

A Warring Infection

By : **Bridget Shayde**

Treachery and despair rule the world created as a safe haven for the survivors of W.W.IV. Children get abducted from their families only moments after birth. Their bodies are subjected to hideous scientific experiments that reconstruct their DNA, making them shells of their former selves. Only a few of them remain capable of human skills, and among them is Xavier Shadowheart who has been given the task of apprehending a young doctor who has blindly taken the mutated creatures into her own hands. Will Shayda Rivera be able to cure these poor souls, or will Xavier unintentionally hand her over to a murderer?

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Prologue

A world destroyed by the people that built it. A land brutalized by weaponry made to protect it. How much blood had earth, the homeland, seen before she was demolished by nuclear weaponry and savage politics? Only time knew the answer to that long forgotten question, and few people even dared to ask it anymore.

The old generation feared for their lives the day they were deported nation by nation to a new world that had been created by the very men that had destroyed the past one. They knew not of the outer realms of the world nor did they know that they could live upon any world other than their original one. Who were these men that sought only power and greed to send them unto a new world?

The older ones of the Firstborns, the old generation, knew to be cautious as they arrived into this new world. There were so few of them now. It would take everything that they had to keep the new race alive.

Groups formed, and among them came the ultimate. Led by Roran Crell, the only surviving scientist that didn't die from either human rampages or the creation of the new world, the Firstborns created cities and governments. Civilization blossomed at last, and all was made mundane once more.

People forgot about war for a time and loved each other in their own ways until more nations arose. People colonized the land creating the same problems that had arisen on the Homeland. Wars were fought once more, but instead of using bombs, heavy machinery, and common soldiers the government of Cratos forged a new weapon, an incredible weapon.

Through the use of technology, scientists stole the genetics of humans and animals that they kept hidden from the world. Immortals were made. Blood was spilt, and weapons now came in the forms of young men and women that were invulnerable to anything. Armies grew as men and women united to create children.

Those children were then cultivated like common plants. Genetics, stem cells, and cloning grew rampant within civilization. Families were tore apart in wartime *and* peacetime. Once more, the government grew corrupt by greed and power.

Children were held captive, stolen from their families, from their lives. Genes were implanted into their helpless bodies, making all kinds of evils. Some fed on blood. Some had extra body parts to wield more weaponry. Others looked normal when their claws and fangs weren't distended. Thus, Xavier Shadowheart was born.

Chapter One

The city was empty to the untrained eye, devoid of life. Exanimate towers loomed above the city's streets and gave watch like haunting sentries. Their tall spires reached up, up towards the midday sun whose burning eye cast a glower upon the land. Grey was all that the eye could see. A grey skyscraper, a grey street, a grey bridge-they were all that was left of this ravaged land.

Clouds hung in fluffy, white patches across the sky as they journeyed over this desolate place. They saw the lack of life. They acknowledged the blood splatter upon the ground, and they recognized the death that permeated through the city walls.

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A single vehicle passed through the streets. Its quiet, airy hum rang out so loudly in the silence of this place. Anywhere else, the vehicle wouldn't have even caused a single creature to look at it, but here it was as if a tank was driving through crushing everything in its path.

With careful precision its dark headed driver weaved it through the wreckage of vehicles that had gone on multiple collision courses with buildings and other vehicles. A waste collector was flipped on its side and the remains of its halted voyage were spilled out on the interstate: a pizza box, a bag of garbage, and other miscellaneous items were spread out like a smorgasbord for the homeless. *What waste*, Xavier Shadowheart thought as he slid his stealthy vehicle between two cargo trucks that had wrapped themselves around one another.

His grey-blue eyes glanced out his tinted window, and he caught a glimpse of a dead woman. Her body was horribly torn. Her clothes ripped off her bloodied skin. She had to have been a stripper by the looks of her tall heels, ripped mini skirt, and see through bra. Her skeleton shined through at the back of her throat. Meat hung off at her thighs. If Xavier hadn't seen it a thousand times before, he would have lost his lunch.

Nonchalantly, he leaned his strong jaw against his fist then glanced in his back mirror to where its reflection landed on the silver briefcase in the backseat. The five vials that rested within that comfortably cushioned case were ready and sterilized to be filled with the DNA of the creatures he was hunting. It was the first time he was sent to do a research mission. Usually, Xavier was sent in to discharge the beasts from the land, but now he was out on field research. How uninteresting.

He loved the fury of the fight, the blood that he spilled for his people. He loved to take out his frustrations on the genetically malfunctioned. He couldn't do that this time. The place had already been cleared out. He had to do work for the nerds since their past field researchers had wound up *dying* by the hands of the mentally uncontrollable and furiously starved Infected. This work was sure to be tedious, but it was either do this work now or have Gwen on his ass chewing his ear off until he did it.

At least, this was supposed to be a quick mission, and he wouldn't have to worry about some complete twerp getting scared then running off when an Infected came at him. All he had to do was find a couple of victims, collect some saliva and blood samples then get the hell out of there faster than Gwen could bite off his ear.

Xavier glanced over more corpses as he drove into the slums. There were more here, but these people looked as if they'd put up some sort of fight. The bodies of gang members were decorations on the broken asphalt. Blood was splattered all over the place, and the shells of not military grade bullets were tossed over the ground. Even a few Infected had been butchered on the ground in death.

As he parked his Halo Lightning in the middle of the street, Xavier pulled the silver briefcase from the backseat. His combat boot covered foot let go of the traditional clutch in his car, and he opened up the scissor-door on the driver's side.

The scent of death whipped up into his nostrils as soon as he stepped onto the blood stained asphalt, and he curled his lip at the sight of a bodiless Infected's head. Rolling it beneath his boot, he kicked it towards a victim then got down on one knee to analyze the deceased.

The body was male and mortal. He looked to be around mid-thirties and bore the tattoos of whatever gang he had been in. As a matter of fact, the entire man's body was coated in tattoos though they were hidden by the darkness of his skin.

As Xavier moved the man's head around with his gloved grasp, he analyzed each marking along the man's hide. By the looks of things, he had killed many people for his gang and lived to tell the tale until the Infected

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came to show him what a real war looked like. It was a shame. The man could have been a great fighter if he would have only put it to mind. With as many kills as were tattooed upon his skin, even Xavier could look upon this corpse with respect.

Turning his attention to the silver suitcase, he opened it. The oxygen sealed case hissed while steam poured out with the top's lifting, and Xavier withdrew a syringe. With a gentle movement, he placed the syringe into the man's still warm forearm then drew out his blood. He had to have contracted some amount of the disease during the scrap with the Infected, and that was deemed apparent when Xavier noticed the large claw and fang marks decorating the man's skin.

