community. Parker had scoffed. She could be in and out in ten minutes, bypassing a home security alarm was child’s play for her. Less than twenty-four hours later they had the location of the Lab and were taking photos for recon.

Sophie, or rather Dr. Margo River, followed Dr. Shamos into Starbucks. She took her place in back of him in line and answered the prearranged phone call from Hardison.

“Hi Alec,” she said. “Please don’t tell me that any of my ladies are on the way to the hospital. I haven’t had my tea yet.” Sophie said in a voice she was sure Dr. Shamos could hear, She kept a covert eye on him, waiting to see if he'd bite on the conversation.

Once he put his order in and moved to the pick up counter Sophie told Hardison to hold on and ordered an earl grey tea with two pumps of vanilla for herself; then she moved down to the pick up counter to wait for her tea and she went back to her conversation with Hardison.

“Alec, have you gotten the results of Mrs. Bates latest tests? Her OB-GYN sent her to me. She’s high risk; I don’t want her losing another pregnancy. As soon as the results come in, call me. We have to keep a close eye on her hormonal balance.” Sophie glanced around and saw that that last little tidbit of conversation had gotten the marks attention. “Also if Ms. Crawley calls let me know right away. Mrs. Bates sent her our way for help.”

“I’ve got his financial records here, Sophie. We’ve got payments from what looks to be a shell company that is part of Washington Genetics out of Washington state. Also have a Swiss bank account in his name with a nice little nest egg in it.” Hardison told her.

“Good to know. Got to go. I'll be in the office soon.” Sophie ended her call.

“Excuse me Dr.?” Dr. Shamos asked.

“Dr. Margo River.” Sophie had just the right balance of curiosity and caution on her face.

“Dr. Aaron Shamos, I couldn’t help but hear your conversation. I’m also working on fertility.”

“Oh...I remember you. You gave that testimony to the Senate about the Guide shortage.” Offering her hand. “It’s a small world,” She said with a big smile.

“Do you mind if I ask you a couple questions about your practice,” Doctor Shamos asked.

“Well that would depend on the questions,” Dr. River said.
“Nothing that would betray patient/doctor confidentiality. I heard you talking about hormone balance. I’m working on high risk pregnancies myself. Have you had much success with hormone therapy for your higher risk ladies?”

“Quite a bit actually,” Sophie knew she had him. “I’ll be glad to have a consultation with you, but I have to get to the office. Can I have your card?”

Dr. Shamus gave Sophie his card. “I’ll call you later today if that’s all right.”

Dr. River reached into her purse and handed Dr. Shamos her card. “It certainly will be,” Sophie said in her most flirtatious voice, she laid her hand on his arm. Nothing locked a mark in like touch. “In more ways than one, Doctor. I’ll be more than happy to help with the Guide shortage. Sentinels and Guides are an important part of our society.”

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That Evening
Andover Lab
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Dr. Shamos thought that his luck couldn’t be any better. A beautiful woman that may be able to help him with his problem had just fallen into his lap. General Wiley was an ass that didn’t know shit about science. He and Dr. Tu had talked the General into keeping the Alternative Womb Program going. He tried to get him to give them a year or more, but all he got was three months to show progress or he would be put on a different program.

Dr. River and he had gone to dinner together and had a very enlightening conversation. She talked about the heartbreak of a woman not able to carry a pregnancy to term. That’s when he brought up the subject of an alternative womb and Dr. River was very receptive to the idea, after all they did that with endangered animals. Now here she was at the lab willing to look over his research records.

Sophie had the camera of her cell phone sticking out of a pocket in her purse sending everything it saw and heard to Hardisen. It was exactly what they needed. Sophie looked at the records as they came up on the screen. It was easy to distract the doctor and sneak a thumb drive into the port. Now Hardison was in their computer system. It was time to get Sophie out of there. Hardison made the call.

Dr. River answered her phone and listened for a moment. “Thank you, Alec. I’m on my way.” Looking up at Dr. Shamos she said, “I’m so sorry, Dear, one of my ladies is on the way to the hospital. I’m afraid I have to leave, but we can continue this another time.”

“I understand,” Dr. Shamos said, as they hurried to the exit.

******
Hetty slipped into the hive mind and called the Hive. “I just got some information from my people in Boston. They have financial information about a shell company and a Swiss bank account number.”

“Oz is working on the finances,” McGee answered. “There’s not much I can do here without a secure computer. Do you trust these people enough to put them in touch with Oz?”

“I trust them,” Hetty said. “I’ll call Oz and tell him to expect a call from one them.”

******
It was noon in Cascade when the call came in from Boston. Oz answered with an open mind. He just couldn’t understand though, how this guy had gotten a bank account number. “Oz here.”

“Hardison here, friend of Hetty. Look I don’t need your help. I can track this down myself.”

“I don’t have a problem with that,” Oz said. “I’ve got three shell companies to track down myself here. I just don’t want us duplicating each others work.”

Hardison relaxed. The guy was treating him with respect. “That sounds doable.”

“Hetty assured me you could be trusted, but I need to know how secure your computer is. As a sentinel friend of mine told me if these people find us, there won’t be an arrest and court trial; there’ll be a bullet to the head and a shallow grave in the woods.”

Hardison did not like the visual of that at all. “I could ask you the same question. I’m allergic to cold steel pressed against the back of my head.”

“Triple firewall, state of the art military encryption,” Oz told him. “You?”

“Anyone trying to get into my computer gets shut down, right after I get everything off their computer.”

“The trick-or-treat worm,” Oz said.

“You’re a hacker,” Hardison answered. He had to be or he wouldn’t have known about the trick-or-treat worm. “How did you hear about the worm?”

“Two years ago I met a guy on the dark web. I came up with the idea, he wrote the code.”

“Are you Red Wolf?” Hardison asked.

“That’s me,” Oz replied. “I take it you’re Black Wizard?”

Hardison laughed out loud. “That’d be me.”

“How the hell did you get a Swiss bank account number for these people so fast?” Oz asked. “I’ve been working on this for a week and can’t find a single real name.”

“Not people, one sleaze ball doctor. The idiot did his banking from his cell and had it remember his password,” Hardison told him. “You’re working back from the shell companies. The shell company he gets his payments from is registered in Quezada. It’s a country on the North coast of Algeria.”

“Well we’re not working on the same shell company then,” Oz said. “Mine is tracking back to San Lorenzo. A small island located in the Mediterranean off the east coast of France and Spain. I’m pretty sure the third one will be located here in the U.S.”

“Look I’ll keep working on this, see if I can find a way in,” Hardison said.

“I think you know we’re looking to shut down the money flow. Do you want in on that?” Oz asked.

“I’m a Guide. Of course I want in.”

“We’ll keep in touch then. Secure lines only.”
“Bye Red Wolf. It’s going to be a pleasure working with you again.”

*****

Andover Lab

*****

Four members of the Leverage team waited in the woods surrounding the Initiative’s secret lab waiting for the staff to leave for the night. When everyone was gone, except for the night watchman, the team moved in. Sophie waited in a van not far away ready to come when called.

Thanks to Sophie’s earlier visit to the lab Hardison had been able to get into their computer system and shut down the alarm system. However the locks to get into the building require a key or a thief that knew how to pick a lock. It was child’s play for Parker and the team was in the building in less than a minute.

Hardison headed for Dr. Shamos office and sat down at his computer. He put a high capacity thumb drive in the port and began downloading all the Lab’s files. They would be sent to Hetty to be released when she saw fit.

Eliot led the way to the Guides by listening for their heartbeats and Guide scent. He found the night watchman and shot him with a dart gun. He would remove him from the building on his way out. Eliot found the Guides down the right hand side of the second intersection. Parker picked the lock on the first door.

“I’m Sentinel Eliot Spencer,” Eliot told the male Guide. “We came to get you out of here.”

“I’m not going to argue with a Sentinel about that,” He said. “Do I have time to put some clothes on?”

“Be as quick as possible,” Nate told him as Eliot and Parker went to the next door.

Parker opened the other door and Eliot repeated his message.

The Guide scooted back on her bed. “I’m not leaving without my baby.”

“There’s a baby? No one told us there was a baby,” Parker said.

“If there’s a baby in this building we’ll find it,” Eliot said. “You need to get dressed and go with Nate. Parker and I will find your child. We never leave a child behind.”

“I want my baby before I go. They took my eggs and made a baby,” the Guide said.

“Have you ever seen your baby?” Eliot asked.

“No, they lied to me,” she said. “They told me there wasn’t any baby, but they took my eggs. I know they were lying to me.”

Nate came into the room with the male Guide. “What’s your name?” Nate asked.

“Susan.”

“Susan,” Nate said in his most soothing voice. “We will look to make sure, but this place is doing genetic experiments with the eggs and sperm. We hacked into their computer system and downloaded all their records. There was no mention of a baby.”
The male Guide walked over and hugged the female. “Hi Susan, my name’s Ian. I’ve been here too. They’re not lying to us, I would sense it if they were,” he said. “You need to get dressed now.”

“You trust them?” Susan asked.

“Yes, I do,” Ian told her.

Susan looked at Eliot. “Sentinel to Guide, you promise you’ll check.”

“Sentinel to Guide, I promise,” Eliot told her.

Susan got out of bed and got dressed. Nate made the call for Sophie to bring the van.

*****

Nate led the Guides to the door. He put them in the van with Sophie and told her about the possible baby they were going to look for.

“Sophie, I need you to get Susan and Ian out of here. But stay close enough to come back and get the rest of us. We’ll call you as soon as we’re ready. If you don’t hear from us in an hour get the Guides to the Safe house.” Nate told her then ran back into the building.

“Hardison, did you see anything in the medical records about a live birth?” Nate called over the coms he got back into the building.

“I didn’t see anything on the first look,” Hardison told him. “I’ll take a closer look.”

The group had already cleared half the building. Eliot and Parker worked in tandem. Parker unlocked the doors and Eliot searched each room. Nate tied up the guard and dragged him out of the building to the edge of the tree line, far enough away to be out of danger when the building went up.

Hardison’s voice came across the com, “Nate I’m in the medical records the last entry was yesterday. Everything says there were no viable births.”

“Parker and I have cleared the building,” Eliot said. “There’s no baby here. I’m going to take care of the pigs and then I’ll set the charges and meet you outside. Nate, I’m counting on you to get my Guide out of the building.”

“I’ve finished with the computers. I’ve sent a virus to every email address that could be another Lab.”

“Sorry ladies,” Eliot said to the pigs. “I have to do this or they’ll just set up somewhere else.” Eliot shot them with a silenced gun and then doused the pigs in lighter fluid and left a charge nearby. He set the rest of the charges in other parts of the building as he made his way back to the door. The charges were set to go off with a phone call. The team felt it would be safer than a timer.

“Set your charges and get out.” Nate told him. He called Sophie to come back and pick them up.

“Headed for the exit now.” Eliot replied.

“Same here.” Hardison called.

“Where are you guys? Sophie just pulled up.” Parker said and hopped in the back of the van with the two Guides.
The last three members of the team strode out of the building and got into the van. As Eliot took over the driver’s seat from Sophie, Nate pulled out his phone and called the number that would set off the charges. The building went up in flames as he hit the gas and drove away. The two rescued Guides turned to look out the back window when they heard the explosion. The team didn’t look back. They never did.

Ian held Susan in the back seat of the van; he tried to comfort her. Eliot had assured her that he used his full Sentinel abilities to search for a baby. There was no sign of one anywhere. No formula and no diapers. She seemed to calm a little after she heard that. Somehow it made it more believable for her.

The team pulled into the driveway of the safe house Hetty had arranged. There were two healer Guides waiting to take care of Susan and Ian. The team went home to get some sleep.

*****

TBC >comments welcomed< I’m surprised I didn't get any comments on this chapter. I thought people would like the Leverage team.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

My thanks to TimeVortex my Beta.
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The Center
An Initiative Site in California

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The lights went out and the electronically locked door popped open. Jarod got up and peeked out into the hallway. There was the soft glow of emergency lighting, but no guards anywhere. This was the opportunity he had been waiting for. He saw no one until he got to the exit.

“Get back to your room,” the guard demanded. He held a taser wand in his right hand and slapped it in the palm of his left hand as he talked.

Jarod walked forward, smiling. “What’s going on?” He asked making sure his voice sounded friendly and curious.

“I said get back to your room” the guard said pointing the wand at Jarod.

Jarod moved fast, like a mongoose attacking a cobra he grabbed the taser wand, spun it and jabbed the guard with it. The guard stood for a few seconds shaking as the electricity coursed through his body then he fell unconscious to the floor. Jarod bent down and searched his pockets. He took the guards cash and credit cards and then left the building.

@@@@

Next Morning
Initiative’s Office

*****
General Wiley was enraged when he got the call. One of their satellite labs had been blown up and the asshole night guard didn’t remember a thing. He apparently had been darted with the same drugs the Initiative used when they abducted Guides. Once again it pointed to a resistance inside the organization. He called a meeting. This hemorrhaging of control over the Initiative’s plans had to be stopped.

*****

Angel sat quietly not saying anything while the General screamed his questions and his demands.
Angel didn’t know who the General’s Guide was, or if he even had one. But whatever the General’s Guide situation was; he needed a healer.

“I want to know how the hell this happened,” The General yelled. “All five satellite labs were hit at the same time. One of our experimental Guide’s escaped. That’s five mole teams in five different places. It was a coordinated attack! The Initiative is riddled with resistance spies and these damn Mindwalkers can’t find the one that’s right under their noses. They’re lying to us. I want the
whole lot interrogated!”

“Interrogated by whom?” Angel asked.

“Don’t be a stupid asshole,” The General yelled “By each other, of course,”

“I don’t think that’s advisable,” Dr. Tu said.

“And why the hell not?” The General demanded.

“It will cause metaphysical energy disruptions,” Dr. Tu told him.

“What the fuck does that mean?! More hokus fucking pokus. I told you that shit is over! YOU,” the General said pointing to Angel, “Get this done.”

“Yes, General,” Angel said. Carefully keeping a straight face as he very happily stood up and left the room.

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Hetty’s Home Office

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Hetty had found a safe house for the hive, or rather an old sea captain’s mansion, that could function as both a safe house and an operations center for the war. A trusted ally had been sent to inspect it. It had sufficient electric wiring to move the computer house there too. Now, thanks to Hardison, she had the money to pay for it. Hardison had not only downloaded all the data from the houses of horror he discovered and crashed their computer systems; he had taken the banking information and stolen all the money he could get his hands on. The money had been deposited in an account under one of Hetty’s cover names, with a message. “Win this war.” Hetty intended to do just that.

The Hive needed to be moved out of the Guide Hospital as soon as possible. They were able to go out for a run at night but all of them were feeling the effects of cabin fever. She was rushing closing the sale on the mansion and then planned to have her people work twenty four hour shifts to get it ready for occupation.

There was nothing else she could do about the house right now so she turned her focus onto the data Hardison had sent. It was quite extensive. One lab in Texas had been operating for years abducting male Guides with the Sentinel gene and subjecting them to what could only be described as torture in an attempt to trigger their sentinel gene. In Chicago female guides were subject to fertility drugs in an attempt to force their bodies into multiple births. According to the records a pregnancy of less than triplets was aborted. A larger secret lab in Nevada was attempting to bring gene spliced embryos to term. She would have to come up with a plan to deal with these labs. In California they were trying to make male Mind Walkers. Hetty couldn’t understand why they were doing those things. They were going against nature. Something had to be done. The Agency was too compromised to take care of the problem. The Guide Guild simply weren’t warriors. The Army didn’t have jurisdiction. That left either asking Nate’s team to help out again or NCSIA, General Gibbs would know who could be trusted in the Agency he ran. NCSIA had the added satisfaction of being able to bring the perpetrators to justice. It was definitely something she needed to talk to Gibbs about.

******
Angel had taken to calling Spike every evening at seven, when the phone rang Spike took the call.

“Spike here.”

“Spike, things are falling apart at W.G., I think the General’s gone insane. He’s ordered the Mindwalkers to interrogate each other. We had a covert attack on a satellite lab in Massachusetts. The lab was completely destroyed. At the same time all the other satellite labs were hacked. The computer systems were destroyed, all the bank accounts associated with them were emptied. There was also the escape of one ‘experimental Guide’. It makes my stomach turn thinking about what that means. The General’s convinced that the Initiative is riddled with moles and that the Mindwalkers are lying to him about not finding a mole in W.G.”

“Are the Mindwalkers in danger?” Spike asked. “Do we need to get them out of there?”

“Dr. Tu told the General that having the Mindwalkers interrogate each other was a mistake. He seems to think it will cause energy disruptions. I don’t know exactly what that entails, but Tu seemed worried.”

“We need to come up with a plan to get the Mindwalkers out if we need to,” Spike said. “Do you think he’ll order them killed like he did the female Sentinel’s?”

“If he tries that I’ll kill him myself. I don’t think there’s a Sentinel in security that will obey that order.”

“Has he said anything about more abductions?”

“No, I think he’s distracted with all the imaginary moles. Spike, I know you have someone in here. If you’ve gotten him out already tell me. If not get him the hell out of here.”

“Thanks Angel, we’ll talk tomorrow.”

Energy disruptions didn’t sound good, Spike thought. He would have to talk to Sweet and Abby about it. They would know more about Guides and the kind of disruptions the stressed out Mindwalkers would cause.

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Hive Meeting
Next Morning

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“How soon will we be moving?” McGee asked. “Being stuck here when there is a war to win is stressing me out.”

“It’s stressing all of us out,” Clint said. “Sweet’s a strong healer but the last couple of days the cabin fever has been coming back faster and stronger.”

“Hetty is getting it done as fast as she can,” Gibbs said, “We just need to hang on a couple of more days.”
“I need to ask Sweet and Abby something,” Spike said. “When Angel called last night he told me that the General has ordered the Mindwalkers to interrogate each other. He thinks they’re protecting moles at W.G.”

Sweet gave an ugh sound. Everyone looked at her.

“Angel said the doctor was concerned about ‘energy disruptions’,” Spike continued. “I’m guessing he was correct about that.”

“Mindwalkers use metaphysical energy when they work. If you point the energy at each other it causes disruptive waves.”

“How disruptive?” Spike asked.

“That depends.” Sweet said. “If the Mindwalkers let the energy dissipate there’ll be shattered mirrors, bent flat ware, broken plates. It will be like poltergeists have invaded the building.”

“What if they don’t let the energy dissipate?” Gibbs asked.

“Then it can be worse,” Sweet said. “Like the difference between a river flooding and a dam breaking.”

“Broken mirrors and bent spoons don’t sound too bad,” Jim said.

“It won’t be limited to that,” Abby said. “You can’t destroy energy. Where it goes will be random. It could affect machines. Like the elevators or computers.”

“Anything with metal will be affected if an energy dam breaks, even things with trace metal like pottery,” Sweet said. “The people inside the building might feel like it’s an earthquake, or if it’s bad enough it could turn into an energy vortex. Do you know how many Mindwalkers they’re holding at W.G.?”

“As far as we know all of them were transferred there,” Gibbs told them.

“Okay, so now it would depend on how many, if any, hold back the energy.”

“Would they do that?” Blair asked. “I mean they’re all empaths. They’re not going to hurt anyone on purpose. Creating the equivalent of an earthquake... people could get hurt.”

“Do you think they’re going to stand by and let those bastards hurt their children?” Sweet asked. “If I were there I’d hold back and advise my sisters to do the same.”

“How long before the dam breaks,” Gibbs asked.

“A month at most,” Sweet said.

“Then all three factions will coordinate,” Gibbs said. “Hetty, the Mindwalkers, and us. We can do it. We can bring down Washington Genetics and the Initiative with them.”

*****

Three Days Later
The Computer House

*****
It was three A.M. and the last computers were being loaded on the truck. Oz had insisted on overseeing the taking apart of the system. He had been living here since NCSIA established it. Now he was moving to the new place. It made him a little nervous moving in with all those Sentinels. He had heard rumors about Sentinel’s weird ways. Jim and the other Sentinel’s he worked with had always treated him with respect, but that was a professional relationship. His mom had always told him, ‘You don’t know a person until you live with them.’

Oz made a last check of the house and made sure he wasn’t forgetting anything. He picked up his thermos of coffee and his backpack and went out the door locking it behind him. The night wasn’t over yet. Hetty wanted the computers up and running by the time the Sentinel’s arrived in the morning. It was going to be a long night.

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Oz yawned. He hadn’t pulled an all nighter since shutting down the cooling towers at WG. The sun was up and the computer network was up and running at last. Then he heard the cars drive up. The Sentinels were here.

Moving into a new house sight unseen was stressful for Sentinels even in the best of times. This was not the best of times. They were at war and two of their Guides were being hunted. Add to that the stress the Sentinels were under from being cooped up at the Guide Hospital...Well everyone was on edge, even the Guides felt stressed.

The Sentinels put all the Guides in one car and ordered them to stay there. Peter and Clint were left to guard the Guides, Jim and Graham went to check the grounds, while Gibbs, Spike, and McGee went to check out the house. All of them had their hand guns pulled as they crossed the threshold. They started through the house, each Sentinel’s sense of smell and sound turned up to maximum.

Oz heard them coming. “I’m in here,” he called.

McGee recognized the voice, “Oz,” he said and went off to get him. The others followed, knees bent, guns still drawn. Spike, was the last in the line walking backward, sweeping his aim from side to side in case an unknown intruder jumped out from the shadows and tried to take them from behind.

McGee entered the computer room, nostrils flaring, gun pointing, first one side and then the other. He put one finger to his lips to signal Oz to be quiet as he sidestepped along the wall searching for any possible enemy. Oz had stood up when he heard McGee approach now he stood perfectly still and silent letting the Sentinel do his thing. After circling the room and looking under every desk McGee lowered his gun and looked at Oz.

“What are you doing here?” McGee asked.

“I’ve been here all night. Hetty wanted the network up and running by the time you all got here.”

“You need to get out of the building. It’s not safe. I’m taking you to the Guides,” McGee said as he reached for Oz’s arm. “Wait with them until we clear the house.”

“This is Oz, he’s with us,” McGee said in the way of an introduction when he got to the van.

Clint opened the door and Oz climbed in.

“Hey, Oz.” Xander said. “Good to see you again, buddy.”

“Ah, Thanks, Xander isn’t it?” The last time he had seen Xander the Guide had acted unusually
friendly and his Sentinel didn’t seem to mind. Now he was doing it again.

“Yep, Xander... you know Blair don’t you?” Xander asked.

“Sure, we worked together at the Cascade P.D.”

“That’s Sweet, Abby, Tony, Riley and Wesley,” Xander said introducing all the Guides.

Oz nodded to each in turn. “Do the Sentinel’s think someone broke in?” Oz asked. “I was there all night I didn’t hear anything, but I don’t have Sentinel hearing.”

“This is Blessed Protector Syndrome,” Blair said. “Riley was kidnapped a few nights ago. Sentinel’s always opt for overkill when it comes to their Guides.”

It was half an hour before Jim and Graham finished checking the grounds. It took a few minutes longer for the rest of the Sentinels to clear the mansion.

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The Guides were very happy to get out of the van and into their new home. Most of the first floor had been converted to an operations center that included a state of the art security system. There was also a large dining area and a gourmet kitchen, fully stocked with everything the Sentinels and Guides could need. Downstairs there was a large media room, an exercise room with several machines for both aerobic and anaerobic exercise as well as a full set of weights, and most importantly there was a laundry room with three washers and dryers. Upstairs the mansion had ten bedrooms each with an en suite. Hetty hadn’t had time to have any of the bedrooms converted to nests so she had California King mattress placed in six of the bedrooms with plenty of pillows and cushions to serve as a nest. The other four bedrooms had traditional beds.

The grounds were well cared for and surrounded by a ten foot wall. There was also a solar heated pool in the back of the house complete with a cabana house and a large gas grill that any man would be proud to own. All in all Hetty had done very well.

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Washington Genetics

One week later

Every morning the Mindwalkers were put to work interrogating either W.G. employees or Agency Sentinels. After putting in a ten hour day they were then required to interrogate each other for two hours. Sweet had been in touch telepathically with Willow and she assured Sweet that the Mindwalkers would be glad to do anything they could to help stop the abuse of their future children. Incacha had also been in touch with Willow to let her know that the Mindwalker’s Animal Spirit Guides were going to help them hold back the energy waves that they were being forced to create.

Dr. Tu was surprised that things were going so smoothly with the interrogations. He had expected disruptions. He decided not to mention his suspicions that the Mindwalkers were up to something. Especially since the Mindwalkers had begun to find moles in the Agency. The Sentinels always said they were innocent, But everyone knew that a Mindwalker would not railroad an innocent. What no one seemed to realize was that the Sentinels the Mindwalkers reported were far from innocent in their eyes. They were men that supported the enslavement and use of Guides in lab experiments. Of course they had to be careful, balance had to be maintained. Finding too many
m Barnes did what they could without being found out.

Mansion Media Room

Hetty was appearing on her first news program. Two days ago the information about the experiments that were going on at the Massachusetts Lab had been leaked to Wiki Whistle a very popular whistle-blowers site on the internet. Within hours the information was trending on Facebook and Twitter. Everything was going just as Hetty had planned. The News program and host journalist had been carefully chosen to be the perfect devil's advocate so that Hetty would have plenty of time to make her points. After answering questions about why Hetty was opposed to the new laws the interview turned to the Wiki Whistle claims.

“Don’t you think the accusation made on Wiki Whistle, that the lab was working on having pigs give birth to human babies is ridiculous?” The journalist asked.

“The documents that were released appear to be authentic,” Hetty answered. “It is my hope that NCSIA will look into it. If true, it isn’t ridiculous, it’s disgusting, the people responsible should be brought to justice.

TBC
The dream was very vivid, right down to the feel of cold stone under his bare feet along with the heat and flickering light coming from the braziers. Jarod could hear a clicking of nails as a fox trotted back and forth along one wall. A man dressed in brightly colored native clothing, wearing a crown of luminous feathers, and holding an elaborately decorated staff stood at the center of the temple. Jarod wasn’t sure how he knew this place was a temple, but he was sure that this temple was a place sacred to his soul. Jarod recognized the hieroglyphs on the walls as Mayan. He walked forward and read the story it told of a Sentinel charged to protect his tribe and the Guide that was his partner.

“Good Guide, you have read the story. You know your duty.” the strange man said.

It was impossible to tell the age of the man, he could have been twenty or one hundred and twenty. His voice had a depth to it that penetrated and vibrated through Jarod’s body.

“I am Incacha, Shaman Spirit Guide to the Sentinels and Guides of your world. You have escaped the darkness that seeks to enslave Guides. You must travel north to Cascade and enter the modern temple of the Guides. Find the one who fights against the rising darkness, Hetty. Tell her I have sent you. Your animal Spirit, the Fox, will accompany you on your journey.”

Jarod woke up with a start. He had had no plan, no destination, his only purpose was to stay ahead of The Centre’s Sentinel Sweepers he knew were chasing him. He decided he would do what the vivid dream had told him. Cascade Washington was north, the modern temple would be the Guide Guild. Then all he had to do was find the woman called Hetty.

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The Hive

The Hive had been at the Mansion for a week. It had turned out to be a very good move. Everyone who had any computer skills took a turn working in the computer room, including the Guides. Others worked through the data looking for names and any other useful information.

Gibbs was back in the driver’s seat of NCSIA. They were currently searching for Dr. Shamos. He had disappeared. Gibbs hoped that he hadn’t been killed by the Initiative. If they could find him alive and arrest him for kidnapping and Guide enslavement he would be a very good witness to flip. Gibbs had put out a BOLO for him at all borders and transportation hubs.

Oz got the break in the financial trail he had been looking for by mid afternoon of his seventh day at the Mansion. He immediately went to Gibbs.

“You can get all the money?” Gibbs asked.

“I can get all the San Lorenzo money,” Oz told him. “San Lorenzo is putting their funding into a
limited liability company. It does nothing but funnel money. Hardison is working on the Quezada money trail and we still need to track down the money coming from the US.”

“Do you have a timeline on that?” Gibbs asked.

“I’m sorry sir, I don’t,” Oz said. “I can call Hardison and see if he has an estimate. But any timeline is going to be more of a guess than anything concrete.”

“Okay Oz. Don’t do anything yet. We don’t want to tip our hand. The plan is to keep everything coordinated and hit them hard at the same time. You’re our contact with Hardison so let him know not to take the money yet. Keep me informed.”

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Hetty

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Everything was going well with the public resistance to the new laws. Hetty would be making an appearance on three of the four news networks. She turned down the forth because she knew it would be nothing but an attempt to discredit her. Today she had a podcast to appear on. More documents were going to be released to Wiki Whistle an hour before the podcast and she expected to get calls from the news anchors to comment. All and all everything was going as planned. Gibbs sent an NCSIA team to the bombed out lab in Andover, Massachusetts and they were able to collect collaborating evidence proving the first documents released to Wiki Whistle were true.

The general public was starting to respond. Protests were being organized. People were beginning to call their Congressmen.

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General Wiley

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General Wily was oblivious to the goings on of the public. He simply considered them beneath him and devoid of any possible consequence. His concern was the Initiative and things were starting to come together. He was convinced his decision to have the Mindwalkers interrogate each other was a correct one, There had been no “energy disruptions”. The Mindwalkers had stopped lying and started identifying the moles. Dr. Tu was an idiot with his ‘metaphysical disturbances’ shit. There hadn’t been anything at all. Just the opposite. Thanks to his leadership things were moving along nicely. Now was the time to get the Initiative agenda back on schedule.

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Angel stood in front of General Wiley’s desk. He had been summoned unexpectedly and told to ‘come’ immediately.

The General looked up from behind his desk. “I’m glad to see things have turned around. My decision to have the Mindwalkers interrogate each other was correct. They’ve been finding our moles. It’s time to get things back on schedule. We’re going to continue with the interrogations. I want the Agency Sentinels interrogated on a regular schedule. That should keep them from turning on us. I also want us to resume our purpose for being here. Put together an abduction team. Rainier is too hot right now, so go to Portland and abduct one of their Guide School classes. You have five days to draw up a plan. Any questions?”
“No, General,” Angel said. The last thing Angel wanted to do was spend a single second more than necessary with the General.”

“Get it done. Dismissed.”

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Mansion Safe House

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Spike hung up the phone and turned to Gibbs and Jim. “The General has ordered a Guide abduction from the Guide School in Portland. Angel has five days to submit a plan.”

“Why Portland?” Jim asked. “It’s quite a drive to the North gate from there.”

“Wiley thinks that Rainier is too hot.” Spike said. “I assume we’re not going to let this happen.”

“No, we’re not,” Gibbs said. “We’ll have to wait until a plan is approved before we can come up with our plan to stop it.”

“Not necessarily,” Jim said. “They have to use the Northgate Road. We can set something up there.”

“We need a map of the area if we’re going to stop them at the North Gate,” Gibbs said. “Can Angel get one for us?”

“I’ll ask,” Spike said and went to make a call.

A few minutes later Spike returned. “He’ll email us one from a public computer this evening and he’ll let us know as soon as Wiley approves the plan.”

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Three Days Later

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Xander’s head popped up and he listened for a moment than he turned to Spike.

“Spike, that was my Hyena. It said that there is an escaped Guide in trouble. We need to go get him. Incacha told him to go to Hetty.”

“How are we supposed to do that, Xan? We don’t know where he is or what he looks like.”

“The Hyena said he’s trying to lose the Sweepers in a crowd of protesters in Cascade. We need to leave now.”

“I’m going with you,” Jim said.

“Me to,” Clint said.

The group grabbed their hand guns and headed out the door. Xander grabbed a baseball cap and a jacket then stopped at the threshold. He turned back and went to the weapons cabinet.

“What are you doing Xan?” Spike asked.
Xander opened the weapons cabinet and took out four shaker bottles of sage. “I wondered why Hetty put this in with the weapons.”

“Are you sure about the sage?” Clint asked. Sentinel’s had allergic reactions to sage. Scrambling of their senses and sneezing were among the symptoms.

“Eight point nine sure,” Xander said. “I’m not getting a hazard warning anymore.”

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Jim was driving one of the two vans that Hetty had left at the mansion for the Hive’s use. It had smoked windows and Guide Guild plates so the team was not worried about being spotted.

Jim knew Cascade well. He wove his way through the streets avoiding any excess traffic caused by the protest. He pulled into a seven eleven and parked the van.

“This is as close as we’re going to get,” Jim told them. “The march is one block west.”

“My Hyena just told me the Guide’s name is Jarod,” Xander told the team as they jogged up the side street toward the group of protesters. When they got to the marchers they stopped on the sidewalk. The crowd was huge. “Follow me.” Xander said. “My Hyena will lead us to him. One of you should sprinkle the sage on the other side of the street.

“I’ll do that.” Clint said, as he headed into the protesters, weaving his way across the street.

Xander, Spike, and Jim, made their way into the crowd pushing their way forward.

“Can you actually see the Hyena?” Jim asked.

“Not the way I see you. He’s like a Hyena shaped sparkling cloud. A Fox just came up to us. That must be his Animal Spirit Guide. He’s up ahead the tall guy, dark hair, blue shirt.”

Xander made his way up beside Jarod and touched his hand. Jarod could feel the healing energy course through him. He looked over at Xander but did not try to pull away.

“Incacha sent me,” Xander said. “We’ll take you to Hetty. Here put on this hat and jacket,”

“Get out of the crowd at the next street,” Jim said. “I’ll sprinkle the sage for two blocks and meet you back at the van.”

Spike slipped into the Hive mind and called Clint back and they made their way toward the side street. Once they got out of the crowd and onto the sidewalk they began to jog towards the van.

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The Sweepers had eyes on Jarod. They were pushing their way toward him when one of the Sweepers began to sneeze. His partner turned his head to look at him and picked up the scent of the sage, his eyes started to burn and water profusely. When they looked back Jarod had disappeared.

“He’s trying to drive us off,” the Sweeper with watering eyes said. “We have to follow the sage.”

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“They’re close,” Xander said. “We only have a few minutes. We should go pick up Jim. I don’t think we can wait.”

