

## Runaway Guide 2, The Healing

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# Runaway Guide 2, The Healing

by [Joan963z](#), [neichan](#)

## Summary

Xander has been rescued from his kidnappers, but an overdose of a memory-erasing drug has destroyed part of the mental pathways he used as a guide.

The group suspects that Xander is still in danger from who ever shot down the Generals plane.

## Notes

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keeping the fandom alive in our hearts.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

A reader pointed out that on the show BtVS, Riley was taller than Graham. Using my artistic licence I have switched their heights for the purpose of this fic. I have also adjusted Spikes height to six feet and he no longer bleaches his hair, it is a natural honey blonde.

### Runaway Guide 2 – The Healing

by Joan Z and Neichan

Xander sat curled up on the sofa with his nose nuzzled into Blair's neck. In the two weeks since the four members of the Sentinel pack had moved into their new home Xander had been seeking out Blair whenever Spike wasn't close by.

Blair was more than happy to give Spike a respite from Xander's constant need to be touched. He could tell that it was beginning to take its toll on Spike. Spike seemed tired, but never turned Xander away. Of course, any other sentinel would have been burned out after only a few days. It was Blair that insisted Spike take a break everyday by cooking supper with Jim.

Blair also had a sense that Jim was hurting too. Jim was tuned into his Second in a way that surprised him, Jim and Spike were close, in more than just the concern for another pack member. They seemed to have a Sentinel-to-Sentinel link that went beyond anything Blair had ever sensed before. He was going to have to talk to Jim about doing a healing bond with Spike before things got critical.

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Jim and Spike stood in the kitchen preparing dinner for themselves and their guides; they spoke to each other in a whisper so low only a sentinel could hear.

"The memories of the kidnapping don't seem to be coming back," Jim said.

"They're not going to come back," Spike said. "The doctor said any memories he hasn't gotten back by now were erased or never existed at all. He just needs to lay down new mental pathways and that will take time," Spike sighed.

"Are you doing okay?" Jim asked. His concern for his chosen second was clear, not only in his voice but in his eyes.

"I'm just tired out. Before this happened there was an abundance of energy between Xander and me. It seemed like the more we re-newed our bond the more energy we had. Now it's just the opposite, the deeper we bond the more tired I get. I know you've noticed that Xander has

lost his Guide Glow. It's not that he's deliberately holding back, It's that something is missing, He needs something that I haven't been able to give him."

"It's not your fault he doesn't glow. It will come back in time. You're healing him, and you're unique. Blair hasn't found any anthropological evidence that there has ever been a sentinel with healing abilities. Even the strongest healer guides can only spend a few hours a day healing and even then they need plenty of time to rest afterward. The only time you get away from Xan is when we cook supper. Don't fret about it. He still has a ways to go."

"It's not just that I'm a healer," Spike said. "He needs his sentinel too."

"It wouldn't hurt once and a while to let me share the burden," Jim said with an edge to his voice.

"Are you angry at me, Jim?" Spike asked confused by Jim's unusual show of emotion.

"Not at you, at this situation," Jim said shaking his head. "I feel like I'm an outsider looking in. I watch you and Blair work on healing Xander. He goes to you and Blair but he never comes to me. It's as if he doesn't remember me."

Spike cocked his head and evaluated Jim. "You need to renew your bond with Xan." It was a statement not a question.

"It can wait," Jim said with a dismissive tone.

"I don't think it can," Spike said unwilling to let it go. "This whole thing is taking a toll on both of us. You're getting grouchy and I'm getting tired."

"That's not important, just let it lie, Spike."

"Why are you trying so hard to avoid this? There's no shame in needing to renew your bond with Xander. He's your secondary guide, and a core pack member; you need to know on a deeper level that he is okay. I won't stand in your way Jim, renew the bond."

"Xander isn't the only pack member that's hurting," Jim said, looking into Spike's eyes. "He isn't the only one I need to know is okay."

"Blair is doing fine," Spike said.

"Jesus, Spike, what do I have to do spell it out for you?" Jim's voice rose and Blair turned to the sound of Jim's anger.

"Jim," Spike said softly trying to warn their pack leader that his voice was now within the guides hearing range.

"Don't Jim me!"

Xander's head popped up and both guides looked toward the kitchen.

"Blair is the only one doing okay in this, he's a healer guide and he's helping to heal Xander. He's not happy about what happened to Xan but he's doing something about it and he is blooming. And then there is you. You're killing yourself, you get weaker everyday."

Blair and Xander got off the sofa and walked to the kitchen.

"I'm not dying, Jim," Spike said. "I'm just a little tired."

"I have no right to feel this need," Jim said.

"Of course you do, Jim," Spike said, "He's your guide. Re-bond with him."

"Aren't you listening? It's not Xander I need; I can wait. Every night I go to Blair and he takes away my need to re-bond with Xander. But he doesn't take away my need for you."

"We promised them we wouldn't," Spike whispered.

"I know," Jim said as he pulled Spike into a hug. "That's why..."

"Jim?"

It was Blair, his hair pulled back into a ponytail, his eyes full of questions. Jim could hear his guide's heartbeat, not agitated, but steady and strong, as if it were in a holding pattern, wai...ting, wai...ting.

It was Spike that broke the hug and walked to Xander. "Come on Xan," he said. "We need to give them some time alone."

"No," Xander said pulling his arm free from Spike. "This isn't about Jim and Blair, this is about the four of us. Are we going to make it work or not?"

"Xan's right," Blair said. "This is about the four of us, we need to talk this out."

"So why don't we start with the easy one first," Xander said as he walked up to Jim and got in his face. "Why didn't you tell me you needed to re-bond with me?"

"You're still healing, it can wait."

Xander turned his head and look at his two pack mates. "See what we have here gentleman is one... POMPOUS ASS," Xander said with two pokes of his finger into Jim's chest.

Jim growled a waning, "Xanman."

"You know that Blair blooms when he is in healing mode but you deny that same bloom to me. Why? ... Because... you are... a pompous... ass."

Jim's eyes were dark and his growl grew louder as he picked up Xander, put him over his shoulder and carried him toward their nesting room.

Xander lifted his head, his smile beamed and he raised one arm and waved at his pack mates, as he was carried from the kitchen to the nesting room.

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Spike smiled and turned to continue with cooking supper. It was Blair that broke the silence.

"We need to talk," Blair said in a firm, alpha guide voice.

Spike sighed. "Jim and I will keep the promise we made to you and Xander, we won't renew our sentinel-to-sentinel bond; you don't have to worry about it."

"That's not what I need to talk about but apparently it is what you need to talk about," Blair said reaching out with his empathic sense to analyze Spike's state of mind. "You'll re bond with Jim..."

"Blair," Spike interrupted. "It's..."

"Don't interrupt me," Blair said letting an edge of anger creep into his voice. It was a tone that Spike had heard him use with Jim but it was the first time it was directed at him. "I'm your guide and you will listen."

Spike cocked his head and looked Blair in the eyes. For a microsecond Blair thought he saw amusement in the sentinel's deep blue eyes, along with a flash of gold, but it was gone so fast he could not be sure.

Blair's voice returned to his normal, alpha guide tone. "When you and Jim made those promises things were different. Xander hadn't had a large chunk of his memories erased and neuro-pathways destroyed. There wasn't some shadow figure stalking him, we thought we knew who it was, but now Ethan Rayne is dead and someone shot down the General's plane, which seems to indicate that it's not just some rich, sociopath or genetics company, that wants Xander. Considering that it was the army that came after Xander, some splinter of our government could be involved. Our pack is under attack. It is only a matter of time before they make their move. You and Jim need to be in top shape to protect Xander. And you are getting weaker. Not just tired, but weaker. You need a healing Spike, which is what I wanted to talk to you about. I think tonight would be good. After that you need to renew your bond with Jim, as soon as possible, after the healing or tomorrow morning at the latest. Jim is hurting and you're the only one that can help with that particular pain."

"Can I say something now, Guide?" Spike asked.

"Yes, Sentinel," Blair said with a smile.

"I will submit to a healing bond but I have to talk to Xan about the re-bond with Jim. I won't do it unless he releases me from the promise."

"He'll release you," Blair said without any doubt in his voice. "He'll do what is best for his sentinels and it's what's best for all of us. This bond that we have is more than four individuals, we're more. I know Xander can sense it too. There is one more thing I need to tell you. Xander has been suckling my guide gland at night. He does it in his sleep. I wake up

and move his head away and he rolls back to you. He's not aggressive about it, the way a sentinel would be, but still it's not normal behavior for a guide."

"How long has this been going on?"

"The last three nights. I've been waiting to get you alone to tell you about it."

"Are you saying his sentinel gene has triggered?"

"I don't know," Blair said. "We're blind here. The sentinel gene doesn't become active on a guide, but Xander has had some of his guide pathway destroyed by the drug overdose. Triggering the sentinel gene could be his brain's way of compensating for the loss. Or suckling me could be a healing behavior. I would like to do a healing bond with Xander, the touch healing is helping but if I do a healing bond with him I'll be able to tell if his sentinel gene is active."

"You should do that first. I can wait."

"No you can't," Blair said. "If Xander's sentinel gene has triggered he'll need all of us in top shape, especially you."

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Sentinel Prime Peter Wall rolled off of his guide, Wesley, and pulled him into a hug. It was unusual for the sentinel to need to renew his bond with his guide in the middle of the day but these were stressful times. His superior had ordered a U.S. Army plane, carrying a General, who was the holder of a metal of honor, shot down and he hated to think what would happen if Jim or Spike ever found out that it was The Agency of Sentinel Affairs that had given the order. His superior was angry with him that his plans for Xander to be bonded to a sentinel that worked for Sentinel Affairs didn't work out. Spike was supposed to come to him when he found out that Rayne was after his guide. Instead fate had conspired against him and Spike ended up in Jim's pack and cross-bonded with Jim's guide and chosen as Jim's Second. All he could do now was monitor the situation by building an active friendship with Jim and Spike. But they expected progress in finding out who was after Xander. Their focus, so far, was on healing their guide, but soon they would ask for his report. He was walking a knife's edge and any loss of focus could, and most likely would, get him killed.

FLASHBACK

Sentinel Peter Wall walked into his superior's offices and was invited to take a seat.

"I understand," the Sentinel Alpha Prime said, "that you have a plan to bring Xander Harris into the Agency."

"Yes sir," Peter began. "I recently worked with an un-bonded Sentinel William Spikeman, he is currently a police detective in Lake View, Washington. The man is an exceptional sentinel. I have invited him to join the Agency as soon as he bonds. I would like to arrange a "chance" meeting of him and the Harris Guide. I am sure he would claim Harris if he picks up his scent. He's been looking for a guide."

"Why not just offer him Harris as an incentive to join the Agency?"

"If he thinks we're trying to manipulate him we'll lose this chance."

"Arranging a chance meeting could be tricky."

"We are in luck there, sir," Peter said. "Xander Harris has accepted an invitation to a co-workers wedding and Sentinel Robert Wheaton, of the Lake View Police Department is retiring. I can arrange for him to have his retirement party at the same place and on the same day as the wedding. From there it would be a simple matter of making sure that Spikeman picks up Guide Harris' scent."

"And how will you guarantee that Spikeman picks up the scent?"

"I'll have someone in coat check make sure that Xander's scent gets on Spike's coat. From there all Spikeman will have to do is track him down in the wedding reception. It will be a simple matter for a sentinel like Spikeman. All I need is your okay, sir, and I can put this plan into motion. The wedding's in a month. Spike will file an intent to bond certificate and a week later I will give him a call, congratulate him on his new Guide and tell him I have an opening in the Agency that I would like him to fill."

"And you're sure he'll take the job offer?"

"I'm sure sir. A sentinel with his talent is wasted in a small town like Lake View and Spike knows it."

## PRESENT-DAY

Peter startled as the ringing of the phone brought him out of his memories. "Sentinel Wall," he answered. "I want you in my office in an hour with a full report on Guide Harris and your plan for getting the situation under our control."

It was the Sentinel Alpha Prime and he sounded like he was loaded for bear. "Yes, sir," Peter answered. The phone clicked dead and Peter sighed as he hung up.

"Do you have a plan?" Wesley asked.

"There is always a plan," Peter said as he swung his legs over the side of the bed and headed for the shower.

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Sentinel Prime Peter Wall had been sitting in the Sentinel Alpha Prime's waiting room for half an hour. From the muffled sounds Peter could hear coming from the Alpha Prime's office the sentinel was using his Guide. Not surprising in itself, any Sentinel would scent mark his Guide when he knew another Sentinel was going to be close by, it was normal sentinel behavior; but the timing was inconsiderate as far as Peter was concerned. He was told to be here in one hour and he had arrived on time only to be keep waiting.