After drawing the amount of blood needed, Xavier capped off the syringe. He unscrewed the needle then placed the filled vial into a slot ready for filled specimen's blood. The body of the dead man stared up to the sky where the clouds were lazily strolling across it, and Xavier glowered. Two gentle hands reached out then closed the eyes of the corpse. "Rest easy," he whispered before turning his attention towards the head that he'd rolled next to the victim. "Now, it's your turn."

Again, Xavier withdrew another syringe. He placed it inside of the jugular that was still bleeding out then withdrew the desired amount. After that, he took out a cotton swab. Parting the lips of the mangled creature with blood soaked hair and a bulldog's under bite, Xavier swabbed the damp tongue and inner cheek of the beast. Its thick, gooey saliva coated the swab until Xavier was ready to gag at the smell of decay emanating from the creature's open throat and mouth. Finally, he withdrew his sample then placed it in another vial to put beside its blood.

Three samples down and one to go, he thought before hearing a sound so low that only a Telios could hear it. His grey eyes ripped over to the sensor in his car, and he quickly snatched up the suitcase. Leaving the corpses where he'd found them, Xavier switched his car into first gear then second then all the way up to fifth as he followed the sound of the sensor.

Pulling up a grid map, Xavier used its touch screen to zoom in until just the area that he was in showed up. His movements were represented by a flashing blue dot, and he cautiously watched until three red dots appeared behind another flashing blue one. Immediately, he stomped down on the gas pedal.

If there was one chance, one single chance to rescue another human from this chaos, he would do it. With that on his mind, Xavier drifted around a sharp curve in the square then hunted down for the blue dot that was still flashing on his screen. His nerves were fraying as he watched the red catching up to the other one. He couldn't let whoever this was die because he was too late. He'd been too late too many times in his life, and he would not lose a survivor like he did his sister. Too many people had died on his watch. He'd lost friends, comrades, and family members alike to these demons. He wouldn't lose anyone else.

Gritting his fangs together, Xavier shifted again then turned another corner only to be blockaded by more wrecked vehicles. His eyes darted to the dots on his grid before he threw the car in reverse. The wheels screeched in protest then spun in a pool of blood before launching him off in the direction he'd come from.

The midnight blue Halo Lightning weaved through the vast amounts of wrecks that were dotted along the city streets until he caught a glimpse of a young girl leaping over a fence with the three Infected hot on her trail.

Quickly, Xavier rolled down the window before firing off several rounds to distract the starved creatures. Their grotesque faces looked his way, and it was just enough to slow them down for the girl to reach his car. The passenger door swept open as the girl scrambled to make her way inside then she slammed the door shut. "Kill those things!" she screamed at Xavier with her chest heaving from a long run and pure exhaustion.

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With a nod, Xavier used to points on his gun to line up with the head of the first Infected then he fired a round off into the in between the two of them.

Time seemed to move slower as the bullet whizzed through the air. The engraved bullet's riveted pattern pulsated with the energy encased inside of it, and the Infected howled as it charged headlong into the shot. Wind berated the bullet's straight shot, and it sunk into each groove. Oxygen sunk into the shell then the veins on the bullet lit up. Fire erupted inside of the bullet, and when it sunk into the skull of the hideous, decaying monster it was sent to destroy, it exploded. Fire erupted in flames within the skull of the beast. Quickly, it fed upon the creature's insides, and Xavier watched with the girl as the Infected clasped his hands to either side of his head. The fire licked at the inside of the genetically ruined being and fed upon its brain before the creation fell to its knees. The fire still brewed within, and it would until its brain was made entirely to ash.

With a calm expression, Xavier lined up the gun to the other two they were breezing past and fired two rounds to finish off the rest of them. Again, the wind ignited the inside of the bullet then the bullet ignited the inside of their skulls, and the young girl watched in awe as the beasts fell to the ground in an instant.

"Crux Militia," she breathed and turned her head to look at Xavier who was calmly driving down the interstate. "You are a part of the Crux Militia!" she screamed with rage tainting her voice.

With a raised eyebrow, Xavier stated, "Yes, I am General Xavier Shadowheart of the Field and Research Branch of the Crux Militia." He gave a short pause before asking, "Why?"

"You bastards let my dad die! You left my family out there to die! My mom, my dad, my brother are all dead because of you! Your people sent the Infected to Sageville! You killed my family!" she screamed with a voice breaking howl. Her hand pulled out a military grade hand gun, and she pointed it to Xavier's skull. "You left us out there to die!"

In a brief whiplash of his hand, Xavier disarmed her and locked both of her wrists in his large grasp. "Roran Crell would never send Infected to Sageville, little girl. Now, sit down and shut up or else I'll throw you out of this car for you to get killed by those creatures out there." His grey eyes gave her a steady glower as he looked down upon her. "And if you want someone to blame, blame those damned rebels that keep meddling in our affairs."

With tearstained eyes, the teenager clenched her flat teeth down hard against each other. Xavier's grip around her bruised wrists hurt, almost made tears come to her eyes, but she didn't dare cry. She'd done enough of that when her family was butchered. Instead, she ripped free of his hold as soon as it loosened and balled her hands up into two fists.

Xavier weaved through more unmoving traffic while letting his rage gradually abate from his body. He would not let some fifteen year old upset him *that* much. His eyes closed for a long moment then reopened just in time for him to swerve up to the main interstate.

The dirty, blonde headed teenager curled up with her bare feet on the leather of Xavier's car, and he glanced over to her. She looked ready to cry. He could see the faint sheen of liquid daubing her eyes. She had every reason to cry, but Xavier didn't regret what he'd told her. He just wished that he would have done it in a lighter way. Still, she had been pointing a gun to his head.

With a sigh, Xavier put the car on autopilot using the GPS and reached into the backseat. The sudden closeness of Xavier's body to the girl's caused her to jump, but she held her ground after that little bound. After some scrambling through his backpack, he withdrew a bottle of ice cold water and a pack of gum.

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Her head tilted at the sight of the items she was handed. He explained, "I thought that you might want something to take the taste of blood out of your mouth. Always helps me." Shrugging, she took a stick of gum then a swig of the water.

The icy liquid chilled the back of her throat then splashed inside of her empty stomach, making her starved state worsen. Nonetheless, she continued to drink it slowly. It'd been so long since she'd drunk real water from a bottle instead of from the broken pipes that stuck out of buildings. It was risky to take the time to drink or eat anything for any amount of time, so she'd kept it at a minimum. She ran out for supplies in the nighttime since even the Infected had to sleep at some point in time.

How many times had she almost died before this soldier saved her? She couldn't even count. Despite his status, she was thankful for him. If he hadn't have saved her, those three boys that she used to hang out with at high school would have eaten her alive. Bile rose up in her throat at the thought. Those boys had been kidnapped before the attack, and now they were dead without even being themselves when they died.