Spike got behind the wheel of the van. He slipped into Hive Mind and told Jim they were on the
way. Once they picked up Jim the group headed for the Guide Guild. It was then that Xander realized that in all the excitement no one had told Hetty they were coming.

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Guide Guild

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Hetty got a message through the Hive mind that the team was on the way with an escaped Guide named Jarod. Incacha had come to Hetty in a dream last night and told her the runaway Guide was near by. She was also told who his intended Sentinel was. But today she would have to deal with Jarod. There wasn’t an appropriate safe house to put an unbonded Guide in. That left the Mansion. There were plenty of Sentinels there to protect him and enough Guides to help him to adapt to a Guide lifestyle. She didn’t have a lot of time. She was scheduled to do two phone interviews this evening and she needed to prepare. There would be questions about today’s coordinated marches in twelve cities around the country not to mention several smaller spontaneous marches. She hoped she wouldn’t have any trouble convincing Jim that the best place for Jarod right now was with his Hive.

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The van pulled into the Guide Guild parking garage and found a space on the third level. Jim took point as they moved through the structure towards the exit. Clint was next, he put his finger to his lips to indicate the Guides should be silent. Xander and Jarod followed walking side by side. Xander held Jarod’s hand giving him signals with a squeeze or wave of the held hand, stop, go, slow, fast. Jarod found them fascinating. He wondered how Xander learned them and why Xander assumed he would understand them. He had never experienced that kind of communication before. Spike took rear guard occasionally turning to look behind him whenever his Sentinel hearing picked up a suspicious sound.

When they got to the reception desk Hetty was waiting for them. She introduced herself to Jarod and asked the group to follow her to her office.

“Well Mr. Jarod,” She said after everyone was seated and she sat comfortably behind her desk. “You’ve had quite a journey.”

“It’s just Jarod,” he told her. “I don’t have a last name.”

“You mean you don’t ~know~ your last name,” Hetty told him. “I’ll have to see if I can do something about that.” She turned her attention to Jim. “I don’t have a safe house where I can put an unbonded Guide. Considering the people that are after him he needs absolute security. I’d like you to keep him at the Mansion...at least until I can find a Sentinel to bond with him.” Hetty didn’t want to tell them any more, not until she found the Sentinel Incacha had told her about. He could be anywhere and convincing him to travel to Cascade on the chance the Guide might be compatible may be a hard sell. She had no doubt she could do it, but it may take some time. “I need to run a DNA test on Jarod, and get him registered as a Guide before you leave. Go to the hospital through the back door. I’ll have a nurse meet you. No one will know you’re there. I’ll register Jarod under the name Gerald Garrett.”

“That’s Jarod in different languages,” Jarod said.

“You’re right it is,” Hetty said with a smile.
When they got to the hospital the tests were done quickly and efficiently. Jarod left as a legally registered unbonded Guide.

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On the ride back to the Mansion, Xander kept up a conversation with Jarod. The young Guide seemed to come out of his shell and began asking questions. He was particularly interested in what he called hand signals.

“Those are the same ‘hand signals’ a mother uses when she is crossing a street with her child,” Xander told him. “You don’t remember them? You didn’t seem to have trouble understanding them.”

“I don’t remember my mother at all,” Jarod said. “Do you remember how she taught them to you?”

Xander looked at Jarod. He seemed curious and genuinely interested in finding the answer to his question. Xander sighed. “She would just hold my hand. If I got what she wanted wrong she would pull me closer to her. It wasn’t formal it just was.”

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Late Afternoon

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Spike and Blair were in the kitchen preparing supper when Jarod wandered in. He walked over to the spice rack and began picking up the bottles and sniffing them.

“What’s your favorite spice?” Blair asked.

“At The Centre I ate optimized nutritional supplements. Wheatgrass, hearts of pom and tomato juice,” Jarod told them. “I don’t have a favorite spice.”

“Sounds like it may have gotten boring,” Blair said.

“I got ice cream from a truck on the way to the protest. Ice cream’s very good.”

“Well I hope you like tuna surprise,” Blair said.

“What’s the surprise?” Jarod asked.

“We use whatever cheese and bread we have so it’s a little different every time. Do you want to help us?”

“I’d be glad to help.” Jarod replied eagerly.

“You top a slice of bread with tuna mixed with the mayonnaise, relish and some cheese then topped with more cheese. Today we’re using sharp cheddar. First fill the pan over here with the bread slices. Then we’ll put the tuna on and cover it with shredded cheese. Next it goes in the oven for fifteen to twenty minutes. We want the cheese to melt and be a nice light brown. If needed we’ll turn off the oven and turn on the broiler to fully finish the cheese.”

“In honor of your first day with us we’re going to have pineapple upside down cake for desert.”

“It there some significance to turning your cake upside down?” Jarod asked.
Spike laughed. “The pineapple is like the frosting. You bake it with the pineapple on the bottom so when you turn the cake out of the pan the pineapple is on top.”

“Oh. That sounds like fun. Can I help with that too?”

“Of course Jarod.” Blair said.

When everything was prepared, including the cake, it was all put into the ovens and timers were set.

“Now we get to watch a little TV until it’s ready.” Spike said.

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Hetty

It had been a long day but it wasn’t over yet. Hetty needed to track down Sentinel Colonel Jack O’Neill. She sat down at her computer and typed his name into the database, what came up was a complete surprise. Colonel O’Neill was currently on sick leave. Six months ago he had lost his Guide in a sniper shooting. The Guide had been killed instantly. It sent the Colonel into a coma. When the healers brought him out of his coma, his Sentinel abilities had shut down. At first the doctors thought they would return when he recovered from the depression he was suffering due to his grief. But that didn’t happen. The military tried putting him through an artificial triggering of his Sentinel abilities, but that failed also. The last doctor’s report said that they doubted that his Sentinel abilities would return. There wasn’t anything to do but call him. Hetty picked up the phone and dialed the contact number in the Colonel’s file.

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Jack sat watching a hockey game on TV and drinking beer. He glared at the thing that was making the offending noise. He picked up the receiver and slammed it down again. He didn’t want to talk to anyone. The phone rang again. Jack swore at it and pulled the wire from the wall.

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Hetty tried a third time to call but this time it would not ring through. Looking at the phone in her hand, Hetty was not amused. She had had a suspicion that this was going to be difficult but she was not the type to give up. According to the database the Colonel lived in Colorado Springs. She called Sam and Callen.

“Grab your go bag,” She told them, “We’re going to Colorado Springs.”

“Tonight?” Sam asked.

“Yes, tonight. I need to be back here by noon tomorrow.” She replied. “I want to be wheels up in an hour.

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Late Evening
The Mansion

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Xander was almost the same size as Jarod so he got an old t-shirt and a pair of shorts and gave them to Jarod to wear to bed. He showed Jarod to his room.

“The bed is huge,” Jarod remarked.

“Well, Hetty expected more than one person to sleep in it.”

“Why?”

Sentinels sleep with their Guide. Plus most of us are in packs and the whole pack sleeps together.”

“So many in one bed?”

“Sentinel’s want their pack near them when they sleep especially when there’s danger.”

“I thought this was a safe house?”

“To a Sentinel that’s just a word. We’re at War with the Initiative. The chances of them finding us are small but...well when it comes down to protecting their Guides Sentinels always opt for doing more than the Guide thinks they need to. Is there anything else I can get for you?”

“No. I’m good Xander. You have all been very kind to me. You even let me have the last piece of Pineapple Upside Down Cake. Thank you for everything.” Jarod said with feeling.

Xander put his hand on Jarod’s arm. “I know it’s strange for you here, but...well a while back I was taken and when Spike and Jim got me back I had brain damage. They never lost patience with me. You’re one of us. You do belong here, we’ll help you with whatever you need. Including finding the Sentinel that is meant for you; your soulmate.”

“Is Spike your soulmate?”

“Yes, he is. I was alone before I bonded with him. I didn’t think anyone could ever want me. My family disowned me when I tested positive as a Guide. They're all Sentinels. They were embarrassed I was a Guide. My dad took me to a police station, but they told him he had to keep me until I turned eighteen. I never saw them again after I started Guide School” Xander glanced at the clock by the bed. “I think that’s enough deep talk for tonight. You get some sleep Jarod. You are safe here.”

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TBC...
Colorado Springs

It was 2 AM in Cascade when Hetty and her bodyguards set down in Colorado Springs. She needed to be back in Cascade by eleven o’clock in order to make her noon appearance on the news. The flight took three hours so that gave her six hours to wake up Colonel O’Neill and convince him to come to Cascade to meet Jarod. “Let’s go gentlemen,” she told Sam and Callen. “It’s going to be a long day.”

The Colonel lived in a modest house in a residential area. Hetty didn’t want to wake the neighbors in the middle of the night but she had no recourse other than to get him to answer the door. Even if the neighbors called the police the worst that would happen is that they would make Colonel O’Neill open the door. She rang the bell several times and waited.

Jack was catapulted out of sleep by the sound of the doorbell. He was a light sleeper, always had been, even before he had triggered as a Sentinel. The few times he had been a more sound sleeper were when he had been a bonded Sentinel sleeping in a safe place with his Guide, but mostly he was a light sleeper. It was his Guide that had given him that occasional extra respite of sleep. He ached for his Guide. He wanted nothing more than to bury his nose in his Guide’s neck and relax filled by his scent. The doorbell rang again. That meant it wasn’t some kid playing a practical joke.

“Damn it,” Jack said with a look at the clock. “This better be good or you better run.”

“He’s awake and he’s pissed,” Sam said gently but firmly pushing Hetty behind him.

Jack opened the door. “Who the hell are you?”

Hetty peeked out from behind Sam’s considerable bulk. “Good morning Colonel O’Neill, I’m Henrietta Lang, Director of the Agency of Guide Affairs. These are my bodyguards, Sentinel Sam Hannah and His Guide Callen. We need to talk.”

“I’m not a Sentinel anymore. There’s nothing for us to talk about.” Jack tried to close the door but Sam’s arm got in the way.

“Things will go a lot easier for all of us if you listen to what Hetty has to say. Then we’ll leave,” Sam told him.
"Come back at seven o’clock and I’ll let you buy me breakfast,” Jack said and tried once more to close the door.

“I’m afraid I can’t do that,” Hetty said. She tried to step out from behind Sam but Callen caught her. “I have an appointment that I can’t break. Please, Colonel O’Neill, a Guide’s life is at stake.”

“So go find a Sentinel to help you. In case you didn’t hear me the first time I’m no longer a Sentinel and the doctors tell me I’ll never be a Sentinel again.”

“I know two strong healers, I believe you can be a Sentinel again,” Hetty said. She was sure that Spike or Sweet could heal him. Incacha wouldn’t have sent her to O’Neill if he wasn’t destined to get his Sentinel abilities back. “Please let us in.”

“You’re not leaving until you have your say, are you?” Jack asked.

“She’s as stubborn as they come,” Sam said.

“You may as well come in, but I’m not making coffee.” Jack opened the door and the group walked in. Jack showed them to the living room. “Have a seat and tell me what’s so damn important that you had to wake me up in the middle of the night.”

“We are currently at war with a dark ops government organization called the Initiative,” Hetty began. “They’ve been abducting Guides and using them in genetic experiments. I’m a member of a Sentinel Hive that is committed to bringing down the Initiative and putting them out of business, permanently. We’ve rescued an escaped Guide. He was taken during childhood and he needs a strong Sentinel to Claim him and protect him.”

“Are you hard of hearing?” Jack asked. “I’m not a Sentinel anymore. I did tell you that. Twice!”

“As I said there are two healers in Cascade, I believe one or both of them have the ability to bring you back online. If you come back to Cascade with us, by this time tomorrow there’s a very good chance you’ll have your Sentinel abilities back along with a Guide.”

“What makes you think this mystery Guide and I are compatible?”

Hetty pulled out a photo of Jarod and handed it to Jack. “His name is Jarod. He doesn’t know his last name. I’ve run his DNA through the Guide database and found no match. The information about him is on the back.

“It says his name is Gerald Garrett.”

“I had to register him with a false name and age. He’s being actively hunted.”

“You still haven’t told me why you think we’re compatible.”

“I have my reasons for believing that there is a very high probability you are compatible. I’m not able to tell you where the information came from, but you have nothing to lose. Come back to Cascade with me. I’ll introduce you to the healers.”

“You’re not telling me anything. I’ve never met you before, you come to my door in the middle of the night and you expect me to just go with you. I don’t think so.”

“What else would you like to know?”

“Why me? You must have known I was offline before you came here. There’s a Guide shortage
out there. It would be easier to choose a Sentinel with less baggage.”

“I’m a Guide, Colonel. I meditate and I’m involved with the metaphysical. I was told by a Shaman that Jarod was ‘on his way’ and that you are his Sentinel.”

“Really? A Shaman? So is one of the healers and the Shaman the same person?”

“No. Colonel O’Neill I know that all of this is hard to believe, but I’m telling you the truth.”

“How many Sentinels have these healers brought back online?”

“Technically none, but that’s only because they’ve never tried.”

“Sentinel-to-Sentinel?” Sam asked.

Jack turned to look at Sam. “Okay, I’ll bite. Sentinel-to-Sentinel.”

“The three of us are members of the Hive Hetty told you about,” Sam said. “I’ve met Spike and the Sentinels he has a bond with. I’ve met the two Guides he’s healed and I’ve met Sweet, a Mindwalker with abilities that are mind blowing. One of the Guides was abducted and came back brain damaged, the kind of damage that kills a Guide or leaves them in a coma. Spike healed him. When Hetty says there are two healers in Cascade that may be able to help you, she’s not talking about a long shot. If I were in your position they are the healers I’d want. They’re the healers I’d take my Guide to. I trust all of them with my Guide’s life. I can tell you a lot about them but I doubt that you would believe it. What you can believe is that we are fighting a war. You can be a part of it and help us bring these bastards down or you can be a couch potato and tell us to go to hell. I give you my word no one is going to force you to do anything. But isn’t it worth a trip to Cascade for the chance of coming back online?”

“Is it a guaranteed round trip?” Jack asked.

“I’ll guarantee you a ride back home,” Hetty said.

“I’m not promising anything,” Jack said. “But I’ll go and have a look.”

*****

Morning
The Mansion Safe house
Cascade

*****

Oz was up early and went to work in the computer room while he waited for Blair and Spike to make breakfast. When he logged on he saw the coded message from Hardison to give him a call. Boston was three hours ahead so Oz called right away. It was good news; Hardison had tracked down the money trail in Quezada. Now they only had one more to go. Oz was sure between McGee, Hardison, and himself they would make short work of finding the account that funneled funds to the Initiative. As soon as he heard the Sentinels up and around he went to the dining room to tell them the good news.

The Hive was in the middle of breakfast when Hetty broke in and told them she was on the way back with Jarod’s Sentinel. She told them she would only have enough time to drop him at the Mansion, so although she would rather discuss it face to face she would have to tell them now.
Colonel Jack O’Neill was offline and would need a healing. She gave them all the information she had on the Colonel and her belief that Spike had the best chance of bringing him back online.

“Did you tell him that?” Spike asked a bit perturbed. He didn’t like people making promises in his name without his permission.

“I only told him the truth. There were two strong healers in Cascade and I believe one or both have the ability to get him online again.”

Sweet could feel her Sire’s emotional turmoil. She went to Spike and stroked his arm. “I’ll scan him. If I can heal him I’ll do it.”

Hetty decided to drop out of the Hive Mind and let the Sentinels and Guides concerned discuss the matter among themselves.

“Wait a minute, Sweet,” Clint said. “This sounds like he’ll need a healing bond. I’m okay with touch healing but not so much with a healing bond.”

Sweet turned to her Sentinel. “Healing bonds fade quickly,” she said.

“It didn’t with me!” Clint told her. “And that was only touch.”

A tear rolled down Sweet’s face as she spoke. “I went very deep with you, I didn’t want you to forget how grateful I was that you came to rescue us. I’m sorry I hurt you.”

Clint pulled Sweet into a hug. “Your mine, Sweet, I don’t want to share you with some unknown Sentinel.”

“I am yours,” Sweet said, hugging her Sentinel back. “All yours, but part of what I am is a healer. If I can do this and you don’t allow it then your throwing away a part of me.”

“That makes no sense, Sweet,” Clint told her.

“It does to a Healer Guide,” Blair said.

“Blair,” Jim said, “This is between Sweet and Clint. Stay out of it.”

“No it’s not,” Xander said. “Spike you feel it don’t you.”

“I feel it,” Spike said. “If you don’t let her be the healer she was meant to be she’ll slip into darkness. You’ll lose her, we all will. It’s what the powers were afraid of.”

“You can’t order me to allow my Guide to lay with another Sentinel,” Clint said. “I’m the only one she’s going to dance with.”

“I know how hard this is,” Jim said.

Clint let go of Sweet and moved her behind him keeping hold of her hand. He turned to Jim. “You don’t know shit,” Clint interrupted. “Maybe your fine with sharing your Guide with two others…

“Hey!” Xander yelled. He tried to move toward Clint but Spike grabbed him. “Don’t you talk to him like that. You’re the one that doesn’t know shit.”

Jim raised his hand in a gesture to stop. “It’s okay Xanman.”

Xander stopped trying to break Spike’s hold. “Did you hear that?” Xander asked. “He called me
Xanman, but what he’s really saying is I love you and when I poke him in the chest and call him a pompous ass, I’m saying I love you back. You told me once that he loved me. Do you remember? It was the day Spike healed Sweet. Jim and Spike did what they had to to keep us safe. In a perfect world they wouldn’t have to, but this isn’t a perfect world. You came to us unable to dance with your Guide. Now you can and you have a chance to pay it forward. Jarod can’t bond with his Sentinel unless we heal him. Look at what they did to Sweet, to Abby, to Jarod, to me. Look at what they tried to do to Wesley and Riley. If Spike needs to perform a healing bond on another Sentinel I’ll let him and I know with every fiber of my being that he won’t love me one quantum particle less.”

Spike buried his nose in Xander’s neck. “Everyday I think I can’t possibly love you anymore than I do. Today and everyday I love you more.” He whispered.

Clint turned to his Guide. “Is it true, you’ll fall into darkness if I don’t let you heal this Sentinel?”

“Not just this Sentinel,” Sweet told him. “I need to be a healer. It’s part of what I am.”

“Okay,” Clint told her. “If he needs you to heal him I won’t stand in your way.”

Clint needed to make a formal apology to Jim in front of the Hive. He brought himself to attention. “I Clinton Francis Barton, apologize to Sentinel James Ellison, his second William Spikeman and their Guides for my judgmental and unsubstantiated accusations. Sentinel Ellison and Sentinel Spikeman have treated me with nothing but respect and my statements were completely unfounded.”

Jim walked over to Clint. “Apology accepted.” He pulled Clint into a kiss. When the kiss ended he whispered into Clint’s ear. “Brothers always.”

Clint nodded and whispered back. “Brothers always.”

*****

During the Sentinel drama Oz wasn’t sure of what to do, leave or stay. He was relieved when everything worked out without breaking into a physical fight so he finished his breakfast and went back to the computer room.

McGee slipped into the Hive Mind and told everyone to stay clear of the computer room until further notice. He needed to talk to Oz and he knew they would both feel more comfortable if the conversation was one on one.

“Oz?” McGee said as he approached Oz sitting at his desk. “Are you okay?”

“I’m okay. I was unsure of whether to leave or stay. I hope I didn’t do the wrong thing.”

“Sentinels have a saying; what happens in the pack stays in the pack. I know you’re not a Sentinel or a Guide but we consider you an honorary member.”

Oz nodded. “Thanks Major, I really appreciate it.”

“Oz, I need you to understand that what happened out there is over. It’s been forgiven and won’t be mentioned by anyone in the Hive again. I know you consider Jim and Spike close friends so I need to make sure you’re not holding any negative feelings toward Clint.”

“Jim accepted his apology. It’s not my place to pass judgment when his apology’s been accepted. As far as I’m concerned it was Sentinel business.”
“Then we can agree it will never be spoken of again?”

Oz nodded his head and offered his hand. “If it’s all the same to you I’d rather not kiss on it.”

McGee smiled and took Oz’s hand. “A hand shake will do just fine.” Then he slipped into Hive mind and told everyone concerned they could come to work.

******

Hetty arrived at the Mansion at ten forty-five. She had very little time to make it to the TV station. Gibbs met her at the door. She introduced the General to the Colonel then she got back in the car and sped away.


“This is quite a safe house,” Colonel O’Neill said looking around as he followed Gibbs.

“Yes,” Gibbs said. “Two of our Guides were threatened with abduction. Hetty found the mansion so we could keep our Hive together. It’s also our operations center. Most of us are working on the data we’re getting from the computers. Sentinel Major McGee I’d like you to meet Colonel Jack O’Neill.” Gibbs said as McGee came over and offered his hand.

“This is my Guide Abby. This is Sentinel Special Agent Derek Morgan and his Guide Spencer Reid and our computer consultant Oz.”

Jack shook hands in turn. “I didn’t know your Hive was so big.”

“We have nineteen members,” Gibbs told him. “Jim, Spike and Clint are out making a circuit of the grounds. They should be back in a few minutes. Their Guides are making lunch.” He led O’Neill past the computer room toward the living room.

“You have a couple of Alphas working in close quarters,” Jack said. “How do you keep them from killing each other?”

Gibbs was surprised that Jack would be so blunt. “All the Sentinel’s here are Alphas. How much did Hetty tell you about our Hive?”

“Not much,” Jack said. “Just that you have two strong healers. With nine Alphas living together I guess you need them.”

“Many of us have a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond with each other. I’m not saying there are never any disagreements, but our Guides keep us in balance. Come sit with me and I’ll tell you the history of our Hive and how we came together.”

“I’m not really interested.” Jack said. “Hetty told me you had two healers that had a chance of bringing me back online. That’s all I’m here for.”

“We also have a compatible Guide for you,” Gibbs told him.

“No offense General, but you can’t possibly know if a Guide is compatible with me. I have to consider more than mental and emotional compatibility. I need someone that can work with me in the Air Force. If I can get back online I’ll be continuing my career.”

Jim, Spike and Clint came into the mansion. “Sentinels,” Gibbs called. “Come and meet our guest. This is Sentinel Marshal Clint Barton. Sentinel Detective Jim Ellison is our head Alpha, and his
second Sentinel Detective William Spikeman.”

Jack shook everyone’s hand and then he looked at Gibbs. “You’re a General, why aren’t you head Alpha?”

“I’m head of war operations and NCSIA, that’s enough for me. Jim, Spike, and I have a Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond. I’m not interested in challenging an ally in this war.”

“Fair enough,” Jack said. He turned to look at Spike. “Sam said one of the healers was named Spike. Would that be you?”

“It is,” Spike said watching Jack closely. He was a man not afraid of letting anyone know what he thought. He was a man Spike thought he would like to get to know a little better.

“Why did Hetty lie to me?” Jack asked. “Sentinels aren’t healers.”

“When my Guide Sweet had a synaptic cascade, Spike was responsible for stopping it,” Clint said.

“But was she healed?” Jack asked.

“Hetty didn’t fill the Colonel in about our Hive,” Gibbs said.

“As I said earlier I’m not interested in your hive history. I came here to get back online. I don’t see how a Sentinel can do that. Hetty told me the other healer was called Sweet. That must be someone’s Guide.”

“Yes, she’s a Mindwalker,” Clint told him. “She told me if she can bring you back online she will.”

“If she thinks she can do a healing bond she’s mistaken,” Jack said. “I’m in a catch 22 situation. I can’t bond unless I’m online and I can’t get online unless I bond.”

“If you let her in she will do whatever she can to heal you. She healed me after I lost my Guide.” Clint said.

“And now you’re bonded to a Mindwalker,” Jack said.

“Do you have a problem with that?” Clint asked.

“Not at all,” Jack said. “Your Guide, your choice.”

Jim wasn’t at all sure he liked the Colonel. He suddenly felt like he had become a bit spoiled by the easy and smooth relationships he had with all the Alphas in the hive. Now this Colonel had come into their life and was questioning the way the hive was organized. If the Colonel had been online as a Sentinel when he made the crack about him being the head Alpha, he would have challenged him.

*****

Blair, Xander, and Jarod finished lunch prep and put it into the oven. Jarod enjoyed his time with Blair and Xander. They were always willing to teach him new things. Learning about food and cooking was a favorite activity. It felt good to have friends. Blair also got him a laptop computer to use and told him about his knowledge of ancient Sentinels, Incacha, and the temple he saw in his vivid dream. Jerod decided he wanted to learn more and spent much of his time looking for information about ancient Sentinels on the internet. Before he had escaped from the Center they had him working on translating Mayan hieroglyphs and some other rune like language. He wanted
to know if there was a connection to his dream.

Blair and Xander found their Sentinels in the living room talking with Colonel O’Neill. Blair and Xander picked up on Jim’s stress and Spike’s amusement. A look at Gibbs’ body language showed his mild frustration. In the Guides opinion it was not a good combination. They did not want a repeat of what happened with Sentinel Miller. Blair immediately slipped into Hive Mind and called Sweet and Tony to the living room.

*****

When the Guides arrived they were introduced to the Colonel. The conversation continued with very little progress.

After a few minutes Sweet decided to take matters into her own hands. “If you allow me to touch you Colonel, I will be able to tell if I can heal you.”

“We may as well get it out of the way,” Jack said.

Sweet walked over to Colonel O’Neill and put her fingertips on both sides of his forehead and closed her eyes. “Tell me your name.”

“Jonathan J. O’Neill,”

Sweet slipped into Jack’s mind and began to look around. It took only a moment for her to find the problem. “You’ve sealed a part of yourself off.” Sweet saw it as a tall white brick tower. “You need to open yourself to the healing or it will not succeed.” Sweet let go of his forehead and opened her eyes.

“That’s what the other Healer told me, but it took him a lot longer.”

“The healer wasn’t a Mindwalker,” Sweet said.

“No, he wasn’t,” Jack said. “Daniel, my Guide, was killed the day after all the Mindwalkers were sent to the Department of Guide Proliferation.”

“Tell me,” Sweet said. “Why a white brick tower?”

“I don’t understand what you’re asking me.”

“What does white brick mean to you?”

Jack shrugged. “Bricks are red.”

“So you’ve built a red brick tower and painted it white.”

“Look, I don’t know how any of this is helping. White bricks, red bricks, it’s just a bunch of gibberish. Can you bring me back online or not.”

“I can’t help you unless you give me access to your Sentinel abilities, Colonel,” Sweet told him. “I believe you’re keeping a secret. I’m guessing of course but I believe the secret is not personal it has something to do with your work. Do you blame yourself for your Guide’s death?”

The timer in the kitchen went off. “Lunch is ready,” Xander said. “We can continue this conversation on how to help the Colonel after lunch.”

*****
TBC
Chapter 10

Lunch
Mansion Safehouse

There were two dining room tables large enough to fit ten each. The Guides made quick work of getting the food onto the tables. Jack waited for the Sentinels and Guides to take their seats before choosing his. He avoided the table Jarod was sitting at and sat where he could watch Spike. The Sentinel was quiet, a listener that didn’t miss much. He was Guide-like, except for the way he moved. The other odd thing was that his Guide was bigger than him. All the Sentinels filled a plate, tasted it and handed it to their Guides before filling their own plate. It seemed a bit strange that they would do that even though Hive members had prepared the food. Jack didn’t taste Daniel’s food when they ate at home, but since this was a safehouse they probably didn’t purchase the food themselves.

Jack took a helping of what smelled like tuna casserole, but not a traditional one. It was filled with green peppers, red peppers, onions (Jack assumed they were vidalia onions, Sentinels had issues with any other kind), mushrooms and something that looked a lot like a cucumber. Jack held it on his fork and looked at it suspiciously.

“IT’s zucchini,” Blair said.

Jack took a bite. “No, this is heaven,” he said after swallowing. “You didn’t learn to cook like this at Guide school.”

Everyone at both tables laughed. “Spike and Blair are the best cooks we have,” Abby told him. “Every meal is heaven.”

“Anything to get out of laundry duty,” Spike said with a salute of his fork.

“Hey,” Clint said. “I’ll trade laundry duty for your cooking any day. No one would want to eat my cooking anyway.”

“Well this recipe is all Blair’s,” Spike said.

“Give Jarod a few more days and he’ll be giving Spike and me a run for our money in the kitchen.”

“I like cooking,” Jarod said. “It’s fun and afterward you have something that tastes good.”

Jack paid no attention to Jarod. He had no interest at all in his potential Guide. The conversation went on as Jack ate and listened to the group. It seemed more like a bowling team that’d just won a championship than a group of Alphas fighting a war. He wondered why this group was so friendly. Maybe he had been a bit too hasty in refusing to listen to the history of their Hive.

When the meal was over the table was cleared quickly.

“I have something to show you,” Spencer said, walking up to Gibbs. “Hetty asked me to look into the data we got from the Center. It’s odd, but I think it’s significant.”

Jack walked into the kitchen. “Is there anything I can do to help?”
“Would you mind wiping off the tables?” Blair asked.

“No problem,” Jack said grabbing a damp cloth and heading back to the dining room.

The dining room doubled as an operations room. Gibbs, Jim, and Spike were waiting for Spencer to return.

“I printed these out for you,” Spencer said when he got back. “All of this is from the Center. But the contents make no sense unless it’s an encryption. These are Egyptian hieroglyphics. These are Mayan hieroglyphics and these symbols they look like runes I’ve never seen before. I can read the Egyptian hieroglyphics. It’s a story about a Sentinel.”

Jack got a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. He walked over and took a look at the printouts in Gibbs’ hand. His queezyness was justified. He recognized it right away. “This is classified material, you shouldn’t have that,” he said.

“Then you have a leak,” Gibbs told him. “What would the Initiative want with this?”

“I can’t answer that question,” Jack said.

“I hold the rank of General with top security clearance,” Gibbs told him.

Jack glanced at Jim and Spike. They got the message and moved off.

“Thanks for bringing this to me Spencer. I’ll take it from here,” Gibbs said.

Spencer returned to the computer room.

Jack took a deep breath and let it out. “Look I can’t tell you any of this without General Hammond’s permission. If you have a secure line I’d be happy to call him.” Jack didn’t think a safehouse would have a secure line and he’d get off the hook easy, but he didn’t know about how efficient Hetty was.

Gibbs walked over to a small table and pointed to the phone. “I know George,” Gibbs said. “You dial, I’ll talk.”

Jack handed the phone to Gibbs when he finished dialing. “It’s a direct line so you don’t have to go through a switchboard.”

“Hammond here.”

“George, It’s Jethro,”

“Jethro? How the hell did you get this number? Is one of my men in trouble?”

“I’m at a safe house with Colonel O’Neill.”

“Is the Colonel okay?”

“We think we have a good shot of getting him back online.”

“Well if you can do that I’ll owe you one. He’s one of my best men. But I don’t think Colonel O’Neill gave you my direct number because you want him back online. What’s going on?”

“We discovered a leak from wherever it is you are. The Colonel won’t tell me anything without your permission.”
“I can’t give my permission, Jethro. What I do is need to know only. If it were anyone but you that I was talking to Jack’d be court marshaled just for giving you this number. Let me talk to Jack.”

“Just to be clear, George, he didn’t give me the number. He dialed.”

“Acknowledged.”

Gibbs handed the phone over to Jack. “O’Neill here General.”

“How bad is it?” Hammond asked.

“Bad, Sir, it’s Daniel's work.”

“Any dialing protocols.”

“Yes sir.”

“Put the General back on the phone.”

“He wants to talk to you,” Jack said as he handed the phone back to Gibbs.

“Here,”

“What the hell is NCSIA poking its nose in?”

“That is also need to know, George. I’ve been on the trail of a black ops faction of our government for two years. They are abducting Guides and performing genetic experiments on them. I have a Guide in my hive that was tortured. I have a second Guide that was left infertile by genetic experiments. General Gideon's plane was shot down over the Great Lakes. There’s a lot more but I won’t take up your time with it. We have their name...The Initiative. Washington Genetics outside Cascade is a cover for them. They have a high security prison under the building where they are holding abducted Guides. I want to bring them down, but we’re having trouble following the money trail. This is the first time I’ve come across a clear link to our government. I’m not saying it’s your people that leaked, George. But you should know the Agency’s been compromised. The Northwest Territory’s Alpha Prime is an Initiative operative. Miller and his pack are here with me in a safe house. He and his Guide were abducted but we got them back before they got to the prison. The Sentinel Judicial System has been infiltrated. We’re in deep shit here, George. You need to take a good hard look at your people because either your computer system has been hacked or someone smuggled classified information out of wherever you are and gave it to an Initiative operative. It might help me to find them if I knew who and why.”

“Jesus, Jethro, I had my suspicions about these new laws but I never thought the corruption went that far. I’ll have Colonel O’Neill tell you what you need to know but first I have to ask a favor of you. You need to let O’Neill destroy any material pertaining to what we do. Do I have your word on that?”

“Of course George. I’ll let him go through everything we have. Although there is a lot.”

“If he needs help he can call. I just can’t take a chance of anything I do here getting out to the public. If it does it will make the shit storm you’re in look like a chocolate birthday cake. Let me talk to Jack.”

Gibbs handed the phone to Jack.

“Here, sir.”
“You have my permission to tell General Gibbs what he needs to know. Nothing about day to day operations of course. Keep it as general as possible. There is only one government agency that could be running this level of black ops. The NID.”

“They killed Daniel, Sir.”

“Yes. I had my suspicions, now I’m sure. The General is giving you access to all his intel. Destroy anything that is compromising to our program.”

“Yes Sir. Sir? There are Sentinels and Guides without clearance. What should I do about them?”

“General Gibbs understands the level of security we’re working under. He has the authority to give his people temporary clearance. I trust his judgment. With this level of corruption, and nothing on the grapevine about his investigation, he’s running a tight ship.”

“General, if it’s okay with you I want to stay here and be part of the take down.”

“I’ll put you back on active duty, Colonel. As of now NCSIA is fighting for our survival too.”

“I understand, Sir.” Jack hung up the phone and looked at Gibbs. “The General said that he trusts you with who you share this intel with. I have to keep it need to know. Is there anyone here you want to keep out of it?”