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Peter didn't like his boss; he was opinionated and unbending. The first time he had met the Alpha Prime he had brought his guide, Wesley, with him. The Sentinel had looked Wesley up and down and asked what "its" number was. Peter didn't understand at first, not until the Sentinel turned his anger on Peter.

"Its psy number, what is it?" the Alpha Prime asked curtly, his anger clearly showing.

Peter gave a proud smile. "Wesley is a 7.8," he said.

"Get it out of my office," the Alpha Prime said as he turned and walked to his desk. "I never want to see it in here again."

When Wesley had closed the door behind him the Alpha Prime began his orientation speech. "I am Sentinel Alpha Prime Byron Macfie Harris. The Harrises have been sentinels for as long as written records have been kept. I don't believe in bonding with high functioning empaths. It takes away a sentinel's edge, brings them down to mundane levels of functioning. My own guide is a 3.2, I can fuck her six times a day and not lose my edge. If I had my way guides would still be property and no sentinel under me would bond with a guide above a 3.9. But I don't have my way and there are not enough guides to go around so we have to make do."

'Well,' Peter thought, 'that explains his anger.' It was not advised to attempt a permanent bond with an empath rated lower than a 4. A low rated empath would not be able to channel away the stress that was worked up by a sentinel using his senses. An empath at that level could keep a sentinel from zoning or going rogue but the sentinel would never be able to completely relax either.

"According to your file," the Alpha Prime continued, "you're one of the best operatives in the Agency. That's why you've been promoted to Sentinel Prime. But I am telling you right now, Wall, lose your edge on any of your assignments and you'll be busted to night security guard on the docks. Got it?"

"Sir, yes, sir," Peter answered. 'Apparently the Sentinel Prime is a hard ass that thinks constant anger is an edge, Peter thought. 'But it's not the kind of edge I want.'

"Good, then we understand each other," the Alpha Prime growled. "I have a long-term covert assignment for you. There is a guide, Alexander Harris, and before you ask, yes, he is a relative, my brother's spawn to be exact. I just got a report that he was abused at guide school. It seems that this, Ethan Rayne, saw something in the guide and managed to bring out a reliable level of telepathic hazard perception. I want guide Harris brought into the Agency; I want you to find a suitable sentinel to bond with him. Unfortunately, the brat is a high level empath so it won't be easy finding someone that can bond with him and keep his edge."

'There's that edge thing again,' Peter thought.

"I need a sentinel with the right mindset," the Alpha Prime said while tapping his pen on his desk. "One that is committed to improving the sentinel gene pool. I plan on harvesting the guide's genetic material and finding out where this hazard perception ability comes from. If it's on his sentinel gene then we'll breed him. If not we will splice it onto the sentinel gene

and breed for the trait that way. It's only fitting the ability should come from a Harris, and then this unfortunate smear of a guide in our family history can be erased."

Peter was very practiced with not letting his emotions show. He managed, although not easily, to keep the shock he felt at the Alpha Prime's disdain for guides from his face. He had met other "old school" sentinels but none with such a high rank. Most of them were either retired or resigned when the reforms were put into place. Peter could see a guide tent at the corner of his peripheral vision. The tent had replaced the cage when cages were outlawed. He wondered how Sentinel Harris had climbed to the rank of Alpha Prime and decided that it must have been a case of, not what you know, but who you know.

"Don't rush this, Wall," the Alpha Prime commanded. "If it takes a year or two to find the right sentinel to claim the brat, so be it. Just make sure that the wrong sort doesn't claim him and that the Agency gets control of the guide. All the information you need is in this folder. Dismissed. Peter picked up the folder, saluted, and left the Alpha Prime's office, glad to be out of his presence.

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The secretary's voice jolted Peter out of his memories. "You can go in now."

The smell of sex with a female guide assaulted Peter as he opened the office door. He managed to turn down his scent dial and set his face in an indifferent expression as he walked through the door.

"At ease," the Alpha Prime snapped when Peter closed the office door and approached the Alpha Prime's desk. "Report."

"Guide Harris is recovering from his injuries." Peter began in a clipped, no nonsense voice. "It has been confirmed by his doctors that his memories of the kidnapping incident, have been mostly destroyed; only disjointed fragments remain. Guide Sandburg and Sentinel Spikeman have been healing Guide Harris on a daily basis. Sentinel Ellison and Guide Sandburg have returned to work in the Major Crimes division of the Cascade Police Force. Sentinel Spikeman and Guide Harris remain on sick leave."

"Did I hear you state in your report that Sentinel Spikeman was healing his Guide?"

"Sir, that is correct, sir." Peter wondered if he should report Spike's healing ability to the Alpha Prime, but he knew that the sentinel would have reports from the doctors and he would be confronted with the information if he neglected to report it. In the end he decided to mention it in passing and hope that the Alpha Prime would stay focused on Xander and not switch to discussing Spike.

"Sentinel's do not have healing abilities, Wall."

"Sir, it appears that Sentinel Spikeman is unique in that ability, sir."

"Has this been confirmed?" the Sentinel Prime asked.

“Sir, yes, sir,” Peter continued, keeping his eyes focused on a spot on the back wall of the office. “The doctors at the hospital have confirmed that the majority of Guide Harris’ healing has been accomplished with Sentinel Spikeman. Guide Sandburg’s contribution, while substantial, has been minimal in comparison.”

“How can Spikeman have healing abilities, does he carry a guide gene?”

“Sir, no sir, he does not. Guides never trigger as sentinels, sir.” He took an opportunity to get back to discussing Xander. “The Ellison pack believes that Ethan Rayne was attempting to trigger Guide Harris’ sentinel gene. What was done to Guide Harris would be enough to trigger any sentinel and yet his sentinel gene remains dormant.”

“So what you are telling me, Wall, is that Sentinel James Ellison, the best covert ops officer I have ever had the honor of meeting, and one damn suspicious bastard, has managed to bring into his pack a sentinel with healing abilities and a guide that has reliable hazard detection. Both of which were supposed to be in the Agency’s employ by now. Exactly how do you plan to fix this, Wall, and get the Harris Guide and this Sentinel Spikeman into the Agency and under our control?”

“Sir, I don’t believe that is possible at this time. Sentinel Ellison has claimed Sentinel Spikeman as his Second and the sentinels have cross-bonded with Guides Sandburg and Harris. The best we can do at this time is to keep them monitored. I have a friendship with both Sentinel Ellison and Sentinel Spikeman and have put myself in a position of trust. I will be able to keep the situation under control.”

“Cross-bonding! What the hell does that mean? It sounds like both sentinels have claimed both guides. No Alpha would allow that and Jim Ellison is one of the strongest Alpha's I've ever met.”

Sir, You are correct. Both sentinels have claimed both guides, Sir."

"How the hell did that happen, Wall? You were supposed to stay on top of this. Simple monitoring and friendship is not enough control, not with James Ellison in the picture.”

“Sir, the cross-bond happened before the abduction, sir.”

“That’s a mighty tight timeline you’re proposing, Wall.”

“Sir, yes sir, I agree, but it is how it happened.”

“How did Ellison find out Spikeman has healing abilities?”

Back to Spikeman again, Peter gave a mental moan. “Sir, I don’t believe that that is the reason that Sentinel Ellison claimed Spikeman for his second.”

“The man was a school teacher and a bad poet before he became a sentinel. Why else would a sentinel like Ellison bring him into his pack?”

“Sir, Spikeman is in every way Jim Ellison’s equal as a sentinel.”

Alpha Prime Harris leaned back in his chair and glared at Sentinel Wall. “Look at me sentinel,” he said in a seething voice that sent a chill down Peter Wall’s spine. “Do you expect me to believe that a schoolteacher goes into a coma and comes out of it a first generation sentinel equal to James Ellison, a black ops trained officer, who has a family history of sentinels that stretch back as far as my own family history?”

Peter Wall blinked and swallowed when he looked into the angry indigo eyes of the Alpha Prime. Most men took a step back when confronted with those eyes. It took every ounce of will power Peter had to keep his feet firmly planted to the floor. “Sir,” he said as he swallowed and struggled to keep eye contact with the Alpha Prime. “I can only report the truth, sir.”

“You handpicked this Spikeman to bond with Guide Harris. Now you tell me that he is an equal to James Ellison. In what way is that someone we can control? You are one damn lucky bastard that you have established trust with the Ellison Pack or you would be out of the Agency so fast you wouldn’t have a chance to kiss your ass goodbye. I’ll let you continue with the monitoring for now. This opportunity will not slip through my fingers. Guide Harris will contribute to the future upgrade of the sentinel gene pool. You’ve lost your edge on this matter, Wall, too much bonding with that high functioning guide. I can smell it on you. Figure out a way to get me that brat’s spunk in a cup and while you’re at it I’ll take Spikeman’s DNA as well. A sentinel with healing abilities could be very useful in the field. Do that, get your edge back, and I’ll consider letting you keep your guide; fail me and I will have that guide of yours declared unfit and your bond with him stripped, there are level three’s available for bonding. You’re a Sentinel Prime you can’t afford this kind of screw-up. Am I making myself clear sentinel?”

“Crystal, sir.”

“Failure is not an option, Wall. Dismissed.”

## NESTING HOUSE

Spike opened his arms to a glowing Xander when he returned to the kitchen with Jim. “Miss me?” Xander asked.

“A little,” Spike answered as he opened his arms to his Guide. “But I knew you were in good hands.” Spike looked at Jim and mouthed a thank you.

“Mmmm,” Xander said, as he snuggled his nose into Spike’s neck and began absent-mindedly licking.

Jim’s face clouded with concern and he looked at Blair who moved toward him. Blair knew what he was thinking, guides don’t lick sentinel’s necks. It is instinct for a sentinel to suck and lick a guide’s neck. A sentinel craves the pheromones that a guide gland gives off in large amounts when being stimulated. Sentinels have no such gland and even if they did, a guide would not have the hyper-senses needed to taste its excretions.

Xander had been a bit assertive while they renewed their bond. Jim didn’t think anything of it at the time. As soon as he rolled Xander onto his back he fell into the usual guide practice of

letting the sentinel take the lead, but now he wondered if it was just Xander being Xander or something more.

“Hey, that tickles,” Spike said, as he pulled Xander’s head away. “And we need to eat dinner before it’s ruined.”

“Spike and I talked about this,” Blair whispered. “We’ll bring you up to date after dinner.”

Jim forced a smile on his face. “Let’s eat,” he said. “I don’t know about the rest of you but I’m famished.”

## THAT EVENING

Spike was lost in a healing bond with Blair. He seemed to be wrapped in warmth. Blair filled Spike’s mind; the sight of him, his scent, his feel, the sound of his heartbeat and his taste, topped by the warm healing energy that Blair so freely gave.

Jim sat watching the healing bond. He wanted to be a part of it. The first time Spike had claimed Blair he couldn’t watch. Now that Blair had already been claimed he felt no reluctance to be there, giving support, both physical and emotional, to his chosen mate.

Jim sat with his back against the side of the nest; he held and stroked his guide. Blair lay in Jim’s arms as Spike finished preparing him and gently entered Blair. Jim’s cock was hard against Blair’s back and he closed his eyes to enjoy the sensation as Blair rose and fell back to the rhythm of Spike’s gentle thrusts. They were in a dance. The three of them seemed to whirl to the drumbeat of their hearts in sync. All of Jim’s perceptions were filled with Blair. He felt what the healer felt, the joy of being filled and giving his energy to his sentinel, the sexual pleasure that coursed through Blair’s body with each stroke of Spike’s cock against Blair’s sweet spot. Jim was one with his guide in a way he never dreamed he could be; the universe shifted and for a moment he was Blair, he perceived everything through Blair’s consciousness. He felt the insecurity of the child, always moving never having a place to call home and he saw himself as Blair’s rock, the stalwart standing fast and true, his home in the storm. And he felt the love Blair had for him. The knowledge of what it was to be Blair hit him hard and he threw back his head and roared. Spike answered with his own roar and all three climaxed in a ball of healing energy.

Xander watched the trio from the other side of the nest; he kept himself far enough away so that he would not pull any of Blair’s healing energy to himself. This healing was for Spike, but when the two sentinels roared their release, he moved to them. Spike pulled out of Blair and reached for Xander. He fell into his arms, nuzzled his nose into Xander’s neck, where he suckled, and fell into a healing sleep.