"Thank you, General Shadowheart," she murmured with a cracked voice. Her big, green eyes looked up towards the man who just nodded.

He had an air about him. It was the kind of air that her father had before he joined the rebels or those damned rebels as Xavier had referred to them. He sat up tall and straight despite how uncomfortable it looked to the hunched over teenager. His eyes were level and looked straight ahead. What did those Crux Militia guys do to their men to make them stand up so straight and proud? The only way the girl would be caught dead doing that was if she was going to get beat if otherwise.

Coughing up some more words, she asked, "Are we going to the hidden base in Augustine? My father used to work there before he was a damned rebel." That surely had Xavier's face faltering. He even coughed in his hand at the question.

"Your father must have started some rumors about the government before the attack," Xavier realized. "Yes, though. I'm going to have a couple of doctors look at you then we'll decide what to do with you from there. If Crell or Aurora isn't paying a visit, you may have a chance at not joining the experiments."

"Hell no! I will never join the Militia voluntarily or otherwise! I'd kill myself before I became like those creatures out there!" the girl exclaimed and threw the empty bottle of water towards Xavier.

Snagging it before it hit him, Xavier stated, "Your father must have injected some serious hallucinations into you before his passing. The Crux Militia didn't create those creatures. They're the after effects of the rebel's attempts to forge an army against us. Calm down and stop spitting out nonsense."

Her fist slammed against the bullet proof glass on Xavier's car, and she shouted, "You're just like the rest of them! You couldn't take a hint if it cock slapped you in the face. As soon as the doctors tell me that I'm not Infected, I'm going to find the rebels or die trying. There's nothing you can do to stop me!"

Shaking his head, Xavier said, "Now that I know your little plan, don't you think that I'd either follow you to their basecamp or stop you from going? You're too hot headed to get far without being killed by the Infected out there. Shut up, keep your ass in the seat, and do as we say when we get into Augustine."

With a scowl the girl crossed her arms tightly against her chest and glowered towards the nearing city. It was Augustine for sure. How did she know? Well, for starters every other city was in utter ruin from the Infected that the Militia had sic'd on them.

Chapter 2

Chapter Two

Jutting her chin up to the sky, Mercy walked with aggravated obedience alongside Xavier who had to snap cuffs around her wrists to keep her from either bolting or smacking him. Her sweaty, dusty, and bloody hair swished in ratty knots against her shoulders. Her lips held a scowl upon them. Her eyes glowered up at everyone that passed them by. She was the epitome of a hormonal teenager in Xavier's eyes.

Grey eyes rolled at her attitude, but Xavier continued to walk the teenager towards the multitudes of stations that were placed in front of the base. The girl's eyes scrutinized each cleaning station, and she winced at the sharp hospital lights that pierced her pupils. Xavier walked them through the first door then tossed the girl into the chair.

From the folds of another part of the station, a brunette appeared in medical garb. Green gloves, surgical mask, white scrubs, yeah, the chick had on the whole shebang. Still, the teenager had to sit still as the woman peeled away the surgical mask to reveal full, crimson stained lips that curled at the dirty child's disgust.

"Well, Xavier, it seems as if you brought home a cute, little girl." The brunette turned away from Xavier to look towards the girl. "What's your name, girl? Mine is Gwen Xenna."

Scoffing at the soothing voice that the doctor or nurse or whatever the hell that bitch was, the raggedy teenager snarled, "Listen, bitch, my name is Mercy Rainier, and I'm not a baby. I'm seventeen years old and can whip a gun out faster than you can hop on this guy's cock and acclimate." She leaned closer to the woman whose jaw had dropped to the floor and whispered, "Suck it."

Unable to do anything but stand there and gawk, Gwen stared in awe at the child. What a complete bitch! Had no one even tried to raise that tramp right? Gwen had no clue. All she could do was stare at the girl whose smile was wider than the space between Earth and Mars.

Breaking in, Xavier waved his hand. "Hey, both of you shut up. We didn't come here to dis the Militia or each other." His grey eyed attention turned to the awestruck doctor. "Just toss Mercy in the showers and let's check her out for Infection. If she's okay, we'll treat her with some just-in-case antibodies and keep a tight leash on her. It's not like we can just send her out there to die. She's a kid."

Mercy cast a quick glower towards the soldier before having him pull her up lightly by her arm. "What if I don't want to stay here? What are you going to do then, soldier? Shoot me?" She yanked away from Xavier but was quickly reeled back in by his god-like strength. His grip was like a manacle, and from all of the tug of war they'd been playing with her arm, she'd be sure to have bruise marks in lines as long as his fingers. There was no getting out of his grasp unless he felt like letting you go.

"Well, unfortunately, Mercy, you won't have a say in the matter, and if you try and escape, I doubt that you'll get any farther than the elevator." His free hand pointed towards the cameras following them towards a steamy room. "There are cameras up and down this place. Even the bathrooms have cameras."

Snarling, Mercy continued to walk then was paused when Gwen said, "Hand her over, Xavier. I'll have to take her into the showers, and you have to go too anyway. The other doctors will see to it that your blood samples are drawn. They've already checked out the briefcase and have it in Analysis as we speak. I also said that they'd use this girl's samples as your missing vials."

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With a nod, Xavier walked off. Every step he took that had him walking further away from the rowdy street rat that he'd left behind had him being followed by a curse or insult. Whatever hatred that her father had instilled into her was deep rooted. With hatred like that it could never be stomped out. Mercy would always hate the Militia. It was a kind of rage that Xavier was familiar with. He understood what Mercy was going through.

As Xavier withdrew the curtain to the showers filled with other soldiers washing the blood and gore from their bodies, he took a trip down memory lane.

"No! Don't take her too! Please, don't take my baby girl!" a woman howled as her unborn child squirmed within her belly at her mother's distress. "Please! Just take the boy if you have to take one of them. Just the boy! I never wanted him in the first place!"

Standing wide eyed as his mother screamed to the man who had called himself Amar Aurora, Xavier watched his mother's vain attempts to save his unborn sister. His tears ran hot down his face though he made not a single sound. What did he do? Why did Momma not want him? Confused, Xavier squeezed his arms tighter around the broken stuffed wolf that he had been given on Christmas morning just days ago.

The tall man just snickered at the bawling woman and patted young Xavier on his jet black head. Amar leaned forward towards the woman. "Sorry, ma'am, but the Militia is not prejudiced against young women in the battlefield. You'll just have to give up that cute baby girl of yours too."

"I'm only six months! You can't take my child before she's born!" Xavier's mother exclaimed as she dug her nails into the bed sheets she had been cuffed onto.

The man examined Xavier's mother with a steady expression before explaining, "Yes, we can, Mrs. Shadowheart, and since your husband would rather give up his children than go to jail for treason, we have full legal ability to take your baby." He turned to the brunette doctor whose name Xavier didn't catch and said, "Take her baby. We'll have enough trouble trying to change this boy before the deportation to Mars. He's too old. Probably best sent to slaughter."