“Oz and Jarod are the only ones not in the Hive. Everyone else we can read in.”

“Call them in General. I don’t want to brief them more than once.”

*****

The Hive sat around the table listening to what Colonel O’Neill had to say. When he was done Gibbs stepped up.

“We’ve known for a long time what was being done to the Guides, but we never knew who or why,” Gibbs said. “We assumed it was to sell the genetic technology to other countries. Then we found out that a plan to enhance Sentinels was in the works. That’s why they wanted Spike. This answers a lot of questions. The NID wants its own army,”

“Are we sure of this?” Morgan asked. “The Initiative is an army. What does the NID need with another one?”

“That’s the part that’s need to know,” Jack said, “But General Hammond and I are sure.” Jack knew that with their own army the NID could go off world and get the alien tech they craved, but that wasn't anything he could tell this group.

“Now that we have a government agency and a name, we should be able to pick up the money trail,” McGee said.

“Okay people,” Gibbs said. “We need to get back to work. Morgan, Clint, Jim, Spike, we need to go over the plans for stopping the Guide abductions.”

*****

After two hours of going through hacked Center information Jack needed a break so he decided to go out for a short run. He left the computer room and headed for the front door. Spike and Clint were working on the logistics of the Guide Abduction. When Jack passed by the dining room Spike
noticed and called out to him.

“Jack, is everything okay?”

“I’m just getting a little cabin fever. I’m going out for a run.”

“I’ll go with you,” Spike said. He could use a little alone time with Jack. They hadn’t finished talking about bringing him back online. They fell into an easy jog. Spike thought he would give Jack a chance to talk first but he didn’t expect a question so quickly.

“I have a question. If you don’t mind?” Jack said.

“Go ahead. Ask what you want to know,” Spike said.

“Gibbs said the Initiative wanted you? No offense, but I can see them wanting Ellison, or Morgan but...why you?”

Spike gave a little snicker. He didn’t know if Jack would believe him, but now was as good a time as any to tell him. “When we got Xander back from the abduction he was brain damaged. They gave him too much of a psychotropic tranquilizer. I helped heal him. The Alpha Prime at the time was getting regular medical reports about Xander so he found out I was a healer.”

“Why was the AP keeping track of Xander?”

“Xander has very reliable hazard detection. The director of the Guide school, Ethan Rayne put Xander up for bid on the international black market. At the time we just thought our government won the bid. Then when General Gideon’s plane was shot down we knew there was more to it than Rayne. Jack, there’s a lot about our Hive you don’t know. I’m willing to tell you everything, but I don’t want to do it piecemeal. It would be a lot easier for you to understand all this if I start from the beginning.”

“Okay,” Jack said slipping into Colonel O’Neill mode. “Let’s find a private place where we can talk.”

*****

Some Time Later

*****

Jack and Spike sat on the lawn chairs in the backyard. Jack had listened quietly with few interruptions for questions.

“That’s quite a story,” Jack said. “So Xander and Sweet are the only ones you’ve healed. Why would Hetty think you can heal me?”

“I believe she was thinking of a blood bond.” Spike didn’t like the idea of trying a blood bond on an offline Sentinel. True he had a blood bond with Sweet, but he did it with the blessing of the tribunal. He planned on having Blair contact Incacha tonight and ask if it was safe. Incacha had sent Jarod to Hetty, not the Hive.

Blair stepped out the back door into the yard. “Spike,” he called. “We have supper to prepare. Or should I get Sweet and Jarod to help?”

“On my way,” Spike answered.”You think on this and we’ll talk more after dinner or in the
morning.” Then he walked into the mansion to help with dinner.

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Night
The Mansion
Jarod’s Dream

********

Jarod found himself in the temple again with Incacha and a tall man with light brown hair.

“Guide,” Incacha said. “You doubt yourself. You have read the sacred story, you know your duty, but still you doubt. I have brought Guide Daniel to speak with you. Listen to his words for his message to you holds wisdom.”

“Jarod,” Daniel said walking forward. “Jack needs you. You have my blessing to bond with him.”

“Jack doesn’t like me,” Jarod said. “He has barely looked at me and hasn’t spoken to me at all.”

“Jack can be stubborn. He blames himself for my death. It’s not his fault. He couldn’t have foreseen it. What happened was meant to happen. I was Jack’s second Guide. His first one was assigned to him by the Air Force. Bob was a level 4 empath. A military Guide meant to be a light bond in case one dies in the line of duty the other will survive. Bob was drafted into the service. He planned to sever the bond when his term of service was over. When the Stargate Program started I needed to bond with a Sentinel. By mutual consent a Mindwalker severed Jack’s bond with Bob and Jack bonded with me. It was a bond of practicality. We came to love each other as brothers, but we never danced in the bond. He never made me glow.”

“But he grieves for you,” Jarod said. “I can feel it. His Sentinel abilities have shut down. Twice an attempt has been made to restore them and they failed. Sweet said he has locked that part of himself away. He can’t become a Sentinel again unless he frees himself.”

“He will free himself and when he does he’ll need you. You are his One True Guide... His Soul Mate. Be there for him. He doesn’t know how much he needs you. I have to go now Jarod. Remember... you have my Blessing.”

The temple and the men faded and Jarod fell into a deep restful sleep his mind and soul now at ease.

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Jack’s Dream

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Jack tossed in the king sized bed. He still found it hard to get comfortable without the heat of Daniel’s body beside him. He decided to do the breathing exercise Daniel had taught him. His body relaxed and he fell into a fitful sleep.

He felt the hard stone floor under his boots and heard the sound of his footsteps as he climbed the stairs. “Daniel,” he called. “Where are you? We have half an hour to get back to the Gate.”

Jack reached the top of the stairs and saw Daniel walk toward him. “I’m not going back to the Gate, Jack.”
“What are you talking about Daniel? We’re due back. If we don’t go Hammond will send a team to look for us. Come on. We can come back here again if this place is so important.”

“Jack, you need to leave me here. It’s time to let me go. You’re not honoring me by holding on like this.”

“Stop talking nonsense. We’re getting out of here now.”

“Jack, I can’t leave. In your heart you know I can’t.” Daniel stepped forward and put his hand on Jack’s face. “You have to go without me. Take Jarod for your Guide. Make him glow, Jack. Dance in the bond with him. You have my blessing.”

“Daniel, NO!”

Daniel backed away. “Yes, Jack. My time with you is done. I have other work to do now.” With each step he faded until he was gone from sight.

Jack gasped and sat up in bed. “Daniel,” he whispered. He fell back and closed his eyes. He’d get no more sleep tonight.

*****

Morning

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“Did Incacha come to you?” Spike asked Blair.

“Yes,” Blair answered. “He said it would be safe to do the blood bond after Jack takes down his tower.”

Spike sighed, “Jack’s pretty torn up about the way Daniel was killed. His tower is tied into that. There’s nothing any of us can do to force this. If the Powers want this they’ll have to find a way and we’ll have to wait.”

*****

After breakfast Jack sought out Clint. He may not be a Sentinel right now but he knew Sentinel etiquette. Talking to a bonded Guide without a Sentinel’s permission could get you, at best, a punch in the nose and at worst dead. “Clint, can I talk to you for a moment?” Jack asked.

“Sure Jack. What can I help you with?”

“Sweet said I needed to stop blocking my Sentinel abilities. I was wondering if you’d let her help me with that?”

“When Hetty told us you needed healing Sweet and I discussed this. I know she’ll be honored to do whatever she can to help.”

“Thank you, Clint.”

“Jack, when I said whatever she can do, that includes a healing bond.”

“That’s very generous of you, Clint. But I don’t think it will come to that, I just need some help in tearing down the tower she said I’d built, I think a touch healing will be enough.”
“When do you want to talk to Sweet?”

“If she’s not busy, I was hoping she could help me this morning.”

“I just called her through the Hive mind,” Clint told him a moment later. “She’ll be here in a
minute. Healing can take a lot of energy, Sweet will need to be monitored. I can stay or I can call
Blair?”

“I’m fine with you being there,” Jack told him.

Sweet walked over to her Sentinel and placed a hand on his arm. “We need to go somewhere
comfortable. The privacy den downstairs should be good.”

******

The privacy den was a small room with a brown leather reclining love seat, a big screen TV, a wet
bar complete with mini fridge, microwave, and Keurig coffee maker. It was used when a pack
member needed alone time with his Guide just to snuggle up and watch a movie or the big game.
Today it was going to be used for something else. It was going to be used for a healing.

There was only seating for two in the room. Clint tried standing by the door but Sweet told him
through the Hive mind that Jack found him standing there uncomfortable, so Clint crouched near
the door. It gave him a good view to monitor Sweet and he could get to her quickly if she needed
him to carry her to their room afterward. Healers nearly always needed sleep after a healing.

Sweet and Jack lay facing each other on a fully reclined love seat. She put her fingers on Jack’s
temples. “First you need to relax,” She told him. “I want you to breath with me in through your
nose to the count of 3 and out through your mouth to the count of six. In 2-3, Out 2-3-4-5-6” Sweet
continued counting for several more breaths.

Jack relaxed.

“That’s better,” Sweet said. “Now when your ready, close your eyes and we will go to the tower
together.”

Jack took one more breath. In...Out…..Then he closed his eyes. He seemed to be in a foggy void
but Sweet was beside him holding his hand.

“The sun’s coming up.” Sweet said in that oh so comforting voice. “You don’t need the fog any
more the sun is burning it away.”

The fog cleared and Jack could see the white tower in the distance. “The tower is up ahead.”

“We’re going to walk to the tower together,” Sweet told him.

They walked for what seemed to be a long time. The tower moved back an equal distance to each
step forward.

“Jack, we need to reach the tower. Why are you pushing it away?”

“I don’t want to push it away. I want to tear it down. I want to be a Sentinel again.”

Suddenly the tower rushed forward and stood looming in front of them. Jack had truly made the
decision. He would do what needed to be done to become a Sentinel again.

“Now take down the tower. Call a brick to you,” Sweet told him.
Reaching out a brick appeared in Jack’s hand. One side was painted white the other five sides were blood red. Jack turned the brick in his hand. “I painted it white to hide the secrets. Daniel’s death, why he died...it’s all classified.” Jack threw the brick to the ground and it turned to dust. “He deserves to be honored, not ignored and forgotten.”

“He’s not forgotten,” Sweet said. “You built this tower to hold on to him.”

“He came to me in a dream last night. He said to honor him I had to let him go. I had to become a Sentinel again and take Jarod as my Guide.”

“Tell the tower you don’t need it anymore. You’re going to honor Daniel in your heart and in your actions.”

“I love you Daniel. My brother.” The tower crumbled and fell away.

******

Sweet removed her hands from Jack’s temples and opened her eyes. “The tower’s down. Clint, I need to sleep.”

Jack got up from the love seat. “Is there anything I can do to help?” he asked.

Clint took his place in the love seat and reclined. When he was even with Sweet he pulled her into a hug. “No, she’ll be fine she just needs to sleep for an hour or two.”

Jack nodded and started to leave.

“Jack, Sweet said the tower was down. Are you back online?”

Jack turned back and met Clint’s eyes. “No, not yet.”

“Spike will help you with that,” Clint said. “I know you’re not going to believe this, but the head of the Initiative was a demon. Spike and I went to a hell world to stop it’s minion. Spike knew what he was walking into and he did what he had to do. Together we stopped this world from turning into hell.”

“Are you telling me you’ve been off world?” Jack asked.

“I guess I am. I don’t know why I mentioned it. I know it stretches the mind. But after we got rid of the demon, things started to fall apart for the Initiative. There’s an end in sight. Believe what I’ve told you or not, it’s up to you. I’ve come to believe in a lot of things I didn’t think were possible since fully bonding with Sweet.”

“Thanks for letting Sweet help me,” Jack said then he turned and went to find Spike. He needed to know how the hell this Hive got access to a Stargate and exactly which ‘demon’ these people had been able to get rid of. Sometimes need to know could be a bitch.

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TBC
Chapter 11

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Safe House

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Jack walked back upstairs toward the kitchen. It was the most likely place for Spike to be. Feeding all the people in the safe house took time and Spike spent a good deal of his time helping with food prep. He had planned to talk to Spike yesterday evening but Gibbs and Jim had monopolized his time and then his Guide went to him. He thought the morning would be better, but then Daniel delivered his dream message and Jack changed his mind. He was glad he did. He now had information he didn’t have before. ~Spike had been off world.~ He needed to find out how this hive got access to a Stargate. General Hammond couldn’t know about it or the General would have told him.

When Jack got to the kitchen he found Spike, Blair, and Jarod laughing and chopping vegetables.

“Spike,” Jack said in his most commanding voice. “I need to talk to you, NOW!”

Spike turned he had an amused smile on his face as he tilted his head and evaluated Jack. Jack thought he saw his eyes flash yellow for a moment.

It was Blair that stepped forward. “Jack, you seem stressed. Let me help.”

“Are you going to hide behind a Guide or are you going to talk to me?” Jack said looking Spike directly in the eyes.

Spike turned and placed the chopping knife he was using on the counter and pulled the towel that he had tucked in his belt out, wiped his hands, and placed it on the counter too. Then he turned back to look at Jack. “It’s not me he’s trying to protect; it’s you.” Spike turned and kissed Blair on the cheek. “I’m not going to hurt him, Blair.” Spike walked forward. “We can go to the privacy room.”

Jack looked Spike up and down. He decided not to challenge Spike’s remark, at least not yet. He had two inches on Spike, broader shoulders and a decade of experience in hand to hand combat. He was sure he could take Spike and when the time was right he would show him, quickly and efficiently, that he didn’t need a Guide’s protection. “Clint and Sweet are in the privacy room,” Jack said. “She’s sleeping. We’ll go to my room.”

*****

Jack’s Bedroom

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Jack closed and locked the door behind him. “You’ve been off world. I want to know how you got access to a Stargate?” Jack said in a tone that said he expected an immediate answer,

“Spike tilted his head and looked at Jack. “Off world? Not sure what you’re talking about and I don’t know anything about a Stargate.”
“Clint told me that the two of you went to a hell world. I need to know how you got access to a Stargate, what world you went to, and what demon you killed.”

Spike’s eyes turned yellow. He’d had about enough of Colonel Jack O’Neill’s attitude “I know this may seem hard for you to believe,” He said in his English accent, “but I don’t have access to a sodin’ Stargate, whatever that is. A metaphysical being named Beacon opened the portal for Clint and me in the nesting house living room. The hell world I went to was an alternate reality earth and the demons I killed were vampires.” Spike started to leave the bedroom but Jack blocked his way.

“Then how did this Beacon get access to a portal mirror?”

“I think you’re telling me more than I need to know.” Spike said, he was sure that anything called a portal mirror or a Stargate would be classified. “I’ve never lied to you, Colonel. We are in a war. I know what the Initiative is capable of; Xander... my soulmate!... My own... was tortured in Guide School. He was abducted and came back with brain damage. All I want is to stop those bloody bastards before they can do it to some other innocent Guide. I don’t give a flying fuck about your secret Stargate or your portal mirror.”

“The NID killed my Guide and they’re responsible for me losing my Sentinel abilities. I want them taken down too. Right now I’m wondering about you. Yellow eyes... English accent. Who the hell are you?”

“I’ve told you everything I know about the questions you’ve asked, Jack. As for the Yellow eyes, they happen when I get majorly pissed off. If you think I’m a mole for the Initiative talk to General Gibbs.”

“What about the phone call you get every evening at seven, what’s that about?”

“He’s undercover at WG. He knows nothing about you or Jarod so you’re not compromised. He’s the reason we were able to rescue Graham and Wesley. He also gave us time to go underground before the Initiative came after Xander and me.”

Jack decided to put the yellow eyed Spike behind him and concentrate on the subject at hand. “How did you get to Mr. Seven O’clock and get him to help you?” he asked. If this hive had a spy in WG they could be being used. If the NID knew about the mole the hive could be compromised and not know it. They could be feeding the hive’s mole false information.

Spike wasn’t feeling at all friendly toward Jack right now. The man was just rubbing him the wrong way. Spike paced back and forth across the room. He wasn’t sure that Jack would believe him if he told him the whole truth, but there really wasn’t anything else to do. “This is a long story,” Spike told him. “You’d better sit down.”

“I’ve got time,” Jack said and sat on the bed.

“This hive is deeply involved with the metaphysical,” Spike began. “I wasn’t born into this reality, I was placed here by the Department of Cosmic Intervention. I was sent here for two reasons. One was to become a Sentinel and have Xander as my Guide so I could work on atonement. The other was to bring Sentinels to their next level of evolution through the blood bond.”

*Blood bond, now that was interesting.* Jack thought, *but first things first.* “Are you telling me that you got to our reality through a portal?”

“No. I died in my last life. I did some very bad things before I started fighting for the white hats there, that’s why I need to atone. When I was sent here the human me was merged with a…”
metaphysical being. That’s where the yellow eyes come from. It’s also why I can heal and track, without scent, anyone I’m bonded to. The blood bond makes those Sentinel’s like me. Blair’s in touch with a Sentinel Spirit Guide named Incacha. He told us that a Hell Demon was controlling the Initiative through a Vampire called Angelus. We trapped the Hell Demon in a sacred box. Angelus was my Grandsire in my past life. The only way to stop him was to merge him with his human soul so that he would become a true Sentinel. When I went ‘off world’, as you say, I retrieved his human soul and it chose to help us by merging with Angelus. That’s who calls me.”

“How did you retrieve a soul?”

“I killed the vampire that was holding it.”

“And just like that you believe he’s helping you?”

“He’s my Grandsire, he can’t lie to me. If he tried I’d know it.”

“Then why not bring him into the hive? He’s a Sentinel.”

“Before he became a true Sentinel he killed Graham’s secretary. None of us want him here, I’m the only one that works with him. He gives us information, we don’t tell him what we’re going to do about it unless he needs to know. Even then we don’t tell him until the last minute.”

“You said that Angelus was a Vampire and your Grandsire. Does the hive know that the metaphysical being that’s a part of you is a vampire?”

“Jim, Xander, and Blair know, but Blair gets pretty pissed when I call it a vampire. He insists I call it a metaphysical being so I give my Guide what he needs.”

“Did the Sentinel’s that chose to ‘Blood Bond’ with you know?”

“I think you should ask them. You clearly have doubts about bonding with me and right now I’m not feeling particularly loving toward you. The bond can’t be forced, it won’t work, neither of us can force it, both of us have to want it. Talk to anyone in the hive, you need to set your mind at ease.” Spike shook off the yellow eyes. “I need to get back to the kitchen and help with lunch. We’ll talk again.”

*****

Jack thought about what he had learned as he walked to the computer room to find McGee. This Hive was odder than he thought. A half metaphysical vampire Sentinel with yellow eyes…? But who was he to judge. He worked in a place where he could travel to another planet in a few seconds and where a worm like parasite could take over a human's mind and keep that person alive for centuries. And then there was the Mayan Hieroglyphics that Daniel had translated before he was killed. It told of Sentinels whose blood was poisonous to the Goa’uld. He was sure now that the NID killed Daniel because of that translation although Daniel believed that it was an ancient Sentinel blood trait that had long ago disappeared. Why didn’t he put it together when the government passed the law that required every Sentinel to donate blood? Jack was sure that all of this went deeper than just the new mandatory Guide Proliferation. The Government had already touched on the need for more Alpha’s. Jack was sure the NID was hunting for a Sentinel with the ‘poisonous blood’ trait. He didn’t want to think of what they would do if they found one. He needed to talk to General Gibbs instead.

*****

Jack knocked on Gibbs office door across the hall from the computer room. The room was much
smaller than his NCSIA office, but it was the only appropriate room in the house for an office.

“Come in,” Gibbs called.

Jack opened the door and took a step inside. “General Gibbs, do you have a few minutes to talk?”

“Sure Colonel, I could use a break. Have a seat.”

Jack didn’t see any point of making small talk; he didn’t think that General Gibbs would appreciate it either, so he just got right to it. “I’ve been talking to Spike. A yellow eyed Spike.”

Gibbs leaned back in his seat and gave Jack a half smile. “What did you do to piss him off?”

“I suggested he was hiding behind a Guide.”

“You have to be careful around Xander. He’s got a hairline trigger when it comes to Spike.”

“It wasn’t Xander it was Blair.”

“Blair?...” Gibbs was confused for a moment then he understood. “If Blair spoke up it’s because he was worried about you not Spike.”

“I can handle myself General. I may not have my Sentinel abilities but I haven’t lost my fighting skills.”

“You can’t win a fight with Spike. Believe me I know. He let me beat him bloody, I bit his lip, gave him two black eyes, at least two broken ribs, and more cuts and bruises than I could count. He let me beat him, without lifting a hand to protect himself, He LET it go on until I was satisfied he could take it.”

“That doesn’t tell me I couldn’t win a fight with him. It tells me he’s too much of a coward to fight back. Or maybe he likes pain.”

“Spike’s no coward so don’t say I didn’t warn you, I’ll just say one more thing. If I were going into battle and could only take one Sentinel with me it would be Spike.”

“You’re welcome to him. Spike suggested I talk to the members of the Hive about the Blood Bond. I want an objective point of view so I thought I’d talk to you. Have you noticed any difference in Major McGee since he’s been in the blood bond with Spike?”

Gibbs sat behind his desk trying to get his thoughts into linear order. “McGee is still McGee,” Gibbs began. “He came up through the ranks before he bonded with Spike. I think there was more change in him after he bonded with Abby, but every sentinel changes some after they bond. I’m not sure about his family’s Sentinel history, but I do know the decision to bond with Spike wasn’t made lightly. I’ve never heard him voice any regret and I certainly don’t have any regrets about him being second in command of NCSIA. McGee was always different. But he seemed like an Alpha that was able to lead in a pinch than one that demanded a leadership role. He was also damned good at his job. That’s why he’s second in command. Now I know that McGee was never weak as an Alpha, he just never had the need to push. The Blood Bond with Spike was intense and personal, I was one of the witnesses. If you want to know more about how it’s affected him, you should ask McGee.”

“There’s something else General. It’s need to know, so I ask that you don’t share it with anyone in the Hive. In my work we’re dealing with a sentient parasite that can and has taken over human minds. These parasites want to invade Earth. Daniel translated some Mayan hieroglyphics before
he was killed. I believe it was why he was killed. The story told about an ancient Sentinel. It said that his blood had healing properties that were fatal to the Goa’uld parasite. Has anyone ever done a blood test on Spike and if so can you get a copy for me?”

“Dr. Mallard processed a blood test before Spike bonded with McGee. He does have some, for lack of a better term, abnormalities in his blood. Ducky said that they were related to an enhanced immune system. Spike has stem cells in his blood, the kind an adult shouldn’t have, and he has a symbiotic virus. Ducky compared it to the beneficial bacteria we have in our digestive system. The doctor gave me a full physical. I’ve had no adverse reaction to our blood exchange. McGee’s had no adverse effects from his bond with Spike.”

“I thought that your bond with Spike was just Sentinel-to-Sentinel.”

“My bond with Spike is very personal and unique. The only Hive members that know all of the specifics are the witnesses. I just told you some but I’ve said as much as I’m going to about it. I’m sure that McGee will fill you in on his experience.” Gibbs returned to looking at the paperwork on his desk.

“Did you know that the *metaphysical being* with yellow eyes was a vampire?”

Gibbs looked up at O’Neill and fixed him with his eyes. “Spike’s never lied to me, Colonel. Dismissed,” he said, letting O’Neill know in no uncertain terms that their conversation was over.

“Thank you General,” Jack said as he left the room and quietly closed the door.

******

When the door closed Gibbs slumped back in his chair. Now he understood why Hammond wanted all information related to his project destroyed. The parasite thing wasn’t unbelievable at all. There were parasites that could take over the behavior of insects. To find that a parasite had evolved that could take over a human’s brain...not good was an understatement. Gibbs thought he must be missing some important information. All Sentinels are required to have a yearly physical. Any blood abnormalities would show up in their blood tests. All the NID had to do was subpoena the results. Maybe they did and found nothing until they came across the report that Spike healed Xander. Suddenly Gibbs was very glad he had Ducky do the tests himself. Well there was nothing he could do about the parasite, that responsibility lay squarely in Hammond’s lap. But he needed to protect his people. He picked up his encrypted phone and called Ducky.

******

Ducky was surprised when he heard his encrypted phone ring. He and Gibbs hadn’t talked since he made his final report of what he learned at the Boston Medical Convention. He pulled off his gloves and answered the phone on the third ring. “Jethro, Is everything okay?”

“I need to know if you have anything about the blood test you did on Spike on the NCSIA computers or your personal computer?”

“I don’t keep medical records on my personal computer. I have it saved under a case number with patient numbers only. There is nothing the file that can identify anyone. Why do you ask?”

“I need you to erase all of it,” Jethro said. “Erase anything pertaining to any of us. I can’t tell you how I know, but the Initiative is looking for Sentinel blood anomalies.”

Ducky could tell his friend was worried. Gibbs wasn’t given to over reactions. “Jethro, I assure you that even if NCSIA were hacked they would get no information about to whom the blood tests
were pertaining."

“There is a possibility that the information could be subpoenaed. If that happened the Initiative would know you processed the blood tests and they would come after you. You know these people and what they’re capable of. Erase the report Ducky. I can’t risk you or anyone in our hive being compromised.”

“Okay, Jethro. I’ll acquiesce to your superior knowledge on this.”

“Do it now, Ducky. Don’t wait.”

“I’ll take care of it immediately,” Ducky told him. He hung up the phone and went to his computer. He sighed as he erased the files the way McGee had taught him. He knew that there would be no way to recover the information. It was a pity to lose it, but he had no choice. Whatever was happening must be bad. He'd find out about it eventually. He put on a clean pair of gloves and went back to work.

******

Gibbs slipped into the hive mind and asked Jim and Spike to meet him in the nest. When the three Sentinels got there they made themselves comfortable. Gibbs was the first one to talk.

“I know you talked to Jack,” Gibbs began. “Did he tell you about the parasite?”

Spike squinted at Gibbs, it was clear that he had no idea what Gibbs was talking about. “No,” Spike said. “He wanted to know about Clint and me retrieving Angel’s human soul. Does he think I’m carrying a parasite?”

“No. Jack thinks your blood may be the cure. He said the parasite is sentient and wants to invade Earth which tells me the parasite is extra-terrestrial. He asked for a copy of the blood test Ducky processed. I just called Ducky and told him to destroy all records of the test. Jack asked me not to share the information, but it’s your blood and it’s you they’ll be coming after. I think you have the right to know. If they are checking doctor's records they may already know you have blood abnormalities, if not it's only a matter of time.”

They won’t find anything from doctors records, they all came back normal,” Spike said.

"How did you manage that?” Gibbs asked.

"It’s the same as making a childe. The person looking at the blood has to want to see it and I have to want them to see it too."

Gibbs nodded.

“I think we should leave this Earth invasion to Hammond and concentrate on our own mission. We already know that the Initiative has intel on Spike healing Xander,” Jim said. “If they think there is any possibility at all that Spike’s blood could be a cure for the parasitic infection they won't take medical records at face value. They will come after him.”

“I should leave and lay down a false trail,” Spike said. “They were going to take Xander and me. If I leave there’s a good chance they’ll leave Xander alone.”

“Not much of a chance, they may try to take Xander to use him to get at you.” Jim said. “I’m not splitting up our nest and I doubt that Xander would settle without you. We should stay here and end this war. I know we can keep our Guides safe. I’ll double the patrols. Hetty’s information
campaign is going well. The Mindwalkers will be ready to let their energy wave go soon. And with McGee, Oz and that guy in Boston working on the money trail there’s an end in sight.”

“Jim’s right,” Gibbs said. “We’re stronger with you here. Once you heal Jack we’ll have another Sentinel on our side. I know Hammond, he’d never abduct a Sentinel.”

“Unless something changes a blood bond with O’Neill isn’t going to work,” Spike said. “I wasn’t lying when I said I can’t bond with someone I can’t love. Right now there are no feelings between us.”

“Is it his age?” Gibbs asked. “He’s older than anyone else you’ve taken as a Childe.”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with age. If you or Jim wanted it I’d make you my own. But O’Neill… He seems…disinterested.”

“I won’t go into what he said to me. He doesn’t know you, but that could change.” Gibbs said.

“Well if you don’t bond with him Sweet will,” Jim said.

“She could take on a regular healing bond with Jack, normal healing bond energy fades quickly. But she’s too young for a blood bond it could cause problems. Plus the blood bond doesn’t fade and I doubt Clint would appreciate the relationship they would have.”

“We’ve got time,” Gibbs said. “My gut is telling me things are going to change between you two.”

******

Jack walked into the computer room and spoke to McGee. “Can we talk for a few minutes?”

“Sure, I just hit a dead end on this money trail, I could use a distraction.” McGee stood up and stretched. He knew he should stretch more often, but once he got on a trail he never wanted to stop until he saw it through. Still sitting at a computer all day was not his favorite thing to do. Not since he had become a Special Agent at NCSIA. But they needed to track down the final money trail and fast. “Walk with me,” McGee said mentally calculating just how long he could afford to be away. “Am I right in assuming this is about Spike?”

The pair had walked through the house and out the door that led to the pool patio. The day was warm with clouds blowing in from the ocean. There would be rain within a few hours but after checking the clouds and the scent of the air McGee was sure they would have time for a short walk and headed for the gate.

“I just talked to Clint and General Gibbs. They suggested I talk to the Sentinel’s that Spike has a blood bond with. I was wondering if you’ve noticed any changes since you’ve bonded with him?”

“I’m stronger, faster, I have more confidence, and Dr. Mallard says I have a better immune system. Your trying to figure out if you want to bond with him.” It wasn’t a question just a statement of fact.

“More confident?” Jack asked. “You didn’t feel confident before?”

“I knew I was different, hell I was a geek, My medical records said I was Alpha, but I wasn’t like any other Alpha I met in Sentinel training. I’d been looking for a Guide since I graduated the academy, but I couldn’t find one that appealed to me. Then I met Abby. I knew the second I picked up her scent that she was the Guide for me. No other Sentinel had ever approached Abby; she wasn’t sure she had the ability to be a Guide to an Alpha. I know other Sentinel Agents were
looking at me sideways about my pursuit of Abby. One of them told me not to settle. He said I wasn’t having sensory spikes or zone outs so I had time. He was an older Sentinel, ready to retire, so I didn’t challenge him but I did tell him off. Gibbs was good, he kept his eye on me and made sure I got credit for what I did. When he got promoted he brought me with him.”

“I don’t understand. General Gibbs wouldn’t have promoted you if you were a slack off.”

“No, he wouldn’t, but Abby was involved and what happens between a Sentinel and his Guide stays between a Sentinel and his Guide so I’m not going to say anymore about that. Then Gibbs invited Xander to Washington to read Abby and see if she was in danger. The whole Cascade pack came of course. At first I didn’t want to have anything at all to do with Spike. But then I picked up his scent and I knew he was like me.”

“Like you how? You’re the second highest ranked Sentinel here, Spike’s the cook.”

“It’s not about rank,” McGee said, “It’s about the bond and about being a strong Sentinel.”

“You have nine Alpha’s in this hive, eight of them live in this safe house. Spike is weak, sneaky, and...”

“Don’t say it,” McGee growled. “I don’t know where the hell you got the idea that Spike was weak and sneaky. If anything he’s brutally honest.”

“I’ve seen the way he touches Tony when Gibbs isn’t around,” Jack whispered. “I saw him lick Tony’s Guide gland.”

“You didn’t know? He’s cross bonded to Tony. Before he started stroking Tony he was getting migraines.”

“Spike has two Guides, he should go to one of them for his migraines. Tony isn’t even a healer.”

“Okay, let me rephrase; Tony was the one with the migraines. It seems Guides feel a deep responsibility to their Sentinels and if they’re not allowed to fulfill that responsibility they get migraines. Spike’s not sneaking around, he’s just trying to keep things private for Tony.”

“That doesn’t make him a strong Sentinel and it doesn’t tell me why you think you’re like him.”

“What makes him strong is that he doesn’t have to put everyone below him to know his worth. He can bend and adapt without compromising his moral compass. He knows he can do what needs to be done and now I know it too.”

“Did he tell you he was a vampire in his last life?”

“You sound like Ducky,” McGee said. “Spike’s not a multiple personality, he’s not mentally ill. I’m not concerned about his past life. As Xander said, Spike gets the job done.”

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The Set of “Morning Talk”
TV show

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“Good morning everyone, I’m Emma Madson and this is my partner Gabe Allen. Good morning Gabe.”
“Good morning Emma. We have a great show this morning. Our guest is Henrietta Lange, Director of the Guide Guild. She has quite a controversial message about the new Guide Laws that were passed recently. So let’s get started. Good morning Ms. Lange.”

The camera pulled in to get a close up of the Director. “Good morning Emma,...Gabe. Thank you for having me. Please call me Hetty.”

“Certainly. Hetty you’ve been traveling around making personal appearances to raise the awareness of the new Guide Laws. What is it that you feel the average citizen needs to know about the new laws?” Emma asked.

“What the average citizen doesn’t know is that all un-bonded double XX Guides, also known as Mindwalkers, have been incarcerated and their right to choose whether or not to have a child and who the father of the child will be, has been taken from them.”

“Wow,” Gabe said. “That’s quite an accusation there.”

“It’s not an accusation,” Hetty told him. “It’s a fact.”

“That doesn’t sound right,” Emma said. “The word ‘incarcerated’ seems harsh.”

“If you were locked in a building with armed Guards and had no right to leave, what would you call it.”

“You’ve actually seen this with your own eyes?” Emma asked.

“Only Washington Genetics employees are allowed into the facility. Even as the Director of The Guide Guild I’m not allowed in. I have, however, seen the armed guards on the grounds and talked to several employees who work in the facility. They talked to me in the presence of a retired Mindwalker and there was no evidence that they were lying to me.”

“Hetty, you also said that the female guides had all their reproductive rights stripped from them. Do you really expect us to believe that?” Gabe asked.