Jim and Blair laid down in each other’s arms. Jim held Blair and rocked him back and forth as Blair fell into the deep sleep he needed to recover from the healing bond, tears rolled down Jim’s face from the intensity of what he had just experienced. The irony of it wasn’t lost on him. He had reached a new level of bonding and it happened because he shared his guide with Spike. He looked at Spike, grateful that the cosmos had sent him this man that he had chosen for his Second. He wasn’t sure if Spike was the catalyst for what had just happened, or the open doorway he chose to walk through. Perhaps Spike was both. Blair had said, after

Jim's bond with Spike, that there was a part of the sentinel that he couldn't reach. Jim hadn't understood it at the time. He just took Blair's word for it. But now he understood. He looked over at his pack mates and saw the reflection of the nightlight in Xander's eyes.

"Are you all right, Jim?" Xander whispered in a level pitched only for the sentinel's ears.

"More than all right, Xan," Jim answered. "We're going to make it, the four of us, I can't let any of you go. You need to roll over Xan, guides in the middle, sentinel's on the end."

"Spike's zonked," Xander answered. "He's in a healing sleep."

"Doesn't matter," Jim said. "If he wakes up in the morning with himself in the middle and you on the end he'll skin me alive, and he'll be right to do it. So, roll in close to us. I need to touch both of you."

Xander rolled over, pulling Spike with him; he cuddled up against Blair. Jim threw his other arm over all three of his pack mates. He was the last to fall asleep; he hadn't felt this contented since the first night he had brought Spike and Xander to share his bed. They were together, safe in their nest and they slept through the night until the alarm woke them in the morning.

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The four were just sitting down to breakfast when Peter and his guide, Wesley, came to the door. Blair and Xander could feel the tension that they were radiating, and Jim and Spike could smell it.

"Come in, Pete," Jim said. "Have you had breakfast yet?"

"I'm not sure you'll want to break bread with me, Jim, when I tell you what I have to say. All I ask is that you hear me out to the end. You may not like what I have to tell you but you need to hear all of it."

"That sounds a little ominous for this early in the morning," Spike said.

"It's worse than ominous. This is deep shit. Did you know that Xander's uncle is the Alpha Prime of the North West Region?"

"Really?" Xander asked. "He didn't have anything to do with my family while I was growing up. My dad never triggered as a sentinel so he was a family outcast and then to have a guide for a son just...well I guess the sentinel side of the Harris family doesn't have any respect for guides."

"That's putting it mildly. But he knows about you, Xander. He has known at least since Blair reported the abuse. He had just gotten promoted to Alpha Prime and I got promoted to Sentinel Prime. He called me in his office. I went with Wesley but he threw Wesley out. He gave me a speech about how he didn't believe in being bonded to a high functioning empath. He said his guide is a 3.2."

"3.2," Blair said. "It must have been a short term bond."

“Unfortunately no,” Peter said. “It’s the same guide. I can smell her.”

“You didn’t come here to talk about the Alpha Prime’s guide,” Jim said. “So why did you come?”

“You met the Alpha Prime, Jim. So, what’s your take on him?”

“Harris is a common name among sentinels,” Jim said. “I didn’t realize he was a relative of Xander’s and I don’t want any special treatment because of it.”

“Believe me you won’t get it,” Peter said. “Not from him, nothing positive anyway.”

Spike got a very bad feeling in the pit of his stomach. “What’s going on, Pete?” he asked, in a voice that sent a shiver down Peter’s spine.

Peter looked at the two sentinels. Now that it came to it he didn’t know how to start.

Wesley rubbed Peter’s back. “You have to do this, Peter,” Wesley said. “Why don’t you sit down and have a cup of coffee. I think it will be easier that way. These men are your friends. They’ll understand.”

Blair got up and poured two cups of coffee. Jim called Simon to tell him they would be late. Peter and Wesley took seats at the kitchen table, but Peter couldn’t bring himself to talk. He just stared into his coffee.

Wesley decided to take matters into his own hands. “The Alpha Prime has threatened to have me declared unfit and strip my bond with Peter.”

Jim growled, “Pete, why?”

“What’s your psi rating?” Blair asked.

“7.8” Wesley said.

“He can’t do it, Peter,” Blair said. “It has to be approved by a tribunal and unless he has proof that Wesley is incompetent, it will never get approved. The risk of brain damage to a guide rated above a 6.5 is too great.”

“That’s what I would have thought before the general’s plane was shot down,” Peter said. “But now I am beginning to think that he can, and will have it done, if I don’t stop screwing things up.”

“He can’t blame you for the General’s plane,” Jim said. “That wasn’t foreseeable.”

“I think you should start at the beginning, Peter,” Wesley said. “They have a right to know everything.”

“You’re right, Wes,” Peter said. “Head to the storm. It’s never as bad as you think it will be. Just let me tell you everything before you throw me out.” Peter took a drink of his coffee and then began to talk. “This all started, for me, when I got promoted to Sentinel Prime. I was

called into the Alpha Prime's office and given a long-term covert assignment. Blair had just reported Xander's abuse and Alpha Prime Harris had a report about Xan's telepathic hazard detection ability. He ordered me to monitor Xander and find a sentinel to bond with him. One that would come into the Agency and allow us to use Xander's DNA for genetic experiments. He told me to take my time and make sure I got the right sentinel."

Xander moaned and dropped his head onto Spike's shoulder. "It's okay Xan," Spike said. "I'm with you, no one is taking you away from me." Spike looked at Peter. "So, your boss is pissed because I claimed Xander before you found an appropriate sentinel?"

"No," Peter said. "You are the sentinel I chose to bond with Xander. I set you up, Spike. I made sure you picked up Xan's scent at the retirement party."

Jim growled and Blair began stroking Jim's arm.

Spike's reaction to the news was very different. "Why me, Peter?" he asked. "Not that I'm not grateful, but you must have known that I wouldn't have allowed Xan to be used in genetic experiments."

"I knew it, but Byron Harris didn't. He looked at your file, all he saw was an ex-schoolteacher and first generation sentinel; he thought you would be controllable. That's why I chose you. You were supposed to come into the Agency. I would have taken you for my second. I believed, at the time, we could protect Xander. But he ran and you met Jim. The rest is history."

"Did you know about Rayne?" Jim asked.

"I knew he was never prosecuted for the abuse. I thought that Spike would come to the Agency for justice." Peter shrugged. "The cosmos had other ideas."

"Was it the Agency that kidnapped me?" Xander asked.

"No, at least not directly, but that is part of what's so upsetting. There are hints that someone above the Alpha Prime, someone or some ones, high up in the government are involved in this. It was Byron Harris that ordered the General's plane shot down and I don't think he could have done that without clearance from someone above him in rank. To be blunt, the Alpha Prime has friends in high places. How high I don't know. And he is not letting this go. He wants Xander and Spike's DNA. He said if I don't get it he will strip me of my bond with Wesley."

"My DNA, that's new," Spike said.

"The Alpha Prime has been getting reports from the doctors treating Xander," Peter said. "He knows you have healing abilities, Spike. He feels it will be a beneficial ability for sentinels in the field to have."

"What do they want to use my DNA for?" Xander asked.

"That's a moot point," Spike said, "since they are not getting any of it."



Xander looked at Spike. "If he doesn't get our DNA and they try to break Wesley's bond with Peter, Wesley could end up with permanent brain damage. I can't have that on my conscience."

"They have to prove with a preponderance of evidence that Wesley is unfit," Blair said. "There's no way that can happen."

"Really, Blair?" Xander asked. "I was declared unfit and abused, and no one gave a damn, because I'm just a guide."

"You weren't bonded to a sentinel then. You didn't have anyone to protect you."

"And you think Wesley does. Peter is being punished and the Alpha Prime is using Wesley to do it. Do you really think Peter has any chance of protecting him?"

"And what about our children, Xan?" Spike asked. "You know they'll use our sperm for breeding. Who will protect our children, the ones we don't even know exist?"

"So what are we going to do, Spike, stand by and let Wesley be mind raped?"

"Xan, you don't have to worry. Wesley and I are leaving. We'll disappear. I only came to warn you. The Alpha Prime is half insane, and this is personal. His words were that it was only fitting that Xander should contribute reliable hazard detection to sentinels. It would take away the smear of having a Harris guide in the family."

"You can't leave, Peter," Jim said. "If Byron Harris is out of control then we need to stop him. We need to find out how far up this goes and you're the only one on the inside that we can trust."

"Easy for you to say, Jim," Peter said. "It's not your guide that's at risk."

"Xander is my guide!" Jim growled.

Peter stopped, frozen for a moment at the vehemence in Jim's voice. "I'm sorry Jim," he said. "I'm just stressed out by all of this."

"There is a way to insure they won't strip your bond with Wesley," Blair said. "Let Wesley bond with a second sentinel. If two sentinels testified before the tribunal that Wesley is fit they would not be able to find him unfit."

"You want me to willingly let my guide bond with another sentinel?"

"I did it to save Blair," Jim said. "You just need to choose the right sentinel, one you can trust with your guide's life."

"Graham," Wesley whispered.

"Sentinel Prime Captain, Graham Miller?" Jim asked.

“Yes,” Wesley said. “Graham asked Peter to be his second but it was right after Peter met Spike. Peter wanted Spike for a second, so he turned Graham down.”

Peter looked at Wesley; his eyes were full of pain and worry for his guide. He did not want to be a second to Graham. He was an Alpha himself, an equal to Graham Miller, in every way except Agency rank, but this was his guide’s life he was dealing with, there was no room for his ego. If Spike could do it, be a second to Jim, then he could make the sacrifice and do it to save Wesley. He made his decision. “I’ll go talk to Graham.”

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Two days later Sentinel Prime Captain Graham Miller sat in his car, two houses from Jim Ellison’s home address. His guide, Riley Finn, seated patiently beside him, still glowing from being scent marked before they left their home. The sweet scent of his own smell mixed with Finn’s soothed Miller. They were about to go into a very alpha sentinel’s personal territory, never a relaxing proposition, not even if he’d been invited. There were protocols to observe and the inevitable recognition of dominance that couldn’t be determined until they were face to face. All in all, an awful lot of trouble to go through. It would be far simpler to just stay away.

“I don’t know why I agreed to come here,” Graham said to his guide. “This cross bonding just doesn’t make any sense to me.”

The idea made Graham’s skin crawl. He didn’t want anyone sharing his Guide. He couldn’t come up with a better reason to pull his gun and shoot someone. Just the thought of another Sentinel’s hand on his sweet Riley would do it for him, throw him into a killing rage. So he had no idea what he was doing outside Ellison’s home. Except he was so damn curious, he wanted to know, needed to know, WHY?

“You agreed because you have been trying to gather evidence to have Byron Harris removed for over a year. You finally have a chance to get a well respected sentinel on your side,” Riley pointed out. He couldn’t help but be aware of Graham’s unease. The tension racing through the sentinel was palpable, as if he were preparing for battle, not a meeting of friendly Sentinels and their Guides.

“I don’t know how much respect he has left with this cross-bonding shit. Having a pack is one thing; it’s normal sentinel behavior and choosing a second is not uncommon in the Agency or with sentinels that spend most of their time in the field, but for cops...” Graham shook his head, his hands tightened on the steering wheel as he spoke. “This cross bonding with guides isn’t normal.”

“Detectives,” Riley corrected.

Graham looked at him, frowning. “What?”

“They are detectives,” Riley said again, mildly. He reached out threading his finger through Graham’s on the wheel and loosening the iron grip.

“Not a lot of difference from my point of view,” Graham said, allowing the touch, though he was usually more reserved in public. “They go home at night. They don’t sleep in the field. And why would Ellison choose an ex-schoolteacher for his second? The only reason I can think of is to protect the guide. But he could have done that without claiming Spikeman.”

“So you’re going to turn down the cross-bonding with Wesley?” Riley asked, speaking low and feeling a strange wave of disappointment wash over him.

“No, I won’t make up my mind before we talk. I do think the negatives outweigh the positives in it. But Peter is worried about his guide. I can’t just turn him down. I have to at least give Peter an informed no, besides I am damn curious as to why Ellison did it. I’ve met Ellison and his guide. He would kill anyone that touched Blair without permission. I just can’t picture Ellison willingly sharing his guide.”

And that was the truth. Graham couldn’t figure out a scenario that would fit the facts. He had tried over and over and always came to the same dead end. It only made his need to know burn hotter. He tried again to picture what he knew to be true. He tried to picture Ellison, the ex-special forces sentinel standing by while another sentinel lay Blair on his back and entered him. But all he could picture was an Ellison in restraints; he laughed out loud at the thought of what it would take to get Ellison into them.

“Well we’re about to get our questions answered. Peter and Wesley just drove up,” Riley said, instead of asking about the laugh. He liked it too much to question it. Graham, his sentinel, didn’t find a lot to laugh about and each and every smile or laugh was precious to Riley Finn.

The laugh disappeared with a sigh as Graham got out of the car, determined to quell his curiosity and get some answers.