Xavier's eyes flashed wide as the woman stabbed a needle into his mother, and he screamed as Amar picked four year old Xavier up. The last thing he saw was the woman looming over his mother's flailing form as she cried out to Xavier. "Take care of your sister, Xavier! I will hate you forever if you don't!"

Glowering, Xavier stepped out of the shower with that last haunting phrase echoing in his mind. It was such a stupid phrase but one that had haunted him through every one of his years ever since seeing his white headed sister always at the side of that sick bastard, Amar Aurora. Yeah, Xavier could understand Mercy's rage. He felt it every single time that bastard came around and forced Xavier's sister to sit in Amar's lap. Xavier knew what went on behind closed doors with the two of them.

Slowly, Xavier wrapped a towel around his waist then departed from the showers to head to the next station. Augustine was filled with these kinds of stations. At every entrance in the base, even if you hadn't left, you had to go through one. It was due to Gwen's paranoia that someone would contract the disease, and most of everyone had in some form or another-except for Xavier.

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That was why Gwen made sure to take as much blood from him as possible. She was the biggest vampire he'd ever seen, and he'd seen plenty after killing off some Infected that were feeding on some trapped soldiers in the hospital basement. She planned to make some cure or something from his DNA. She oftentimes called him the perfect experiment when she was talking to someone else.

If anything, it was creepy as hell. Still, Xavier had to put up with it. He had been sent here after his awakening by Roran Crell himself. It was his first mission to go there and help the base. Roran said that he'd give him further orders after he could clear up some *problems* he'd been having with his wife.

Leaning his head back against the smooth leather of a chair, Xavier tossed his arm up on the table to have another doctor draw his blood. The man withdrew the syringe and without a word drew blood from Xavier's arm.

There was something about the way that people always treated him around here. It was standoffish as if they were afraid Xavier would snap at the smallest thing. Very few people spoke to him aside from Gwen and a woman with dyed purple and blue hair named Winter. Men always stood away from Xavier as if he was a lone wolf, but women frequently gawked, admiring him from a distance but never saying a word.

It wasn't like Xavier had done anything but sleep in the past century or so. He'd been sealed up and hidden away under the capital city of Cratos. No one that he knew or had ever known was alive aside from a few people in the Crux Militia. His whore of a mother was long gone, and his useless father had died in prison, still taken away for treason despite his barter with Amar. His sister was alive, but he wasn't even allowed to speak to her.

Perhaps, they stayed away because of this. They expected him to snap once he realized that everyone was dead, but Xavier wouldn't do that. He knew when he was thirty-two and sealed off inside of that steel casket that everyone would be dead when he awakened. If anything, he was surprised at the amounts of people that were still alive. He figured that Oktober would be dead and that Amar would be killed by the rebels. He didn't suspect to see either one of them especially not within reaching distance.

Nodding to the man that had taken his blood, Xavier tossed on simple clothing then went through a body screening that tested his immortal bones and muscle. As usual, he passed with flying colors—ones brighter than the younger men and women that had just recently been immortalized by Gwen's miracle antidotes.

He scowled at the thought. Immortality, such a waste. It was given to the power hungry not to the beneficial. The men and women that could rescue this land died off and died off fast. It was no wonder that this land had succumbed to the wild wickedness within each and every man in existence.

Nonetheless, Xavier wandered away from the masses of people in each station then weaved into the front lobby of the massive Augustine Hospital. There people were sitting in the waiting room chairs, chatting casually amongst the serenade of elevator music, and being taken off by the nurses to go to their doctors. The scene was so casual despite the raging war just down the road. People in Augustine were all military, and for some strange reason, they paid little notice to the nearness of the war.

Only three hundred miles away, rebels were sending out Infected to rid the world of the Crux Militia and Roran Crell's government. They were so close, on the brink of discovering Augustine, the center of Roran's military might. Alas, no one was paying any mind to it.

On each and every angle of Xavier's vision, people were acting so normal. Could it be that the stress had sent them into a state of eternal peace? He doubted it. These people's eyes didn't look like the eyes of the men that Xavier had sent to that kind of abyss. These people's eyes were just simply and inadvertently calm.

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He assumed that it was due to their knowledge of their own force. The Crux Militia was the most revered in the new world. Few people dared to even trespass within their borders. They knew that trespass's penalty was death, and to be frank, no one truly wants to die.

Ignoring the common actions of his comrades in arms, Xavier strolled further down the lobby until he came upon an elevator. It was glass. Everything that could be seen was seen from this elevator. It was the spine of Augustine Hospital.

With the press of a square button, Xavier watched the multitude of two hundred lights that represented the many floors of this skyscraper of a hospital. Each one light up for a brief second as the elevator breezed through the floors. The lights on the floor were just done blinking on and off once the elevator opened up for Xavier to slip into the elevator that sent out several people. Just when he was about to press the one hundredth floor's button, a familiar tomboyish voice cried out in the distance.

"Stop that elevator!" a voice exclaimed out from amongst the masses, and Winter Crusade leaped over someone's kid before coming to a sliding halt beside Xavier. "Thank ya, sir." Giving the soldier a loving but very manly smack on the back, Winter thanked the man.

Grinning, Xavier said, "Leave it to you to cause a scene over a closed door." His gaze looked around to see where her General was. "Where are my sister and Amar? If you're here, they must be around here somewhere. Right?"

Winter gave a nod, making her different colored hair bob around her lanky arms. "They're here. We actually came to deliver a message to you from Roran. It's something about some girl he found. She's been working around with Infected DNA and made a couple breakthroughs on things Gwen hasn't been able to find. He wants her here."

Xavier gave a shrug, clearly not understand where he fit into that straight line of a puzzle. After thirty seconds of waiting in the elevator, the glass doors parted for Xavier to lock eyes with his sister.

Grey and blue met in the distance between them. Recognition flashed in her eyes then came the brief glimpse of dampness, shame. It happened like this every time they met with each other. The meeting of the eyes, her shyly looking away as if she was ashamed she was getting raped by that bastard Amar. Xavier was used to it despite the thick pit of hatred he was harboring deep within his heart for that sick freak.

No one should be allowed to touch his sister like that. If Xavier could lay a palm on Amar without being killed, he would have ripped the man's testicles off with Amar's own hand. Oktober knew it even though they'd never spoken anything more than a few greetings and goodbyes, and Amar knew it. That was why he hired so many more guards to protect him when he had to come meet with Xavier.