“Again it’s also the truth. I gave your producers a copy of the letter that all the Mindwalkers received. Perhaps it can be put on screen now.” The face of Hetty was replaced by an official letter. “The letter orders that the Mindwalkers report to the Department of Guide Proliferation located at Washington Genetics.”

“That doesn’t mean they are locked in and have no say as to who the father of their children will be.”

“I have copies of internal WG documents sent to Wiki Whistle by an anonymous whistle blower,” Hetty said. “Perhaps your control room could put up that list. The numbers are Mindwalker numbers the Sentinel names have been blacked out for privacy. That certainly tells me that it is the doctor that is deciding the parents of the babies that will be born.”

“I have heard your accusation that there was a secret lab north of Boston that was experimenting on using pigs to carry human embryos to term. You asked Sentinel Internal Affairs to investigate. The preliminary findings are that it was true. Has there been any further findings in that case?”

“NCSIA was able to recover most of the lab records. It’s also confirmed by the physical evidence. They are currently looking for a Dr. Shamos who was the head of the lab. He has disappeared.”

“Isn’t that the doctor who testified before congress?” Emma asked.
“It is. It is also my opinion that it brings all of his testimony under suspicion.”

“You think he was lying?” Gabe asked.

“Yes,” Hetty said. “I believe the cause of the Guide shortage is that the Government is artificially triggering Sentinels instead of letting them trigger naturally. Simply stopping that practice will increase the population of Guides available to choose a Guide mate and have families. We could increase the Guide population just as quickly without taking away a Guides reproductive rights. We could free Mindwalkers and get them back to work in our law enforcement agencies and courts.”

“That certainly gives us a lot to think about,” Emma said.

“I agree. It looks as if we have been lied too,” Gabe said. “We need Guides and Sentinels in our society. But they deserve to have the same rights that all of our other citizens enjoy.”

“Thank you, Hetty, for coming in and bringing us up to date on this issue.”

“I would like to let your viewers know that there is a list of Guide Equal Rights marches on www.guideguild.sen. I invite anyone who wants to preserve our culture and way of life to join one of our marches. These Guide abuses must be stopped. Twenty five years ago it was legal for a Sentinel to lock his Guide in a cage. Our citizens stopped that barbaric practice. Now we need to do it again. Guides should have the same rights as any other citizen.”

“Thank you, Hetty, and we will be right back after these messages.”

Hetty stood up and a tech came over to remove her mic pack. Everything had gone well and she expected that the protests would continue to grow.

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Safe House

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McGee and O’Neill came back to the computer room and sat down at their respective computer screens. Sentinel Derek Morgan watched as they returned. He was well aware of what was going on in the safe house. But he was the newest member of the hive and his primary focus was on his Guide, Spencer, and his work organizing the information that they were getting from the computers. His time with Spike was limited, He did run around the grounds with him some evenings checking the perimeter. It was surprisingly comforting to run with Spike or any of the Sentinels Spike had a blood bond with. Now he felt it was time to speak up and make himself known. Colonel Jack O’Neill needed to bring his Sentinel abilities back online. They needed him in this fight. Yet O’Neill didn’t seem to be interested in talking to Spike. There was a chance that he was asking McGee about his bond with Spike, so maybe now was the time to bring it up. Sentinel Morgan got up from his desk and walked over to O’Neill. “Colonel, we need to talk.” he said.

“Should we go to the privacy room? I just saw Clint and Sweet go upstairs. I suppose you want to talk to me about bonding with Spike?” he asked as they walked down to the privacy room.

“That and claiming a high maintenance Guide. I noticed that you don’t look at or talk to Jarod.”

The pair entered the room. Jack had forgotten that the only seating in the room was a love seat recliner. He found it a bit embarrassing but they took a seat beside each other. “It’s hard to know what to talk to him about,” Jack said. “I don’t know anything about him and I don’t have my Sentinel abilities so I can’t pick up his scent.”
“His scent? Non Sentinels and Guides don’t have the advantages of scent and other Sentinel abilities to find their ‘soulmate’ for lack of a better word. They talk to each other, find out what the other one likes.” Derek stated. “Spencer and Jarod have become friends and neither of them can pick up the other’s scent. It’s not easy for Spencer to make friends, but Jarod is kind and understanding. People think Spencer’s odd but both of them are very smart, genius smart. I didn’t plan on telling you this, but Jarod is convinced you don’t like him. He doesn’t believe you’re going to even give him a chance. You’re a Sentinel and a Guide is hurting because of your behavior.”

“I’m not a Sentinel, not anymore,” Jack said.

“As the kids say, ‘I call BS’ on that. You’re going to get your abilities back as soon as you bond with Spike.”

“Why is everyone here so gungho that I bond with Spike?”

“I was very reluctant about bonding with him. Hetty sent him to us, she said that he was the teacher Spencer and I were looking for. I wasn’t sure. I thought he was betraying his Guide by bonding with me and others. He talked me through it. Told me that if Xander had said no to any of his bonds he would have walked away immediately. He sacrificed a lot by choosing to bond with others. He takes his responsibility seriously. He doesn’t love Xander any less than before, but he does have less time to spend with him. He has to touch base with us. We run the perimeter in the evening. Spike is tenacious and very loyal. I can sense it since the bond. I didn’t know it then, but I know it now; he won’t desert us.”

“He’s the cook!” Jack said. “I know an army travels on its stomach but…”

“If twenty Initiative soldiers were to come over our wall right now, Spike would be the first one out there to protect our Guides. He’s not just a cook. If he stopped cooking there would be mutiny. You’ve had enough meals with us to know that.”

“Well he certainly hasn’t shown me he’s worth bonding with. Did he tell you that he was a vampire in his last life?”

“I don’t remember everything he told me. I just know that I trust him. What do you want from Spike? Do you want to fight with him to prove to you he’s worthy? I don’t know why Jim Ellison claiming him as his second isn’t enough, or General Gibbs sharing their nest.”

“It’s the Generals nest. He’s the highest ranking Sentinel.”

“No. It’s Jim Ellison’s pack. General Gibbs would never have joined them if they weren’t worthy.” Derek was emphatic with his statement.

“McGee told me that Tony and Spike are cross bonded. Do you know why that happened?”

“I wasn’t a part of the pack then so I only know what I was told. Tony was in danger of being abducted so he cross bonded with Spike so that Spike could track Tony and get him back if he was taken. Xander let him because he didn’t want another Guide to go through what he went through when he was abducted. You were a Sentinel, you know everything is about our Guides.”

“I’m still not sure of Spike.” Jack said.

“Figure out what you need from him and ask. It’s what I did.”

“I’m not sure he’ll be cooperative with that.”
Derek’s head popped up. “Blair just called us for lunch.”

“Okay.. That was the Hive Mind thing, right?”

“Yes, anyone who joins the hive has this ability. Spike is the source.‘

“The ability is through Spike. I didn’t know that. Sentinel’s aren’t telepathic.”

“Why is this bothering you so much?”

“I don’t want anybody or anything inside my head.”

“No one spies on us. Just now Blair turned on the Hive mind and called, but He couldn’t tell where I am or what I’m doing. You know I think you and Spike need to go on a mission together. Nothing brings two Sentinels together faster than a mission. We better get upstairs or Blair will get really pissed at us.”

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Lunch

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Jack sat beside Jarod for lunch. Morgan was right he needed to get to know Jarod. He also wanted to know how much Jarod knew about the Stargate. It wasn’t difficult to start a conversation, Jack just asked how his cooking lessons were going. After discussing his joy of cooking Jack got to what he really wanted to know.

“So did I hear right...you can read hieroglyphs?”

“Yes,” Jarod answered. “The Center had me learn to read both Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphics. I also learned to read Sanskrit and Cuneiform.”

“It must have taken you quite a while to learn all that.”

“I spent a week learning each of them,” Jarod told him.

“Do you know why The Center wanted you to learn all that?”

“No, they never told me why. Most of the time I had to Pretend to be a person and figure out how or why something happened or figure out how to make something happen.”

“Do you remember anything you translated?”

“The Egyptian hieroglyphics were about a God named Ra and his brother Apophis. It was a history of their wars.”

“How about the Mayan? Or the Cuneiform and Sanskrit? What do you remember of those?”

“The Mayan stories were about Sentinels and their Guides. They were enemies of Ra. The stories I read were about a war with Ra. I didn’t finish the translations of them. I never got beyond learning to read Cuneiform and Sanskrit. Did you know English has words based on Sanskrit; Buddha and shawl are a couple of them.”

Jack was reminded of Daniel with the way Jarod talked about words. “You seem to enjoy ancient languages.”
“They’re a lot of fun.”

“They can be,” Jack said. “I think we need to talk again soon. Maybe in private?”

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TBC

If you like this story please recommend. Rec’s help readers find good stories.
Jim and Blair lay cuddled together in the nest after renewing their bond. Blair traced the contours of Jim’s pecs with one finger as he sighed and made sounds of contentment. Jim enjoyed the sounds. They were his warm blanket, his shelter from the cold reality of war.

“Do you know how much I love you?” Jim asked.

Blair leaned back and looked into Jim’s eyes. Something was bothering his Sentinel. Something that could come back and bite them in the ass if he didn’t get to the bottom of it. “You haven’t asked me that question for a long time. You know I know I’m loved. What’s wrong Jim? I can hear it in your voice.”

Jim was quiet for a moment. It’s true things were bothering him, but nothing he wanted to outright talk about. But Blair always knew when something was not quite right. All Jim wanted to do was reassure Blair of his love. It wasn’t easy getting around his Guide’s empathic antenna he pulled Blair back to him. “I’m sorry Chief. I shouldn’t have spoiled the moment.”

Blair put both hands on Jim’s shoulders and pushed himself away. Experience had taught him that when Jim tried to avoid a conversation it was a conversation best pursued. He took Jim’s face in both hands and once more looked into his eyes. “I’m your Guide, I know something is bothering you. We need to deal with it now.”

Jim looked down, refusing to look into Blair’s eyes. “I was patrolling the grounds yesterday when I overheard O’Neill talking to McGee. O’Neill called Spike weak and sneaky.”

Blair moaned. That had to have hit Jim hard. Spike was his chosen second and calling him weak also called Jim’s judgment into question. “You didn’t do anything, so McGee must have taken care of it.”

“McGee shut him down, but I’m having trouble letting it go. I don’t want to interfere with Spike’s decision to bond with Jack.”

“Spike let it go, you should too.”

“I didn’t tell Spike, he doesn’t know.”

Blair’s muscles froze and he stopped breathing. He knew he had made a mistake.

Jim felt the sudden change in Blair’s body, his empathic warmth stopped flowing. “What’s going on?” Jim asked. “What do you mean Spike let it go?”

“I was in the kitchen with Spike and Jarod doing lunch prep. Jack came in and demanded to talk to Spike. And I do mean demanded. I could feel the emotional stress coming off Jack so I offered to help him and he accused Spike of hiding behind me.”

Jim gave an audible growl.

Blair hurried on. “Spike didn’t challenge him, but I got the feeling Jack would have welcomed it. Anyway Spike told Jack that it was him I was trying to protect. They went and had their talk, when
Spike came back he seemed fine.” Blair stroked Jim’s arm. “This is Spike’s battle to fight, let him take care of it.”

“He called Spike a coward, weak, and sneaky. That is an insult to our pack and our hive.”

“Yes, when spoken by a Sentinel. Sentinel Law says you or Spike have the right to challenge, but O’Neill isn’t a Sentinel.” Blair pointed out. “No Sentinel that has ever met Spike would think him a coward.”

“There was one,” Jim said referring to the Sentinel that had called Spike a Guide and then a coward the day of Peter’s challenge fight. “But Spike showed him the error of his ways. Jack was a Sentinel. He knows better.”

“And when he gets his abilities back he’ll know it again. But there is more to being a Sentinel than having dials for your senses. There are parts of the brain that are active in a Sentinel that are dormant in an un-triggered Sentinel. It’s like you’re asking a person who’s gone blind to see just by remembering color.”

“Guide logic,” Jim said. “It’s not easy for me to grasp. Jack is acting like a Sentinel. The Hive is treating him like a Sentinel.” Jim was quiet for awhile still refusing to look Blair in the eyes.

“Chief, do you know why I asked Spike to be my second.”

“You asked me once if I loved him, I said no. What if I’m so pissed off because that’s not true anymore?”

“You know Sentinel, sometimes you really are a goof. We’ve all been in the dance together. I used to wonder why it was so smooth to go from acting as your Guide to acting as Spike’s Guide and back again, but it was the same way for Xander so I thought it was the bond. Then Spike took Tony for a Guide and it’s not the same for Tony. Spike and Tony have to work at it. I think I’ve figured it out. The four of us, we’re all soul mates to each other. I had a vision back when we were still worried about making our pack work, in it our pack was a tree, the tree was hit by lightning and torn apart. It had a large jagged wound on it’s side, and half the tree laid on the ground, dead. That’s what we’d be like without each other. None of us would be the same.”

Jim pulled Blair’s head against his shoulder. “So it doesn’t bother you that I love him?”

“I think I didn’t know it at the time, but I was pissed about being left out of the flow.”

“Like the song *Love flows like a mountain stream*?”

“Now your getting it Sentinel.”

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7:20 PM
Safe House

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Spike hung up the phone and slipped into the hive mind to call the hive to the dining room. Jim, Blair and Xander were the first to arrive. He expected that Spike would get news from Angel tonight about the Portland Guide School abduction plan. He walked over to his chosen second and stood toe to toe. “We’re going to stop this,” Jim whispered. He put his right hand behind Spike’s
neck and traced small circles with his thumb on Spike’s cheek. Jim knew Spike’s feelings ran deep; he knew that Spike preferred action to wallowing in emotions and that he would never ask to be comforted.

“This is too close to what happened to Xander,” Spike whispered back. “I don’t want any of them hurt.”

“We’re not going to let that happen,” Jim said he leaned in and whispered on a breath, “I love you.”

Spike tilted his head and looked into Jim’s eyes. “Jim...I…”

“It’s okay, Blair knows, I’m pretty sure that Xanman knows too.”

Jack walked into the dining room with Graham, Peter, Wesley, and Riley. When he got there he saw Jim and Spike standing together, Jim touching Spike in what looked to him to be both dominant and intimate. No Alpha would let another touch him in that way. Add to that it was in front of other Sentinels.

There were two tables in the dining room. For the purpose of a war strategy meeting the Guides sat at the back table and the Sentinels sat in the front.

Jack watched as Gibbs came into the room and quietly talked to Jim and Spike. Jim didn’t immediately remove his hand from Spike’s neck, but Gibbs didn’t seem to notice and neither did any of the other Sentinels. Jim nodded at Gibbs and Spike sat down at the table.

“Angel came through for us,” Gibbs began. “He got the VIN number of the the bus the Initiative will be using to abduct the Guides and the route they’ll be taking. The north road is too narrow for us to attempt an attack there. Now that we have the VIN number we won’t have to set up an accident to stop the bus. McGee will be hacking into the bus and shutting down the engine once it gets off the highway back in Cascade. We are breaking up into three groups. Team A will be Jim, Spike, and Clint. Clint will be taking position on a roof where he can put his bow to the best use. They will be responsible for taking out the Initiative soldiers on the bus. Team B will be Tim, Graham, and Peter. They will be in charge of taking out the chase car. Team C will be myself directing the operation from here, also here watching over the home base and our Guides will be Derek, Sam, and Jack. Hetty is providing us with a bus driver. We’ll be using the hive mind to coordinate our attack. Does anyone have any questions?”

Jack wasn’t so sure about Spike. The Guides deserved the best Sentinels possible on this mission. He raised his hand. “I’d like to be in Jim’s group. I have a lot of experience on this kind of mission.”

“I appreciate that Jack, but you’re not part of the hive mind and we need strong fighters to protect the home front. We can’t do our jobs unless our Guides are safe.”

“Sir, we have three Sentinels here plus Wesley, Riley and Sam’s Guide, Callen who are all soldier Guides. All are assigned to protect the home front. The chances of the enemy suddenly finding the safe house are slim. It makes sense for you to put your odd man out on the mission.”

“You haven’t had a Guide abducted,” Graham said, “or you wouldn’t say that.”

“No,” Jack was emphatic, “I haven’t had a Guide abducted. I had one murdered. I don’t want to be sidelined in this war because I have a temporary loss of Sentinel abilities. Going into this battle could bring my Sentinel abilities back online.”

Gibbs leaned over and whispered in Jim’s ear. Jack couldn’t hear what he was saying, but he was
sure that the other Sentinels in the room could. Gibbs turned to Jack. “Colonel O’Neill you’re assigned to Team A. Now is there anything else?”

******

Xander grabbed Blair’s arm after the meeting and headed for the privacy room. When they got there he pushed Blair in and closed and locked the door behind them. He didn’t wait to sit down. Something was going on between Jim and Spike. He felt it through his bond with the two Sentinels. Blair must have felt it to.

“What’s going on between Jim and Spike?” Xander blurted out.

“What do you mean?” Blair asked.

“The way Jim was touching Spike in the dining room, I’ve never seen Jim touch Spike like that except in the nest. Tonight he did it in front of other Sentinels.”

“Xander, Spike has worn Jim’s scent in front of all these Sentinels. That’s a lot more intimate than touching him.”

“And we wear Jim’s scent too. How often has he touched you like that in front of other Sentinels? Spike might if we were stressed out enough, but not Jim. Jim would take us to the nest or at least out of view of other Sentinels.”

“They’re not strange Sentinels, they’re all members of our hive,” Blair said.

“Guide to Guide, what’s going on between our Sentinels? I saw and felt the reaction Spike had when Jim whispered in his ear. I don’t even know how to put it into words. I know you felt it too.”

Blair sighed and reached out for his friend and pack mate. “It’s nothing bad, I promise you.”

“Than why not tell me about it?”

“You know why. What happens between a Guide and his Sentinel stays between a Guide and his Sentinel.”

“I’m asking you what’s going on between Spike and Jim, not between you and Jim.”

“Okay, I’ll answer that question and only that question,” Blair said. “Jim just figured out he loves Spike.”

Xander froze for a moment and blinked his eyes at Blair. “You’re telling me the pompous ass just figured it out?”

Blair shrugged.

Suddenly something occurred to Xander. “Are you okay Blair? You do know that Jim still loves you? You’re still his soul mate.”

“I’m fine Xan. I’ve known for a long time. I never said anything to Jim because I didn’t want him to think I felt betrayed. It’s losing the two of you that would be a betrayal, you know you’re my best friend.”

“Hell, Blair, what we have goes way beyond friendship. When we dance sometimes I don’t know where I leave off and you begin. It’s like that when I dance with Jim and Spike too.”
“But when the dance is over and we come back you’re Spike’s soul mate and I’m Jim’s?”

“Yeah, that’s what I feel too. Do you think Mr. Stoic actually told Spike he loves him?”

“It seemed that way.”

“But why now? It just seems like weird timing.”

“That’s the part I can’t tell you.”

“Okay, I’ll respect that,” Xander said. Then with a lust filled leer at Blair he smiled. “But things are going to be fun in the nest tonight.”

*********

Captain Simon Banks sat alone smoking a cigar and watching a Jags-Celtics, basketball game on the TV. His Guide Tara was in their bedroom chatting on the phone with a friend. Simon heard a soft knock on his back door along with a call of his name. Simon got his gun, checked to make sure it was loaded, and advanced a bullet into the chamber. He crept silently to the back door when he heard a second knock and a voice he recognized.

“Simon, it’s Jim.”

Simon opened the door, without flipping on the light he pulled his friend into the dark room. “Jim, what the hell are you doing here? Are you okay? Where’s Blair?”

“We’re fine Simon. I came to ask a favor.”

“Anything buddy, you know that.”

“There’s a Guide abduction going on tomorrow. My team’s going to stop it. I came to ask you to keep the police out of it.”

“That’s a lot to ask, Jim. If a 911 call comes in it has to be answered.”

“Anything you can do to give us time. The Agency is completely compromised. We have reason to believe there are moles in the police department. The task force is on it’s own on this.”

“Give me the details Jim and I’ll do whatever I can. I’ll make sure there are guys I trust on the SWAT team and I’ll be there personally.”

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Rescuing the Abducted Guides

Two carloads of Sentinels quietly drove through the streets of Cascade. No one felt like talking. They all had their jobs to do. They were battle seasoned Sentinels. Everything had been planned and gone over until they had it down. Every contingency they could think of had been considered. But every one of them knew the unexpected could still happen. Angel had called and told Spike that the General had ordered extra soldiers to go on the Portland raid. Until last night they had thought there would be six Sentinels to contend with now they knew there would be ten. Angel couldn’t try to talk the General out of it without being compromised. There was nothing to be done. The hive would have to deal with it.
They parked a block away, off the route the bus would be taking. They picked a street on the bus route that was quiet and unlikely to have any traffic. It was an all but abandoned business area. With narrow alleys to hide in. They didn’t take much notice of the Yellow Subaru Baja parked across the street. As soon as they got to the staging area the Sentinels took up their hiding places and Clint climbed up a fire escape to the roof of an abandoned building where he would have a good view and clear shot with his bow and arrow. Clint was the lookout who would tell them through the hive mind when the bus was near.

They didn’t have long to wait before Clint alerted them, *The bus was only a few blocks away.* McGee took out his cell phone and pulled up the app that Oz had helped him code. When the bus was on the street McGee tapped the screen and the bus engine sputtered and cut out. The driver turned the bus and let it roll over to the curb swearing at their bad luck.

On the roof Clint notched an arrow and waited. The driver got out and walked to the back of the bus as the chase car pulled up behind them. A Sentinel passenger in the chase car got out to see what was up with the bus. Clint drew back the arrow and shot the bus driver at the base of his neck. Then he shot the second Initiative Sentinel dead before the first one hit the ground. Upon seeing two of their comrades fall with arrows in their necks one of the three Sentinels in the chase car got on his radio and warned his comrades on the bus before joining the others, guns pulled, in defensive positions outside the car.

The Five Sentinels on the bus grabbed Guides as hostages. They pulled their guns and held them to the Guides heads as they exited the bus yelling for their attackers to drop their weapons or they would kill the Guides.

Clint notched another arrow and said, *Be ready.* He took careful aim, let out a slow breath and shot an Initiative Sentinel through the eye. Spike took off from his hiding place faster than Jack had ever seen anyone move. Jim and Jack followed.

Out of the corner of his eye Jim saw a woman come out of a nearby office building. Graham, Peter and Tim were going after the Sentinels from the car.

The woman wasn’t paying attention to anything around her. She was focused on her purse and she was going to walk right into the crossfire if Jim didn’t do something. He changed the course of his charge and headed straight for the woman yelling for her to get back. Startled and confused the woman looked up just as the first shot rang out and hit Jim in his flack jacket. Jim went down. The woman screamed and ran back into the building. Jim was now pinned down by the gun fire. He had left Jack to backup Spike in a hand to hand combat against an armed enemy; he hoped Jack was up for it.

The Initiative Sentinels froze and Spike took out one with a snap of his neck as Clint took out another. Jack charged his guy. The Sentinel shoved the Guide out of the way and tried to level his gun at Jack. He didn’t make it. Jack hit him in the nose with the heel of his hand. The nasal bone was driven into his brain and death was instantaneous. Counting the driver that made five Initiative Sentinels from the bus down. Jack turned only to see the Sixth Sentinel had a gun leveled at him and Spike. Spike stood still with his hands raised and Jack did the same.

Spike slipped into the hive mind. *Do you have a shot?* He asked Clint.

*Get him to move a quarter of a turn to the right,* Clint answered.

“Call your guy on the roof off, or you’re both dead,” the Initiative Sentinel barked.

Spike slowly moved sideways and the Initiative Sentinel turned with him. A split second later an
arrow pierced the soldier's ear and sliced into his brain. The Guide screamed as the last Sentinel from the bus fell dead.

*The bus is clear,* Spike told McGee through the hive mind.

*We're pinned down,* McGee said.

*Clint, do you have a shot,* Spike asked.

*Not where they are. Any chance of getting them to move with a distraction?*

*On my way,* Spike said. He turned to Jack who had gotten all the kidnapped Guides down on the floor of the bus. “Stay with the Guides, Clint needs a distraction.”

Jack grabbed Spike’s arm. “I’ll do it.”

Spike yanked his arm free. “I’m faster,” he said and then he was gone.

The only cover on the other side of the street was the yellow Baja. Spike got behind it and gave it one hard rock. The alarm went off. The hive was ready. Tim and Peter were fast, they changed their position and got a clear shot at two of the chase car Sentinels, the shots were fatal. Clint took out the third.

*Clear,* McGee called through the hive mind.

Peter and Spike ran back to their parked cars where the bus driver they had brought with them was waiting. The Sentinels could hear police sirens in the distance.

Clint climbed down from the roof and retrieved his arrows from the dead.

McGee took out his phone and turned off the kill engine app then he placed a device in the wheel well that would scramble the bus’s GPS tracking. The Initiative would not be able to find the bus. A few seconds later the bus driver arrived. He had no problem starting the bus and driving away with the Guides. He would take them to safe house outside of town then dump the bus.

Spike got out of the car and Clint got behind the wheel, Jack took the shotgun position. Spike shoved Jim into the back seat, followed him in and closed the door. The hive heard McGee say, *Go* and the two cars sped away. They were off the street three seconds before the Cascade SWAT Team got there to find ten dead Sentinels lying in the street and an hysterical woman flagging them down.

Captain Banks and Tara went to the woman while the SWAT team checked the bodies for survivors. The Captain called for an ambulance while Tara put her arm around the stranger and began transmitting healing energy. The woman slowly calmed. As soon as the ambulance arrived the EMT’s took her vitals and transported her to the hospital. Tara accompanied the distort woman to the hospital, only Tara and Captain Banks would see her statement of the incident.

Car On The Way Back
To The Safe House

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Jack adjusted himself in his seat. If he got it just right he could watch the goings on in the back
through the rear view mirror. There it was Spike was taking off Jim’s vest.

“I’m okay Spike,” Jim said as he tried to push away Spike’s hands.

Spike stopped. “You know I have to do this. It’s not negotiable, so stop being a pompous ass and let me do what I need to do.”

Jim just stared at Spike. Xander was the only one that called him a pompous ass. Not long ago Xander had said it meant I love you.

“That’s right,” Spike said as he began unbuttoning Jim’s shirt “I called you a pompous ass.”

Jim leaned back and began to laugh and then moaned. “Don’t make me laugh. It hurts too much.”

Spike was back to concentrating on what he was doing. He opened Jim’s shirt and looked at a very ugly bruise. “We’ll have to have Sweet take a look at this. You could have broken ribs. We don’t want to take the chance of one piercing your heart or lung.” Spike laid his hand on Jim’s chest and let his energy fill Jim. Jim closed his eyes and tried to turn his touch dial down, but it kept creeping back up so he started the breathing exercises that would help him control the pain. He really needed Blair.

@@@ Safe House @@@

It was dusk when the cars drove up to the mansion. All the Guides went out to meet their Sentinels. They had been told through the hive mind that Jim was the only one injured, but a firefight and the stress of keeping a bus load of Guides from getting hurt was stressful and the Guides knew the Sentinels would need to renew their bond and relax in the arms of their Guides tonight. Jack got out of the car and walked toward the house. Jarod hadn’t walked to the car, but he was waiting just outside the front door watching anxiously for Jack.

“Hi Sport,” Jack said as he walked through the front door.

“Blair told me Jim was hurt. Is it very bad?” Jarod asked as he followed him into the house.

“He’s in some pain,” Jack said as he walked to the weapons room off the foyer. He hung up his vest and walked to the weapons cabinet to hang up the handgun he didn’t get a chance to use and the knife that General Gibbs ordered everyone to take along with them. The order was overkill as far as Jack was concerned. He had no intention of going into battle without a knife. “He’s going to be fine, he won’t even have a scar.”

General Gibbs came into the weapons room and held out his hand to Jack. “Well done,” Gibbs told Jack.”

“Thanks General.” Jack said as he left the room.

The other Sentinels came into the weapons room from the foyer and hung up their gear. Each one was greeted by General Gibbs.

Jim, Spike, Xander, and Blair were the last ones to enter the house. They stopped in the foyer and took off Jim’s remaining gear. Spike took it to the weapons room. He hung up his own vest and put Jim's in a trash bin. It could no longer be used now that it had stopped a bullet. Then he put away
the other weapons.

“What happened,” Gibbs asked. Spike knew he was referring to Jim’s injury.

“Civilian, about to walk into the line of fire. Jim went after her and got shot.”

“The civilian?” Gibbs asked.

“She ran back into the building. She wasn’t hit.”

“Do you think she can ID Jim?”

“I doubt it. Banks said he’d come with the SWAT team. He won’t let that happen.”

Gibbs nodded. “You better go to the nest. Xander’s been… restless.”

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Spike walked to the dining room and found Jim sitting in a chair while Sweet gently touched his wound.

“The ribs are telling me they are cracked but not broken,” Sweet said. She looked at Jim, “No running for at least a week. No lifting weights. No Sparring. Walking is okay. After ten days you can start some light jogging.” Sweet turned to Blair and Xander. “He needs to be VERY careful when you renew your bond.”

Blair knew what that meant, Oral bonding with mutual fellatio only. He also knew that Jim wouldn’t like it. “For how long?” Blair asked.

“I’d recommend two weeks, but I have a feeling your Sentinel will feel like that’s a lifetime so I’m going to say one week, then I’ll look again.”

“Thanks Sweet,” Blair said, he turned to Jim. “Let’s get you to the nest.”

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Jarod invited Jack out for a walk. Most of the Sentinels had gone to their rooms with their Guides and Sam and Callen had gone back to their home. It was a little too early for Jarod to go to bed but not too early for a walk under the stars.

“The stars are so beautiful,” Jarod said. “I didn’t get to see them at the Center, except in pictures.”

“That’s a shame,” Jack said remembering as a boy how much he loved to find the constellations in the night sky.

“Jack? Do you like me at all?”

Jack was a bit taken aback by the bluntness of the question. Morgan had warned him of this. A Guide was hurting and it was his fault. “I’ve been preoccupied. It’s not your fault. There are things I can’t tell you. So I’ve avoided talking to you at all. Then I had that dream about Daniel. He… Well I don’t think I should bring up things better left unsaid.”

“Daniel came to me too and a guy with face paint and a feather headdress named Incacha. Incacha told me to stop doubting myself and that I had a sacred duty. Daniel gave me his blessing to bond with you.”
“Daniel talked to you in a dream?”

“He said you were stubborn so I thought that if we talk...maybe you’d start to like me a little.”

“Jarod, It’s not that I don’t like you. I don’t have my Sentinel abilities back. I don’t want you to get your hopes up that I’m going to claim you as my Guide and then it doesn’t work out. I know I had the dream, but it could have been just a dream, wishful thinking. I’ve never been much for all this metaphysical stuff.”

“Is that what you think I’m doing? Wishful thinking.”

“I don’t know Jarod. I think that your a very smart and talented young man.”

“I know what you’re doing right now. You’re saying nice things to me. But you’re only doing it because you don’t want to feel guilty about hurting me.”

“Okay, then, I’ll be honest. I don’t have my Sentinel abilities back and I have absolutely no interest in finding a Guide. If or when I get them back that may change. It’s not personal Jarod. I’m just not interested in anybody.”

“Daniel told you to bond with me didn’t he?”

“Jarod, Please? I know you’re hurting. I don’t want to cause you pain. But dreams are just dreams. I can’t plan my life on a dream.”

“Blair and Xander have been teaching me about being a Guide. I’ve been meditating and learning about Incacha. Blair said Incacha has always told him the truth. Was Incacha in your dream?”

“No it was only me and Daniel.”

“But Daniel was your Guide. Why do you think he was lying to you?”

“Daniel’s dead and gone. Coming to me in a dream? ...Really? ...He’s dead.”

“I still want to know what he said to you.”

“Jarod, don’t you get it? Daniel didn’t say anything to me. It was just my brain, asleep, trying to deal with my grief.”

“So you don’t like me and you never will.” Jarod turned and walked back to the house.

Jack sighed he hadn’t wanted the conversation to go that way. Maybe things would change if his abilities came back. He needed to talk to Spike again and settle things. But he knew it would have to wait until morning. He turned and slowly followed Jarod back to the house. Once inside he saw Jarod head towards the stairs, so Jack went the other direction towards the privacy room; he had some more thinking to do before talking to Spike.

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Jim’s Nest

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Jim asked Gibbs to give his pack an hour of privacy before coming to the nest so Gibbs and Tony
were renewing their bond in one of the empty bedrooms. Spike came into the nest a few minutes later. Jim looked at Xander and Blair. “I know this is unusual but I need a few minutes alone with Spike. It’s Sentinel business.” Blair and Xander left the nest and quietly closed the door behind them.

Jim carefully sat up with his back braced against the side of the nest. Spike sank down with his legs crossed in front of him waiting for Jim to talk.

“If you feed me blood will this be healed by morning,” Jim asked looking down at the softball sized bruise on his chest.”

Spike tilted his head and looked at his Alpha. “The bruise would be gone by morning. The cracked ribs will take a few hours longer.”

“Okay, feed me your blood. I can’t go weeks without claiming my pack.”

“Jim, this is a big step. We need to talk about this.”

“What’s to talk about. You feed me, I heal.”

“Jim, I’m your second. I want to stay your second. Feeding is a dominant act.”

“You fed Gibbs.”

“I did.” Spike looked down at the nest and then back into Jim’s eyes. “He bit me on the lip and sucked my blood. I couldn’t let that stand. I had to… I had to make him mine. I’m your second and I won’t let anyone take that away from me.”

“You don’t dominate Gibbs,” Jim said. “I’ve never seen anything to show your dominance.”

“Think about it Jim, Gibbs sleeps in ~your~ nest. You accept it because I’m your second and you were a witness when I made him my own. As far as my demon is concerned Gibbs is third rank in our hive and in your nest. I don’t have to be overt and I never will be, General Gibbs has earned his rank and place in our hive. We need him exactly where he is. I won’t let anyone take that away from him or our hive.”