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Jim saw Graham’s nostrils flare and the hackles on the back of his neck rise as soon as he stepped through the front door. “Graham, welcome, my word it’s safe.” Jim said, his face stoic but offering his hand to the career military sentinel. “It’s been awhile.”

“Yes, too long, Jim,” Graham said with an equally stoic expression as he shook Jim’s hand. He was busy cataloging the parts of the house he could see and the people in it. Riley, bless him, was staying firmly behind his Sentinel. Not further complicating the mix by making Graham worry about his safety before he had the situation scouted out. “I’m sorry it couldn’t have been under happier circumstances.”

Jim nodded agreement with Miller’s assessment of the mess they now found themselves embroiled in. “You know my Guide, Blair.” Blair stepped forward, smiling. But not far enough to move beyond the shelter of Ellison’s bulk. He stayed behind him, keeping his sentinel happy.

Graham nodded at the glowing guide but did not offer his hand. He sniffed and could smell that Blair had been scent marked by two sentinels. His hair rose further, it just... It made him nervous and he fought to keep his lips from peeling back and showing his teeth. Riley moved

up in back of his sentinel. Gently and subtly as he could, he channeled off the stress his sentinel felt.

“And this is my claimed Second, Sentinel William Spikeman, he goes by Spike.” Jim sounded proud as he introduced Spike.

With Riley plastered against his back, Graham managed to turn his head and look at the ex-schoolteacher and quickly sized him up. He was slimmer than most sentinels and barely six feet tall, not much bulk to speak of, almost guide-ish in appearance. If it weren't for the square jaw and intense blue eyes he would have trouble believing he was a sentinel at all. Spike offered his hand and Graham took it. He immediately felt a very pleasant energy surge go through him. His nostrils flared as he took a deep breath and moved to shake Spike's hand with both of his hands.

“Nice to meet you,” Spike said and then gave a small jerk as Sentinel Miller began to pattern Spike's palm with his fingertips. His blue eyes widened and he made a strange ugg sound with his sudden intake of breath.

Xander felt the energy bump through his link with Spike. His nostrils flared and his pupils dilated as he glared at the high-ranking sentinel. Xander pressed in against Spike's back, much as Riley was doing, but this wasn't subtle, it was overt, and his arms came around Spike like steel cables, anchoring them together. It was fine with Spike, he melted into the embrace, giving Xander as much comfort as he was able.

With more than a little effort, Spike pulled his hand away from Sentinel Miller as he introduced Xander. As soon as Spike was free, Xander pulled them backward three steps. He made it clear that he wanted to keep a distance between them and the military pair that stood in their doorway.

If Graham had seen the pair from a distance he would have thought Xander Harris was the sentinel. He was bigger than Spike and with his unusually broad shoulders and thick dark hair he had the look of a Harris family sentinel. The aggressive body language was more sentinel than guide. Just as the melting quality of Spikeman's posture as Harris embraced him was pure Guide. It was weird, and to Graham, standing in strange territory, weird was synonymous with dangerous.

“Why don't we go into the living room,” Jim said, cutting through the building tension. “We can sit comfortably in there and have a beer while we talk.” ‘And give Blair a chance to work his calming magic... and Spike a chance to get Xander under control,’ he thought.

Blair went into the kitchen to get the beer and Wesley and Riley followed to help, leaving the three sentinels and Xander in the living room. Xander glared at Miller who ignored the guide as he busied himself mentally cataloging Spikeman.

Spike was wearing a tight black t-shirt that left his arms bare so that Xander could have the skin-to-skin contact that he needed. Graham could see that Spike's relatively thin frame was all muscle. He watched Spike move across the living room one hand placed gently on his guide's back. Graham's eyes dilated as he evaluated Spike's gate and listened to the soft pat of his bare feet on the hardwood floor, he didn't move like a schoolteacher; he moved like a

predator, Graham's mouth began to water as he tasted the air Spike had walked through. The bare feet, a sign of submission to an Alpha sentinel, were surprisingly...stimulating.

'This could be the man who put restraints on Ellison,' he thought as he watched Spike move. Unconsciously his tongue flicked out to lick his lips.

Spike and Xander sat on one of the sofas. Xander curled up on Spike's right with Spike's arm around him. Xander pulled the arm across his chest and gently stroked it, his nostrils flared, as if he were scenting the air.

Graham's brows shot up. 'No it wasn't possible,' Graham thought. 'Was it?' The other sentinels in the room seemed not to notice the odd way the Harris kid was behaving. Graham grabbed for control. He was in another sentinel's territory and he had to get a hold on himself and stop letting his mind play tricks on him.

Graham sat on Spike's left. He thought he heard a low growl from Xander as he sat down but guides don't growl so he categorized it as a stomach rumble. Thinking how funny it was that it sounded just like a territorial warning, one he had used himself more than once.

Spike knew his guide was capable of growling. "It's okay, Pet," Spike said, stroking Xander's arm. "He's not going to hurt you, he's here to help." Spike looked at Graham. "This is the first time since the kidnapping he's been around a strange sentinel," he explained.

Graham blinked. Spikeman was explaining as if...He stared at the dark brown eyes fastened on him from over Spikeman's shoulder. As if the growl... No he had to be mistaken it wasn't the growl Spike was referring to it was the glare and the intimate way Xander was holding and stroking his sentinel.

"Hey." Graham looked up, startled that Ellison's Guide had managed to sneak up on him. "A beer?" Blair asked.

Graham nodded and took the beer Blair offered, accepting a second one and after sniffing it, passed it over to Riley with a nod of permission to drink.

Blair handed Spike and Xander cokes. Xander wasn't allowed alcohol since the overdose and Spike simply refuse all alcohol until Xander recovered. Blair went to sit on the other sofa with the other two guides. Jim and Peter sat in the two remaining living room chairs.

Jim looked at Graham. He knew the man well and decided there was no point in wasting time with small talk. "I understand you have some questions about the cross-bonding,"

Graham leaned forward on the sofa. He rested his elbows on his knees and held the brown beer bottle between his legs. "Mostly I want to know why you did it, Jim. You're the last sentinel I could imagine sharing his guide. Now that I've met Spikeman I understand why you chose him for your second..."

As he said Spike's name, Graham placed one hand on Spike's knee. His strong fingers were gentle as they cupped it seeking to feel the power of the man beneath the denim jeans.

Spike startled at the unexpected touch, he knew the reaction he caused in many Alpha sentinels but none had ever been this brazen before. He could feel Xander's muscles tighten when Graham touched him, but he wanted this man to help them. He was not happy about Graham's behavior but he believed Graham was trying to figure out if he could trust him enough to align himself with Jim's pack. Pushing Graham away wasn't a practical thing to do, so, instead, he began to murmur soft soothing sounds to his Guide.

Xander was even less happy about Graham's behavior than Spike was and his big hand made its journey downward to lay itself over Spike's crotch. Spike looked down at Xander's hand, embarrassed at the intimacy of the touch in front of a strange sentinel but removing Xander's hand was not an option. Xander was on the edge and Spike knew that he was probably lucky he wasn't being stripped and claimed right now, company be damned.

"But, what I don't understand," Graham continued, unaware of Xander's protective move, "is your cross-bonding with the guides and nesting with them." Graham let his hand stroke Spike's thigh as he sat back on the sofa. Xander gave a loud growl as he saw the sentinel's hand move closer to Spike's crotch and then he lunged for Graham.

Spike was faster and stood up, snatching Xander from what seemed like mid air.

"He's mine," Xander screamed as he reached for the sentinel's neck. Graham could feel the movement of the air against his skin as Xander's fingers slipped past. Jim and Blair were out of their seats in a flash.

'Fast for a Guide, too fast,' Graham thought as he stood up ready to defend himself, knowing it was impossible for the smaller man to hold onto the raging larger one. But somehow Spike did the impossible and held the struggling, angry, guide, then he got a glimpse of something else impossible just before Jim cut off his line of sight; Spike's eyes had turned yellow.

"It's okay, Luv," Spike said in an English accent, "I'm yours, Luv, yours forever."

Graham Miller stared, his mouth hanging open as the slim Sentinel picked up the larger, growling and thrashing Guide, with no more difficulty then picking up a gallon of milk and carried him off to the nesting room.

"He's mine," Xander screamed again over Spike's shoulder, still clawing the air trying to get to the offending sentinel.

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When Xander went for Graham, Peter got out of his seat and quickly went to protect Wesley, making sure he stayed down. Riley tried to go to his sentinel but Peter held him back. "Let Jim and Spike handle it," he whispered in the guide's ear, his eyes glued on the scene as it played out. He panted, tasting the air, filtering for Spike's scent and any clue that things had gotten out of the pack's control. He was thankful that they were in the new house with room to maneuver, in case it came to that, and a private room to take Xander to instead of the tight quarters of the loft apartment. He wasn't surprised to see Spike's yellow eyes or the smaller man pick up a struggling, angry Xander and carry him away. He'd seen the yellow eyes before, and knew Spike was stronger then he looked. As soon as Spike and Xander were

safely out of the living room he let Riley go to Graham and he pulled Wesley to the front door. A sentinel put in that situation had a choice, fight or bond. He needed to get out of the overwhelming scent of testosterone and pheromones before he reached a point of no return. Peter left the front door open as he stepped out onto the porch. Gulping fresh air, clutching Wesley and fighting for control. He hoped that fresh air entering the house, would reach the two sentinels in the living room, forestalling a disaster. But the wind was wrong and the open door only served to pull the scent of bonding out off the nest toward the open door, past the two sentinels in the living room.

For Captain Miller, object of the attack, it was already too late, the choice had to be made, fight or bond, and Miller was not the type to bond in front of another sentinel.

“What the hell just happened, Jim?” Graham growled. “That was a sentinel that tried to attack me, not a guide. If that’s the result of cross-bonding I don’t want anything to do with it.” Riley was by Graham’s side trying to pry the sentinel’s fingers from the empty beer bottle. The beer was now a puddle on the floor as Graham had instinctively turned the bottle to use as a weapon against Xander.

“It’s not,” Blair said in his soothing guide voice. “That’s the result of years of abuse and an overdose of drugs during the abduction; it left Xander with brain damage.” Blair and Jim watched carefully as the sentinel refused to give up his weapon.

Riley had no choice. He sunk to his knees in the puddle of beer and bowed his head. “Master,” he whispered, for the sentinel’s ears alone, but Jim heard the guide clearly, and so did Peter pacing outside with his hearing turned up to monitor the goings on inside.

Graham broke eye contact with Jim and looked at his guide. Riley was in need, the danger had passed and the guide’s whisper was a call that could not be ignored. Graham let the empty bottle drop to the floor as he put his hands in his guide’s hair. The decision had been made. Bond!

“We have a private room,” Blair said, knowing what the sentinel needed.

“Where?” the Captain asked.

“This way.”

Graham looked around the room as he pulled Riley to his feet. He saw Jim and growled a warning. Jim backed up slowly, small non-threatening steps, until his back was pressed against the wall. Graham, satisfied that the sentinel was no threat, moved with his guide to follow Blair.

Blair made his way to the spare bedroom. There was no furniture; the pack hadn’t foreseen that the room would be needed so soon. There was only wall-to-wall carpeting, but it beat the back seat of a car with windows anyone could see through.

Blair opened the door and stepped aside to let the sentinel and his guide through. “I’ll bring lube,” He said.

“No, I’m set,” Riley said, as Graham pushed him into the room and slammed the door.

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Spike carried Xander into the nesting room and kicked the door shut before putting Xander down. As soon as the guide was free he tore off Spike's shirt and pulled him to the floor of the nest. Xander kissed Spike hard, with an urgent need and Spike responded in kind. He let Xander put him on his back and Xander lay on top, his mouth rooting for a guide gland on Spike's neck. Frustration set in and Xander growled deep and angry; he was a sentinel lost in a bonding thrall. Spike guided Xander's head to his chest and finding the small nipple Xander latched on to it, sucking and biting, making it swell. Xander was brutal in his need, Spike moaned with the pleasure pain of it.

“Yes, baby, yes,” Spike mewed as Xander worried the tender bit of flesh between his teeth. “Yours, my Luv, always yours, forever.”

Xander stopped and looked up into yellow eyes. “I want you,” he growled.

“I’m yours to claim, Luv,” Spike said. He grabbed the lube that the pack always kept handy in the nest and squeezed a large dollop onto Xander's hand.

Xander moved down and took Spike's hard weeping cock into his mouth. He had given Spike oral pleasure many times but this was different. Now Spike was the submissive as Xander's mouth ravaged him and his fingers massaged Spike's hole.

Spike fisted the sheets on either side of him as he lifted his hip and moaned his encouragement. One of Xander's fingers slipped into Spike and Spike's hips rose to meet it. Xander's finger thrust in and out matching the rhythm of his mouth on Spike's cock. Then two fingers entered Spike.