Tossing his gaze around the circular hallway, Xavier counted each one of Amar's guards. There was one to the left. Two more were to the right. Winter was another one of them. He even had one of them casually strolling around to try to get Xavier to not realize that that was the reason the man never stopped at any of the bedrooms. Desperation? Xavier believed so. Amar may have been desperate, but he was right to have men guarding him because if enough of them left Xavier would rip him limb from limb.

"Xavier," his sister mumbled with a short nod of recognition before sinking back to the state of silence Amar always kept her in.

"Oktober. Amar." Xavier acknowledged each and every one of the guards around him to make sure that they knew he'd figured them out. A cold chill seemed to settle in the air, making some of the guards nervous and

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ready to bolt. Xavier noticed it. He noticed it and made sure to walk himself in front of the elevator, showing them that escape was impossible from here.

"General Shadowheart, it's always a pleasure to have you around," Amar greeted before motioning to a grouping of chairs that he must have had put together for this little meeting. "Please, have a seat. We only have a few short things to discuss before I'll have you sent off on this mission."

With a nod Xavier said down. Winter sat to his left, looking more like Xavier's guard than Amar's. Her general noticed this, frowned, but didn't make any more notion to it. When Amar sat down, he made sure to have Xavier's sister throw her legs over the arm of the chair so that he could place one hand on her bare knee and have the other trailing through her ivory hair.

The soldier's grey eyes narrowed, but he kept his mouth shut. There was nothing he could say here that wouldn't provoke a fight between himself and the others guards. Just the slightest movement could provoke the men to attack him. It was a decree given by Roran Crell himself after Xavier had beaten Amar to near death in a drunken brawl over Oktober.

Roran knew that Xavier's killing strikes could come in the fewest of seconds, so he made sure that Amar and Xavier stayed separate unless forced to meet. It was a government sentenced restraining order.

The enemy general saw the way that his presence around Xavier's sister was treating Xavier, and he made languid strokes up and down Oktober's thighs. Her blood thrummed in fear that he desired to stoke. In pure bliss, Amar taunted Xavier to act as he continued to pet Oktober.

"What the hell do you want, Amar?" Xavier snarled between gritted teeth as his eyes followed Amar's hands on his sister. The air heated, and all the guards put their hands on their weapons—all except Winter who was glaring at Amar with the same heated rage as Xavier.

"Well, Roran called for me to assign you to a case that he has become particularly intrigued in. It seems that this blonde beauty of a woman has been playing around with Infected DNA. We want you to go undercover, figure out who is sending the DNA to her, kill them, and bring the woman back here. He believes it has to be rebels. They must be trying to perfect these monsters that they keep sending into our cities. Lay low for a few days, dig up all that you can, and strike with ample time for us to uncover some information on these rebel's whereabouts. We cannot allow them to make any Telios like you or me. Else have our dominion fall into utter ruin at the hands of those foulmouthed incompetents. Questions, brother?"

"What is the woman's name? I can't go find her if you don't give me details, idiot." Xavier glanced towards where the guards were still on edge. Their hands looked ready to scratch at this itch Xavier was creating on their weapons.

"Her name is Shayda Rivera. She lives in a city named Carson. Due to unfortunate circumstances, we weren't able to wiretap her house because her mother kept finding them. She also hired Shayda a bodyguard named Gauge Bloodthorn. It seems that he has been in their family for some time now," he read from a holographic file presented in front of them. "According to our inside resources, he has some relation to the rebels. Thus our interest in the DNA she's been provided. Her mother's name is Erin Rivera. She records everything that her daughter has done scientifically. She also keeps her daughter on a relatively tight leash. If Shayda goes somewhere, Gauge tells Erin. Other than that, we can't say much about her."

Xavier nodded then watched the holographic image turn from a report to a small, blonde woman sitting on a bed with an elderly patient going through the first few signs of Infection. The woman was a prime example of how the Infection spread. It went through the weak. First, it attacked children and the elderly, killing them

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with flulike symptoms, then it spread to the more physically able bodied men and women whom it could possess. Each bacteria was relatively different. It was a disease that continuously evolved. That was why Gwen has had such difficulty creating immortality from it. Xavier and Amar were just a few of the Infected that weren't mindless. They had been graced with bacteria that properly molded to their DNA instead of obliterating it.

Still, Xavier's attention couldn't help but go back to the face of the woman tending to the patient. She was oddly attractive. Her eyes were wide and tender. Their blue color was calming, something hard for a man like Xavier to come by nowadays. Her face was heart-shaped and suited her simplistic, loving physical design. Her body was small and very unlike most of the women he frequented. Her breasts were petite, little mounds that caught his attention when the woman sighed. Her legs were long despite her shorter body. They flowed from her slender ankles and up to a curvaceous ass that had Xavier watching as she walked off screen.

Breaking Xavier's attention was the sight of the man protecting Shayda. He appeared on the holographic screen with his arm wrapped around the smaller woman's waist. If Xavier didn't know better, he could have said that their muscles were mirrored, but only a Telios had a perfect build. No rebel could be a Telios. Still, this Gauge was strong with broad shoulders and thick arms. In a hands on brawl, he could prove to be a challenge, but Xavier was a skilled warrior who knew how to kill on sight.

"Well, well, well, Xavier, I just may want to come with you if that guy's involved," Winter chimed in as she acknowledged Gauge. "Just look at that ass. Bet you could thump a quarter off of it." Her elbow jammed into Xavier's side, but the soldier just ignored her. He needed to focus on this male: find his strengths and play on his weaknesses.

Then screen faded away, and Xavier looked up at Amar who'd finally taken his obnoxious palm off of Oktober's inner thigh. "She lives at Seventy-five West Beach Ridge," he explained. "You are to be a casual male who happens to become interested in her. She and Gauge commonly go to buy groceries on Wednesdays and visit the beach on Saturdays. Also, Winter, you will seduce Gauge away from Shayda so that Xavier can occupy the doctor's time. I suggest you take that god awful coloring out of your hair. Dye it something more practical if you must. He typically hits on red heads."

"I get to go too!" Winter exclaimed, leaping from her seat like a child. "I never get to go on missions! I usually have to guard your pansy ass from Xavier when you come to Augustine! Yahoo!" Her arms raised to the sky as she hollered out her gratitude.

Irritated, Amar stated, "Yes, now the both of you go get packed before I decide to change my mind and let Vixen go instead." The red headed guard nicknamed Vixen gave an excited glance that was quickly stomped out by Amar's glower. Xavier knew why. It was the same reason Xavier's skin crawled when he saw Amar laying a single part of his body against his sister who was the unfortunate object of his current affections. "And another thing! The two of you are not to speak with one another except to coordinate away from Shayda and Gauge. We do not want our little scheme to get broken up before we have a single one of the rebel's heads."