“Shit Spike, that metaphysical being of yours has really strange ideas about dominance. I guess that means I have to heal the old fashion way.”

“There’s a ritual you can do, you’ll still be my Alpha, I’ll still be your second.”

“Okay, what do I have to do?”

“You have to call me to you, tell me you want my blood, and open my vein yourself.”

“I don’t have fangs, Spike. If I bite you it’s going to hurt.”

“It’s supposed to hurt. It’s part of the process. But if you want you can use a knife.”

“I think I prefer to use a knife.” Jim decided.

“You should send Blair for one. It has to be new with a smooth edge, not serrated, and afterward you need to save it for when you want to feed again. It shouldn’t be used for anything else.”

Jim slipped into the hive mind and and gave Blair the instructions. “Do you mean if I get wounded in the future we’ll have to do this again? The healing ability isn’t going to last?”
“It will last, but by doing this you’re claiming yellow eyes. You’ll need to renew that claim and I’ll need you to renew it. Jim, think about this, you’ll need to cause me pain. Yellow eyes will crave it from you. Are you sure you want this?”

"I'm sure."

Blair came into the room carrying a KA-BAR knife. He was followed by Xander who closed the door and locked it. “It’s new I got it out of the weapons cabinet. I sterilized it with fire and cooled it with alcohol. What’s going on?”

Spike stood up and took off his pants and gave them to Xander. When he spoke his eyes were yellow and it was in an English accent. “Be a luv and put these away for me.” He turned to Blair. Jim’s going to claim me.”

“He’s already claimed you,” Blair said. “What does he need a sterile knife for?”

“Jim’s going to drink Spike’s blood so he can heal,” Xander said. "He has to cut Spike himself. Do you need us to leave?”

“I think I need to do this myself,” Jim said.

Blair handed the knife to Jim. “Call us when it’s over.” The two Guides left the room.

Jim turned the knife over in his hand. He had used a knife like this many times in his military career. He had cut drug dealers throats in the jungles of Peru. He looked at Spike standing, waiting, naked and quiet.


“You can cut me anywhere you want,” Spike said.

“Come here Spike,” Jim told him. It was a gentle order, but an order nonetheless.

Spike walked forward and sank to his knees waiting.

“I want your blood. Hold out your arm.”

Spike offered his arm. Jim took it in one hand and slid the sharp knife across it. Spike didn’t make a sound. Jim lifted Spike’s wrist to his mouth and drank three swallows of his blood. Spike’s cock grew instantly hard and he moaned in ecstasy as Jim drank from him. Jim pulled his mouth away from the wound. He gave it a lick and brushed his thumb over it.

Spike’s breath wobbled and he moaned at the ritual being over too soon.

Jim looked at Spike’s hard cock dripping with precum. “Lay down Spike,” Jim took the tip of Spike’s cock into his mouth and licked at the precum.

Spike took Jim’s face in his hands and looked into his eyes. “Please,” He said, The yellow eyes shifted to look at the knife still in Jim’s hand and then looked back into Jim’s blue eyes. “Please,” he repeated.

“Spike...I”

“Please.” This time it came as a whispered plea.

Jim raised the knife and held Spike’s cock in his other hand. He pressed the point of the knife just
where the shaft met the tip and made a small cut. He bent forward and swirled his tongue mixing the blood with the precum and savoring the taste as he swallowed it down.

“More,” Spike whispered when the small cut quickly closed.

Jim’s eyes were nearly black. He was no longer aware of the nest, he was lost in the euphoria of his seconds complete surrender. Jim handed Spike the knife. “Show me what you need.”

Spike got up onto his knees, his yellow eyes met Jim’s nearly black ones. He brought the knife down to the base of his shaft. Jim shifted his gaze to the knife as Spike slowly drew the knife up toward the tip leaving a red line of blood in its wake. Spike dropped the knife and lay back down beside Jim.

Jim took the wounded member in one hand and licked the length of the cut.

Spike moaned in delight at the feel of his Alpha’s tongue accepting his offered gift of blood.

Jim’s mouth closed over Spike’s cock. His warm wet mouth slid up and down and each pass captured more blood and drew a whisper of “Yours,” from Spike.

Jim’s cock grew hard and he stroked himself in time with each stroke he gave to Spike. He felt the wave begin at the base of Spike’s cock and pushed forward. Jim’s cock responded in kind and they came together with a hoarse shout of, “Yours,” from Spike.

“Always,” Jim whispered back as Spike burst into a golden glow and fell into a deep sleep.

Blair and Xander felt the ripple in their bond and returned to the nest.

“Blair, you need to help me with this, Spike’s in a healing sleep.”

Blair went to Jim. “There’s blood on the bed.”

“We need to do that hospital thing where you make the bed with someone in it.”

“Or we can call Peter or McGee, they can hold him while I make the bed.”

Gibbs came into the room. “I just walked by Peter’s room, he’s busy. I think McGee would be a better choice.”

Jim groaned and slipped into the hive mind calling McGee. He had hoped to keep the blood bond with Spike private. It wasn’t going to happen.

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TBC

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Chapter End Notes

Comments and recommends help readers find good stories. Please help.
Chapter 13

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Morning In The Nest
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Spike woke up sandwiched between Jim and Blair. He could feel Xander’s hand resting on his shoulder.

“Why am I in the middle?” Spike asked.

“You were too deeply asleep to guard anyone last night. I told Xander he was Sentinel for the night.”

Spike didn’t object. Jim was the head Alpha and Spike trusted that he made the right decision.

“How does your chest feel?” Spike asked.

“I haven’t looked at it yet,” Jim said. “But it feels like the bruise is gone and I can breath without pain now.”

“Jim, I need to bond with Xander.” Spike said.

“And I need to get breakfast started,” Blair said. “Don’t worry, Spike, Jarod will help.”

It had been a long time since Blair and Jim got to take a morning shower alone together. Spike and Xander usually joined them. Jim adjusted the water to just the right temperature and they stepped in. Jim soaped up his hands and began rubbing them over his Guide’s body. Blair lifted his hand and traced the contours of Jim’s pectoral muscles, there was no sign of yesterday's bruise. Jim smiled, the battle of the day before was forgotten.

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Safe House Mansion
Breakfast
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Jarod was up early, as usual, to help with breakfast. He already had the coffee on when Blair came into the kitchen without Spike. He told Jarod they were going to make pancakes. After mixing the batter Blair taught Jarod to watch for the little bubbles around the edges to know when the pancakes were ready to flip. Jarod had a great time joyfully laughing at every pancake he flipped.

Spike came down for breakfast with Xander and Jim later than usual. Jack waited for Spike to finish while he sipped at an extra cup of coffee. As soon as Spike finished and got up from the table Jack approached him. “Spike, do you have a few minutes to talk?”

“The weather looks clear; I could use a walk.” Spike leaned over and gave Xander a kiss. “I’ll be back in a bit luv.”

The two men headed for the front door. They walked outside in silence for a minute before Jack began to speak.
"I owe you an apology," Jack said. "I thought you were just the cook. I was wrong. I’ll give a formal apology after lunch but I wanted to apologize to you face to face."

"You didn’t see me do much more than cook." Spike said. "For me, you don’t need to make the formal apology, but Jim feels like you were questioning his judgment."

"He let me on his team."

"When you said the mission may re-trigger your abilities they weren’t about to turn you down. Not when it could solve this whole debacle about how to bring you back on line."

"Well it didn’t trigger me," Jack said. "So I’m still in the same boat."

"Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Turnabout is fair play," Jack said.

"We seemed to be getting off to a good start the day I told you about our hive. What changed?"

Jack took a breath and let it out slowly. "I’ve never been much for the metaphysical. I believe in keeping both feet firmly planted in the here and now. My first Guide was a level 4 assigned to me by the Air Force, we were both soldiers. When my present posting opened up we sundered our bond by mutual agreement. I was assigned Daniel. He was a scientist. Not much room for the metaphysical. No offense but a lot of what you told me sounded like just so much hokum. Then Clint mentioned you went off world and all the alarms in my head went off. I was watching you right from the beginning. Everyone was telling me ‘when you bond with Spike.’ I felt pushed. Pushed and I don’t get along very well."

Spike gave a little laugh. "Well that’s something we have in common. So what now?" Spike asked.

Jack looked down at the ground. This wasn’t going to be an easy sell, but it needed to be said. He took a deep breath and looked at Spike. "There’s something I have to tell you."

"About the parasite?"

"Gibbs told you." Jack wasn’t really surprised. Gibbs would want to protect his people and giving them a heads up was the first step.

"He felt it was my blood that the NID was after, and I should know."

"I’ve lost men to the Goa’uld, good men. If we can come up with a vaccine or even a way to poison the Goa’uld so they have to leave the body it could save a lot of lives. Maybe even save the earth from invasion. I asked Gibbs to give me a copy of your blood test but he hasn’t gotten back to me yet."

"All records of the blood test have been destroyed. Right now myself and everyone I’ve sired are in danger from the NID. I don’t even know what this parasite is. Any earth parasite would be killed by my immune system. But yours is extra terrestrial, plus the hieroglyphics were written thousands of years ago. I may not have the blood you’re looking for."

"If you don’t, we’ll be no worse off than we are right now. When this is over come back with me. Let our doctors take a look."

"I’m in a nesting pack, I don’t go anywhere without them and I’m not subjecting myself to becoming a lab rat."
“I guess that’s something else we have in common.”

The pair walked quietly for awhile then Spike asked, “How are things going with you and Jarod? Blair said that he’s doing a lot better than expected with his Guide studies. I’ve been working with him on self defense, but he already knew a lot. He said the Center made him learn it.”

“We talked last night. It didn’t go well. He left thinking I’m never going to claim him.”

“Is that what you think?”

“I know I’m not interested in looking for a Guide. And then there’s the push thing again. Everyone expects me to bond with Jarod. Morgan told me he was in pain and I should talk to him. I didn’t want to hurt him but that’s just what I ended up doing.”

“Why do you care about whether or not you hurt him?”

Jack stopped and looked at Spike. “What are you talking about? The guy spent most of his life as a slave in some Center. He never saw the stars. He’s joyful about chopping vegetables and flipping pancakes. He deserves a whole lot better then some…”

Spike tilted his head and smiled. “He deserves better than what?” he asked.

“You know what. I’m at least ten years older than him. He’s a genius and I’m boringly average. He’s a people person and all I seem to do is rub people the wrong way.”

“So you don’t want to hurt him because you love him.”

Jack stared at Spike for a moment. “I didn’t say that, besides is it such a bad thing to not want to hurt someone.”

“It would have been for me.” Spike started walking again.

“What, you thought you weren’t good enough for Xander?”

“Other way around, the bastard that tortured him, also had him declared unfit to bond. Xander was terrified he wasn’t good enough. He was sure he’d disappoint me.”

“You didn’t tell me this when you told me about the hive.”

“No reason to then.”

“I’ve seen you more with Blair than Xander. You two seem very close. Looking at the two of you from a distance I’d think he was your guide.”

“Blair IS my Guide.” Spike said it without ire. It was just a statement of fact.

“Sorry, I’ve just never seen anything like this hive before.”

“The metaphysical ‘hokum’ you don’t believe in plays a big part in that.”

“Jarod mentioned Incacha.”

“Blair’s in touch with him. He’s been helping us out in this war.”

“Have you ever seen him?”
“The hive went on a vision quest. We needed information, Incacha gave it to us.”

“Are you telling me this vision quest information actually checked out?”

“It’s the reason we’re so close to taking down the Initiative.”

Jack shook his head. “It’s hard for me to wrap my head around that.”

Spike scoffed. “Says the man on the front lines of fighting a sentient extraterrestrial parasite that wants to take over the Earth. Have you found anymore classified information from the Center?”

“I’m still going through it but the file that Spencer found is the only one so far. Spencer is hoping to find something that will lead to a money trail in the financial books. I can’t say more than that.”

“Have you made any decisions on what you want to do about bringing your Sentinel abilities back online?” Spike asked.

“I’ve burnt my bridges with you so I’m going to talk with Clint this evening. Hopefully I haven’t been too much of a dick for him to let Sweet help me.”

“Your bridges haven’t been burnt with me. I’d be proud to sire you if it’s what you want. We can do it tonight.”

“Why?” Jack asked.

“We have more in common than you know.” Spike said. “Right now I need to renew my bond with Blair. Think about it and let me know.”

The walk had come full circle and both men went back into the mansion.

Lunch was nearly finished when Jack stood up and walked to the head of the table and cleared his throat. Everyone stopped their conversations and waited for him to speak.


Jim sat down.

“I also apologize to potential Guide Jarod for any misconceptions I may have inadvertently given him pertaining to his worth as a future Guide or of my interest in pursuing him should my Sentinel abilities return. I wish to state, unequivocally, that I believe Guide Jarod will serve as an exemplary Guide.”

Jarod leaned over to Blair who was sitting beside him. “Am I supposed to say something?” he whispered.

“This is Sentinel business,” Blair said. “You can talk to him later if you want to.”

“Am I allowed to say thank you?” Jarod asked.
Jack began to walk back to his seat.

“You just did,” Blair told Jarod with a smile and a pat to his hand.

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Jarod was a bit confused. Jack didn’t come to talk to him after his apology, he quickly left the dining room.

“Blair?” Jarod asked as they cleaned up after lunch, “Jack didn’t come to talk to me. Should I go talk to him?”

“I don’t think so, he made it clear he wants to get his Sentinel abilities back before he pursues a Guide. You need to respect his wishes and give him some space. Once he gets his abilities back he’ll want a Guide and the Sentinels here will want him to bond as soon as possible or they’ll make him leave. Sentinel’s keep their Guides away from un-bonded Sentinels.”

Jarod was worried and it showed on his face. “They won’t make him leave before he has a chance to ask me to be his Guide will they?”

Blair smiled and laid his hand on Jarod’s arm sending him comforting energy. “Everyone here knows you were sent here to be his Guide. They won’t deny a brother Sentinel a chance to bond with his one true Guide.”

“Do you think that’s what I am? His one true Guide?”

“Not only me. Daniel thinks it too or he wouldn’t have given you his blessing.”

“Jack said that Daniel is dead and gone and that the dream he had was just his brain trying to deal with his grief.”

Blair scoffed. “Typical Sentinel they have to be dragged into the metaphysical. Or maybe I should say they have to be ‘Guided’ into it. Didn’t he notice you had a dream of Daniel too. How did you do that if it wasn’t a true dream. You didn’t even know Daniel existed. Did anyone even tell you Daniel’s name?”

Jarod thought about it trying to remember when he learned Daniel’s name. “Jack hardly looked at me before the dream and he didn’t speak to me at all. Incacha told me Daniel’s name.”

“There’s your proof, Jarod. The metaphysical may work slowly but it never works too late.”

“Okay, I’ll be patient,” Jarod said with a sigh.

******

Spike and Xander ran the perimeter of the mansion grounds. Spike’s nostrils flared as he sniffed at the soft breeze coming over the high wall. His hearing was turned up as he listened for any small unusual sound, or lack of sounds that should be there.

Xander ran beside his Sentinel practicing his ability to filter out the sound of their footsteps on the rain soaked grass. He felt no danger in his run. His hazard detection stemmed from his Guide abilities. There was no dial to turn up and down, it was simply always there. Xander was slowly learning to control his Sentinel abilities, but his Sentinels had made it clear that he was a Guide and only a Guide. They agreed that he did need to learn control but that was as far as his Sentinel training would go. Xander didn’t mind. He loved being a Guide, he loved his life since bonding
with Spike and joining Jim’s pack. He had a family now, four people who loved each other deeply and he had an extended family. In many ways life was good, but Xander knew that he and his Sentinels could never let down their guard. There were bad things out there beyond the wall. So Xander ran and waited for his hazard detection to warn him of danger. In the world of war it was only a matter of time.

******

It was after supper and Jack was waiting for Spike to get back from his turn patrolling the perimeter. He was a bit nervous about talking to Spike. He didn’t know the actual details of what the blood bond entailed. He did know he wanted to be a Sentinel again. He went to the empty dining room and started pacing. He could just go to Clint and ask to have Sweet bring him back online, but that wouldn’t give him the blood that might just make him immune to the Goa’uld. The prospect of having one of those worms invade his body was just too close for comfort. If there were any chance at all to keep that from happening he would take it. Of course there was a risk. He would have to depend on General Hammond and his team to find him if the NID took him. But still the chance of beating the Goa’uld was worth the risk.

******

Peter was on his way to get a beer when he saw Jack pacing. He went to the beer cooler and came back with two open beers and offered one to Jack. “It looks like you need a Guide,” he said with a smile.

Jack took the beer. “Thanks, I’m waiting to talk to Spike. There are some very good reasons to go along with the blood bond, but when something seems too good to be true it usually is.”

“Well, the bond changes you, that’s for sure, but for me it’s all been for the best,” Peter told him.

“It’s been my experience that every coin has two sides,” Jack observed.

“Oh, so you’re looking for the negatives.”

“I’m a soldier, I don’t like to jump in and look later.” Jack took a large swallow of beer.

“I wish I could help you with that, but I wanted this. It just wasn’t a difficult choice for me. The worst thing that’s happened was that I was challenged for my rank because of my cross bond with Graham and I had to kill the Sentinel that challenged me.”

“I think I would have taken my Guide and gotten the hell out of Dodge before I would have cross bonded.” Jack didn’t understand all the cross bonding in this hive. He just accepted it without judgment.

“That was my plan,” Peter said. “But that would have taken me out of what was, at the time, the resistance and I was in the best position to get intel on AP Harris. Jim told me his bond with Blair deepened after he bonded with Spike and as I said I wanted what Spike had to offer. I had a choice, live life on the run, always hiding, or stand and fight. There was a plan to keep Wesley safe. After the bond I knew that Spike would be by my side to stop anyone from hurting Wesley. In the end staying and cross bonding was the better choice, I have no regrets. When Graham and Wesley were taken I could track them. I called Spike and he came with no hesitation. We got them back. If I had run Graham would be in the prison under WG right now.”

“You went through this blood bond. What exactly happens?”

“It’s very intense. There’s no way to prepare you for it. You exchange blood and go to sleep.” Peter
didn’t want to get into the whole drinking blood thing, best to let Spike deal with that little tidbit of information. “Four of us in the hive have done it and none of us have had any health problems from it.”

“That doesn’t sound very intense.” Jack said. “I get the feeling you’re leaving something important out.

“Spike will talk to you about it. He’ll be back in about two minutes.”

“How do you know that?”

“I can feel it.” Peter said, then he turned and went back to the TV room. The game was about to start.

*****

The decision had been made. Jack would blood bond with Spike. It was decided that Jim and Gibbs would witness and all would then spend the night in the nest. Spike didn’t want to wake again without Xander and he had to stay with Jack until he woke.

The wind had picked up and a hard rain was falling, beating against the windows causing the Sentinels to turn their hearing down to human normal. Jim and Gibbs were stoic as they walked to the nest. They had been through this before, understood the emotional intensity of what was about to take place. They told themselves it wouldn’t be so deeply jarring this time, this time they were prepared for the depth of emotion the ritual invoked, this time they wouldn’t be shaken by the sheer power of what they witnessed.

Jack sat in the nest naked, his back leaning against the nest wall. He was muscular and in excellent shape for a man his age. Not that he was old, he wasn’t, but he had to be honest with himself he was no longer considered young either. He was somewhere in between. Although that thought made him grimace. It was too much like being middle aged. The image that came to his mind was a couch potato with a beer belly. Jack was far from that. He worked out daily when not off world. He had to, his life depended on his ability to fight or run.

Spike followed Jim and Gibbs into the room. He stopped just outside of the nest. Jack watched with interest as Spike unbuttoned his shirt. There was no discomfort in his body language or on his face. The light in the room was dim but bright enough for Jack to see clearly. Jim stepped up to take Spike’s shirt as it slid off his arms. Jack was mildly surprised by what he saw. Every muscle was sculpted perfection. And every movement was grace personified. How had he ever thought that Spike was weak?

Spike dropped his pants and stepped out of them and into the nest. The perfection of each movement caused Jack’s breath to deepen in unison to each step taken. Right foot… inhale... left foot… exhale. Each muscle taut like a cat stalking his prey. And then Spike was there beside him he dropped to his knees. Jack could feel the body heat radiating from him.

Spike began to talk, his voice a smooth, low and soothing baritone. “I want to tell you why we’re more alike than you know.”

Spike reached out and laid his hand on Jack’s arm encouraging him to lay down as Spike himself settled into a more comfortable position. Spike’s voice was alluring, a siren’s song. Jack complied with the gentle request. He made himself comfortable facing the man that would become his sire. Spike slid his hand over Jack’s chest to rest over his heart. Warm energy filled the Colonel chasing away an inner cold he didn’t know was there. Jack’s pupils dilated. Something in him shifted. A
The spark ignited and kindled a fire that loss and grief had extinguished. Spike’s voice continued even as his energy filled Jack’s body. Seductive, the cadence and tone became more important than the words. The spark in his mind grew and burst into a chrysanthemum of light. Jack’s senses spiked in a split second of searing pain and then just as suddenly dropped back to human normal. His cock grew instantly hard.

“Spike?” Jack asked.

Spike’s voice stopped for a moment. He leaned in and whispered into Jack’s ear. “Do you want it?”

“Yes, oh yes,” Jack answered, and it was true. He felt a strong irresistible pull to the energy along with a surety in his soul that this was right.

Spike’s cock had grown hard as well. He leaned back and let Jack see his fangs. Jack’s eyes were fully dilated now, his nostrils flaring and flexing. He was a Sentinel lost in a bonding thrall.

Spike moved in licking Jack’s neck with the experience of one hundred years he judged the bite perfectly and sunk his fangs into Jack’s flesh.

Jack’s back arched upward and he moaned. Spike took three hard swallows of blood each matched with an upward thrust by Jack.

Spike lifted his wrist to his mouth and bit into it. He held it to Jack’s mouth. “Drink and become my own.”

Jack took Spike’s arm and pulled it to him. He fastened his mouth to Spike’s arm and pulled in a mouthful of his Sire’s blood.

An intense orgasm hit both Spike and Jack. Spike pulled Jack to him and they thrust against each others torsos as Jack took his second and third swallow of blood.

Jack rolled onto his back still holding Spike’s wrist. Spike rolled to him and kissed him on the forehead. “Sleep,” he said and Jack closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep. Spike pried Jack’s fingers from his wrist. “It’s done,” he told Jim.

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Morning

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It was mid morning before the rain broke and the sun came out. All of the hive was up and around except for Spike and Jack. Spike had been awake for a few hours waiting for his childe to wake. As soon as the sun shone through the window Jack stirred. He gave a little “mmmm” sound and snuggled in against his sire’s warm body before coming to full consciousness. “Spike?”

Spike smiled and stroked his childe’s arm. “How are you feeling?”

“Better than I’ve felt in a long time,” Jack said as he sat up. “I need a shower. Not that your scent isn’t comforting but it is kind of sticky.”

“It’s okay. Jim and Gibbs are the two highest ranking Sentinel’s in the hive and they already have our scent. All the other Sentinels will be able to sense your mine.”

“Ah, I know this may be an odd request but would you mind taking a shower with me?”
“It’s not odd,” Spike said as he stood up and walked to the bathroom.

“You didn’t tell me I wouldn’t want to let you out of my sight,” Jack told Spike as he followed his sire.

“It will fade,” Spike told him.

“I hope it fades soon, I don’t want to piss off Jim.”

“The drive to keep me in sight should fade quickly. What won’t fade is our bond.”

Spike quickly adjusted the shower and the two men stepped in.

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When Spike and Jack made it down to the kitchen they found Blair doing the last of the cleaning up from breakfast. Spike walked up behind Blair and wrapped his arms around the Guide and nuzzled his neck. Blair leaned into Spike’s attention and smiled.

“Jarod went out to check the perimeter with Jim and Xander. How does bacon, eggs, and hash browns sound for breakfast?”

“I’ll take care of breakfast. It smells like there’s some coffee left.” Spike said as he let go of Blair and headed for the coffee pot. He poured two cups and handed one to Jack.

“Is there anything I can do to help?” Jack asked.

“Just tell me, how do you like your eggs?” Spike asked.

“I’m partial to sunny side up,” Jack said with an easy smile.

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Spike and Jack finished their breakfast and were sipping their second cups of coffee when Jim, Xander, and Jarod came back into the mansion. As soon as they passed over the threshold from the foyer and into the main house Jack picked up Jarod’s scent.

Spike saw Jack’s nostrils flare and his eyes dilate. “Go,” he told him.

Jack got up and walked toward Jarod. Jim took Xander’s hand and dropped back. He could see all the warning signals, Jack was a Sentinel on the edge of a Claiming Thrall. He would kill anyone who got in his way. Jim kept walking backwards keeping his eyes on the potentially dangerous Sentinel when he got to the foyer he darted sideways, out of sight, with Xander in tow.

Jarod froze. He couldn’t believe his eyes. Jack was walking toward him. His body language had completely changed, it was purposeful, determined. Blair had told him how to tell if a Sentinel wanted to claim him; flared nostrils, eyes dilated, his voice will drop an octave and he’ll say…


Pleasure exploded through Jarod’s body, he moaned. Gods he’d never felt anything that good. Jarod grabbed Jack’s hand and began pulling him toward the stairs. The touch of a Sentinel, he wanted it. Until this moment he didn’t know just how much.

Jack planted his feet.
Jarod turned, a pain filled looked on his face. “Sentinel?” he asked. Had he been wrong, did he read the signals wrong?

Even though Jarod was an inch taller and had a good ten pounds of muscle on Jack, Jack picked up his Guide and strode to the stairs. With his new found strength it took no more effort than picking up a gallon of milk.

Jarod threw his arms around Jack’s neck and laid his head on the Sentinel’s shoulder.

Jack took the stairs two at a time and carried Jarod into his room. All the Sentinels in the house heard the bang as Jack kicked his bedroom door closed.

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TBC

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Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

The J-36 jet is a figment of my imagination. I didn’t think it was right to make up a fake problem for a real jet.

Jack kicked the bedroom door shut and laid Jarod on the bed then he got undressed. He didn’t bother to unbutton his shirt, he just pulled it open, took it off his arms and let it fall to the floor.

Jarod watched as the man that would soon be his Sentinel tore off his shirt. The buttons flew and made a skittering sound when it landed and slid across the room. Jarod knew what a naked man looked like, after all he was a man and the Center made him stay in shape. But he had never seen a Sentinel without his shirt. Jack, in spite of being toward the end of his prime years was magnificent as far as Jarod was concerned. Jarod couldn’t tear his eyes away, even if he wanted to.

Jack undid his pants and let them fall. He stepped out of them and then turned to Jarod. The Sentinel laid down on the bed and pulled his chosen Guide to him. He nuzzled his neck taking a long, firm lick of Jarod’s Guide Gland. Multiple tastes assaulted his tongue and brain. Sentinel instinct separated out each one, evaluated it, and stored it as the taste of his Guide. And then it hit him, the taste that screamed ~virgin~. There was a subtle shift in the bonding impulse as the Blessed Protector instinct rose up and blended with the thrall. ~ The Guide is virgin. The Guide must not be hurt. The Guide must be claimed. ~

Jarod closed his eyes and enjoyed the feel of the warm wet tongue traveled across his neck. He laid still on the bed recalling all the things that Blair and Xander taught him about the Claiming.

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Flashback

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“Don’t touch the Sentinel,” Blair said. “All his instincts are telling him to pattern you and claim you. Even if you just want to pull him to you and kiss him you’ll be interrupting his patterning. He’ll register it as resistance. When a Sentinel goes into a Claiming Thrall a previously unused part of his brain is activated. He’s laying down new synaptic pathways. That part of his brain is dedicated to you, his Guide. You don’t want your Sentinel registering you as resistant to the bonding process. He’ll get…”

“He’ll use more of his strength to hold you still while he does what he has to do,” Xander interrupted. “You’ll get bruises.”

“So a Sentinel will force a bond?” Jarod asked.

“No,” Both Blair and Xander said in unison.

Blair continued. "A Sentinel can't force a true bond. A reputable Sentinel wouldn't try."
“The first night I was with Spike I was terrified,” Xander said. “Spike went into the bonding thrall and
took me into the bedroom. He held me and purred to me all night. He knew I wasn’t ready. Sentinels can sense what their Guide needs. There are some Sentinels that believe that Guides should be owned, But even they look for a compatible bond. Anything else won’t keep them stable.”

Xander nodded to Blair and he continued. “A Sentinel chooses a Guide first by scent. Then he’ll
touch a Guide, skin-to-skin. The empathic information a Guide gets from the touch is
instantaneous. A Guide ~KNOWS~ if this is the right Sentinel for him. The Sentinel’s touch will
be very pleasant if it’s a good match. If the Sentinel doesn’t get some kind of reaction he’ll walk
away. In Guide School they used to say ‘The Sentinel hunts the Guide captures.’ But Jim tells me
that walking away is rare. A Sentinel’s scent is pretty accurate. He said that it only happens to
military assigned Guides or to Sentinels that have been looking for a Guide for a long time and are
willing to settle. They find a Guide that has a scent they can live with, but the Guide doesn’t react
to the touch, so the Sentinel walks away.”

“So is that how it happened with you?” Jarod asked. “Jim saw you and you touched and knew?”

“Not exactly, I didn’t want to bond so I resisted,” Blair said. “After Guide School I wanted to
continue my studies and become a Doctor of Anthropology. I applied for a waver, I won’t go into
all the specifics, but suffice to say The Guide Guild said no and designated me ‘High Maintenance
due to Uncooperative Nature’, They did say that if no Sentinel claimed me in six months I could
reapply. Whenever a Sentinel came to me in a Guide Meet they would see my High Maintenance
designation and walk away. I was on my sixth and last meet when Jim walked in the door. The last
five months he had been to meets in, Seattle, Everett, Tacoma, Olympia, and Portland, Oregon. That’s why I never saw him before. He looked at my designation and sat down anyway. I didn’t
know then that in all of the Guides he had scented I was the only one that came up as compatible. I
put my hands under the table so he couldn’t touch me and did my best to talk him into walking
away. He said we had to talk in private so he put me over his shoulder and got a room. He barely
touched me when he took me off his shoulder, but I felt it go through me. I thought I could resist it
but ten minutes later the nausea and cold sweats hit. Jim saw it and put his hand on mine. The
nausea and sweats instantly stopped. That’s when I accepted that the bond had started, he was my
Sentinel and I was his Guide.”

“But you do have a degree in Anthropology,” Jarod said.

“Jim wanted me to follow my dream. He said he was being selfish because it was part of what
made me taste so good.”

“Taste good?” Jarod asked.

recognized by the taste of the Guide Gland. Sentinels crave the pheromones it gives off. When
they’re stressed, they suckle to calm themselves. The Guide Gland also releases neurotransmitters
that open the Guide’s empathic pathways to a deeper bond during the bond crave. The same
neurotransmitters can be used by the Sentinels to calm an over stressed Guide.

“But that’s rare, Jim’s never done it to me.” Blair interjected. “Most of the time a Sentinel will use
purring and touch to calm his Guide.”

Xander nodded his head in agreement. “Spike’s only done it to me once. I was refusing to do what
Jim thought would keep me safe. Blair told me not to fight it, I wouldn’t win. But I had already
triggered both Jim and Spike. So that’s another lesson, don’t argue with a Sentinel who is trying to
keep you safe. Even if you think he’s being unreasonable. To your Sentinel your safety is non
negotiable and so is the Claiming bond.”

“So I shouldn’t participate in the Claiming Bond. I should just let the Sentinel do his thing?” Jarod asked.

“There is one thing you can and should do,” Blair said. “Let the Sentinel know when he does something you like. Moans, squeaks, heavy breathing, are all good. If you want to use words, try to keep it to one single syllable word, like yes, more, or please. During the claiming bond the Sentinel won’t seem to respond, but when you rebond he’ll remember and do what pleases you. Sentinel’s love foreplay. They love pleasuring their Guide and making him or her glow. I don’t think they know what a quickie is. After you bond the Sentinel has three primary drives; protect the Guide, keep the Guide centered in the bond, keep the bond Strong.”

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End Flashback
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Jack stopped suckling and went to the foot of the bed. He removed all of Jarod’s clothes. Jack then lifted one foot, he bent the knee testing for any weakness or stiffness that he needed to be careful of. He found none. He lifted Jarod’s left foot to his mouth and began sucking each toe in turn.

Jarod fisted the sheets. Who knew having your toes sucked could feel so good?

Jack began licking the sensitive flesh between the toes.

Jarod moaned and lifted his hips stabbing into the air. His hard cock began dripping precum.

Jack duplicated his efforts on the right foot and Jarod once again let his pleasure be known.

Jack needed to taste. He took Jarod’s cock in his hand and swirled his tongue around the tip savoring the taste of the creamy offering. Jarod’s body filled with more pleasure than he had ever known before. Jack began licking the shaft and letting his tongue travel over the tip then he lowered his mouth over the shaft and began to purr. Jarod panted his eyes were tightly closed. Then he felt the ripple start at the base of his cock and travel upward. Jarod screamed, “Jack, Jack, JACK!”

Jack took all that Jarod had to offer. He savored the taste of his Guide before swallowing.

Jarod lay on his back just breathing and still trembling from the intensity of the orgasm, when Jack came to him and pulled him into a hug. Jarod grabbed onto his Sentinel and buried his face in Jack’s shoulder. Jack stroked his hair and purred until the trembling stopped.

“It’s okay,” Jack said. “You’re okay. Sleep now. I’ll be here when you wake up.” He settled around his Guide and they both fell into an exhausted sleep.

******

News at Noon was on the TV. The lead story was a multi city march protesting the continued holding of Mindwalkers by the Department of Guide Proliferation. In Washington D.C. Police Chief Robert Malcolm was speaking on the steps of The Capital when a shot rang out. Chief Malcolm fell dead. Simultaneously, in a coordinated attack in New York City a sniper killed Special Agent in Charge Randall Hays as he spoke at a podium. Up and down the East coast in Miami, Atlanta, and Boston snipers shot and killed the keynote speakers. Panic ensued as people ran screaming from the areas. Sentinels in each city tried to secure the scene but in every city the
sniper escaped into the panicked crowd.