“Yes Luv, more, please, more. Claim me Luv, please.”

Xander inserted a third finger, scissoring them and stretching his guide for the inevitable penetration and claiming to come.

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Blair came back to the living room and found Jim still pressed against the wall. “Are you okay, Jim?”

“Too many pheromones, too much testosterone, need to bond.”

Blair went to the front door and closed and locked it then he walked back to Jim and put one arm around the big guy. “Come on, let's get you to the nest.”

When they got to the nest they froze in the doorway. Xander was on top of Spike. Spike's legs and arms were wrapped around Xander as Xander thrust into him. Both men knew it would happen eventually. Spike had said as much more than once. But neither expected to witness it. This claiming was different somehow. Jim could hear it. The sounds Spike was making were guide sounds, and the scent was not quite right either. Jim opened his mouth



and tasted the air. The taste was there, it was the taste of Xander, not Guide taste but Sentinel. Jim had tasted it before but always diluted, now it had come into full bloom and filled the nest. Jim gave a low growl as he watched the scene.

Blair was the first to recover from the sight and he pulled Jim down onto the nest floor and guided him to suckle. Jim gave another low growl and a cursory lick to Blair's neck but refused to take his eyes from Spike and Xander.

"Jim, it's okay," Blair said. "We knew they would do this sooner or later."

"Xander's triggered," Jim said. "He's a sentinel, I can smell it."

"Mine," Xander screamed.

"Yours," Spike answered as they completed the claiming.

Jim started to move toward the couple, but Blair held him back. "Jim, let them have some time."

"Can't do that, Chief. Xander's a sentinel now. He just claimed my second. If he wants to stay a member of the pack he has to defer to me as head of the pack. Don't interfere in sentinel business, Guide."

"What are you going to do, Jim?"

"Claim my third guide."

"There isn't any third guide, I'm your guide."

"Spike's a guide, he's glowing. Xander's claimed him and now he needs to let me claim him. There's no other way Blair, Xan has to recognize me as head Alpha." Jim broke away from Blair and moved toward Xander and Spike.

"He's mine," Xander said without any of the anger he has shown before the claiming.

"Yes," Jim said, "and mine too. I need to claim him, Xan. I'm head of the pack, you need to let me do this."

"Doesn't Spike have a say in this?" Xander asked.

"Xan, it's okay," Spike said.

"You're his Sentinel," Jim said. "I need your permission first. It's that or you leave the pack now."

"I'm a Guide, Jim." Xander said as he began to stroke Jim's arm. "Blair, you need to get over here Jim is in some kind of a weird fugue state."

"I can't," Blair said. "You just triggered. You're a Sentinel now. This is sentinel-to-sentinel business I can't get involved. Look at him, Xan, he's glowing, Spike's your guide, but he is

still Jim's second. Jim has to do this or our pack will go out of balance.”

Xan looked at Spike and saw the glow. “I don’t understand, Spike is a Sentinel, He shouldn’t be glowing.”

Spike took Xan into his arms, “It’s okay love. We’ll deal with this, but right now Jim needs to claim me and I need it too. I know you’re confused, love. Just tell Jim he has your permission to claim me. You have to say the words.”

Xander looked at Jim. His soft brown eyes showed his concern. “You’re going to top him aren’t you?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s what I need to do,” Jim said.

“Will you make it beautiful for him?” Xander asked.

“I’ll never disrespect you, Xander,” Jim said, as he removed his clothes. “We’re pack.”

“Sentinel, claim your guide,” Xander said as he looked at Spike and the golden glow that emanated from him.

“I knew it would come to this someday,” Spike said as Jim lay down next to him.

Jim didn’t answer, he just leaned in and began patterning Spike’s body. As soon as he touched Spike he felt the familiar warm healing energy flow through him, but this time it was stronger. Jim moaned and pulled Spike into a passionate kiss. Spike wrapped his arms around Jim and returned the kiss and the two men began to make love.

Xander went to Blair and fell down beside him. “I don’t understand, Blair,” he said. “How can Spike be a guide. He doesn’t have a guide gene.”

“I don’t know,” Blair said. “But it would account for why all the Alpha sentinels are so attracted to him and why he can heal.”

“Are you okay, Blair, with Jim claiming Spike?”

“We’re already family,” Blair said. “This just keeps us in balance.”

“I hope so,” Xander said, “because I need to suckle and Spike doesn’t have a guide gland.”

Blair bared his neck for Xander and for the first time in Xander’s sentinel life he began to purr as he sucked Blair’s neck.

Jim took his time patterning Spike. Instinct had him search Spike’s neck several times, trying to find a guide gland. Jim growled in frustration and Spike would stroke his back and whisper sounds of comfort. Spike’s energy filled Jim and he could feel the bond he had with Spike deepen. When he finally entered Spike everything seemed to click into place and for a brief moment everything was crystal clear. Jim understood, Spike was still his second, unique and beautiful, but he was also a guide, unlike any that had come before him. Then Jim roared out his claim of “mine” and Spike answered, “yours.”

When the claiming was done all four men felt a pull they could not resist and they all came together in the center of the nest. The scents of the claiming mingled together for the two senior sentinels and the energy vibrations filled Blair and Xander. They lay together in silent exhaustion; all closed their eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

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As soon as the door slammed shut, Graham pushed Riley to the floor and straddled him, sitting on his belly. "You called me Master in front of another sentinel. I told you never to do that."

"I'm sorry, Master, it was the only thing I could think of," Riley replied.

"You knelt in a puddle of beer and you stink like a brewery."

"I'm sorry, Master. Please forgive me."

"Forgive you, Riley, is that what you want?"

"No, Master, I want to be punished. It's been so long."

"How long?"

"Seventy-nine days, Master."

Graham ripped open Riley's shirt. The buttons flew across the room, some tapping the wall like a hard rain. The sentinel bent down and bit Riley's nipple.

Riley hissed at the pain and his cock became instantly hard. He didn't know why he enjoyed the pain so much, why he craved it and needed it. He only knew that it somehow cleared his mind and made him a better Guide.

Graham was an Alpha Sentinel but not inclined to be a slave master. He gave Riley what he needed and rarely rewarded him with more. Graham made it all precious, every moment and he kept it that way. But Graham had rules and the most important one was that they kept the master/slave relationship in the bedroom and very private. Now Riley had called his sentinel, Master, in front of other Sentinels and Guides.

Riley was determined to make it right, he would find a way to tell the Sentinels that Graham was only giving him what he needed.

"Can't punish you right now, I need you too much. But when we get home I'll give you a spanking, I promise." Graham reached into Riley's pocket and pulled out the lube he knew was there and then he got off his guide. "Get up and strip, then get on your knees and spread your cheeks for me. I'm going to take you from behind."

Riley got up and stripped, unable to keep the smile from his face. He knew that if he begged hard enough the sentinel would make it hurt, just a little. God forgive him. He wanted it so much.



## Chapter 2

Chapter by [Joan963z](#)

Peter did not want to go back into the house. He paced up and down the sidewalk, gulping fresh air. His whole body tingled as if he had been subjected to an electrical shock. His jaw was clenched, his hands fisted. He growled, low and menacingly. Pedestrians stopped and hastily rushed to the other side of the street, keeping an eye on the agitated man as they hurried away.

Wesley paced with him, stroking his sentinel's hand, trying to bring the sentinel's emotions under control. He murmured soothing sounds, keeping his body in contact with his sentinel's, knowing it was necessary, no matter how public the place. His sentinel's needs came first, before propriety, before all other considerations.

Peter could hear what was happening inside the house. He hoped that he would not have to go in and break up a fight between Jim and Graham. The tension between the two sentinels crackled in the air. Burned. Two Alpha Sentinels facing off, Jim's territory, but Graham wasn't used to backing down to any civilian. Jim might have once been military, but not any more. Locally, almost no one outranked Graham. Graham growled again, the deep rumble transmitted to Peter's sharpened hearing even out on the busy street.

And then Peter heard it, Riley's soft voice, barely a whisper, but the word was unmistakable. "Master." Whispered, sweet, filled with tempting devotion, surrender.

Peter felt his blood sing, his heart pump all the harder. His head snapped to glare at the front door. He took a step in that direction. A Guide... sinking to his knees, he heard a soft splash and then a thump as the beer bottle hit the floor.... angrily he shook his head, driving the illicit vision from his mind. He couldn't credit it. Couldn't believe.... He would never do that to a Guide. Never. "No, no, no!"

Wesley could feel the overwhelming fear course through his sentinel and he tugged at Peter's elbow to stop the move toward the front door. "What is it?" he asked as he wrapped his arms tightly around Peter. "Are they fighting, did they kill...?" His voice trailed off unable to finish the sentence. Had the Sentinels killed each other? Was one of them, or both, lying on the floor dead? Wes felt dread rising up to choke him. "Tell me!" He demanded as he dug in his heels. Until he knew what the new crisis was, he was going to do all he could to keep both of them out of it. If Graham and Jim got into a knock down, drag out...so be it. Peter, if Wes had any say at all, was staying out of it.

"How could I have been so stupid?" Peter said, his voice nearly a wail, his grip dug into Wesley's arms.

Wes felt his skin tighten. God! It couldn't be true. It couldn't. Not Jim, not Graham. What would Blair do, or Riley, without the Sentinels who were the better part of their reason for living? Come to that...what would Wes do if Peter was threatened. If he went in there and.... He held on tighter. He wound his legs through his sentinel's and clung, knowing that Peter

would trip if he tried to move. If he tried to get into that house...where two sentinels now lay....

"No, Peter," Wesley said, as he pulled his sentinel's face into his neck. "You did the right thing, you did it to save me." He was frantic, and fought to keep his voice down, even. His wild emotion would escalate Peter. He couldn't let that happen. He had to get back on an even keel. "If they are dead...." He began, his voice hoarse.

"I was going to let him bond with you," Peter said, putting his hands up framing Wes' face. "Oh I am so, so, sorry, I swear I didn't know, love, I didn't know."

Wesley's voice changed to the soothing, command timbre of a working guide, calm, reassuring. "What is it you didn't know, Peter?"

"Riley's a slave guide." Peter said with profound distaste. Wes stared at him. He blinked. "You mean no one's dead?" Wesley asked confused.

"Dead? No," Peter said. "Didn't you hear me? Riley's a slave."

"No, Peter, he can't be, there is no sign of it. He doesn't wear a collar or even an earring, no tattoos to denote ownership and behavior wise, there is no indication either. Graham treats Riley like an equal and demands other sentinels do the same." Wes insisted, wracking his brain for clues that Peter might be correct. He came up blank. "He can't be." He finished lamely.

"I just heard Riley call Graham, Master. Not Sentinel, but Master. That's pretty unambiguous." Peter said, flatly. He turned to look into his Guide's eyes. "Tell me what else that could mean?"

"Maybe it's a game they play," Wesley said trying to make sense out of what seemed like nonsense. Riley a slave-guide? No. He wasn't going to believe it. Riley didn't act like a slave.

Peter shot him a bemused glance. "That wasn't game time in there, Wes. Riley did what he had to, to keep Graham and Jim from fighting. He had to call Graham, Master, to make him drop the beer bottle. I heard him." Peter said, freeing himself from Wes' slackened grip. He had heard it all right, and he had felt the sincerity. He took his Guide's hand, leaned forward and drew in the clean fresh scent of his guide. Letting it fill him, strengthen him. "And I almost let him bond with you." The last was a whisper accompanied by a shudder.

"Peter this doesn't make any sense," Wesley said, even as he arched his neck to give Peter access to the line of his long throat. He saw that there was a little shadow next to the house. If he could maneuver them there, then all of this wouldn't be so public, he thought. "I've met a lot of sentinels in our work and I can sense immediately if they don't respect guides as equals. Graham always treats me with the utmost respect. He listens to the all the guides, he's never dismissed them out of hand."

"I know what I heard, Wes." Peter was staunch in his belief. However he was also, like any sensible sentinel, focused on his Guide, especially now, as Wes managed to get them out of sight, and pressed up against the house, in the darkness.

Wes continued to murmur as his Sentinel's powerful hands began mapping him, responding to the situation's stress triggers, and seeking comfort and reassurance that his Guide was present and unharmed. "And I know what I sense, Sentinel.", Wesley said "Graham has been the ranking Captain since you transferred to Cascade. We interact almost everyday with him and with Riley. We've been in the field together. I've seen him angry, happy, scared, dog tired and drunk and never have I felt that he had anything but respect for me as a guide. Do you really think they could fool us for so long? All I'm saying is there must be a different interpretation. You heard one word but there is over a year of behavior to counter it."