Chapter 3

Chapter Three

Xavier gave a curious look to a city that looked like a complete other world to him. As he drove over the Great Carson Bridge, so called by the locals, he could only stare like a sheltered child out in the world for the first time. Waterâ it was everywhere. Under the bridge, on either side of it, he couldn't escape it. Even ahead of them was a massive quantity of water that Xavier couldn't even begin to number in gallons.

Driving in front of him the whole journey was Winter. Her bright, custom painted, purple car bounced with bass as she danced in her driver seat. Her hands were in the air instead of on the steering wheel as she did the air guitar, drums, and a variety of moves that looked completely spontaneous to Xavier. She seemed to pay little mind to the fact that they were driving on a materialized bridge that could fade away at any second.

Like a cat to water, Xavier had his claws digging deeply into his steering wheel. Even though a splash in the water couldn't kill him, he'd never swam in an ocean before, and he never planned to. Ever.

He couldn't even fathom the blasÃ© reaction she was having to this behemoth blue-green world below her. This was a materializing bridge for crying out loud not to mention the first of its kind and probably had all kinds of malfunctions compared to the new and improved ones over the Crimson Canyon he'd awakened in.

Gripping the steering wheel even tighter, Xavier hurried up past Winter in her purple Halo Convoy Convertible then watched her flip him the bird. Her name appeared on his GPS, and he reluctantly answered her call. "You don't even know where to go! My cousin's rental complex is on the beach. You don't even know how to get to the beach! Get your two ton, hairy ass back behind me or else I'll shoot your tire with an IX bullet." On the screen she appeared waving her gun in the air like a mad man.

Before Xavier could even get into the other lane to slow down, she'd already passed him, breezing by with the top down as her now cherry red hair flew behind her. Recklessly, she had to weave through oncoming traffic and honked her horn as if it was their fault she was in their lane. Cars bobbed off and switched lanes. It wasn't long before had a cop hot on her trail. "Ah. Shit," she cursed before sidling off the bridge and onto the blessed ground Xavier missed so badly. "Head on to my cousin's place. I'll send you the coordinates via GPS. If you can't find her, just imagine a responsible version of me with black hair." Just as the GPS switched her face off, Xavier saw the cop pulling Winter onto the shoulder of the main road.

With a scowl Xavier glanced in the rearview mirror. The cop had come out of his car and was quickly halted at the sight of Winter bare in an almost illegal bikini top and shorts that were little more than a napkin with a built in crotch. Great. Just great. They hadn't been in the city for more than a half hour and Winter was already causing trouble with the cops. Real mature.

He shook his head. It couldn't be helped. Getting Winter to behave was as easy as taming a tiger, so he drove on towards the growing cityscape. Penthouses, high rises, and condos engulfed him as he neared Carson City. Finding a single woman in this vast amount of land was as easy as finding the hay in a needle stack. The wrong turn would meet you at any end.

Grey eyes surveyed each inch of the land as Xavier memorized the way back to Augustine. They would have no helicopter support going back, and if the rebels unleashed Infected into any of the towns or cities that he had to go through on the way here, they would have to drive through nonetheless. There was no help except for Winter. Amar had all connections cut just in case the rebels caught them.

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Pondering, Xavier rested his square jawline against his nimble fingers. Although he didn't trust Amar as far as he could throw the bastard, he still wasn't able to question the man. Cutting off connections had been a beautifully yet deadly scheme in the gist of things. If the Infected were unleashed upon them, the plan would give. Winter and Xavier would be forced to meet without any other form of communication between them and home base. Shayda and Gauge would catch on, and if Gauge was really a member of the rebels, he would do anything at all cost to get Shayda away from their grasp. On another angle though, it was a good plot seeing that both of the Field Research Soldiers were plenty strong enough to bring back the woman if things went according to plan.

As Xavier drove through the masses of vehicles hovering inches from the ground, he inspected all angles of that man's scheme. Then he was taken off guard when the doctor herself appeared before him.

Just from the corner of his eye, Xavier could see his prey. She was with her guardian, and the two of them were headed towards a large hospital with a college attached. It was Carson City's esteemed Rivera Hospital Academy. Shayda would have been going there to teach her medical class. According to Amar, the students were going to take a look at Infected DNA today and each student was going to see if they could decipher which traits came from animals.

Never taking her out of his peripheral vision, Xavier turned the corner to slide into the parking lot. It was buzzing with students rushing to class and ambulance sirens returning to their base. Again, he had to look in awe at the mundane actions of these people. Again, he knew that there was a war just going on miles away, but they didn't seem to have a single care in the world.

All he could do was shake his head in surprise. Was there some kind of protective bubble that kept people from knowing about the chaos and destruction nearing their door? Perhaps, Roran was preventing the media from showing any kinds of details on the places demolished by the Infected. The man had the money to do soâ€¦

Still, Xavier had to get himself back into the game. There was a woman he needed to abduct, and abduct he would.

Pulling up a pair of binoculars set to look like sunglasses, Xavier pressed a discreet button on the side to zoom in closer on Shayda and Gauge. Her blonde hair swayed down her back, and Gauge kept a protective arm around her waist. She held a black messenger bag across her frame, causing Xavier to notice the teasing skin pressing against the fabric of her dress. Frowning at that accidental observation, Xavier looked at the brick wall wrapped around her.

Gauge was definitely built to be a bodyguard. He was tall like a Telios. He was built like a Telios. Still, Xavier couldn't properly call him a Telios such as himself due to his lack of knowledge.

To be a Telios a man or woman had to have distinct features. He needed retractable claws and fangs. He needed to be immortal, death only coming in the form of a beheading or an obliterated brain. His mind needed to be over ten percent available to him, something no mortal could accomplish without temporary drugs.

Still, with Xavier's lack of knowledge the word *brother* just seemed to call out to him from Gauge. Xavier had never met another Telios aside from Roran, Roran's mysterious wife Amar, or Oktober. They were so rare in existence after the earth was demolished that only a reported four existed. Properly, Xavier should have already checked Telios out of his idea, but even he remembered the soldiers that had been placed into steel caskets to be sent to the new world. There had been him and a few others but he'd never known the names. Roran had kept that a secret from each one. His wife had even stolen a few of the caskets before the Revival had taken place. Xavier had to wonder if Gauge Bloodthorn had been one of the men stolen from the Crypt

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beneath debilitated Washington D.C.

Taking his eyes off of his prey, Xavier withdrew the glasses from his grey eyes. A knock sounded at his door, and Xavier glanced up towards a security guard motioning for him to exit the vehicle. In an attempt to be a civilian Xavier tapped his fingerprint against the sensor on the door to open it and stepped out.

"Is there a problem, sir?" he asked as the man gawked at Xavier's six foot and five inch build of pure muscle. Politely, Xavier dipped his sunglasses into his breast pocket then looked curiously towards the shorter male looking up at him.