Hetty slipped into the hive mind to let Gibbs know what had happened.

*We must be hitting a raw nerve,* Hetty said. *This kind of attack is a warning to stop protesting. They want us to crawl back into a hole and let them have their way. This has to be spun correctly. We could lose our public support or solidify it. I’ll coordinate with my public relations team. I’ll be getting calls for TV interviews. See if your contact in WG has any information on this. It would be nice if we could slit the snipers’ throats. My phone is ringing now. I’ll keep in touch.*

The Hive stood around looking at each other. They hadn’t expected this. They had the impression that the Initiative was located in Washington State. How could they have been so wrong?

“Maybe we’re not so wrong,” Graham said. “Maybe they just want us to think that. It’s only a six hour plane flight to the east coast. All these marches were planned well in advance.”

“Graham’s right,” Gibbs said. “There was plenty of time to plan this. We knew there could be repercussions for thwarting their Guide abduction. We have to stay the course. If there are other Initiative installations we will find them and bring them down too.”

Blair sighed. Five high ranking law enforcement officials were dead. Blair started to walk back into the kitchen and stopped. He saw his animal spirit Guide, the Grey Wolf, was pacing back and forth along the wall in the dining room. Blair slipped into the hive mind. *Hey guys is anyone else seeing their spirit Guides?”

*Yeah, hold on,* Xander answered.

Most of the Hive knew what that meant. Xander was getting information from his Hyena. The Hyena Guide was unique. It talked to Xander. The hive waited and hoped that whatever the Hyena had to say was going to be useful.

*Everyone, meet me in the dining room,* Xander said in the hive mind.

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“I’ve got some bad news,” Xander said when everyone was assembled in the dining room. “All of the sniper attacks were a diversion to expose Hetty. She’s the real target. The plan is to kill her coming or going to one of her TV appearances. We have to warn her. The other thing is that the Initiative plans on hitting the the marches in the other time zones. I don’t know if we have time to warn them or if they’ll be automatically called off.”

“Anyone with any sense would call them off or postpone them,” Gibbs said. “But some people won’t listen and march anyway. I’ll call my people and make sure the local LEO’s know to be on the lookout.” Gibbs hurried to the secure phone.

“Ah,” Morgan said raising his hand. “Where are we getting this intel from?”

“It’s good intel,” Spike told the newest Sentinel to the Hive. “Xander’s spirit guide talks to him. The Hyena has never led us wrong.”

Morgan stared at his sire. If it was anyone but his sire he’d think the Sentinel had lost his mind. He looked at the other members of the Hive. Everyone was watching him as if they thought he may be the one ‘going round the bend.’

“Okay,” Morgan said. “If you guys are fine with it …” He shrugged his shoulders and shut his
Gibbs came back into the room. “Okay, I notified Sam. He said Hetty’s phone has been ringing off the hook. He’ll see to it that all interviews are conducted off premises. He and Callen will keep her safe. He said he’s surprised that it took them this long to get around to it. As for the marches in other time zones they’ve all been cancelled due to the coordinated nature of the attacks.”

“I guess we’ve done all we can do,” McGee said, “Now we wait.”

******

Jack woke up, he stretched a little which only caused Jarod to cuddle in in his sleep. Jack began to purr. Not that his Guide needed it, but it felt good doing it.

His first Guide, Rob, had been a Soldier Guide. The only time that Jack had purred to him, Rob was incredulous. “What do you think you’re doing,” his voice had been as near to a growl as a Guide could get. “I’m no yellow bellied pantywaist, I’m a soldier.” Jack never purred to him again.

Daniel was different, not a soldier in any way at all. Daniel, however, turned out to be a lot tougher than he expected when they met. Daniel had kept himself physically fit, not sharpened to the point of a Sentinel or a Jaffa, but still fit. He also had a diamond hard mental focus. When things went to shit, as they frequently did off world, Daniel stayed focused. He had total confidence that the soldiers would do their job and get them out of whatever situation they had found themselves in. He didn’t purr to Daniel because Daniel never needed it.

Daniel had displayed an insatiable intellectual curiosity. Jarod was different, his curiosity was the clamorous curiosity of a child. He wanted to know everything. Jack remembered the morning he listened to Jarod joyfully flipping pancakes. He didn’t exactly find it appealing. But on the other hand Jarod had escaped from The Center in Southern California and made his way up the coast, out in a world he had no experience in. He managed to avoid Sentinel Sweepers, find food to eat, a place to sleep and clothes to wear. He wasn’t a helpless child. There was hope he could adjust to his new Stargate life, more than hope actually, there was evidence.

Spike had said Jack loved Jarod. It was true he did. Jack wondered if he would ever again find Jarod’s childish joys unappealing. He thought not. Every new joy his Guide discovered would be his joy now.

Jarod yawned and let go of Jack giving his arms a little stretch.

“Hi,” Jack said carding his finger through Jarod’s hair. “How’re you feeling?”

“Good. What time is it?”

“Sometime between lunch and dinner. Are you hungry?”

“A little. We can go down to the kitchen and I’ll make lunch for us.”

“We can’t do that,” Jack said. “I haven’t fully claimed you yet. It would make me very uncomfortable for you to be unclaimed around so many Sentinels. Not to mention the Sentinels will want to put us out if we leave the room before I fully claim you. I’ll ask Blair to bring a tray for us.” Jack slipped into the hive mind and told Blair his request.

“Are we going to stay here after you claim me?” Jarod asked.

“We’ll stay until this war is over,” Jack told him, “then I’ll go back to work and you’ll come with
“Where do you work?”

“You can’t tell anybody here about my work, Jarod. It’s classified Top Secret. I’m showing you a lot of trust in telling you this.”

“I understand, I won’t let you down.” Jarod told him.

“My home base is Colorado Springs in Colorado, at a place called Cheyenne Mountain. There is a machine called a Stargate. It creates a passage to other planets. I have a team and we explore those other planets. When we get back you’ll be on my team.”

“Wow, I didn’t expect that. How do you know they’ll let me on your team?”

“You’re my Guide. We come as a pair or I’ll resign.”

“You’d do that for me?”

“Of course I’d do that for you. We’re mated and Sentinels mate for life.”

There was a soft knock at the door. “I’m leaving your tray out here,” Blair said. “There’s also a clean set of sheets.” Blair knew that Sentinels didn’t like crumbs in a bed. Since there was no table in the room the Sentinel and Guide would be eating in bed. Clean sheets were a necessity.

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Jack pulled the clean top sheet tight and tucked in the last military corner then turned to Jarod on the other side of the bed. “Why don’t we take a nice warm shower before we get into bed?”

“A shower sounds good,” Jarod replied.

The pair walked into the bathroom and Jack turned on the water. While he was waiting for the water to warm up he turned and talked to his Guide. “Jarod, there’s something I need you to know. I may not claim you tonight. It’s not because I don’t want to.” He walked over to Jarod and put his hands on Jarod’s shoulders, stroked down his arms and held his hands. “You’re a virgin and I don’t want to hurt you. I need you to understand it’s not because I don’t want YOU, It’s because we need to go slow.”

Jarod gave Jack’s hands a little squeeze. “I know. Blair and Xander explained it to me.”

Jack nodded his head and then turned to the shower. The water was steaming so Jack adjusted it and the two removed what clothes they had on and stepped in. Jack soaped up his hands and and began washing Jarod.

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Two days Later

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Spike hung up the phone. “Angel gave me the names of the Snipers. He had to look in the expense account to find the expenditure and then match it to the duty roster with time off. Turns out the idiots didn’t even create false identities for their plane tickets. He said it would look too suspicious if he tried to get their addresses right now. I told him we had someone who could do that.”
“I think it would be good for us to take them all out at the same time,” Jim said. “It would prove a point. I want in on this one.”

“Me too,” Spike interjected. “I think we’ll need stealth for this.”

“I volunteer,” Peter said. “I’ve been sitting around going through paperwork for too long.”

“I feel the same way,” Morgan said. “I’m new to the hive, I want to pull my weight.”

“I’m in too,” Graham said. “But we need intel, we’re all too well known to do it.”

“Maybe Hetty can help with that,” Gibbs said. “She has a lot of resources.”

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One day later

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The last three days had been heaven for both Jack and Jarod. Time had been spent showering, eating, making love and learning about each other. Jarod was always curious and eager to learn more about Jack’s life. Jack thought of his life as ordinary before he joined the Stargate Program, but he couldn’t go into details about that so he told him about becoming a pilot. He was surprised when Jarod told him a couple of his Pretender scenarios were learning to fly a Coast Guard helicopter and the J-36. Jack didn’t know much about helicopters, but he knew jets. He asked Jarod about the J-36, Jarod told him that he was given the assignment because of more than expected accidents on the vertical landing. He reported that the controls were poorly designed. Jack did have a vague memory of the J-36’s having a control board redesign. But it wasn’t one of the planes he was certified on so he didn’t know any specifics. Still from his answers to Jack’s questions it sure seemed like Jarod knew how to fly.

Jack had taken every opportunity to gently stretch his new mate. He told Jarod that he felt this would be the night. As usual Blair brought up a dinner tray complete with a set of clean sheets. Jack and Jarod had fallen into a routine, eat, change the sheets, shower, dry each other off, and make love. Jarod loved taking showers with Jack. Having a Sentinel’s hands caress his body was nirvana. He always left the shower aroused and aching for more. Jarod was taken from his parents at a young age. As an empath from birth the loss of a connection to another human being was devastating for the young boy. For years he yearned to have that hole in his life filled. Now he felt the warmth of another human being that loved him; it filled him to overflowing.

As always both Jack and Jarod were hard when they got out of the shower. They dried each other off and Jack took Jarod to the bed. Jack laid down beside Jarod and began suckling his neck as he stroked his Guide’s body.

The neurotransmitters filled Jarod’s mind and he began to crave a deeper bond with Jack. He wanted nothing more than to dive into Jack’s energy and never leave. He moaned and began whispering Jack’s name. “Please, Jack, I need you to claim me. Oh, Jack please.”

Jack stopped suckling and kissed Jarod’s face. He carded his finger through Jarod’s hair. ”Okay my love. It’s time.” He kissed his way down Jarod’s body, grabbing the lube in one hand and pulling a pillow with him. He lifted Jarod’s legs over his shoulders and slid the pillow under Jarod’s hips. He licked and kissed Jarod’s bud and then squeezed a generous amount of lube over his hand and began massaging Jarod’s hole while he licked and gently sucked at Jarod’s orbs. One finger slipped into Jarod. Jarod thrust up and clutched at the sheets. Two fingers slid in, out, and
into Jarod. Jack took Jarod’s orb into his mouth and rolled it over his tongue. He scissored his fingers and let Jarod’s orb gently plop out of his mouth. A third finger entered Jarod. The Guide was breathing heavily as his Sentinel took his other orb into his mouth. Jarod once more stabbed upward and called out to Jack. The stretching went on for a few more seconds.

Jack let the second orb drop from his mouth. He took the lube and spread a generous amount onto his hand and then spread it onto his hard and aching cock. He centered himself and entered his Guide. He pushed forward slowly, millimeter by millimeter careful not to cause his Guide pain. Just a little further, he thought, almost… and then he hit Jarod’s sweet spot.

Jarod’s head lifted off the pillow and slammed back down. Jack slid in and out of his Guide, gaining speed as their orgasm built to completion. Jack’s torso rubbed Jarod’s cock as he moved. And then Jack’s orgasm burst and his cum filled his Guide. Jarod felt Jack’s warmth fill him and his orgasm erupted. Sentinel and Guide were lost in the dance.

“Mine,” Jack called out.

“Yours,” Jarod answered and for the first time he began to glow. “Yours always,” he whispered as Jack pulled out of his Guide and moved up to hold Jarod in his arms.

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TBC
Chapter 15

3 days later

The hive was gathered in the living room listening to General Gibbs briefing about the Protest Snipers. Oz had easily gotten the perpetrators addresses, Guides names and phone numbers, from WG’s computer system. Oz was able to hack and clone the Sentinels phones in case they were needed for the mission. Angel gave the hive the Sniper Sentinel’s duty schedule. Hetty sent out her people to provide intel about the apartment buildings that the snipers lived in. All the snipers were bonded to level 4 Guides which added a level of difficulty to the hive’s attack.

“Low level Guides have a light bond with their Sentinel,” Jack said stating the obvious. He and Jarod had come down stairs two days ago and Jack was glad to be back online and contributing to the war effort. "Do we know if they go to WG when their Sentinel’s are on duty?"

“Our intel shows they’re pretty much on free time during the hours their Sentinel is on duty.” Gibbs said.

“Then we should abduct them.” Jack said. It seemed like a no brainer to him.

“That’s a whole other can of worms,” Gibbs stated. “There in five different places, that’s five different missions. We just don’t have the manpower or the equipment.”

“I’ll help,” Sweet said. “I worked in the field with Clint for almost a year and we have two soldier Guides…”

“Sweet!” Clint interrupted. He stood up and looked across the tables at Sweet. “That’s enough.”

“It’s true,” Sweet continues in spite of Clint’s order to stop. He walked toward the Guide’s table.

“We’re under utilized.” Sweet continued ignoring Clint’s advance.

Clint picked up Sweet, put her over his shoulder, and carried her to the stairs.

“We have a right to fight for our freedom.” Sweet called out as Clint carried her up the stairs.

Wesley stood up, “She has a point.” Peter gave a sub-vocal moan, he knew his guide very well and Wesley had been restless lately. That was unusual for a Guide. At first he thought it was Wesley picking up on his own restlessness so he tried spending more personal time with his Guide. But extra time bonding, running and sparing didn’t help. He was sure that Wesley would not let this go.

Riley started to stand up. “Down,” Graham commanded.

Riley looked his Sentinel in the eyes. “No,” he said. “Whatever else I am; I am also a soldier.”

To say Graham was surprised by Riley’s behavior was an understatement. Riley was a submissive. When not on duty his submission was total. When on duty he came across as the perfect Soldier Guide. Graham had picked up on Riley’s and Wesley’s restlessness and talked to Peter about it. They both assumed it was the empaths picking up on the Sentinels restlessness. Now it seems that they were mistaken.
Clint kicked the door closed behind him and put Sweet down. He stood in front of the door as he spoke. “You can’t volunteer another Sentinel’s Guide to go on a covert mission.”

Sweet glared at Clint. “You do know I could get out that door if I wanted to?”

Clint sighed. He’d never had this kind of talk with Sweet. She’s always been… Sweet. But she had changed since the blood bond with Spike. Not just because she was physically stronger but she was also more assertive. It had never gotten to the point of her being aggressive and he hoped it would stay that way today. Still, he never expected this from her. “I’m hoping you don’t try to. If you go back down there I will be a Sentinel that can’t control his Guide and that means I can’t protect my Guide. That will cause both of us a lot of pain.”

Sweet sighed, “You know I’m capable of working in the field.”

Clint walked forward and took Sweet in his arms. “If it’s any consolation Wesley and Riley both agreed with you.”

“Both?” Sweet asked as she tilted her head to give Clint better access to her guide gland.

“MMM,” Clint answered as he licked her neck and pulled her down into the nest.

Sweet slipped into the hive mind and sent a message to everyone. *Sentinel claim your Guide.* She wanted no misconception in the hive that her Sentinel wasn’t in full control.

*Okay we get the message,* Gibbs shot back.

Sweet shutdown the communication and moaned with pleasure as Clint quickly and skilfully removed her clothes.

“Minx,” Clint told her with a smile.

“Would you have me any other way?”

Clint didn’t answer. He was busy suckling his Guide.

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Dining Room

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The meet had declined into disagreements on how to proceed. Gibbs’ slapped his hand on the table. “Sentinels, I’m taking Peter off the sniper hit team and moving him to the Guide abduction team. Peter you are responsible for coming up with a plan for this mission. Get it to me ASAP. That leaves a place open on the Sniper team.”

“I want in,” Jack said. He felt as if he missed out by being on ‘bond leave’ when the sniper killings happened. He wanted to make up for lost time.

“Okay Jack,” Gibbs said. “We go in Four days. Don’t let me down on this.”
Four days later

Hetty had once again come through with all the equipment they needed. The plan was set. Peter, Wesley, and Riley were dressed as EMTs and Hetty had supplied the Ambulance. Sweet would ride along as a healer in case they came across any doors that needed to be opened. An SUV with a driver that Hetty supplied would wait at a private location to take the Guides to a safe house. Morgan was skeptical that Sweet could open a locked door simply by asking the lock to unlock itself. He was concerned that a broken down door would tip off the sniper Sentinels that something had gone down in their apartment and make their mission more dangerous. Sweet simply went to the front door stepped outside with Clint and had Morgan lock the door. A few moments later Morgan watched as the locking lever flipped. Sweet and Clint walked back in. Morgan looked over the door. The lock still worked and there wasn’t a mark on the door.

“How do you do that?” Morgan asked with some awe in his voice.

“I’m what’s called a breaker,” she told him. “Everything is sentient in its own way. I just know how to communicate with all kinds of things.”

“Why do they call you a breaker?” Morgan asked.

“Well there’s a downside to it,” Sweet answered. “I tend to break electronics. I had to wear gloves in the field when Clint and I were working for the Marshall Service. I had a radio to communicate with, it would break down within an hour if I held it without gloves. I couldn’t make skin contact with any electronic device. But it did come in handy when I had to shut down a car a fugitive was trying to steal once.”

“Did she convince you yet?” Clint asked.

Morgan nodded. “Sorry I doubted you. The rest of the hive didn’t.”

“Only because they've already seen what she can do.” Clint told him as he put an arm around Sweet. “You just weren’t a member of the hive then.”

West Side of Cascade
First Sniper’s Apartment

The team was at the first apartment building. This one was the easiest. It was on a dead end street and it didn’t have a security door or an alarm system. Riley stayed in the ambulance as the driver. Peter, Wesley and Sweet got out of the back with a gurney. They had used the siren so a few curious senior citizens had the building door open. Peter carried the gurney past the neighbors and slipped his air dart gun out of the shoulder holster that he wore under his jacket. The guide they were there for was standing in the hall just outside of the apartment of their target sniper. The rest of the hallway was empty. Peter shot the air-gun, no curiosity seekers heard the shot, the dart hit it’s mark in the Guides neck. The Guide looked shocked and slowly slid to the floor next to the door, Wesley’s body blocked the view from behind him, but none of the seniors had bothered to climb the stairs. Peter ran forward and caught the Guide just before he hit the floor. He picked up the Guide, placed him on the gurney and Peter and Wesley quickly strapped him down. Sweet
closed the door and asked the lock to lock itself from the inside. The Guide was taken to the meeting place and put into the SUV Hetty had waiting. One down, four to go.

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Abducting the second and third Guides went just as smoothly, it was the forth building that gave them a problem. It was in a fairly busy area and it had a security door. Sweet asked the security lock to let them in but the lock did not want to cooperate.

“What’s wrong,” Peter asked.

“It’s saying no,” Sweet told him. “It takes protecting the residents seriously.”

“Can you convince it?” Wesley asked.

“No, but I can ask the Sentinel’s apartment buzzer to buzz us in.” A moment later the buzzer went off and the group walked in.

The Guide stepped into the hallway. “Hey… What’s going on? My buzzer just went off.”

Peter raised the dart gun and took the shot. The rest of the abduction went smoothly. Four down, one to go.

Whatever can go wrong will go wrong. Number five wasn’t home. It was Riley that had come up with their plan B. Peter pulled out a phone and sent a text message to the Guide. Oz had hacked the Snipers’ phones and cloned them so when the Guide got the message he thought it was from his Sentinel. In the end they talked the Guide into meeting his Sentinel for lunch.


Riley got on his radio and took the call from the ambulance company dispatcher. Three minutes later the team drove up and put the Guide on their gurney. Forty five minutes later they were back in their Sentinel’s arms.

Within two hours all five Guides of the Sniper Sentinels were in the safe house Hetty had arranged and the hive could move on to the next phase of their plan.

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Evening

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Peter had made sure to take the phones from all the abducted Guides. The hive Sentinels were waiting for the sniper Sentinels near their apartment buildings, when the text message came from one of the Guide phones ^Where are U?^ That was their go signal.

It was Graham’s man. He lived in the building that Sweet had had trouble with. Graham rang the buzzer and the Sentinel answered. “Can you give me a little help,” Graham asked through the intercom. “Your Guide’s had too much to drink.”

The Sentinel grabbed his gun and made sure there was a round in the chamber. His Guide didn’t drink.
Suddenly Xander screamed through the hive mind. *Graham! He has a gun!*

Graham quickly moved into a shadow beside the building. The sniper came out of the building ready to shoot whoever rang his bell. He didn’t see anything suspicious. As soon as the sniper lowered his gun Graham attacked. He grabbed the hand with the gun and brought it down hard on his knee. The gun fell to the ground. Graham held the sniper around the neck with one arm. He quickly pulled his knife and held it to the snipers throat. “For the Guides,” Graham whispered then he slid his knife in a slow deep cut from ear to ear.

Graham walked a short distance and then began to jog to where they had parked their SUV.

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Two texts came in about five seconds apart. One was ^Where are you.^ The second said ^I have the table. Did you forget it’s Italian night?^

Morgan moaned his guy was at some restaurant. He went onto Google Maps on the sniper Guide’s phone and pulled up the ‘Your Timeline’ app. He scrolled through and there is was the Italian restaurant ‘Manga’. It was two miles away so Morgan sent a message ^Running late. Be there in 10^ and started running. Since bonding with Spike, Morgan had become very fast, but he couldn't let himself run too fast it would attract attention. Even if he was a minute or two late he knew the Sentinel would wait.

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Jack had the perfect hiding place. The apartment building had assigned parking so Jack knew exactly where the Sniper was going to park. There were cement barriers and a row of hedges. Jack crouched behind them. He wouldn’t have to wait for a text message. He could get his guy before he got into the building. He heard a car turn into the parking lot and it turned into the snipers space. Jack had made sure he was down wind so the sniper wouldn’t pick up his scent. The sniper got out of the car and paused to click on the alarm. That was all the opening that Jack needed. He jumped the hedge and was on the Sniper before he knew it. Jack snapped his neck and heard a very satisfying pop as the bone broke. He grabbed the car’s remote and unlocked the door, sat the sniper back in the driver's seat, closed the car door, and walked away.

He looked up at the stars. It was a clear night, no clouds this night. He would have to take Jarod out for a walk under the stars as soon as he got back.

******

Jim walked into the apartment building and knocked at the snipers door.

“Who is it?”

“Sentinel Ellison, Liaison Officer for Cascade. Your Guide has been injured. I need you to come with me.”

The apartment door opened but the chain lock was still on. “Show me your badge.” the sniper demanded.

Jim pulled out his badge and held it up to the crack.

The sniper nodded his head and opened the door.

Jim shoved him back into the apartment and slammed the door shut behind him. He had to give the
Sniper credit. He tried to fight, the man just didn’t have a chance. Jim had a blood bond with Spike; he was healthier, faster, and stronger than he had ever been. He had no trouble breaking the sniper’s neck. He left the man where he fell and left the apartment.

Only Morgan’s and Spike’s targets were left. Morgan had checked in to let everyone know he was at the restaurant.

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There was only one man sitting alone in the dining room. Morgan slid into the booth across the table.

“Who the hell are you?”

“I’m the Sentinel that’s going to take your Guide away from you.” Morgan calmly told him.

“Get the hell out of here,” the sniper said looking a little startled.

Morgan had expected the guy to challenge him right away. He smiled at the coward and said, “This is just a professional courtesy. Your Guide isn’t coming back to you. He’s a real sweet fuck and right now he is glowing and wearing my scent.”

With a roar the sniper propelled himself across the table at Morgan. Morgan snapped his neck before he made it across.

A waiter dropped his tray. Everyone within hearing was staring at Morgan. He called out, “Someone call the Agency. He just went rogue and tried to kill me.” He looked at the waiter who was frozen in place staring at the dead man on the table. “Where’s the men’s room?”

The waiter pointed with a shaky finger still unable to pull his eyes away.

No one noticed when Morgan went out the front door.

*****

Spike got word through the hive mind that everyone else had taken out their target. His target was late, he should have been home forty five minutes ago. Spike decided to take a page out of Sweet’s book and ask. He took out the Guides phone and sent a text, ^Where are U?^

^game^ was the curt reply.

Well that sucks, Spike thought. How the hell was he supposed to kill the guy when he couldn’t get to him? He couldn’t very well ask the bastard what game. Then it came to him.

^What’s the score?^

^10-7 Jags^  

Well that told him two things. He was at the Cascade Arena and he knew the game had just started. It would be at least 2 hours before the target got home.

Spike slipped into the hive mind and gave everyone the bad news.

*We’re not leaving this undone,* Jim said. “We’ll wait.* A few minutes later the hive’s SUV pulled into a space that had a view of the buildings front door. Spike joined the team and they listened to the game on the radio. Half an hour after the game ended Spike and Jim got out and took
up strategic positions near the front door. They could smell the beer on the sniper as he stopped to open the door. Spike walked up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder. The sniper turned to look, Spike grabbed his head and in one swift twist broke his neck. He caught the guy and dragged him behind a tree and dropped him. Spike and Jim walked back to the SUV. It was time to go home.

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Next Morning

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General Wiley was livid with rage, again. Three of his best and most trusted Sentinel’s were dead. Two of them had been found outside their apartment buildings and the other had been killed in a restaurant full of people and nobody saw anything. The witnesses in the restaurant were useless. Two of them said that the other man in the booth was a tall black man, three of them said it was a tall Latino man. They all blamed the dead Sentinel for what happened. They said the missing person of interest was just sitting and talking quietly when the Sentinel roared and attacked him. But the General knew better. He had three Initiative soldiers dead and he didn’t believe in coincidences. He called the other two men who had been in on the killing of the protesters and when there wasn’t any answer he sent men to their apartments. The bodies were found. Wiley roared in frustration and pounded on his desk. All five of the snipers had been killed on the same night and their Guides were missing. Where were these piss ants getting their intel? Was it the Guides that were the leaks? He called Angel.

“I want every Initiative soldier and Guide that was off duty last night interrogated by the Mindwalkers,” Angel was glad that Spike had warned him to make sure he was on duty and noticed last night. Then he left the office to give the order.

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Nine Days Later

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Everything had been fairly quiet at the Mansion Safe House, but tension, nonetheless, had been slowly growing. Xander’s Hyena had told him two days ago that they wouldn’t be able to hold back the Mindwalker wave of feedback energy for much longer. Gibbs was holding on to hope that they would be able to follow the last money trail to the end before the Mindwalkes had to release their wave. He knew if they didn’t wipe out the money the Initiative would just rebuild again.

Oz and Hardison had been spending more time on the secure line exchanging information and coordinating their search. Suddenly Oz jumped up with a “YES! We’ve got it. We can do it, we can get all the money!”

A cheer went up and a large ripple went through the hive. All the Sentinels in the computer room went to the small red headed man and tossed him into the air, catching him, hugging him, and patting him on the back. Gibbs came out of his office across the hall and stood in the doorway watching the celebration. The Sentinels had been controlling their stress and it was only now that it was released that they realized how it had been affecting them.

All of the hive felt the ripple and they made their way toward the computer room. Everyone couldn’t fit in the room so they waited just outside the hall doorway.
Finally Gibbs spoke up, “Meeting room now!” he said in his Gibbs means business tone. Everyone turned and went to the dining room. “Oz, you too.”

Oz was surprised to be invited to the meeting, but he didn’t need to be asked twice.

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McGee turned to Oz when the meeting was over. He still needed Oz on this mission. He hoped that Oz would continue in his job as consultant to NCSIA when this war was over. He certainly would ask him. But right now he needed him to be his second on the ‘Money Trail Mission’.

“You’re still the liaison with Hardison,” McGee said. “We have to make sure we get this right. We can’t give the Initiative a chance to keep any of their financing.”

“I won’t let you down, Sir,” Oz told him.

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Blair needed to talk to Jim alone. The final battle of this war was happening soon. At least Blair hoped it would be the final battle. Things had changed a lot since Xander and Spike had come into their life. They had thought that Xander was safe when they got him back from the kidnappers. That assumption was short lived. Now Blair waited across the room as Jim and Spike chatted quietly.

Xander came to Blair. Both were high level empaths and had a very deep friendship. He could feel Blair’s apprehension and need for his Sentinel. Xander reached out and took Blair’s hand.

“What is it, Blair?” Xander asked.

“I just need Jim to hold me,” Blair said. “I’ve always felt secure and cherished since bonding with Jim, but now… I need him to tell me everything’s going to be alright. He’s going to think I’m acting like a…”

“Guide?” Xander interrupted.

“I was thinking more along the lines of wimp.”

“Not true. Don’t you know you’re the strength of our little foursome?”

“Right now I don’t feel very strong.”

Xander put his arm around Blair. “Why don’t we go over there and tell them what we need.”

“They’re making war plans, I don’t want to interrupt them.”

“Too late,” Xander said. “Here they come.”

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Jim looked at Xander with his arm around Blair. It was unusual enough for Jim to be concerned. The relationship that Xander and Blair had was unique. Blair was also Xander’s Guide, but Xander kept that part of their relationship in the nest. Jim couldn’t remember Xander ever putting his arm around Blair anywhere where other Sentinel’s could see.

“Chief?” Jim asked.
Xander took his arm off of Blair and whispered softly to Jim. “Blair needs alone time with his Sentinel.” Then Xander turned to Spike and took his hand. “Let’s go for a run.”

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Nest

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Blair lay in the nest listening to Jim purr. He felt comforted and loved.

“Chief,” Jim said after about twenty minutes. “Do you want to tell me what this is about?”

“I just felt I needed some one on one time with you. We don’t have that much anymore.”

“Is this about Spike and me?”

“No, we already talked about that. It’s not an issue, it hasn’t been since we cross bonded.”

“Blair, there’s been a lot going on recently. Our cold war has heated up. You’ve always been by my side when I was a detective now you’re not. I have to keep you safe, Chief. So if you’re thinking of asking to be there when we bring down Washington Genetics, I’m going to say no. I need you and Xander and all the rest of the Guides in the house safe.”

“I wasn’t going to ask. There’s probably going to be shooting and you know how I feel about using a gun… It’s just that... there’s probably going to be shooting, and it worries me.”

“Blair, I spent over a year in the Jungles of Peru fighting drug dealers with only natives for allies. Before I was a detective I was a Ranger. Everyone here knows what they’re doing. I know I can trust every Sentinel here with my back. I can’t give you any guarantees, Chief, but I do know that we will have a good battle plan. The Initiative isn’t going to know what hit them.”

Blair sighed and then leaned back and looked into Jim’s eyes. “Sentinel, claim your Guide.”

Jim didn’t have to be told twice.

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TBC
Chapter 16

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One Day Later

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The Sentinels were working on a plan. It quickly became evident that they didn’t have enough men from the Hive alone. Their talks with Angel had revealed that they needed to secure both the South entrance and the North gate entrance. Hetty had a partial solution. She would arrange a protest outside of the South entrance. The protesters would be made up of trusted Sentinels and Warrior Guides as well as Sentinel and mundane law enforcement officers angry about the loss of the help of Mindwalkers in their work. Graham volunteered to lead the group, but General Gibbs felt it was his place to be there and make sure Red was safe. After all he was the one that asked her to spy for them. Any surviving Initiative soldiers would be arrested by NCSIA and brought to their facility. McGee would represent NCSIA at the north gate.

“I’m going with you,” Tony said. “I know that technically I’m not a Warrior Guide, but I am a trained NCSIA agent with years of experience in the field. I’m capable of having your back.”

“We’ll discuss it in private,” Gibbs told his Guide. If he could possibility talk Tony out of it, he would. But Tony seldom asked for anything and when he did he was tenacious. Tony was a Guide that knew how to choose his ‘battles’ with his Sentinel.

“We need to move on to the North Gate.” Gibbs said. “There are problems we need to address. How do we get to the gate without being discovered?” How do we get through the security gate? How many security guards are we likely to face? Can we free the abducted Guides? If so, how do we transport them to safely?”

“I’ll talk to Angel about that tonight,” Spike said. “He’ll be able to give us the intel we need.”

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Privacy Room

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“Tony, there is nearly 100% certainty that there will be shooting. I can’t risk losing focus because I’m worrying about you.”

“I’ve been in shooting situations with you before. You’ve never lost focus. I want to be there. I want to make sure we bring Red home with us. I don’t want to wait any longer to have a child.”

There was grief in his voice when Gibbs spoke. “I’ve already talked to her about it. She said no.” Losing the hope of having a child wasn’t an easy thing to go through. He hadn’t expected that kind of pain. He wondered if it was the same kind of pain a woman went through when she found out she was infertile and could never conceive a child. Gibbs didn’t want to talk to Tony about it. Tony didn’t want to have a child as much for himself as he wanted to have one for his Sentinel.

“Is that all she said, ‘no’?” Tony asked. “Did she tell you why she was saying no?” Tony couldn’t believe Red would be so blunt as to say just the one word, ‘no’. She was a high grade empath, she knew what he and Gibbs felt for her. He remembered the first time she healed him, and every time
since, there was a sense of family, a sense of belonging. He’d missed her for weeks afterward.

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Gibbs Flashback
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“Don’t!” Red said her voice hard and commanding, it made Gibbs startle and he didn’t startle easily. “I know you mean well but you’ll never claim me.” She sighed and her voice softened as she continued. “I know how much you love Tony… I’d be in the way and I would know it, every second I’d know it. It would be a painful way for me and Tony to live and that would make it painful for you. So put away your guilt. What happens to me isn’t your fault. You’ve done more for me than you could ever know just by being my friend.”

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End Flashback
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“Red said ‘no’. Her reasons are her own. I don’t want to talk about it.” It was true Gibbs didn’t want to talk about it. The last thing he wanted to do is make Tony think he was to blame, and Gibbs knew Tony would blame himself.

“AP Harris said the Agency owned her,” Tony said. “She feels like family when she heals me. I’m not letting her go back into slavery. I couldn’t live with myself.”