"Okay, Wes, I'll give a cautious bow to guide assessment and logic on this one, but I have no intention of letting you cross bond with Graham unless I get a really, really good explanation out of him. Let's go home, baby, I need to bond." Peter ground his hips into this Guide, letting Wes know how true that statement was. Peter did indeed need to bond, in the worst way.

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Sentinel Alpha Prime Byron Harris and The Agency of Sentinel Affairs, Director Adrian Donovan walked through the deserted building of Washington Genetics.

"The lab seems complete," Director Donovan said, running a finger through the dust on the top of a centrifuge.

"Yes, we managed to save all the hardware. The lab is ready to re-open as soon as we can get it staffed," the Alpha Prime said.

"Good, Byron, you did well with this part of the operation. In three days Senator Blakemore will introduce a bill into congress that will require Sentinels to breed their guides. This bill will pass quickly and quietly and be signed into law by the president. The bill provides for monies to be allocated to reopen this facility. We will provide free artificial insemination to any sentinel who wants it for their Guide as well as a registry for mundane woman who wish to be surrogate mothers. Sentinels and male guides will be required to donate sperm. Eggs will only be harvested from the female guides if the sentinel does not wish to be burdened with a pregnant Guide. With all the activity going on we will be able to hide any genetic experimentation we wish to do."

"You seem to have things very well thought out."

"Yes, it does seem to be working out, doesn't it? However there are those who are quite disappointed in your performance in this area. They feel we should have control of the situation without the cost of this facade. But, I think in the long run that this will be the better outcome. Where there is one there is more, so to speak. This facility, along with the legislation, will give us a chance to find the other guides that carry both the sentinel and guide genes, get them all cataloged, and into special training before they are bonded to a sentinel. Now, about Guide Harris and Sentinel Spikeman..."

"They are being closely monitored, Director, I assure you there will be no more screw-ups."

"I am sure there won't be. I want them left alone for now, monitor only. Once the lab is re-opened it should be a simple matter of getting a hold of their genetic material, once it is in

our hands we will have free reign.”

“There is one more thing,” the Alpha Prime said. “It’s about Guide Wesley Price. I would like to have him declared unfit and have his bond with Sentinel Peter Wall stripped.”

“What has the guide done?”

“He allowed his sentinel to repeatedly lose focus. If he had been doing his job, Sentinel Spikeman would be working for the Agency and we would have the boy by now.”

‘It’s your call, Sentinel, if you think it is necessary.’

“I do. It will serve as an example to other sentinels in The Agency to keep their edge.”

“Yes, I see your point. The more liberal sentinels may protest some of the reforms we want to put in place. This example, of what will happen to those unwilling to tow the mark, may be just what we need to nip the protests in the bud. I want you to wait on this until after the mandatory breeding law is past. That way it will also serve as a convenient distraction from the new law as well as an excellent example. Is the guide rated above a 6.5?”

“Yes, he is a 7.8 I believe”

“All the better as an example. I’ll make sure the tribunal is made up of sentinels that are sympathetic with our cause. It will be no problem to disregard the testimony of one incompetent sentinel and I have just the Mind Walker Guide for this, she broke a bond with a level 8.2 less than a year ago.”

“And the guide survived?”

“Yes, there were extenuating circumstances, but...” The director waved his hand as if to brush away a fly.

“She is a very powerful double X guide,” Donovan continued. “All her children will be guides. She is one of the first I would like to breed with this Sentinel Spikeman you’ve told me about, artificial insemination of course. She belongs to the Agency, her parents signed her over to us at age 11, so we have complete control of her as well as unlimited access to her genetic material. A child of hers with a sentinel gene...Imagine the possibilities.”

“If you can get the sentinel gene to trigger,” Byron Harris said.

“There are new breakthroughs every day, it is only a matter of time. I'm returning to D.C. this evening. There are other things in the works that must be overseen. You are in charge here. I don't have to tell you this is our most important operation. Make sure everything goes smoothly.”

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Blair woke with a start.

“Blair, are you okay?” Jim asked.



“I just had a vision,” Blair said. “Incacha came to me.”

“I hope he gave you some answers,” Jim said.

“He did, but I am not sure you are going to like all of them.” Blair began to untangle himself from the group so he could sit up and stretch.

“Who’s Incacha?” Xander asked, as he too untangled his legs and arms from the group.

“He is a Chopec Shaman, he started coming to Jim and I when we got into exploring the meta-physical side of the sentinel/guide bond.”

“Did he tell you why I am glowing like a guide?” Spike asked.

“Actually, you’re not exactly glowing like a guide, Jim said. “Your glow is more golden than normal guide glow.”

“Incacha said that Spike is a different kind of Guide, one that is new to this reality.”

“What do you mean, different?” Xander asked.

“Spike doesn’t have a guide gene. All his guide abilities come from the meta-physical. Spike is very flexible. He can switch from being an Alpha Sentinel to being a healer guide seamlessly. He has no problem deferring to Jim as leader of the pack because he doesn’t see it as a weakness, as other sentinels would. He knows it to be his strength. Spike was sent to us because Jim and I had already opened the door to the meta-physical world. Xander is here because he is Spike’s soul mate. He said Spike will be able to act as Xander’s guide and keep him in balance but there will be occasions when his physical sentinel will need a physical guide. He’ll need to bond with me for that. I hope that doesn’t bother you Jim.”

“This whole thing is freaking me out,” Jim said. “We are in deep shit. I hate to think of the consequences if anyone finds out Xander’s sentinel abilities have triggered. Xander’s need to claim you, as a guide, is not on my list of things to worry about. I would not like it if he were to bond with another guide.”

“No, way,” Xander said. “This four way thing is all I can handle, besides I’m not even sure that I have triggered. I can’t hear your heartbeats and I don’t smell anything more than usual.”

“It’s better if your hyper-senses develop slowly,” Spike said. “We can deal with it more easily that way.”

“Or not develop at all,” Xander said. “There is still that small problem of going insane.”

“You’re not going to go insane, Xan,” Spike said. “Incacha told Blair I could keep you balanced. That means no insanity.”

“Spike, I just tried to kill Graham Miller, and I don’t know what will happen when we leave this room, if he tries to touch you again... or some other sentinel tries... Insanity is just too close for comfort.”

Spike looked over at Blair. "I don't suppose Incacha mentioned anything about that, did he?"

"He did," Blair said. "But I don't think you are going to like it. Graham's soul is at a place where he is ready to take the next step, meaning journeying into the meta-physical. When you shook hands with him Spike your energy opened previously closed pathways. Now he has a drive for more. He senses your meta-physical guide abilities the same way he can sense any guide. But you're different. Remember what Jim said, when he comes to me, I can take away his need to bond with Xander but not his need to bond with you. It's the same with Graham."

"So what does that mean?" Jim asked, "Do we have to bring him into our pack?"

"No, Incacha said not to do that." Blair said. "Graham and Peter need to form their own pack."

"But how will that solve the problem with Graham's pull to me?" Spike asked.

"Incacha said that you need to make Peter into a conduit for the same energy you channel. Then Graham will transfer his drive to bond from you to Peter."

"That's all well and good, Blair," Spike said. "But I don't know how I transfer this meta-physical energy, it just happens, so how am I supposed to teach Peter to do it?"

"Incacha said you need to do a blood bond with Peter. He said Yellow Eyes would understand."

"There has to be another way, Blair."

"I don't think so, Spike. He said it is why you're here. To light the path and bring sentinels to explore their meta-physical side."

"What's a blood bond?" Xander asked.

"It's a healing bond, and then just as the bond locks into place we would have to drink each other's blood. It's how the demon inside of me procreates."

"You don't have a demon inside of you, Spike," Blair said. "You have a meta-physical being capable of love and healing. There is nothing you can say to convince me that you, or it, is evil."

"You have no idea what I am capable of, Blair."

"We all have a dark side, Blair said. "So your dark side is darker than most, but you have reached a state of balance."

"Blair's right, you've achieved balance," Jim said. "As for the pull to claim you as a guide, I know from experience just how strong it is. Blair has no effect on it, so we have no reason to believe that Riley would have any success in relieving Graham's pull to you. I don't want to kill Graham but if he makes a challenge..."

"Do you really think it would go that far?" Xander asked.

"I know Graham," Blair said. "He is usually stoic. Touching Spike like that in front of other sentinels and guides... that was way out of character."

"So, do you two trust this Incacha guy?" Spike asked.

"With my guide's life," Jim pledged.

"And with my immortal soul," Blair added.

"Well, that's the best I can ask for," Spike said. "If Peter agrees, I'll do the blood bond."

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After the pack's conversation, Blair came out of the nesting room and gently knocked on the spare bedroom's door. He could sense the satisfaction that had replaced the tension and anger from before. The bonding had done its work. Still, it wouldn't hurt to move cautiously, to be extra careful not to step on sensitive, sentinel toes. Blair intentionally softened his stance, his whole body looked softer, less aggressive.

"What is it?" Graham asked, as he lay naked on the carpeted floor with a glowing and contented Riley lying limply next to him. He wanted to smile, to laze around on the floor for as long as he could, longer than the circumstances made practical. The voice of Ellison's Guide came through the closed door, gentle, soothing, properly submissive. Graham felt his whole body relax back into its sense of ease.

"It's Blair, I'm leaving 2 sets of sweats out here for you and Riley, in case you need them and there are also a couple of towels; if you want to take a shower you can get to the guest bathroom from the bedroom, it's on the right." Blair said, quietly.

"Thanks, Blair, that's very thoughtful of you. I'll have Riley pick them up as soon as you're out of the hallway." Graham, even trusting the other Guide was aware of his volatile state, of how close he'd come to losing it and fighting one of his best friend's pack mates...Graham wasn't going to take a chance. Riley was going to be the only one to get close to Blair. Graham didn't trust his instincts right now. Not after how he reacted to Xander and Spike. That had turned his whole world on its ear. He, already bonded, had tried, intended, to take another man's second and a fellow sentinel by force if necessary. He wasn't going to take no for an answer. He had provoked a violent episode through his lack of control. That shouldn't have happened to him. Certainly not since he became bonded with Riley.

"We'll be in the kitchen, having tea, please join us when you come out, there are things we need to discuss." Blair offered carefully. His whole delivery was soft, unassuming. Leaving it to the Sentinel to decide. He didn't push. Graham felt himself relax further. There was no threat, no demands. The choice was his.

"Thank you," Graham said, surprised in a way to receive the invite. Jim must think it was safe. Jim trusted him to keep it under control. Graham was flattered. "Are you sure it will be safe?"

"As long as you don't touch Spike, Xander will be fine."

Graham could hear Blair's bare feet padding softly away. Bare feet. His skin went hot. Graham looked over at the nude form of his Guide. His groin filled with blood. He was abruptly aching long and hard. He grit his teeth together. Bare feet, bare skin. Sweat dewing the curve of his Guide's chest, a chest tipped with tender, bite swollen nipple, beckoning. Riley's upper lip wet, his face flushed, beautifully submissive. A Guide waiting to be claimed. Taken. Graham reached out, down, cupped Riley's soft genitals. Warm, un-aroused, waiting for what Graham wanted, what the sentinel wished. Riley melted into his arms, opened his mouth, and sighed happily. His body was open, inviting, telegraphing his willingness to submit, to give Graham what he needed, all he needed. Willing, so very willing. Graham felt his control returning. He was still Riley's Master, his Alpha Sentinel; he was still in charge. It was time to get up and go face the music. Reluctantly Graham stood, letting go of his Guide's pliant body.

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Twenty minutes later Graham walked into the kitchen, Riley, barefoot, a step behind him, a warm welcome presence safely at his back. The sight that greeted them made him stop in his tracks. His hackles rose at the strange sight, a sight that twisted his perceptions of what should be. And wasn't.

Xander sat perched contentedly in Spike's lap but it wasn't the guide who was glowing. It was Spike. Graham's nostrils flared and he caught the scent; he reached behind him and held Riley firmly back. He heard his Guide sniff, no doubt picking up the scent of hot toast, butter, and homemade jam that was laid out on the table. Graham's attention was fixed on something else entirely.

Spike had been claimed as a guide not only by Xander, but by Jim as well, and Spike, a powerful Alpha sentinel sat happily sipping his tea as if were the most natural thing in the world that he should smell of other men's fluids, not they of his.

Graham felt his balls contract, his cheeks instinctively squeezing against assault. No one was putting him on his back! He wasn't playing second to anyone. Captain Graham Miller was an Alpha; he wasn't anyone's Guide. He didn't even try to fight the automatic flash of his teeth or the growl that found its way out of the depths of his chest. Riley stepped up, pressing his entire length against his agitated Sentinel.