The guard gave a quick sneer and barked, "You have a suspicious vehicle on campus. I request an ID, license plate number, and proof of insurance."

Nodding, Xavier handed the man an ID card Roran had assigned to him in case of such an occasion, and the man's words rang out in his mind. *"Xavier, if anyone questions you I would like for you to hand them this identification card. Whatever penalty they are trying to give you whether it from a DUI to murder, I want you to hand them this card, and if they try to question it, ask them to call me personally. You are the closest thing I have to a son, Xavier, and I'm not going to let some cop with little man syndrome attempt to ruin any of your missions."*

With a raised eyebrow the man scrutinized the government ID card. His fat fingers flipped it over in his meaty hand, and Xavier patiently waited as the man mumbled something beneath his breath. After a moment of inspection, the guard stated, "I'm going to need you to come with me to the Security Board. Even your ID is suspicious. No one carries cards anymore. Put your hands behind your back, and I'll take you there."

Shrugging, Xavier obliged then glanced over to see where a crowd was gathering. People were muttering about his sexy sports car, others were muttering about him, and Shayda Rivera in the flesh was walking towards them with Gauge looming behind her. She cast him a curious glance, and their eyes met in the distance. A faint, pink blush ran across her skin, so she quickly darted her frantic gaze towards his car.

Another man was walking towards a car, and just when Xavier was about to open his mouth to ask why, the security guard explained, "We'll have to keep your vehicle in holding until deciding what to do with you."

"Sir, I believe that you will have a more difficult time doing that than you suspect," Xavier explained as soon as the want-to-be cop put the electric handcuffs on Xavier's wrists.

"Are you threatening me, boy?" the overweight guard hissed with a breath reeking of onions, and Xavier tried not to roll his eyes. Not even the overbearing guards at Augustine were this dramatic.

Before Xavier could explain himself further, the other guard was fighting with his wrist band that was supposed to be able to unlock all vehicles in case of suspicion. "What kind of newfangled madness do you have on this thing? Not even my break in can open it," the man snarled as he pulled at Xavier's car door.

"Sir, it's called personal security identification or PSI as most people call it. Only the richest tycoons in the entire world can own one of those systems," an awed student acknowledged as he walked towards the man. "No matter what you do, that door will not open." He turned to Xavier. "I bet he's also got bullet proof glass on that thing. It's as armored down as the tanks in New Kindred."

The guard holding Xavier down by his wrists bit out, "Open that thing up, so that we can put it in confines!"

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Xavier casually walked over towards his vehicle, slipped out of the supposedly unbreakable handcuffs, and tapped his fingerprint on the inconspicuous scanner. After that came a scanner that sent out a thin, blue stream of light that scanned across the expanding and constricting muscles in Xavier's right eye. In an instant, his vehicle came on with a mechanical hiss then began to levitate in the air. "She's even got the temperature set comfortably for you, sir," Xavier stated then slipped his hands back into the handcuffs without getting electrocuted.

Mouth gaping, the guards gave Xavier a suspicious glance, but the intrigued student could only look at Xavier in pure awe. Xavier didn't care about their looks. He was only interested in Shayda's awestruck expression as she looked at his impressive machine.

After waking back up, the security guard slipped into Xavier's car and snapped, "Boy, you come with me in case this crazy machine decides that it wants to self-destruct." The intelligent young man gave the guard an eager expression before looking nervously towards Xavier who just shrugged, urging the child to go on.

"Humph. You may be rich, but you aren't invincible. I bet you stole that car from some rich guy up in New Kindred. That'd explain a lot," the guard walking him scoffed then led him towards a tall building. The man glowered at the circle that had formed around them and snapped, "All you kids get out of here! Scat! Everything's under control! Get to class!" He gave Xavier a forceful push that didn't have the tall male budging an inch, and all the college students gave out a quick snicker as they loosely scattered about the parking lot.

Xavier's grey eyes looked towards Shayda who had started to follow them towards the Security Board's building. Her wide, blue eyes held a concern for him, and he couldn't help but notice the way her dress flowed against her thighs in the wind. She was so innocent ;

Trying to get his mind out of the gutter, Xavier scowled at where his thoughts were drifting then continued his leisurely stroll towards the building. It seemed that even he was getting in trouble with the cops after an hour of being in the city. Winter would have been proud of him.

The black asphalt of the parking lot turned white as it became a sidewalk decorated by hydrangeas and other native plant species of the new world. A man watered a part of the garden as he attempted to refrain from looking at Xavier's handcuffed state.

It was hard not to judging by the people all whispering and gawking. Then again, Xavier wasn't used to civilians. Perhaps, this was the way they always were. He had no clue. He'd been living in a steel casket for the past hundred years. The few times that Xavier had even been out in the world were times where he was supposed to kill someone, steal something, or spy on someone. He had no clue how to act around civilians. All Xavier could do was try to act as much like Winter as possible since she was frequently scolded for acting too civilian.

Once they were in the Security Board's office, Xavier was told to sit in a waiting room chair. The plump security guard left the soldier alone, and Xavier just propped his sneakered feet up on a coffee table. *Well, might as well be comfortable before you're free to go*, he thought with an internal grin. Perhaps, being like Winter wasn't as bad as one would think.

The spinning doorway opened up once more, and Xavier had to glance up at Shayda Rivera placing her bag behind a counter where a woman eagerly took it.

Intuitively, Xavier glanced around for Gauge, but the male was nowhere to be seen. Shayda and he were all alone minus the woman who kept eyeing Xavier with a lusty gaze.

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His eyes flowed with Shayda's form as she picked up a glass and walked over towards a coffee maker. After opening a drawer full of different flavors of coffee, she asked, "How do you like to drink coffee, sir?"

"Black," he replied, mentally questioning her reasons for offering him coffee.

Snickering, she let his glass be filled then went to make her own cup filled with vanilla creamer and a few packets of sugar. Once the two of them were ready, she sat them down on the coffee table Xavier's massive feet were on and watched as he withdrew them.

"I'm not as bold. The taste of black coffee is disgusting to me," she explained before offering to take the manacles he'd already slipped off of his wrists.

"Then, you and my sister have something in common. She used to make fun of me for it." He gave Shayda a heartbreakingly gorgeous snicker before placing the green cup to his full lips.

She flushed once more then put her glass down on the coffee table once more. "I am truly sorry for what Rodin did to you. He overreacts a lot. Were you here to tour the campus?"

"Hmm?" He gave it a second's thought then quickly added, "Yes. My younger sister would have loved to come here. When we have a chance to talk, she always talks about her interest in the medical field." Well, it wasn't a complete lie. In the brief moments that Xavier was allowed to spend with Oktober, she frequently talked about wishing there was a way for her to lose her immortality and strength. Always, the mundane appeals to the unique.