Gibbs walked over to his Guide and took him into his arms. Tony was hurting, not just for a lost child but for Red too. “All right Tony,” he told his guide. Gibbs wasn’t at all sure how to heal Tony’s pain. At the time he had talked to Red about claiming her she was right. At least he thought she was. Now he wasn’t so sure. They had bonded with Spike, they slept in the same nest, yet Spike was never in the way. Maybe Tony could convince her. Gibbs didn’t want to have hope, it hurt too much to lose it. But he couldn’t help himself. Hope rose like a lone candle burning in the darkness. “Talk to Red. I’m not sure you’ll be able to change her mind, but I hope you can.”

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Five Days Later
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Tomorrow was the day they would bring Washington Genetics down. The tension in the hive was palpable. Guides spent time taking away their Sentinel’s stress and Sentinels spent time soothing their Guide’s trepidation. Everyone knew that the end to the genetic experiments and the repeal of the new laws counted on this attack being successful. The odd thing about the disquiet in the hive was that Xander and Spike seemed to be taking it in stride. Spike’s childer weren’t surprised, it was expected from their Sire, but Xander was usually the least likely to be composed in the face of approaching danger. It was Jarod that asked Xander about it.

“This isn’t the first showdown between Good and Evil I’ve been involved in,” Xander said. “After you’ve survived a few of them it all seems familiar and in a fluky kind of way, reassuring.” Xander put his arm around his new friend. “We’re going to be okay. We’ve got a good team.”

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Jim was in the weapons room. Yesterday Graham had gone through all the handguns to double check that they had all been cleaned and were in good working order. Today it was Jim’s turn to
check the rifles. He was just putting the last rifle back in the gun cabinet when Spike came into the room and closed the door. Jim closed and locked the gun cabinet door then turned to Spike.

Jim looked into Spike’s impossibly blue eyes. “If you’ve come to help you’re too late. I just finished.”

“I came to make sure you’re okay.”

“Why wouldn’t I be.”

“You’ve always been the Alpha, the leader.”

“It’s not an issue, Spike. I may not be the leader but I am the center,” Jim said. “I started this hive when I invited you to my bed. None of this would be happening if I hadn’t claimed you for my second. Everything would fall apart without the hive. I’m the center and as my Second so are you. The center has to hold!”

“I’m proud to be your Second?”

“I’m proud to have you by my side.”

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The Battle

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The morning was cool but clear. The wind had shifted and was coming down from the north instead of off the ocean. It was the promise of a rain free day. A good day for a battle.

Gibbs and Tony got out of the car and walked into the crowd that was forming for the protest march. They both wore baseball caps and Flak Jackets under their coats. In addition Gibbs wore glasses and two days growth of beard to keep from being identified by the TV cameras that Hetty had arranged to follow the march. Tony had opted for changing his hair color with a temporary color shampoo and wearing color contacts for his disguise, both things he had done before for undercover work. The pair blended in with the crowd without being recognized.

“Gibbs better get here soon or we’re going to be late. Hetty said this whole thing was timed for maximum public impact, whatever the hell that means.” Some police Sergeant wearing his uniform grumbled.

Tony walked over to the impatient man. “Sergeant,” he said softly, “The General’s already here. He just wants the TV cameras focus to be on the protest not on him. Maybe one of the Police Chiefs can get us moving in the right direction.”

The Sergeant walked over to a Police Chief who was holding a bullhorn. The two whispered together for a moment and then the Chief walked over to the TV station’s microphone.

“We are here today to protest the incarceration of the Mindwalkers. We have five Police Chiefs from across the country who will ask for entrance to the Washington Genetics facility for the purpose of interviewing the Mindwalkers. We are willing to give housing to any Mindwalker who wishes to become an outpatient. I want to make myself perfectly clear. We will not be breaking the current law that the Mindwalker must be artificially inseminated. We will keep any appointment for the procedure scheduled for regular business hours. In addition any Mindwalkers who have already conceived will be brought in for their prenatal care appointments. We feel that this is a
reasonable compromise to the current situation that imprisons our citizens without probable cause. We invite the media to walk with us.” The Police Chief turned to the crowd and raised the bullhorn to his face. “To quote President Kennedy, ‘United there is little we can not do to assure the survival of liberty’. Onward to Washington Genetics.”

A cheer went up from the crowd as it started to move in unison toward WG.

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Noon
Washington Genetics

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Washington Genetics was a large modern office building. The front side of the building was a twelve foot high wall of windows with the double glass door entryway in the middle. Beyond the wall was a spacious foyer with a marble floor. Two guards shared an extravagant reception desk.

The five Police Chiefs walked up to the front door of Washington Genetics and tried to enter the building. They found the door locked. One of the Police Chiefs knocked and was ignored by the guards.

“We represent the Citizens and Law Officers of the United States,” A Police Chief said through the bullhorn. “We request entry to speak with the Mindwalkers.” Again the guards ignored them.

A chant rose from the crowd. “Let them in...Let them in… Let them in…”

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News at Noon

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“We have breaking news from Washington Genetics and The March to Free The Mindwalkers. We are going to our correspondent on the scene Barbara Noah. Barbara what’s happening there?”

“Thank you Anna, I’m here at the entrance of Washington Genetics with a Group of Five Police Chiefs from across the USA. They are asking for entry to talk to the Mindwalkers inside. Their plan is to offer them sanctuary in private homes in the area.”

“Barbara, what is that chanting we hear?”

“That is the other marchers, I don’t have a count on how many, I would guess they would be in the hundreds. They are chanting ‘Let them in’. The public protest is not allowed on private property so the five Police Chiefs were chosen to come to the door and represent the group. If I can get the camera to focus over my shoulder you can see there are two guards at the reception desk. It seems that The Department of Guide Proliferation is refusing to unlock the door and let them in.”

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‘Red Willow’ and her Mindwalker sisters were moving tables and chairs to the side of the cafeteria when she got a telepathic message from Sweet that all the Sentinels were in place.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing?” a guard asked after the kitchen crew reported the Mindwalkers strange behavior.
The Mindwalkers ignored him and sat down on the floor, legs crossed. They took each other’s hands, closed their eyes and bowed their heads. The shaking started as a small vibration going through the building, but quickly increased. Plates and cups began to rattle and walk their way across the shelf. As the vibrations increased to a rumble cabinet doors in the kitchen swung open and plates and cups fell, shattering as they hit the floor. A kitchen worker screamed, “Quake!”

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Mansion Safe House

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At twelve noon sharp, Cascade time, and three PM Boston time Oz and Hardison pushed the enter button on their computers and began downloading the Initiatives money to offshore accounts in Bermuda. Before the day was out the money would have been changed to Bitcoin and then back to dollars The money would continue to travel to various accounts and end up deposited in a Swiss bank. Both Hardison and Oz were sure that the Initiative would never be able to track the money.

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“We need to help the Mindwalkers,” Sweet said.

“How can we do that?” Abby asked.

“After they let this wave go they’re going to be very tired,” Sweet said. “But they will need to get out of the building. We can send them our energy. If we fall asleep we’ll be fine. If they fall asleep they may be in danger.”

“That would be healing energy,” Blair said. “Don’t we have to touch them for that?”

“Ordinarily yes,” Sweet said. “But they’re all Mindwalkers. I can channel your energy through me and send it telepathically to them.”

“I’m not a healer,” Abby said.

“Neither am I,” Spencer said. “I guess we’ll have to sit this one out.”

“All you have to be is willing to help,” Sweet said. “The Mindwalkers will need all the positive energy we can send to them.”

“My Hyena just told me that as soon as the Mindwalkers release the energy wave they won't need the animal spirit guides to help them hold it back. He tells me that they will add their energy to ours so that the Guides can be set free.”

“I guess that settles that,” Abby said. I’m in.”

“Me also,” Spencer agreed.

“I’ll send a message to Clint to let him know that we’ll be asleep when they get back.”

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The five Police Chiefs felt a rumble under their feet. Hetty had told them that she had a vision that there would be an earthquake. Of course they thought she was a bit crazy, for lack of a better word, but she was Hetty and they couldn’t turn her down. It wasn’t a good idea to disappoint Hetty. Besides this was an issue that they believed in. The five men looked at each other and decided to
get away from the wall of Glass. They jogged back to the edge of the property where the rest of the marchers were waiting.

Barbara and her cameraman followed the Chiefs back to where the marchers were gathered. Barbara didn’t have the eyesight of a Sentinel, but she knew how to listen and something was going on. She took out her phone and called her producer. Barbara asked for a chopper to cover the story from the air. Her producer said no but they did have a new camera drone that he was willing to commit for an hour, but if nothing happened it would be pulled off and reassigned.

The Sentinels were pointing.

“You better get it here fast, Joe. Something's happening inside the building.”

******

Angel had told his men to expect two cars through the north gate around noon. They would be carrying some abducted Sentinels and Guides. He told them they were resistance operatives that General Wily had wanted to get his hands on for some time. He left orders for them to bring them into the building and call him, Wily would want to interrogate them immediately.

Angel wanted to be in the control room when the quake started so he could make sure all the doors were unlocked and the Guides could get out. Spike had told him to expect a strong quake and that they may lose electricity. The building did have emergency lighting, but Angel wasn’t all that sure it would survive the quake.

Angel got word from the guards at the North entrance that they had just let the men through the gate. He, of course, ignored the call. He knew that Spike and his team were quite able to take care of the guards that they encountered. seconds later he felt the first rumblings of the quake beneath his feet. Angel opened all the doors in the prison. The guards questioned what he was doing as the vibrations continued to get stronger.

“This is an Earthquake,” Angel told them. “We need to get the Guides out of here.”

Whatever else the Initiative guards were, they were Sentinel’s. They would not risk letting Guides die due to inaction. Angel snapped an order to leave the North Gate open in case they had to evacuate the Guides, then he went to the cell area to lead the Guides out of the building himself.

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In the cafeteria an unseen energy vortex began to form around the Mindwalkers. It spread out until it came up against the chairs and tables then it began to push them in a circle. The cafeteria workers decided it was definitely time to leave. They headed for the exit.

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Dr. Tu was in the lab looking at sperm samples through the microscope. They were all dead. That couldn’t happen unless the cryogenic pods had failed. It did, however, answer the question as to why all of the artificial insemination attempts for the last few weeks had been in vain. He started toward the cryo lab when he felt the first vibrations through the floor. He stopped for a moment and felt the vibrations increase. That’s when he knew...It was the Mindwalkers. That asshole Wily may have just killed them all. He had to get to the Mindwalkers and try to stop them. By the time he got to the cafeteria it was too late. As soon as he opened the door he was pulled into the vortex. In seconds his body was being pummeled by debris.
General Wily was enraged. The report said that for yet another week all of the insemination attempts had failed. He banged his fist on his desk and didn’t feel the first vibrations of the energy wave. He picked up his phone and auto dialed the Doctor’s office. He let the phone ring several times till he suddenly noticed his pen holder was moving across his desk. He grabbed the cup of pens and waited for the quake to stop. It didn’t. The energy wave came up through the floor and Wily’s office chair began to roll. Wily jumped up and tried to get out of his office. Everything loose was flying through the air. A paperweight slammed into General Wily’s head and knocked him unconscious. A stream of blood from the head wound quickly saturated the carpet until it could take no more. The shallow red pool grew deeper, waves of blood formed and began to splash. Drops formed and swirled around the office splashing walls and other objects caught in the energy vortex. Wily’s body began to pivot his arms and legs lifted from the floor then his torso. He was caught up in the gyre and began to whirl around the room careening into his office chair. Pens stabbed at his soft flesh, one pierced a kidney. No one else would ever suffer through General Wily’s temper tantrums.

*****

Graham, Riley, Peter, and Wesley were dressed in their Agency uniforms. They parked the two cars in front of the door in a way that would give them cover while the quake took place. Sweet had warned them to get out of the building once the quake started.

The team got out of the cars holding guns on Jim, Spike, Tim, Clint, and Derek. Peter pulled a duffel bag out of the back of one of the cars. It held rifles for the team as well as Clint’s bow and arrows. In reality the duffel was quite heavy, but Peter carried it with ease. The ‘prisoners’ appeared to have their arms zip tied at their backs, but the ties had been nearly cut through, once they got through the door they would be able to easily snap themselves free.

There was less time than they thought there would be. Graham and Riley took out the guards at the door quickly. Zip ties were snapped, weapons were handed out and the team moved to clear the building when they felt the first vibrations of the quake. It was tempting to push ahead, but their Guides had made each Sentinel promise to leave immediately at the first sign of the quake. The team took positions behind the cars and waited, any Initiative soldiers that came out would be shot on sight.

*****

In the cafeteria the Mindwalkers sat in the eye of the vortex. The lights began to blink and then the bulbs burst, bolts on the metal stair rails, no longer able to take the strain of the energy cyclone, popped from the wall. The rails twisted like pipe cleaners. The electrical panel and the emergency generator simultaneously exploded starting fires. Hinge pins lost the last hold they had and flew into the vortex closely followed by the doors themselves. The foyer was full of employees, screaming as they were swept into the churning energy. The wall of glass shattered inward. Shards cut at exposed flesh and clothing, the cyclone turned red with blood. The Sentinels in the crowd of marchers could clearly see what was happening. They could hear the screams that came from the foyer.

“The Mindwalkers,” one of the Sentinels cried out and started to run toward the building.

Gibbs grabbed the chief. “They’re in the eye, it’s not touching them.”

“You can’t know that.” the Sentinel said jerking his arm free.

Tony took the strange Sentinel’s hand and looked into his eyes. “I know it. I’m linked to one of them. If she were hurt I’d feel it.” He wasn’t lying. Red was family.
“Stand down. There’s nothing we can do until this is over.” Gibbs ordered.

The Sentinels ignored him and began to run forward. Suddenly the roof ripped off of the building swirled around and landed on the cars in the parking lot.

******

Angel ran, vampire fast, through the doors of the prison. When he got to cell block A he stopped for only a moment. “Get down! Hold on to whatever is anchored to the wall.” He took off running he had to get to cell block B. The vibration continued to grow, Angel’s Sentinel hearing was turned up, he could hear the building above him groan. He opened the door to cell block B the cells were two stories high and the energy vortex swirled above him. Angel quickly looked around. The cell doors were open and he could see that many of the guides were on the floor of their cells clutching the frame of their bunk beds. Angel could feel a pull up to the vortex so he dropped to the floor and crawled to a table that was anchored to the floor of the common area. He noticed a slim female Guide holding on to a table next to him. She seemed to be losing her grip. He crawled over to her and partially laid on top of her. He put his arms around her. “I’ve got you,” he said. A moment later the lightbulbs exploded and the cell block was plunged into darkness. The glass from the Guard tower shattered and Angel covered the Guide’s body as best he could expecting a shower of fragments. It never happened. Instead the shards were pulled into the vortex. The two tower guards were pulled out of the tower and into the the swirling energy. They screamed as the shards of glass were driven into their faces and hands and cut away their uniforms exposing more of their bodies to the glass. A few moments later the screaming stopped, moments after that the vortex slowed and was gone. The bodies fell to the floor with a heavy thud.

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The Police Chief Sentinels were forced to change directions and go around the wreckage the roof caused. They had made it to the corner when the red cyclone stopped and the swirling bodies fell to the floor.

Gibbs saw it end and took off running. He didn’t bother to go around the roof, he jumped up on top of it and ran across, he had never run faster. He got to the building a full ten seconds before the other Sentinels. He found the foyer slick with blood and littered with dead bodies and shards of glass. Gibbs picked his way across the foyer into the main building. He called out for Red.

******

The team at the North Gate could hear screams from inside the building. They could hear metal twisting and something exploded. Spike searched his awareness looking for any sense of Angel. He could feel that his grand sire was still alive somewhere on the bottom floor. Minutes went by and the vibrations that had been crawling over their skin stopped. The Sentinels rushed into the North entrance. They spread out searching in pairs to clear the building listening for heartbeats and breathing.

******

The Mindwalkers collapsed to the floor, but they didn’t fall asleep. They could feel energy flowing to them. The only light was coming through the broken windows high up in the wall. Devastation was all around them. The food that was intended for lunch made the cafeteria look like a garbage dump.

“We’re receiving healing energy,” one of the Mindwalkers said. “Where’s it coming from?”
“My friends and animal spirit guides are sending it,” Red told them. Just then she heard General Gibbs call her name. “We’re in here,” she called back.

Gibbs made his way through the cafeteria throwing large pieces of debris out of the way as easily at tossing aside a newspaper. Other Sentinels followed him widening the path. When he got to the circle of Mindwalkers he crouched down beside Red. “Are you hurt?” he asked. He ran his hands over her body sniffing for blood.

“No, I’m fine,” She said as she stood up. She had no problem recognizing Gibbs through his disguise. She could feel him.

Gibbs scooped her up in his arms. “I have to get you out of here. The building’s on fire,”

“I can walk,” Red told him.

“Not open for negotiation, Red.”

Red wrapped her arms around Gibbs neck. She was a bit surprised, she had never been held by a Sentinel. She had always been the one doing the touching. Now she was being held and it felt good and comforting and the way Gibbs had just talked to her, it was the same tone she had heard him use with Tony when he was hurt.

“Close your eyes and turn your head into my shoulder,” Gibbs told Red as he approached the foyer. “I don’t want you to see what’s out here.” Red complied and Gibbs carried her outdoors and over to a grassy knoll. Gibbs sat her down on the grass and began carding his fingers through her hair and shaking it out as he went.

“Um...what are you doing,” Red asked.

“Checking for glass fragments,” Gibbs said.

Red tried to stand up. “General, I’m not your Guide.” she said just as Tony sat down on the grass beside her. Gibbs stopped her from standing with a hand on her shoulder.

“Boss, all the Mindwalkers are out of the building and the fire departments been called.”

Gibbs grunted. The grunt concerned Red. Gibbs laid her down on the grass and began sniffing her for the scent of blood.

“Tony, you have to stop him, he’s…”

“I know what he’s doing, he’s done it to me often enough. Don’t worry, he won’t undress you out here. Gibbs told me he asked you about?...”

Red lifted her hand and moved it toward Gibbs’ head. Tony grabbed her hand and intertwined their fingers. “You don’t want to do that, Red. Now to get to the subject at hand, why did you say no to Gibbs about him claiming you.”

“I don’t want to live in your way. It would be too painful.”

Gibbs laid down on the grass beside Red and began licking her Guide Gland.

“Oh my God, Tony, you have to stop him.”

Tony lifted Red’s hand and kissed it. “Since the trial Gibbs and I have been bonded to another Sentinel. I think you met him at the trial. A bit short and slim for a Sentinel, yellow eyes? In all
“You know I can’t,” Red whispered. “You’re the dream I keep in my heart.”

Tony bent over and whispered in Gibbs ear. “Boss our car is here, Red said yes. We need to get her back to the mansion.”

Gibbs picked up Red and carried her to the car Hetty sent for them. He was oblivious to the firefighters and the body bags laying in the parking lot and the camera drone flying over head.

*****

Spike headed toward the feel of his grand sire. He ran across few Initiative soldiers. They were more a nuisance than a delay and quickly taken out. The inner corridors were pitch black. Spike was using his vampiric eyesight to see. Jim was surprised to learn that he could now see in the dark. Suddenly they saw yellow eyes glowing in front of them.

“Angel,” Spike said. “Is everyone okay?”

“We’re good. Just having a little trouble making it through the halls. Did you get the Guides from Cell Block A?”

Spike contacted the hive. “We haven’t found them yet,” he told Angel, “but the building is almost clear. We’ll get them out.”

“We need to keep moving,” Jim said. “There’s a fire. I think we’ve got about five more minutes before this place is full of smoke.”

*****

When the vortex stopped and the imprisoned Guides heard two large thumps. One of the Guides called out. There was no light at all in the underground prison. “Is anyone injured?”

There was no answer.

“We need to get out of here. I think I can smell smoke,” a Guide said.

“How, it’s pitch black?” another Guide asked.

“If blind people can do it we can,” the first Guide said. “Everyone grab hands let’s form a chain. Move along the wall until you find someone. When you find someone call out.”

Making the human chain went on for a few minutes. The Guides on the second tier managed to make their way down the stairs and connected up with the rest of the line. The Guides started walking with one hand on the shoulder of the Guide ahead of them and one hand brushing the wall. “I think I see a couple of lights up ahead,” The Guide at the front of the line said.

McGee and Morgan could see the line of Guides ahead. “I’m Major McGee from NCSIA. We’re here to rescue you. Is anyone hurt?”

“We’re okay,” the first guide said. “Do you know the way out?”

“I’ll take the back,” Morgan said, “and make sure we don’t lose anyone.”
McGee sent a message through the hive mind that they found Cell Block A.

The line was able to move faster now and they were out of the building before the smoke interfered with their breathing.

*****

The camera drone circled overhead sending its pictures back to the TV station.

“The Guide that Angel saved on the Cell Block B was holding his wrist with both hands. Angel needed to get to the motor pool before the fire. The building was huge, but there was no telling where the fire was located. He looked around and saw a female guide that the other Guides seemed to think of as a leader. He walked to her.

“Excuse me,” Angel said. The guide turned. “Cordy?” Angel asked. He couldn’t believe that Cordy was here.

“It’s Cordelia, I see you didn’t think to bring those ugly assed silver blankets to our rescue. FYI we’re cold.”

“If you’d take care of this Guide for me I’ll get some cars and get us out of here.” Angel told her.

Cordy gave a huff but put her hand on the Guide’s shoulder. “Come here Shelly, give me a hug and we’ll keep each other warm.” Shelly let go of Angel and hugged Cordelia. Cordy slammed one hand against Angel’s shoulder. “Stop flaring your nostrils at me and go get the cars.”

“Spike,” Angel called. “The motor pool is this way.”

Spike gave a silent call for drivers, they would need seven vans to carry everyone out. Luckily the garage style door to the motor pool wasn’t damaged. The energy wave didn’t make it down to the bottom floor. The motor pool was, however, full of smoke. The Sentinels didn’t have a choice. They charged in and got the vans out and to the Guides. Spike told everyone to meet at the west end of the Appleseed Mall.

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Breaking News

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Barbara stood as close to the building as the firemen would let her.

“I’m here at Washington Genetics where there has been a devastating incident. As you can see over my shoulder the glass wall that was the front of the building has been destroyed. If my camera man will turn you can see that the roof has come off the building and landed in the parking lot. Before the firemen got here I was able to see into the foyer. It’s a scene that will haunt me for the rest of my life. The white marble floor of about half an hour ago is covered in blood, broken glass and dead bodies.”

“Barbara, do you know what caused this?”

“No, Anna, I was at the edge of the property, I couldn’t see the cause. The Sentinels that are here are refusing to be interviewed. The marchers are loading onto buses now and leaving the area. At this time the only ones that have been inside are the the firefighters and the Sentinels that brought out the Mindwalkers.”
“Hold on Barbara. We have pictures from our camera drone. It appears to be showing a
camouflaged back entrance to Washington Genetics there appear to be Sentinels and a large
number of Guides standing on a rock cliff and there is smoke coming out of what looks like a cliff
face. I believe it must be a camouflaged entrance.”

“I know nothing about a back entrance, Anna. If they are Guides then I would say Washington
Genetics has some explaining to do. Our citizens have been told that The Department of Guide
Proliferation were holding only Mindwalkers.”

“Thank you, Barbara. We’ll be right back.”

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Appleseed Mall
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Hetty had buses waiting in the parking lot for the abducted Guides. Cordelia had been riding in the
car that Angel drove. When she got out of the car she started to walk away, but then stopped and
walked up to Angel.

“How did you know my name?” Cordelia demanded.

Spike walked up to the couple holding an envelope. He wore a smirk on his face that told Angel he
was up to mischief.

“Spike!” Angel growled trying to warn Spike off.

Spike gave a little huff. “He knew you in a past life,” he told her.

“What about you?” Cordy asked.

“I wanted to kill you,” Spike said, remembering the Parents Night that he raided Sunnydale High
School. “Angel stopped me.” Spike turned to Angel. “If you don’t claim her, your a bigger ponce
than I thought.”

Angel noticed Jim watching and no doubt listening. “Does he treat you good?” Angel asked
pointing his chin at Jim.


“Does he know the real reason you became his second?” Angel asked. He was sure that would
bring up an interesting conversation in their nest.

Spike ignored the question. What Jim did or didn’t know was none of Angel’s business. He handed
the envelope to Angel. “Hetty asked me to give you this, it’s an offer for a job in Los Angeles. She
bought an old hotel in LA and had it restored. The lawyers name is in the envelope, go see him.
He’ll take care of all the paperwork. Don’t worry it’s not Wolfram and Hart. You have to get out of
Cascade, Angel. Graham’s going to be reappointed Alpha Prime and he won’t tolerate you
anywhere near this city. Claim Cordy and get out.” Spike turned and walked away.

“Wow, LA,” Cordy said. “I can live with that.”

“Cordy, I…” Angel sighed. “I think we…”

“Yeah, tongue tied,” Cordy said. “Did you ever hear the saying ‘Sentinels hunt, Guides capture?’
Well mister you’ve been captured.” Cordy got into the passenger seat and closed the door. She buckled her seat belt and then looked at Angel who stood staring at her through the window.

“Well mister you’ve been captured.” Cordy got into the passenger seat and closed the door. She buckled her seat belt and then looked at Angel who stood staring at her through the window.

“Are you going to get your ass into the driver's seat or stand there like the ponce Spike thinks you are?” Angel opted for the driver’s seat.

******

Jim and Spike were riding back to the mansion alone. Spike sat quietly looking out the passenger side window. Jim felt as if they were on opposite sides of a very large room instead of sitting next to each other in the car. He had never felt distant from Spike. Since claiming him as his second there was never a moment when he didn’t know Spike had his back. Jim turned into a drugstore parking lot, he pulled into a space and shut off the engine.

“Full circle,” Jim said., “You don’t know this, but the night Xander ran and you called us, on the way to the motel I pulled into a parking lot and shut off the engine. I made Blair tell me what was bothering him. That’s when he told me he waited six months to report Xander’s abuse.”

“I never blamed Blair for that,” Spike said confused as to where this was going.

“What’s the real reason you became my second?”

“You saw me Jim, I went bonkers and you were there for me. Why did you ask an unbalanced Sentinel to be your second?”

“You’re avoiding the question, Spike.”

“No, I’m not,” Spike said. “The reason I accepted was the same reason you asked me.”

“Then why would Angel ask if I knew the real reason?”

“If I told you Angel is very good at mind games you’d think I was still avoiding the question. But that is exactly what he was doing. He knows I fed you, he can sense it. I was his for a century. Now your my Alpha.”

A few days ago I asked Blair if he knew why I asked you to be my second. I had to face some things I’d been avoiding. I had to face that I love you. So I’ll answer your question. I asked you to be my second because you’re the strongest Sentinel I’ve ever met. You were holding off a bonding thrall with nothing but will power. I told Blair it was because I trusted you. But I couldn’t put it all into words. Even now all I can tell you is what I said that day in the guide hospital; ‘It felt right.’ It felt like you belonged by my side.”

“I know Blair doesn’t like to hear I have a demon inside of me, but that is what I have. A demon that was born with a major birth defect for a demon. I love and that makes me very dangerous. If you weren’t my Alpha I would have killed everyone of the bastards that took Xander. You’re not the only Sentinel that asked me to be his second. I needed four things from the Sentinel I accepted as my Alpha. I needed a strong Alpha. He needed to be someone I could respect. He couldn’t be afraid of what I am, and he had to be someone I could love. So the real reason I said yes to you is because I needed an Alpha that could put me on my back, someone that I’d obey.”

Jim didn’t know what to say. It was more than he expected. He wanted Spike by his side. But did he need him? His life would have gone on without any change. He was satisfied and happy in his bond with Blair, but everything changed when he saw Spike at the hotel room door holding Xander’s bed pillow. “I remember now, the moment my life changed, the moment I knew I had to have you. It was the moment I saw you hugging that big red pillow.”
“For me it was the moment you came back from Booker's house. You looked at me and said ‘fire’, We closed ranks. You didn’t know it but from that moment on you were my Alpha.”

“Do I treat you well, Spike?”

“Blair and Xander wouldn’t let you get away with anything less,” Spike said with a little laugh.

Jim turned on the car. “You’re right, they wouldn’t.” Jim backed out of the parking space and drove back to the mansion.

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TBC…
Mundanes and most scientists believe that the brain is the creator of consciousness. Guides know that is not true, the brain is the receiver of consciousness. Guides may not know the true source or origin of consciousness but they are one hundred percent sure it is not the human brain.

Guide 915 drifted slowly up from sleep and back into consciousness. It is those few seconds between being asleep and awake, when all telepathic barriers are down, that Guides are vulnerable to mental invasion. It is a secret that is well kept by Guides. To a Sentinel, for a Guide to wake up beside his or her Sentinel and feel the love and protection; to feel the Sentinel’s need for them, is just the way Guides are.

Last night had been unexpected for Red, Tony was not only with Gibbs when he Claimed her. He held her and sent her his love and joy at the Claiming. She had expected Tony to wait outside the bedroom or perhaps in his own bedroom until Gibbs came to him. Two guides, two bedrooms. That may have been true before they bonded with Spike, but things were different now. To Gibbs it was a certainty that the three of them would be in the nest together. Tony couldn’t wait in the hall anymore than Gibbs’ left foot could decide to wait outside the bedroom door.

Now Red was waking, spooned between the two men. The essence of who they were, invaded her consciousness just as she invaded theirs. Her consciousness touched Tony’s mind and his reached back for her’s and embraced her. Suddenly she was in ‘The Dance’ with Tony, and Gibbs was with them. The bond reached out, first to Sweet then to Blair, Xander, and on it went; in less than the blink of an eye it reached every soul in the hive. Red gasped as she became fully awake and was welcomed into the hive mind. “I didn’t know,” she whispered as the profound emotions hit her and she was brought to tears.

Tony rolled over to face Gibbs and Red. Gibbs pulled Red into a hug. “Red, are you okay? What happened?” Gibbs asked. “Did you feel that, Tony?”

“She just got linked into the hive,” Tony said, rubbing Red’s arm. “It was unexpected, her shields were down.”

Red composed herself. “Wow! Wow! I just bonded with Tony... and the hive...I can feel the whole hive.”

Gibbs got to work right after breakfast. He didn’t have time to take a bond leave. He sent McGee out to arrest the current Alpha Prime and have him interrogated by a Mindwalker. Other NCSIA Agents got busy in the field tracking down any missing Agency Sentinels and brought them in for questioning. The amount of work that needed to be done was huge. Sweet and Red agreed to help with the interrogations so that the Agency could get back in working order quickly.

The Sentinels were busy trying to get their lives back together. Morgan and Reid were the first to leave the Mansion and get back to work with the Cascade FBI, promising to stay in touch.

Clint had a difficult task to undertake. He had to call Sam Gerard and tell him that he would not be
coming back to Texas. He didn’t tell Gerard about the Tribunal’s order that Sweet must live with Spike, but he did tell him that they had joined a hive that accepted Sweet and that they had a place and a home in Cascade. Gerard was surprised that Clint and Sweet had been brought into a hive, it was more than his team had ever done. They had tolerated Sweet as a part of their team but never truly accepted her. In the end Gerard knew that staying in Cascade was what was right for Clint and his Guide. He wished them well and he meant it.

Graham Miller and Peter Wall had to go to Court to get back their rank and jobs as Alpha Prime and Sentinel Prime. They had been accused of deserting their jobs. General Gibbs went to testify on their behalf and after a week Graham’s rank was restored and he and Peter were once again working at the Agency. The Agency had lost a lot of men to the Initiative so Graham brought Clint in as a Sentinel Prime and Sweet as their assigned Mindwalker. No other agency in the States had a permanent Mindwalker. Sweet hoped that her example would serve to get other agencies to follow suit.

McGee was successful in convincing Oz to take a job as a Computer Consultant in the Cascade Office of the NCSIA. Jim also made him promise to come in and work for the Police Department when needed. “Are you kidding?” Oz asked. “Of course I promise. Just try and stop me.”

Jim wanted to get back to the nesting house and report to work at the Police Station, but it was decided they would wait an extra two days until after Gibbs tied up some loose ends in Cascade, before going back to the capital. Xander and Willow, as Xander insisted on calling her, spent a good deal of their time together talking about Xander’s memories of Sunnydale. To Willow they were wonderful, even if a bit like scary fairy tales. Being a witch intrigued her, but now that she had been Claimed by Gibbs her life had taken a major turn for the better. She knew that Gibbs and Tony wanted to have a child and she was looking forward to it too.

Going to the airport for goodbyes just seemed like it would be too hard. So everyone said goodbye at the Mansion with hugs and kisses and promises to visit. They promised that they would make time to attend a reunion.

Jim and the remaining members of the hive locked up the mansion and returned to the nesting house. It seemed smaller after the mansion, but it still felt like home.

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Sunday Morning News

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“Good morning viewers. This is Allen Hall and Casey Witt. We have a special show for you this morning coming from Washington D.C.. Our guests are Sentinel General Jethro Gibbs of NCSIA, Senator Elita Lopez, Democrat from Texas, and Director Henrietta Lang, of the Guide Guild joining us via Skype.”

“Good morning panel. My first question is for General Gibbs. I want to thank you General for joining us this morning. I know that it is rare for you to make a personal appearance on TV.”

“You’re welcome, Allen. The discussion you’re having this morning is vital to the legal and cultural health of our nation and to the physical health of the majority of our citizens. I want to thank you for continuing to follow this story.”

“That brings us to my question. It’s been just over a week since the incident at Washington Genetics and we still don’t know exactly what happened. We have photos of the foyer before the
fire reached it. It was covered in blood and littered with dead bodies. NCSIA has sealed the autopsy records. Why are you hiding the cause of death from us?"

“The incident at the Department of Guide Proliferation, Washington Genetics Office is an ongoing investigation. In order to preserve our ability to bring charges against any perpetrators we need to keep any evidence we uncover sealed. There is no nefarious intent.”

“Can you at least tell us if it was a terrorist attack or sabotage?”