Graham's arm shot back again and looped around Riley, then he pushed and Riley ended up on the floor, low, safe. Graham stood erect over him, a sentinel protecting his guide from an unknown situation, the urge barely winning out over the pull to go to Spike. Graham wanted to feel the warm energy, wanted to put Spike on his back, drag up those slim hips and enter him. Graham wanted to feel the heat Spike's touch gave coursing through him, wrapped around his dick. He came so close to taking the other man. So close. Only Riley at his feet stopped him.

"What the hell is going on here, Jim?" Graham asked without taking his eyes from Spike. All his efforts at calm were now as good as tossed out the window.

"What happened here, stays here," Jim said, the warning in his tone subtle but unmistakable. "Sentinel-to-sentinel. Do you agree, Sentinel Miller?"

With a monumental effort Graham pulled his eyes away from the glowing Spike and looked at Jim. Jim had called on him for formal acknowledgement. Why? Frowning he went through the last moments in his memory. Then it hit him. "Brothers," he said. "It is no one's business but our own." Graham agreed. Besides, he didn't want anyone to know he was losing it, was lusting after another sentinel. He'd be a laughingstock. Ridiculed for his lack of control. A perversion of what a sentinel should be and should want. Graham defiantly lifted his chin, glared.

Spike, glowing, merely continued sipping his tea and stroking his guide as if the world hadn't suddenly been turned on its end.

Graham's statement was all Jim needed to satisfy him that nothing said in the kitchen would go beyond those walls, no official reports or unofficial ones, no conversations with anyone other than the people involved. No chance that some regulatory agency would find a reason to investigate.

"Sit down and have some tea," Blair said smoothly, moving up out of his chair and indicating the free ones left for Riley and Graham. He was offering respect, service. He was the graceful Guide, the perfect Guide.

Graham felt instantly better. He took a cautious step inside the kitchen.

"Or I could make coffee if you prefer," Blair offered, his attention focused on Graham. Waiting. Patient.

Damn, Ellison was a lucky man. "Tea will be fine," Graham said without moving, and then looked back at Spike. "There are so many questions I don't know where to begin. Did you lie to me, Jim? Is Spike a Guide?"

His eyes, his senses were in conflict. His eyes said Guide! on seeing the glow. Then said, Sentinel! on seeing the negligent, assertive posture. Graham smelled Sentinel...and Guide. Smelled the claim. It made him nervous, and it aroused him.

"It's a long story, Graham," Jim said, letting a faint touch of weariness enter his voice. "I've called Peter and Wesley, they're on their way back. I'll explain everything as soon as they get here. I am asking that you keep an open mind. This, all of it, is important, a matter of life and death, literally. And not only for our Guides, but for Spike, for me and for countless other Sentinels and Guides. Just listen. Don't decide without listening to what we have to say. Please."

Graham's brows flew up towards his hairline. Jim Ellison, the epitome of the alpha sentinel, asking for patience. Graham would of course comply. He couldn't refuse. He wasn't that much of an ass, no matter how freaked he was feeling at the moment. But it didn't make him any more comfortable as he took his seat. Riley, sensing it, curled up on the spotless floor at his Sentinel's feet, instead of taking his own chair. Graham's fingers immediately found their way into his thick, shining hair. Winding the smooth, silky locks through restless fingers.

"None of this is making sense, Jim. I feel a strong pull to Spike. I've just bonded with Riley; I shouldn't feel a pull to another guide. Not to mention that Spike is a sentinel, so why am I feeling a guide pull at all? I don't understand any of this." Graham fought to keep his anger out of the question. But the enormity of the wrongness wasn't letting him get back on an even keel.

Spike sighed, "I think we had better go back to the nest, Xan. It's pretty clear that Sentinel Miller isn't going to be comfortable, or able to concentrate while we are around." He shifted, preparing to stand.

"I think you should answer my questions." Graham commanded. "Before anyone leaves."

Spike stopped moving and fixed the alpha sentinel with his eyes. It was a look that Graham hadn't seen before, pure predator and it was fixed on him. He gave an involuntary shiver. Riley responded by sneaking a hand up Graham's leg, stroking skin-to-skin. Xander's hand began to move against Spike's chest.

"Graham," Jim said, obviously picking his words carefully. "I know how strong the pull to Spike can be..."

"That is obvious, Jim," he said not taking his eyes off of Spike. "I can smell it." Graham heard the edge of anger in his own tone. "I can smell you on him. I can smell Harris on him." Graham was the first to break eye contact. He turned his head and looked at his brother sentinel. "For God's sake, Jim. I know what happened in your nest. I only wish I didn't."

"All right, Graham, I'll give you an overview of what's happening, but you will have to listen to it again when Peter gets here." A flush rode Jim's cheeks, and Blair hurried over to put a hand on his Sentinel's shoulder.

"You can start by telling me why Spike is glowing and why I feel this pull." Graham came close to demanding.

"Are you interested in the metaphysical, Graham?" Jim asked, almost absently, his eyes closing as he leaned for an instant into Blair's touch. Then his eyes snapped open, their icy blue depths piercing and hard, startling Graham.

"What? Witchcraft? That is horseshit and you know it, Ellison." Graham snapped back at him. The two sentinels stared into each other's faces.

"Blair." Jim ordered crisply. "Get their drinks. And let's get this started. Let Peter and Wes in when they get here."

"I thought we were going to talk about Spike?" Graham pushed, not able for some reason to back off as would be prudent. He felt wave after wave of aggression. He ground his teeth together, biting back the next words that wanted out. Words that Jim would have to take as a challenge, Sentinel to Sentinel. A challenge Graham didn't want to utter.

"We are," Jim said, more mildly. "That is exactly what we are talking about, Spike. Now, answer the question."

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The eight men sat in the living room. Jim occupied the chair he had taken at the first meeting. Spike, Xander, and Blair sat on one sofa, with Graham and Peter on the other, eying each other with a degree of trepidation that hadn't been present last time. Riley and Wesley sat on the floor, Wes at Peter's feet. Riley at Graham's, each knowing his Sentinel needed to touch him, and needed equally to have him firmly subordinate.

"So," Peter said when Jim and Blair were through bringing the visitors up to date on the prophetic dream Blair had had, "this shaman, Incacha, said I have to do this blood bond thing with Spike?"

"That's right," Blair said. "In order to make it work with Graham. To be Graham's second and protect Wes."

"Uh huh, I've got just one question. What the hell does it mean? Blood bond? Real blood? I couldn't possibly be lucky enough that you are talking metaphorical blood, could I?" Peter didn't like the idea of it; the concept of cross bonding at all and being a second to another sentinel was bad enough. But drinking blood for the privilege, not even the blood of a pack mate; Spike's blood... Yech! It went against all the instincts he had.

"Simple." Spike said, interrupting. "My blood will make you like me. Which is what has to happen. It's the whole point. Right?"

Xander snarled, and Spike immediately stroked a hand down his side. "No, pet, you promised to be good. I am yours. All yours. It is just a bit of blood. No dicks, no kissing. Just blood."

Xander snarled again, but sounded more subdued and relaxed as Spike licked his hand, nuzzling his wrist and bit gently over the pulse there. Peter, watching, saw all the little hairs along Xander's arm stand to attention. He hid his smile. Yeah, Wes could do that to him with a little nibble in the right place, too. But there were larger issues to deal with now.

"I don't mind taking Spike as a sentinel brother, in fact I would welcome it, he is strong, a good ally, but this blood bond... It just seems... I mean why blood?" Peter again failed to keep the distaste out of his voice.

Xander glared over at him, eyes heated.

Graham grunted his agreement. The blood thing...not good.

"Blood gives life," Spike said. It was like teaching kids, better keep it simple and impossible to misunderstand. "It's how the metaphysical part of me multiplies."

Graham and Peter stared at him, eyes narrowed, as if trying to figure out just how nuts he was. Spike fought the urge to roll his eyes. These sentinels were such literalists. Such concrete thinkers. If they couldn't see it, hear it, taste it, smell it, or pound it into the mattress...it didn't exist, wasn't real. He prayed for patience.

"Is this the only way?" Peter asked after several long minutes, considering what had been said.

"It's the only way to transfer the pull toward Spike that Graham is feeling," Jim said. "The only way, as far as we know, to make it possible for you and Graham to cross bond without challenging each other for supremacy."

"So aside from this pull thing, I'll be transferred into a Beta Sentinel?"

"Spike's no Beta," Graham said.

"Graham's right," Jim said. "You've seen Spike in the field. You know what he can do. He's stronger for what he is."

"I know you want it, Peter," Spike said. "I felt it since I first met you, it's different than what Jim and Graham feel. They need what I have to give but you want to be the giver."

Peter stared at Spike. It was true. He was jealous of what Spike was. He wanted it. But he wanted the sentinel parts. He hadn't seen the true, fullness of what Spike was. It was a bigger bite than he wanted to chew. He gave a small ironic laugh at his mental pun.

"You've been talking about this from a metaphysical point of view. I think we need to lay out all the more mundane benefits and problems this will cause before we decide," Blair offered. "We know that there is a faction of the government that supports taking procreative and genetic control away from the individual pair bonds. They want the gene that Xander has, the threat assessment gene, and they are willing to alter centuries of law to get control of it. So they can breed it into future generations at will. Use it, and the Guides and Sentinels who have it, as weapons of war."

"What do you mean?" Peter asked, grateful for the change of subject. "I've heard some of what you are saying. But...surely it won't get that out of control. It is just a few people like Byron Harris. Not a government conspiracy." A law? Not simply kidnapping a Guide or two, which was unforgivable enough. But making Sentinels and Guides legally bend to the will of the Nation? That was a huge step up in escalation. Guides and Sentinels, all of them, would become property of the state.

"Ok, let's start with our situation," Blair said. "Your whole pack thing was kicked up a notch in urgency because of the threat that the Alpha Prime made against Wesley. So one of the immediate benefits of a cross bond will be that Wesley has a better chance of survival if the crazy bastard makes good on his threat. Any other benefits that you know of?"

Jim turned towards Graham. "I know you've heard of the proposed law, you have always had a talent for finding out these kinds of things."

"Rumors." Graham admitted reluctantly. "Along the same lines Peter has heard. But nothing about making what they have been doing legal. There are labs, secret genetics labs, but that is a tiny part of what is happening. There aren't enough of them to make an impact. Making it nationwide? Jim are you sure? That sounds...well frankly, insane. No one will vote it in even if it does get out of committee and to a congressional vote."



Jim thought about what Graham had said, and then he spoke. "I can only tell you what I've learned through sources, including you two, but not limited to you. The Agency has purchased the Washington Genetics Lab. They have enough confidence in their support that they are stepping out in the open. There is going to be a vote; the law will pass. They have managed to buy the votes, somehow. What it means is we can't afford to be weak. We can't afford to be only as strong as we were. We have to be stronger than last year, stronger than we are today. Or we have lost before we begin to fight. As far as the rest..." He shrugged. "My bond with Blair has gotten deeper since the cross bonding. I wouldn't have thought it possible but that is what has happened. It has enhanced all my senses and my control, my thinking. I have lost nothing, and gained...everything."

Xander raised his hand, his glowering look had faded once the serious business was being discussed and Spike was no longer the center of attention, half wedged under the larger guide. "Speaking as a guide here, my two sentinels are different, they give me what I need in different ways. Spike has been healing me and bonding with me, but it wasn't until I re-bonded with Jim that I started glowing again. So I would say that having two different sentinels has benefited me." Xander took in a deep breath, frowned, and then continued. "I don't remember much about what happened during the kidnapping, fragments mostly, a few words, a face, but I do know this...you better believe it when Jim tells you there are people who will stop at nothing to force you to do what they want to control you. They have the power, they have the will and they believe they have the right to own you, me, all of us. No one is making this up."

Peter and Graham were looking at him assessing what he had said when he finished. His heartbeat was accelerated, but not erratic. He smelled like he believed what he was saying was true. The Sentinels turned their heads in unison, pinning Jim with their eyes.

"On the life of my Guides, it is true, Graham. Xander was kidnapped; the intent was to find a genetic component to his hazard detection and to harvest it. Peter was there at the rescue. Whether Xander lived or died was not important to the people who had him. The attempt failed. But there are now even more people who believe they have the right. That Xander, and the Sentinels and Guides, who mutate and show new, desirable talents, should be harvested. Their genes used for the benefit of their projects." Jim's eyes fixed on Spike. "Get the letter." He said.

Spike rose and padded over to the locked desk against one wall. He spun the key in the lock and lowered the lid. Then he tapped in the code to open the small safe in the center of the desktop. He pulled out a letter. Spike looked over at Jim, who nodded. Then Spike walked over and handed the letter to Graham, careful that their fingers didn't make contact.

Graham wasted no time. He opened the letter and read it. Wordlessly he handed it off to Peter when he was done, his brow furrowed.