Shayda nodded. "Mmm. Sounds like you two don't get to spend much time with each other. Oh! How rude. I completely forgot to tell you my name. I'm Shayda Rivera. A recent graduate from Carson's esteemed Rivera Academy. I also work as a Bacterial Research Doctor in the Rivera hospital."

Xavier took a hold on Shayda's soft, extended palm and gaze her another one of those grins that had her heart stuttering. "Xavier Shadowheart. I'm here on vacation from my work up in the North East Medical Company."

"The NE," she recognized. "My father used a lot of their materials back when he was alive. I hear that they're one of the few companies that survived the Revival. Quite the accomplishment in my opinion. Roran Crell almost lost them after they shipped ten steel caskets of military weaponry illegally from the homeland."

Taking note of the number, Xavier nodded. "Some laws need to be broken." He gauged her blushing reaction to that when his eyes accidentally slipped down to the low V of her dress.

Nibbling on her plump bottom lip, Shayda said, "After you're free to go, would you like me to show you around the medical study facilities. It is what you came here to look at. Isn't it?" She watched his eyes. The way he studied her was fascinating. Few men looked at her with such complete attention.

Xavier leaned slightly forward in his chair and stated, "I would love to, Ms. Rivera." With that, the door to the office opened up for the security guard named Rodin to scowl at the sight of Ms. Rivera so close to Xavier.

The man snarled, "The dean said that you were free to go, but watch yourself, boy, else I'll have you packing out of here. Rivera's Academy is my turf. You'd better respect it." The man grabbed a hold of his belt then waddled out the door to leave Shayda snickering.

Her laugh was endearing, a welcome balm to the many screams Xavier was used to hearing. Pulling herself up then brushing her dress down, the doctor reached out to Xavier once more. "Please, ignore Rodin. He's more

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talk than action. He used to threaten me with that attitude of his back when I was a student here. Always said something about how valedictorians always got the special treatment around here." Xavier took her soft palm, and mentally enjoyed the silken touch he was so unaccustomed to.

"I hear that you've been working on DNA with forty-eight chromosomes, part of which is animal. Have you figured out what's been causing this mutation in people yet or have your students still been working on it?" he asked as Shayda led them towards a glass elevator that was much, much slower than the one in Augustine.

Her eyes grew impossibly wider, and she clutched her messenger bag tighter against her body. "I-I had no clue that my experiments had become so popular that the NE even knew," she stuttered then glanced up at Xavier. "They didn't pay me much mind when I had originally uncovered the DNA sample."

"Just because someone doesn't reply doesn't mean that they aren't listening," he stated as she led him down a beige corridor decorated in dark brown stripes along the chair railing.

"But, no. We haven't figured anything out aside from the fact that there are humans running around with animal DNA injected into their cells at early ages. We have the nursery at the hospital locked up tight to prevent that from happening to our children." She opened up a door and showed Xavier a lab. "This is where we originally discovered the DNA."

Xavier gave a nonchalant nod as he followed Shayda inside. She seemed proud as she tucked her messenger bag inside one of the drawers then locked it up tight with a fingerprint sensor. Another mental note for the soldier. Her eyes lit up with pride as she explained how many students she had in her classes. She even explained details about her most successful students, told Xavier some names that he'd have to check out once he got back to Augustine.

"Down here is our lecture hall where I teach my students about anatomy and biology." She pointed up to a holographic projector board where a man was rotating on the screen. "This is our example of a man we call Telios. It's the Greek word for perfect. We call him that because he is physically perfect. Each facet of him is perfect. Physique. Height. He is a perfect killing machine." She pulled the screen to zoom in on the man's hands then played a recording of claws extending and distending from his nails. "His nails are razor sharp and thick to prevent cracking when used in battle." Zooming in on his face, she opened the hologram's mouth. "He even has fangs. Also, the man has vampiric traits. If you would look here, you can see his fangs retracting from his canines. On a closer examination, we also realized that the DNA causes the man to develop two sets of canines, a retractable set of fangs and another set of permanent canines meant to eat meat in the case it needs to be torn straight from the flesh."

"You seem to have a lot of information on a creature that you've never seen before. Can you find this all out by imagining the DNA or is there another way?" Xavier questioned, suddenly connecting the dots between Gauge and the man on the hologram.

She blushed. "That's not something people normally ask!" Her manicured nail tapped on her lip stained lip. "Well, due to the DNA's construction, we can imagine the man before you. It doesn't entirely mean that we know how to reproduce it. The DNA is so complex. They continuously mutate in most of the samples that I've been given. We were only able to reconstruct this because of a recent sample that I was given. Honestly, the cells that do try to reproduce tend to fail because of how the DNA continuously separates itself. Each cell changes its mind then kills its daughter cell before it's even born."

Slowly, Xavier nodded. His mind was absorbing all of this information like a sponge, and by the sound of things it didn't seem as if Shayda had discovered much more than Gwen. Was Roran wrong about this woman's prowess or was Xavier missing a vital detail? Only time could tell, and he had to get Shayda back to

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Augustine whether he knew the truth of it all or not. He wasn't a lab rat like Gwen. He was a FRS. All of this thinking was completely over his head.

"That's about the gist of everything that I do here though. If you want a detailed tour, you should catch up with some other students or teachers. I'm sure that Vice would love to get his hands on you." At Xavier's blank look, she explained, "He was the boy that had to drive your car to holding."

Xavier just shrugged. He wasn't interested in whatever child had been smart enough to figure out how his car worked. If anything, Xavier was thinking about just how he was to seduce this brainy beauty away from her work. Amar hadn't wanted them to use force to separate everyone from Shayda, but Xavier was more skilled with force than seduction.

He ran his fingers through his hair then cast his eyes to the door where he could hear footsteps coming. They were steps so light, predatory. He was positive that Shayda couldn't hear them. Eyes narrowed, he awaited Gauge's arrival.

The bodyguard stepped into the room cautiously and slowly closed the door behind him. "I'd thought that I'd heard voices, but I didn't expect you to be in here with the trespasser," Gauge muttered as he walked the distance between him and Shayda in mere seconds. His body moved protectively behind Shayda, and the man put two of his heavy palms on her slender shoulders. "Your class will be here soon. Would you like me to see this man out?" he whispered with a voice so low Xavier knew that he shouldn't have been able to hear.

"Hmm? Well, only if he has better things to do. Relax, Gauge. Mr. Shadowheart here was just here to tour the campus for his sister. Due to certain circumstances, I don't believe that he's getting the kind of tour he wanted." She looked to Xavier. "Would you like to be a spectator as I teach the class?"

Giving Shayda a polite grin, Xavier said, "No, Dr. Rivera. I should probably check up on my house. A couple of friends are probably there by now. Thank you for the tour. I'm sure that my sister would love to come here." He gave the bodyguard a short nod then took his leave.

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