“All I can say is that at this time we are not ruling out anything.” The General said.

“General Gibbs?” Casey Witt asked. “I’ve heard rumors that the attack may have been metaphysical, is that also one of your areas of investigation?”

“As I said, Casey, we’re not ruling out anything at this time.”

“I do have one more question for you General. You have registered the claiming of Guide 915 two days after The Incident at W.G. We have video of you, in disguise, carrying a Mindwalker out of Washington Genetics and what looks like you in a state of Blessed Protector Syndrome on the grass with the Guide. Were you secretly bonded to 915 before The Incident and why did you attend the march in disguise?”

“I’d like to answer that question,” Hetty broke in. She knew that Gibbs would not like to answer. “I’ve known both General Gibbs and Guide 915 for years. Guide 915 has worked with General Gibbs on cases several times including, most recently, a trial where Guide 915 was a witness and Sentinel General Gibbs was head judge. At the trial Guide 915 was threatened with being flogged and in fact the General’s Guide, Tony, was injured protecting Guide 915 from the Sentinel that threatened her. When such stressful things happen it creates an emotional and protective link between an unclaimed Guide and a Sentinel. I believe that that is what the video is showing. As for the claiming, I would testify under oath, if called on to do so, that Sentinel Gibbs and Guide 915 were not bonded to each other before or during her incarceration by the DGP.”

“And the reason for the disguise?” Casey asked.

“As you know I’ve had to go into hiding because of credible threats to my life.” Hetty cut in again. “Four members of the Generals hive were threatened with abduction. They were actually successful in taking two of them, but the hive got them back and relocated the whole group to a safe house. General Gibbs was simply protecting the location of his safe house and the members of his hive by using a disguise. I don’t understand this line of questioning. Are you attempting to infer that General Gibbs was somehow complicit in The Incident at Washington Genetics?”

“From your own words he had motive,” Casey said.

“Every Sentinel in the country, not a member of the Initiative, had reason to resist the Guide laws,” Senator Lopez said. “I am on the Classified Senate Committee to Investigate The DGP. While I can’t tell you what the witnesses have told us, I can certainly comment on the recent news. In Boston a secret lab was blown up. Dr. Shamus’ body was recently found. You may remember that Dr. Shamus was the doctor that testified before Congress that Sentinels were to blame for the Guide shortage. He was also in charge of the secret lab in Boston. The records that were recovered from the Boston lab led to more secret labs across the country including one in Southern California that was imprisoning genetically altered Guide children as young as eight years old. These labs have been uncovered and the abducted Guides have been rescued due to NCSIA and General Gibbs leadership. To attempt to infer that General Gibbs was in anyway involved in the black ops army, The Initiative, that he was instrumental in exposing; would be outrageous if it weren’t so incredibly
absurd.”

“We'll be right back after these messages,” Allen Hall said, he turned to his co-host. “Are you insane,” Allen whispered to Casey through clenched teeth.

“I have the right to question our guests the way I see fit. Just because you want to throw softball questions at them doesn’t mean I have to.”

“Then maybe you should stop asking ‘incredibly absurd’ questions. Keep your mouth shut for the rest of the segment.”

“I will not!” Casey said.

“Welcome back,” Allen said when the break ended. “Hetty, how are the Guides that were rescued from the Initiative coping now?”

“They have all been returned to their homes and are in counseling. They’ve been excused from Guide School and will not be required to return until their Counselors feel they are ready.”

“Were any of them raped?” Casey asked.

“Yes. Some of them were artificially inseminated against their will,” Hetty answered.

“I’m talking about rape,” Casey said. “Artificial insemination is not the same as rape.”

Hetty did not like this young woman at all. She apparently didn’t have any empathy for what happened to the Guides. “Tell me Miss Witt, if you were abducted, strapped down to a table, your legs forced open, an object full of sperm from a male you never met is inserted into your vagina and the sperm injected into your body; all against your will, what would you call it? I call it rape.”

“I feel it would be more accurate to call it forced artificial insemination.”

“Rape is defined as penetration of the vagina without the consent of the victim. If you had the misfortune of being one of them, I believe that like them you would call it rape.”

“And what about the Guides that did consent?” Casey asked.

“Are you attempting to blame the victims?” Senator Lopez asked.

The producer suddenly cut to an add and the camera light turned off. “Casey!” the producer said into her ear piece. “You will make a sincere apology to Hetty, the Senator, and the abducted Guides for your line of questioning or you will find that tomorrow you no longer have a job.”

“That’s censorship,” Casey complained. “I’ll do no such thing.”

“Casey you’re fired,” the producer told her. “Allen I’m sorry, but I’ll be putting up a technical difficulty sign for the remainder of the segment. Thank you Senator Lopez, General Gibbs, and Director Lang. I apologize for Casey Witt’s behavior. Her conduct does not reflect the beliefs of this program. We are dedicated to bringing the truth to the American people. We are not in the business of spreading conspiracy theories.”

Hetty sighed as she shut down Skype. There were always going to be conspiracy theorists, even in the wake of overwhelming evidence. Luckily Allen Hall and the producer knew better. The segment wasn’t a complete loss. They had made some very valid points that would have gone unsaid without Miss Witt. Hetty would keep working for her Guides. Right now Sam and Callen
were being overly cautious. She allowed it, but soon she would be able to continue her work in the open. Her people would continue protesting outside their State Houses demanding the Repeal of the Guide Laws that took away a Guide’s reproductive rights. Hetty and her contacts around the country were still appearing on Talk shows and News programs as guests and in round table discussions. The population had been shown the evidence. A few small pockets of naysayers still existed. They always would. But as a rule the population no longer supported the ‘New’ Guide Laws.

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First day back

Cascade P.D.

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It was hard to believe that Spike and Xander had not been back to work at the station since he had been abducted. Jim and Blair had been able to go back while Xander was recovering, but Xander just wasn’t up to it and Spike was busy healing him. Then the task force was formed and it became their full time job.

The mundane Detectives in the bullpen had gone to Captain Banks and asked about having a Welcome Back party for Jim, Spike, and their Guides. Nothing too big just a happy acknowledgment.

Everyone in the bullpen came in early. They set up in the break room with a Welcome Back cake and they talked the Captain into donating a pot of his special blend coffee for the occasion. Simon made sure that no one touched the coffee pot until the guests of honor got their cup. A lookout was posted to watch for Jim’s truck, he had retrieved the truck from impound the day they left the mansion, as soon as Jim was spotted word was sent to the bullpen. Everyone crowed into the break room and waited quietly. The elevator doors opened to a silent floor. Jim stopped one step out sniffing the air. He turned and looked at Xander who shook his head to indicate he felt no danger. At the same time Spike let his hearing expand he could hear all the heartbeats coming from the same place.

*They’re in the break room,* Spike said through the hive mind.

They all knew what was about to happen. You couldn’t really give a Sentinel a surprise party. So Jim and Spike turned their dials back to human normal and went to the break room.

“Surprise!” everyone yelled with a laugh, followed by “Welcome back we missed you.” with lots of pats on the back and hand shaking. The feeling was good, warm, a feeling of coming home. For Xander this was where it had all started. This place, these people were the first ones that gave him unconditional support and faith in his abilities to be a Guide.

Xander grabbed Simon and hugged him. “Gee, I’ve missed you,” he said barely holding back tears of joy.

“Missed you too, Xander,” Simon said patting the Guide on his back.

“Hey,” someone yelled, “Do you mind pouring yourselves a cup of coffee. The Captain won’t let us have any until you get yours.”

Jim turned his scent dial up. “Is that your special blend?” Jim asked.
“Damn straight it is,” Simon said. “Just don’t get used to it. It will be a cold day in August before it happens again.”

Spike leaned in and whispered in Simon's ear. “Don’t tell Jim I told you this, but we love you too.”

The sentiment surprised Simon, but what surprised him more was that he knew, deep in his soul, that Spike meant it.

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The Hyperion

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Angel took the job that Hetty offered him. He got his private detective license and investigated Guide and domestic abuse as well as running The Hyperion as a safe house for the abused. Cordy got the well earned reputation of being a ‘Tiger Mother Guide’. She insisted that anyone staying at the hotel, three years old or above, take classes in Tai Chi. Teenagers and adults also took classes in self defense as well as money management.

“Money gives you options,” Cordy tells the residents. “Manage your money and you manage your life.”

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Colorado

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Jack and Jarod were able to hitch a ride back to Colorado on a military jet. As soon as Jarod set foot on the tarmac he said he had never seen a view so beautiful. Jack showed Jarod around town. Jarod found a book store and wanted to purchase a cookbook as a housewarming gift to themselves. Jack couldn’t say no to his Guide. They spent close to an hour going through the cookbooks before settling on one that they both liked. They stopped at a grocery store to pick up what they needed before Jack took Jarod to their new home. Jack actually found it enjoyable shopping with his Guide. It felt good to finally have Jarod home.

The next morning Jarod showed off his cooking skills with a breakfast that was every bit as delicious as Blair and Spike would make, then they headed for Cheyenne Mountain.

Jarod wasn’t allowed on the Stargate level so they were forced to wait one floor up for General Hammond to come and debrief them.

“Getting Clearance for Jarod isn’t going to be easy,” General Hammond said. “He has no records.”

“He’s my Guide, General. If he can’t get clearance, I’ll resign my commission,” Jack told him.

“Let’s not be hasty, Colonel. I said difficult not impossible.”

“Jarod can take Daniel’s place on SG-1. He already knows how to read Egyptian Hieroglyphics.”

Samantha Carter and Teal’c suddenly burst into the room.

“Colonel, why didn’t you tell us you were back?” Sam asked. “What are you doing up here?” She knew that the Colonel didn’t lose his security clearance.
“I just got in. I thought it was best to check in with the General first,” Jack told her. “Jarod, this is my team, Captain Samantha Carter and Teal’c.”

Jarod stood up with a huge smile and offered his hand. “Hi I’m Jarod,” he said shaking Sam and Teal’c’s hands.

Sam smiled back and Teal’c gave a bow of his head. “It’s good to meet you,” Sam said.

“Now that that’s over,” General Hammond said, “I need to get back to debriefing the Colonel.”

“I’m sorry General,” Sam said as she and Teal’c backed out of the room and closed the door.

“Have you heard from that Rat Bastard, Maybourne?” Jack asked.

“He was in here a few days ago, sticking his nose into everything,” Hammond told him.

“We got all their money. At least all they were using to fund the Initiative,” Jack told the General.

“That must have been what they were in a snit about. Did you find out anything about Spike’s blood?”

“Not much. There were no records of blood tests. He did tell me, his blood carries a symbiotic virus and stem cells. It enhances his immune system.”

“Is he willing to come in and let Dr. Frasier take a look?”

“No, I’m afraid not, General. He’s a nesting Sentinel, he doesn’t go anywhere without his Alpha and Guides. Plus he’s had a pretty bad experience with the Initiative in the past. He said something about not being turned into a lab rat and he feels that it would put everyone with blood like his in danger.”

“Blood like his?” Hammond asked. “I thought he was unique. You said there are others like him?”

“General, I have something to tell you. I bonded with Sentinel Spikeman. I’m one of the Sentinels with blood like his.”

“Jack, no offense, but we have your DNA and blood in our medical records. You don’t have any abnormalities in your blood.”

“I do now, General. I want to keep it secret. I’ll let Dr. Frasier give me a physical now that I’m back. But I want to return to duty as team leader of SG-1. I’m not interested in becoming a lab rat either.”

“I’ll talk to Dr. Frasier and let her know. I’ll make sure that she includes your blood in her ongoing research on the Goa’uld. I’ll have her keep your name out of it. If anyone asks I’ll have her say the blood is from an autopsy on one of our lost men.”

“Thank you General,” Jack said.

“If I’m going to get security clearance for Jarod I’ll need him to be up to speed in self defense and weapons use and safety. Also I want you to have Jarod read all of Daniel’s published books and any other public material there is. Dismissed.”

“I’ll take care of it,” Jack said. He took Jarod’s hand as they walked to the elevator. “There’s a Gym and a shooting range on base. On the way home we’ll stop at the bookstore and pick up copies of Daniels books. I need to get you ready to join SG-1”
Epilogue

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It had taken General Hammond nine long weeks to get security clearance for Jarod. After three weeks Jack had gotten very anxious. Jarod had no idea what to do about it so he called Blair through the hive mind and asked for his advice. Blair suggested they take leave and get a change of scenery. So Jarod told Jack that he would like to see Boston, Concord and Salem Massachusetts and if they had time he’d like to go to Pennsylvania to see the Liberty Bell.

Jack checked with General Hammond who also thought it was a good idea since it would get Jack off his back. The pair hitched a ride on an Air Force jet and rented a car. Jack had never been much of a touristy type person. His idea of a vacation was to go to a nice quiet lake and fish. But Jarod had never seen any place on the East Coast so Jack took him. Jack looked up every tourist trap possible for his Guide. They rode the Swan Boats in Boston Common, caught a game at Fenway Park, had lunch at Durgin Park, the oldest restaurant in America and visited the Paul Revere House and the Old North Church, they walked the Freedom Trail and toured Old Ironsides.

In Concord they walked the same roads as the Minutemen and stood where ‘the shot heard round the world’ was fired. They took the ferry from Boston to Salem and saw the House of Seven Gables. Jarod insisted on buying the book of the same name. They bought popcorn from the vendor on Salem Common and ate lobster bisque at the Lyceum. Jarod was like a kid in a candy store. After seeing everything Massachusetts had to offer they hitched another ride from the Air Force and went to Pennsylvania.

First stop was Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia. They saw the Liberty Bell and the Benjamin Franklin Museum. Jack thought it would be nice to go to Hershey. It fascinated Jarod that a whole town was based on a chocolate company. The whole time they were traveling Jack forgot about the pending clearance for Jarod and just enjoyed the time with his Guide. The days were filled with sightseeing and Jarod’s child like curiosity and delight filled laughter. The nights were spent in the comfort and warmth of each other’s arms.

When they got back to Colorado, Jack told General Hammond that he was going up to his cabin by the lake to fish. General Hammond gave Jack Daniel’s Journals. He told him to have Jarod read them and learn as much as he could about Daniel’s Stargate work. It looked like it was going to come down to whether or not Jarod could fill Daniel’s roll in SG-1. If he could, he’d get his clearance. Reading wasn’t a chore for Jarod. His mind was a sponge. He soaked up Daniel’s work. Then it was time. Jack and Jarod were called back to the mountain. Jarod of course had no problem answering the questions put to him about Daniel’s work. He just pretended to be Daniel. A week later Jarod got his clearance and joined SG-1. Now five months later he was off on another adventure. The team stood by the Stargate waiting for the chevrons to lock into place. Teal’c was telling Jarod one of his Jaffa jokes which always made Jarod laugh and had Sam and Jack totally confused as to why. The shimmer appeared and the team walked through. Life was good.

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Babies

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When Abby saw Hetty on the news talking about abducted Guides that had been inseminated against their will she told McGee she wanted to adopt one of the babies.

“You don’t even know if any of them will go up for adoption,” Tim told her.

“I thought you wanted a family,” Abby said with a stamp of her food. “Why are you saying no?”

“I didn’t say no, Abbs. I just don’t want you to get your hopes up and then be devastated if it doesn’t happen. We’ll talk to Hetty and find out if it is possible. If we can’t adopt one of DPG babies we’ll look into adopting from an agency.”

“I want one of the DGP babies!” Abby said. “Don’t you see, they’re like me. Somebody did stuff to me when I was just a zygote. These babies deserve parents that will love them no matter what was done to them, just like you love me.”

“I’ll call Hetty tomorrow,” Tim said as he pulled Abby into a hug and kissed her forehead.

Hetty did help. She found good families for all the unwanted babies. Tim and Abby adopted a little girl and named her Sarah after Abby’s favorite nun.

Dr. Tu’s records were destroyed in the fire so they didn’t know what, if anything, may have been done to her. But it didn’t matter, just as Abby said they loved her anyway.

Making adjustments to living with a woman was sometimes a bit embarrassing. Tony saw the circle around the 15th and couldn’t remember what was supposed to happen that day. So of course he asked at the breakfast table.

“Hey, what’s happening on the 15th. I don’t remember making any plans?”

Red turned red. “That’s for me. I put a circle on the calendar every twenty eight days. I’m sorry if I confused you. If you take me to the mall after work I’ll get my own calendar.”

Now it was Tony’s turn to turn red. “No, not unless you want your own calendar. I just thought I forgot something.”

Gibbs sipped his coffee and watched his two Guides. “The circle’s not a problem. I hardly notice it.”

Gibbs knew if he was right Red wouldn’t need to put circles on the calendar. She was scenting as pregnant. He didn’t say anything, he was willing to wait. The fifteenth was tomorrow. She could take a pregnancy test on the sixteenth.

Gibbs was right. She tested positive. The trio celebrated by going out to dinner.

The first trimester was a nightmare for the Sentinel. Red had morning sickness. The sound and smell of Red vomiting was difficult for the Sentinel to bare. Tony sent Gibbs out for a morning run and he stayed to kneel by her side holding a cool cloth to her neck and forehead. At first Red refused to keep soda crackers by the nest knowing how sensitive Sentinels were to crumbs. But Tony insisted. He took the sheets off everyday and shook them out before putting them back on.
When Red entered her second trimester it was time to buy maternity clothes. They found a store and the three of them went shopping. The clerk was not used to dealing with men. Much less a pair of men who were so picky about everything. The younger man took the clothing off the rack and held it up, pronouncing most things frumpy. “Don’t they have a stylist for maternity clothes?” he said before moving onto another rack.

The older man felt everything, rubbing it between his thumb and forefinger and declaring everything too scratchy. “Do you have anything in Egyptian Cotton? Six-hundred thread count?” He asked.

“Sentinel,” Tony silently mouthed to the clerk over Gibbs shoulder.

“I’m sorry, sir,” the clerk said. “This is our most expensive line.”

“What about silk?” Gibbs asked.

Red couldn’t help it, she burst out laughing and that got Tony laughing.

“Silk maternity clothes, really Jethro?” Red said. “I’m only going to be wearing them for a few months. I think you can put up with a bit of rough clothing. You’ll just have to keep your touch dial turned down a little more than normal.”

In the end they settled for, what Tony and Red thought, was a wonderful and stylish maternity wardrobe.

All in all, Red couldn’t complain about her life. She wondered how she ever got the idea that she would be in the way. She was loved and so was the baby. This baby would have two fathers and a mother, it would be a Guide, as all the children of a double X Guide would be. Her only regret was that she couldn't give Gibbs a Sentinel son. But it was a small regret and one that neither Gibbs or Tony shared.

Tony and Red helped Gibbs to keep his sense of touch turned down for the last two trimesters of the pregnancy. There was one exception, when the baby was kicking. Then Gibbs would turn up his sense of touch and lay his hand on Red’s naked belly. As soon as the doctor heard the baby’s heartbeat Gibbs would listen every night.

Tony was not just standing by either. He always made sure she had a pillow for her back and he would massage her feet with a Sentinel friendly lotion after every shower.

During the last of her third trimester Red found it difficult to get out of the nest at night to go pee. Gibbs would get up, pick up her, and put her on her feet. He never complained. In fact he was happy to do it. They considered changing from the nest to a bed but Red thought it would be too much of an adjustment and it was only going to be a few more weeks. So they stayed in the nest.

Tony and Gibbs both signed up for classes so that they could attend the delivery. Red understood pain control so the delivery went smoothly. In the delivery room the doctor handed the scissors to Gibbs and he cut the cord. They named their daughter Kaitlin. She was a joy to everyone.

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Cascade

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It was Jim that asked Simon’s permission to let Tara carry a child for him. Simon, of course, gave
his permission. Tara was very happy to say yes, under one condition. She wanted to move into the nesting house for the duration of the pregnancy. This child was to have four fathers and one mother and she wanted all of them to experience all that a pregnancy had to offer. There was extra room at the nesting house so that wasn’t a problem but Jim didn’t know how Simon would take the move.

Simon wasn’t happy. “Have them take you to your prenatal appointments and we can go to their home on weekends but sleep in our own beds in our home at night. Look Tara, I’m an Alpha Sentinel. I could probably cope with Jim’s nesting pack for a short time, but they have Clint living there and you know as well as I do that two strange Alpha’s don’t always play well together,”

“Jim can bring you into his hive,” Tara argued. “They all get along well together. What makes you think you wouldn’t?”

“Maybe I should have told Jim to find someone else. If I had known you’d come up with this cockamamie ultimatum I would have said no. Tara, I’m his boss! I’d have to … I couldn’t be Jim’s Alpha at work and not be his Alpha at home. It just won’t work. Damn it Tara, I’m going to have to tell him no, unless you change your mind on this.”

“Can’t you just think of it as us being their guest for the duration of the pregnancy?”

“Being a Sentinel is about territory. I can’t just go live in another Sentinel’s territory.”

“There has to be a solution,” Tara said.

“They could come here to live for the duration of the pregnancy. That’s the only other thing I can think of. I’ll talk to Jim.”

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Jim listened quietly to everything Simon had to say. “There’s not enough room in your house for the six of us.”

“I was talking about you and Blair.”

“I nest with Spike and Xander, the bond we have is deeper than usual, I can’t abandon the nest for nine months, and Clint and Sweet have to live with us.” Jim paused to think for a moment. “But there may be a solution that works. I gave Clint his own territory in the house. I can’t enter without his permission and when I do I have to go barefoot. I could do the same for you and Tara. Outside your bedroom would remain my territory. You’d be a guest for the duration of the pregnancy. When the pregnancy is over you can give the territory back to me.”

“My own territory in your house. I wondered how you and Clint managed not challenging each other. Can I smoke my cigars in there?”

“Not my call, Simon, it’s your territory. You’d have to deal with all four guides about that, but from what I hear second hand smoke is not good for a pregnant woman so you would be up against a formidable group of opponents on that one.”

“Well you can’t blame a Sentinel for trying. But you owe me one and I know what I want.”

“If it’s in my power to do it, I will,” Jim said. “Just name it.”

“I want to be this kid’s Godfather.”

“I’m pretty sure that’ll be a no brainier.”
“We worked it out,” Jim told everyone at supper. “Simon’s bedroom will be his personal territory. Just like with Clint. He did have one demand.” He finished putting a worried look on his face.

“Please tell me it’s not the cigars?” Blair said.

“No, but I told him I would try my best to talk you into it,”

Blair groaned, “So out with it.”

“It’s a deal killer, Chief. He wants to be the baby’s Godfather,” Jim said with a ‘got ya’ smile.

Everyone at the table but Blair, burst out laughing.

“You ass, you put me through that. You knew damn well we were going to ask Simon and Tara to be the Godparents.”

“I just had to see your face,” Jim said. “It was priceless.”

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One month later Jim donated his sperm at the Clinic and two weeks later it was confirmed that Tara was pregnant. Everyone helped the Banks to bring their things to the nesting house. Tara didn’t want to sleep in a nest. She thought it would be too hard to get in and out of in the third trimester, plus they slept in a bed at home, so Simon chose the bedroom with the bed that they had bought for Gibbs. Tara and Sweet hit it off and became instant friends. They spent time together watching girly movies and talking about woman’s stuff. Tara had an easy first trimester. She had some nausea but no vomiting. She had had a child before, so she knew what to expect. Her maternity clothes were old and out of style so she had to go shopping, but she refused to let the Sentinel’s come into the store with her. Sweet accompanied her while Jim, Simon, and Clint sat on a bench in the mall, one where they could see anyone that walked into the store and also gave the Sentinels a good view through the store window. Jim felt like he was being treated like a naughty school boy, but Simon told him to get used to it and when a pregnant woman gets upset, NEVER NEVER say to her ‘it’s just your hormones that are out of balance, sweetheart.’

“I guess you made that mistake?” Jim asked.

“Oh yeah. My advice, if she gets upset put your arm around her and just purr. Let Blair take care of the rest. No, on second thought, she’s my Guide; I’ll do the hugging and purring.”

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Tara insisted that Jim and Blair accompany her to all her prenatal appointments. Spike was willing to accept what Tara wanted but Xander was not happy. He was as much Jim’s Guide as Blair was. Tara was surprised when she found out. She had just thought of Blair as Jim’s Guide and Xander as Spike’s. She only saw them at work where the cross bond was much less noticeable. The first time Jim and both Guides showed up for an appointment the doctor objected.

“The father and his Guide are the only ones permitted in the exam room,” the doctor told them holding the door open as he stared at Xander.

“They’re both my Guides,” Jim told him.

“In that case you need to choose which one will stay. This room is too small for both Guides. I’m making an exception to have one in here.”
“We’ll both go then,” Blair said.

“No, I’ll leave,” Xander said. “I didn’t know the room was so small.”

“We’re both going,” Blair said grabbing Xander’s arm and tugging him out the door. “You’re right Xander, you are every bit as much Jim’s Guide as I am, I was being selfish. The four of us are going to be dads to this baby, not just Jim and me. Does Spike feel as if he is being cut out of this too?”

“No, he said that he’ll be happy to feel the baby kick and listen to it’s heartbeat. But he does want to be there for the birth.”

“You know we could switch off,” Blair said.

“Are you sure, Blair?”

“I’m sure,” Blair said. “There isn’t much that happens. Jim can tell us what the doctor says.”

Jim was a bit worried. He thought he may be forced into choosing between his Guides. He should have known that Blair and Xander would work it out.

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The beginning of the Third trimester meant it was time to go to ‘Dad’ classes. When five men showed up for class with Tara she got a lot of stares. They all took turns helping her with her breathing exercises and trying on the ‘Sympathy Vest’, a vest with a fake pregnant belly. The men did learn what their mates were going through with the difficulty of keeping their balance when walking and not being able to bend at the waist when standing up and sitting down.

Everyone took the breathing exercises seriously. Jim practiced with both Tara and Blair.

Tara’s due date was circled on the calendar, but the days seemed to be creeping by. Every time Tara went for her checkup and the doctor said nothing was happening, it was a disappointment for Jim’s pack.

Then finally it happened. It was two AM when Simon knocked on the nesting room door. When they got to the hospital Tara was put into the Family Birthing Suite. Jim’s son was born at 7:22 AM. and Jim cut the cord. They named the baby Bill after Jim’s father.

Xander asked Jim to have a DNA test done to see if little Billy was a Sentinel or a Guide. Jim resisted, he said it didn’t matter he loves his son either way. Xander’s voice broke as he told Jim that he had been brought up to be a Sentinel and the sudden knowledge that he was not contributed to him feeling unworthy. It was as if he suddenly lost his place in the World. Jim hugged Xander and assured him that this child would never be abandoned either emotionally or physically.

“I know that,” Xander said, “but I want Bill to know who he is and be proud of it right from the beginning and not have to wonder how he’s going to fit in in life.”

Jim had a DNA test done. It wasn’t difficult or invasive. Just a cheek swab and they had their answer within hours. Jim was told that his son would become a Sentinel.

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Eighteen Months After
Initiative Take Down

A tremendous amount of evidence poured into the Sentinel Department of Justice. It took months to put together cases and indict the accused. Sentinel law was different than mundane law. It was more military in style with a panel of five high ranging Sentinels to act as judges. Because there were so many high ranking Sentinels indicted NCSIA had to vet the the judicial panels. Everything took time. The wheels of justice move slowly but they did move and the cases were adjudicated.

Mundanes that were indicted in the conspiracy, mostly politicians and wealthy businessmen, were prosecuted in their own court system.

All the cases pertaining to the Initiative, the DPG, and conspiracy to abuse Guides; were found in favor of the prosecution. General Gibbs vouched for Angel and he got immunity for his testimony. Graham had a hard time accepting that Angel wouldn’t pay any price for the killing of his secretary but in the end Angel’s testimony was instrumental in bringing others to justice and Graham grudgingly admitted it was for the best.

Hive Reunion

It was mid summer and a perfect time for a Hive reunion. They asked Hetty if they could use the mansion, as now there were babies to contend with. She, of course, gave her consent.

The reunion was scheduled to last a week. Jim, Blair, and Clint went to the mansion two days early to make sure it was baby proofed. Jim scrubbed the floors and crawled around looking for any baby hazards. Blair dusted, checked the house for chipped paint, and cleaned the linens and got the bedrooms ready for occupancy. Clint was in charge of cleaning all horizontal surfaces above the floor as well at removing any breakables and putting baby gates in appropriate places. A sign was put in the foyer that all must remove their shoes to keep the floors clean for crawling babies.

The hive started arriving on time. The first to arrive were the Sentinels and Guides from Cascade. Then the NCSIA group. Gibbs was tempted to requisition a jet. Traveling with two babies was a chore. Gibbs swore they needed more paraphernalia than a Marine troop, but since the trip was personal he felt it would be unethical. After arriving they had to stop off and purchase two portable cribs, Gibbs refused to check them through the airline as luggage.

Seeing Gibbs greet Jim and Spike was an eye opener for Red. The usually reserved Sentinel, except in the nest, showed no hesitation at all to enthusiastically hug his hive brothers.

Blair ran up to Tony and jumped into his arms. “Hey, Blair bear,” Tony laughed, “I’ve missed you too.”

It was Xander who went to greet Willow. She was holding the baby so Xander could only put one arm around her. “Willow, she’s beautiful,” he told her.

Willow smiled. “Some of the memories of Sunnydale came to me in a dream,” she told him. “Was I in love with a werewolf?”

“That would be Oz,” Xander told her. “He’ll be here anytime now, but he doesn’t have the
Willow nodded. “Thanks for the heads up. It’ll still be nice to meet him.”


Spike put his hand at the back of McGee’s neck and pulled him into a kiss. “Childe,” he whispered back before turning to Abby and giving her and the baby both a kiss on the cheek. The baby grabbed a hank of Spike’s hair and giggled as her parents pried her little fingers away.

Spike kissed the back of her hand, “You’ve got a good grip there little one,” he told her as he carded his finger through her hair.

Everyone helped carry their luggage into the mansion. The babies were fed and changed. Hetty sat quietly watching the goings on, this was, in every way but blood, a family reunion, or what a family reunion should be. It definitely lacked the crazy uncle, no Sentinels jockeying for head Alpha. No subtle argument about personal territory. There was only warmth and joy and it felt damn good.

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Jack requested time off to attend the reunion. The General couldn’t give him the full week but he did manage to rearrange the Stargate schedule and free up four days. Jack and Jarod were glad to have it. Once more they hitched a ride on an Air Force jet and made it in time for the last four days of the reunion. Graham and Riley picked them up at the Air Base and drove them to the mansion.

As soon as he could Jack got Spike alone. They walked around the grounds just as they had done during the war. “I want to tell you about the blood. I donated a pint for research. Hammond ordered Dr. Frasier to keep our names out of it. Everything is buried in her ongoing research. Anyone reading it will think she got the blood from a man we lost to the Goa’uld. She managed to separate out the virus, but it dies almost instantly when it’s removed from blood and she can’t establish it in anyone else’s blood.”

“Tell her to get permission from the blood donors to use their blood for research, before she takes it. That may solve her problem. There’s a meta-physical component to all of this. I wasn’t kidding when I said it won’t work unless you want it.”

“I’ll tell her, but I didn’t come here for advice, I just wanted you to know you were all safe.” Jack told him.

“Didn’t think otherwise,” Spike said, “or you would’ve given me a warning.”

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The last day of the reunion Jim and Blair went into Cascade and bought T-bone steaks, Idaho potatoes, corn on the cob and watermelon for a cookout. The Cascade sky was cloudless and it was a beautiful night under the stars. When Spike went into the house to refill the beer cooler Willow followed him.

“Is there something you need Willow?” Spike asked.

“This is the first chance I’ve had to talk to you alone.”

Spike tilted his head and looked at her.

“I’ve been having flashbacks of my past life in Sunnydale. Not the whole life like you and Xander...
“Yeah, the Powers can do that,” Spike told her.

“I also had a vision of the future. It had to do with you and me. We’re going to have a child together. A girl Guide. You were sent here to bring Sentinels into their next level of evolution. She’ll be born to bring Guides into theirs. It’s not going to be for awhile. Maybe two or two and a half years before I get pregnant, but it is what the Powers want.”

“Do you want it, Willow?” Spike asked softly and once more looking at her with tilted head.

“You’re not the only one here for atonement. I have things to atone for too. But it’s more than that. I met her soul, Spike, and I very much want to give her life.”

“The Powers don’t make anything easy. They give me a daughter but I won’t be part of her life.”

“You’ll be part of her life,” Willow said placing a comforting hand on Spike’s arm. “Gibbs will move to the Cascade office. It makes sense since this is the main office for Sentinels and Guides.”

“Hey, what’s taking so long with the beer?” Morgan called from the kitchen doorway.

“Be right there.” Spike said. He turned to Willow. “Thanks for telling me. I think we’ll have a lot to talk about over the next two years.”

Willow smiled and leaned in and gave Spike a kiss on the cheek. Two years would go by very quickly.

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It was late but no one wanted to go to bed. It was too hard for the reunion to end. But it had to end. It was Hetty who took things into her own hands. She stood up. “President George W. Bush said: ‘Even in the toughest times we lift our eyes to the broad horizon ahead.’ We have done that. In the face of overwhelming odds this hive stayed the course. Always looking ahead for a better life for our citizens. I want to make a toast. To the hive; to it’s Sentinel’s and it’s Guides. May we be forever together; forever vigilant; and forever strong,”

The End.

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Chapter End Notes

Author's Note:

I started this story in June of 2006. That’s not a typo. It was only going to be one story. Sentinel scents Guide, Guide runs, Sentinel finds Guide and they fall in love.

Then my friend Neichan became my co-writer and the story became two stories, then three, then four.

It has stayed on my mind through my husband’s diagnosis and treatment of cancer, through my own long recovery from a misdiagnosed burst appendix and the loss of
Neichan as my co-writer due to real life popping in during my years of being too sick to put two sentences together all of which happened in the middle of RG3.

Thanks to my current beta, story buddy, and occasional co-writer, Time Vortex who has given me the boost I needed to get this story finished.

I thank all of you for sticking with this story. Your faithfulness and perseverance is greatly appreciated.

Hugs to each and every one of you,

Joan Z

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