"Read it and weep." Spike muttered. "The bastards have the cheek to tell me to report to their facility and jerk off into a cup for them. Then to lay back like a good little sod and let them stick needles into me. No bloody way."

"Jesus," He said, shaking his head. "They can't...I mean...Jesus...." The first sentence blared in his brain. "Under penalty of arrest and permanent loss of freedom, Sentinel William

Spikeman is hereby compelled to report....'

"The bastard," Peter said and handed the letter to Wesley. "I swear it's not my doing, Spike. The Alpha Prime called today and ordered me to stand down on this. He said other things were in the works, but this..."

Xander made an unhappy sound and threw his long arms around Spike, clinging to him. He gave out a little whimper.

"Jesus." Graham whispered again.

"This letter didn't come from the Agency," Wesley said. "The paper doesn't have our water mark and we have our own stamp machine. This letter was mailed from a public post office."

Graham held out his hand and Wesley handed him back the letter. "You're right, guide. This is a forgery and that's not Byron Harris' signature either."

"So what does it mean?" Riley asked.

"It means someone else is in the game," Graham said with a low growl. "And they are not waiting for the Agency to get the upper hand."

"It means we're in deep shit," Peter said. "But who else could be doing this? Another wacko billionaire?"

"Probably another government," Jim said. "Rayne put Xander up for auction on the international market. Our government just happened to be the high bidder. But that won't stop another government from trying to steal what they couldn't buy."

"You are right, my brother," Graham said. "We can't allow this to happen. Jesus, I thought all I needed to deal with was an insane Alpha Prime. He's just the tip of the iceberg."

"So," Jim asked. "Do you need any further convincing or have you made your decision?"

"I've made mine," Graham said. "I think you're right Jim, we don't have a choice. We're stronger together than we are apart."

"I have a question before I give my answer," Peter said and looked at Graham. He took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. It was a question that needed to be asked. "Is Riley a slave guide?"

Riley startled and looked up at Graham, silently asking for permission to speak. Graham didn't give it.

"Riley is a beta guide. He is submissive. It's what he is. Like any decent Sentinel, I give my Guide what he needs."

"I'm more interested in what you need," Peter said. "Specifically, what will you need from Wesley?"

“Wesley is not like Riley. If he’s true to himself and happy with the bond, if he continues to be as good a Guide as he has been then there is only one thing more that I require, and that would be from both of you. If we’re going to nest together, you need to accept what happens between Riley and me. I can’t take you as my second if your distaste hurts my Guide. If you can’t find it in you to accept it then you need to find another Sentinel to cross bond with.”

Peter looked at Wesley. “Does that answer satisfy you, Wesley?” he asked. “Can you accept their relationship and be there when they renew their bond?”

“I’m an empath, Peter. If Graham is giving Riley what he needs I won’t pass judgment on them, Graham is a good man and a strong Sentinel. He is the only Sentinel that entered my mind when we discussed cross bonding. You have the final say, but I’m satisfied that Graham will treat me with respect.”

Peter looked at Spike, “When do we do this?”

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Graham had been uneasy when he first arrived at Jim’s home. The group had decided that having Graham present at the ceremony may be problematic and the same for Xander. Spike did not want to leave Xander without a sentinel protector so after some discussion it was decided that Graham, Riley and Blair would stay with Xander at the nest house. Graham was a little reluctant at first. But Peter said he would feel more confident having both Jim and Wesley with him and Xander assured Graham that it was the sentinel’s interest in Spike that caused him to lose control. Now, Graham silently watched the couple on the sofa. Cataloging every move. He knew that both Blair and Xander were healing guides, but Riley was not a healer so he had not had much opportunity to see healers in action. Both Blair and Xander were shirtless and barefoot. Xander lay with his head in Blair’s lap as Blair ran his fingers through the thick dark hair. It seemed to Graham a very healer guide thing to do, but then Xander turned his head and began licking and rimming Blair’s belly button. Blair’s pheromones flared, as if reacting to his sentinel. Graham was a bit sqirked by it, but the pheromones won out and he began to feel a need to bond with Riley.

Riley, who sat at Graham feet, grateful that he could be himself in front of the two guides, immediately picked up on his sentinel’s arousal. He turned and looked into Graham’s eyes. “Master?” he asked softly.

“Not now,” Graham said, through gritted teeth, unwilling to shirk his duty and leave the two guides he was entrusted to watch by his brother sentinel, bonding would have to wait.

But Blair, bless him, understood the situation. “Xan,” he said quietly, “I don’t think you should do that right now, Graham is honor bound not to let us out of his sight and I don’t think he’s the type that will be happy about bonding with Riley in front of us.”

Xander blinked up at Blair “Oh,” he said, suddenly understanding the problem. He looked over at Graham, his soft brown eyes, so full of feeling, tenderness and warmth. “I’m sorry,” Xander said, his voice was soft, seductive, a guide’s voice. “I wasn’t thinking. I’m not used...”

Graham's pants immediately tented. "Just be quiet, Guide!" he interrupted.

Xander looked away. "Okay," he whispered, as he sat up and pulled Blair's arm over his shoulder.

Graham gave a soft moan and his fingers tightened in Riley's hair. Luckily for Graham the News Magazine they were watching announced the beginning of their segment on Sentinels and the Guide shortage. The distraction was welcome and everyone in the room refocused their attention on the TV. The program documented Sentinels going into zone comas for lack of a guide and, of even more concern for the public, it talked about several sentinels who had gone rogue and killed civilians due to the need to bond. They even reported bonded guides being kidnapped and the death of a Sentinel General Henry Gideon, Metal of Honor Winner, who was involved in one such kidnapping.

"This is a setup," Blair said, "to get public support behind the laws for mandatory breeding of guides."

Blair's comment was confirmed when the reporter ended the program with a plea to The Agency of Sentinel Affairs and Congress to, "take action and protect the public from such outrages."

Xander mewled and nuzzling his nose into Blair's neck, he began to suckle. Blair began petting Xander with both hands.

Graham watched the two guides and everything suddenly fell into place. He was filled with a cold burning rage. The boy was meant to be a guide, a healer. Not this disturbing mixture of sentinel and guide. He looked at Blair. "You said they tortured Xander, how?"

"Does it matter?" Blair asked.

Xander's head came up his brown eyes so full of pain and determination. "Just stop them," Xander said. "That's all that matters. Don't let them do this to anyone else."

"You have my word, Guide," Graham said, his voice firm and every bit the Alpha sentinel. "I will stop them, or die fighting them."

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A full moon shown through Peter's bedroom window as Spike and Peter stripped down while Jim and Wesley looked on.

"This feels awkward," Peter said as he and Spike lay down on the bed together.

Peter was nervous, so Spike stroked him and talked to him in a soothing voice. "Just relax, Peter. You'll be fine."

Peter tried to smile, but he was pretty sure it looked more like a grimace. "Yes, well, it's not like any of this is about love. So, no worries, right? It's just a one-night stand. Except I'll have to see you again." He sounded less at ease than he had meant to, the joke falling flat.

Spike's eyes turned yellow and his touches filled Peter's body with warm energy and Spike's gentle voice filled his mind with comfort. "Love? It is about love. You and me are going to be connected forever," Spike told the other man. He stroked down Peter's arm until he could link their fingers. "Don't worry, we aren't lovers, but there is love for you here." Spike thumped his own chest. "There always will be." He released Peter's hand and ran his fingers back up his body. "I want to tell you how I came to be the way I am and how I came to be here." Spike seemed to be looking off into the distance as he spoke. "I was a bad poet in love with a beautiful woman. When I told her my feelings she put me down in the cruelest way possible. I ran into the street, crying, and attracted the attention of a female vampire. She was a seer and she seduced me with words. She asked me if I wanted it and I said I did. I didn't know it then but to make a child the victim has to say he or she wants it. Otherwise you'll just be a minion. But I became her child."

Peter's breathing slowed and he closed his eyes and relaxed, enjoying Spike's voice and touch. His cock grew hard from the pleasure of Spike's fingers sliding over his body.

"She was quite insane," Spike continued. "My grandsire had driven her insane before he turned her. I sometimes wonder if that's why I kept my ability to love. I spent a hundred years with her, fighting and killing and doing things I don't want to think about. But I also loved her, really loved her and took care of her. She left me after a century together. I was devastated. Most people don't know this but vampires have a very strong sense of family. Blood calls to blood, they say. A military group caught me and put a behavior modification chip in my head. I couldn't kill humans anymore, but I found out I could kill demons. I became an ally to the White Hats and fell in love with a vampire slayer. She didn't love me back. I changed while I had that chip in my head. I saw myself the way the humans saw me. So I went off and fought in the Demon trials to get my soul back, I won. A year later an apocalypse needed to be stopped and I gave up my life to stop it."

"Apocalypse?" Peter murmured, knowing it should be something he was more excited about, something that should get him sitting up and full of questions. But he only wanted to listen to Spike's voice. Feel the man's hands on him. Peter sighed he felt contented and safe. As if he were being gently rocked and the voice telling him these fantastical things was slowly, slowly taking him down, to a place where nothing else could touch him, or hurt him. He listened.

"That's when I was sent here," Spike said, "to this reality. This life is my reward for saving that world. Xander is my soulmate; he's also my reward. He hated me in my last life, until I got my soul back, then I saw him for what he was and he began to see me for what I could be, but I didn't believe I deserved him, so I never pursued him, I think I would have if I had lived, maybe then I could have believed... Here he doesn't know about the things I've done, he is mine and I am all his. Now I have to use this life to make amends for the things I've done in my past life. And this is one of the things I can do to make amends." Spike's yellow eyes focused on Peter. "The first day we met I knew you could sense what I am. I could feel that you wanted me. Wanted to be like me. That's why you asked me to be your second." Spike kissed Peter gently on the forehead.

Peter opened his eyes. "Yes," he murmured "I still want you, Sentinel-to-Sentinel." He closed his eyes again as Spike kissed the bridge of his nose.

"I know," Spike said, his voice was low and intense and his lips hovered just above Peter's mouth. "We are going to be closer than that, closer than brothers. You're going to be my childe, my first in this reality. Do you want it?"

"Oh, yes," Peter said. Knowing he did. He tilted his head wanting the kiss to drop the fraction of an inch to his lips. He wanted to feel the heat of that mouth on his own.

Spike let their mouths touch. It was chaste, but filled with power like being struck by lightning; Peter was stunned. He gasped when Spike pulled back far enough for them to look into each other's faces. As Peter watched, Spike's fangs dropped, he let Peter have time to see it, then deliberately raised his arm to his own mouth and bit down. He opened his wrist and then held it to Peter's mouth as he lowered his head into Peter's neck and nuzzled him. Peter gasped, feeling the sharp piercing of his skin as those fangs did their work. Spike gave an approving growl as Peter involuntarily swallowed a mouthful of blood, and he took three swallows from Peter's neck.

Peter's back arched as the warmth that filled him turned to fire, his erect cock stabbed the air three times, once for each of Spike's swallows. He drank another gulp of Spike's blood, quivering, and feeling how Spike now merely rested his lips against his neck in an unmoving kiss. Then Spike lifted Peter's head a fraction and licked.

Peter's reaction was beyond his control. He arched his throat, his body shuddering, a deep groan found its way out of his chest. With the third swallow of Spike's blood, his cock erupted and spurt a fountain of cum into the air. When his vision returned, Spike was leaning over him stroking him soothingly. He had stopped drinking and licked the wound until it sealed over and the bleeding ceased. Like a contented, trusting childe, Peter fell asleep in his sire's arms.

Spike's yellow eyes looked at Jim. "It's done; when he wakes he'll be my childe."

"How long will that take?" Jim asked. He had not been prepared for the intensity the transfer of Spike's nature would create. He hadn't realized he would feel the bond between his second and the man Spike still held in his arms. A surge of territoriality shook him. He wanted them both for his own.

"He should wake up no later than sunset tomorrow. I'm staying with him until he wakes."

"What about Xander?" Jim said, frowning.

Spike picked up Jim's real question with no effort at all; he felt it through their link. "I am still your second. That won't change because I have a childe. Peter belongs to another man, not to you or me. Not that way. If Xander needs me, bring him here. I'm not leaving my childe. If he wakes up hungry he'll need to drink from me. I don't want him attacking Wesley."

"He wouldn't hurt me," Wesley said, offended at the suggestion. He glared at Spike.

"I doubt if he would kill you but he may wake up confused and I know for sure he will feel abandoned if I'm not here. He may think that drinking from his guide is the thing to do,

instead of just sucking pheromones, he may want blood.” Spike smiled. “This is an unknown for me, for all of us. I don’t know whether we will have to redirect his desire for blood to a desire for pheromones.”

Wesley swallowed. “Do you still crave blood?” he asked nervously.

“No,” Spike answered, “not in this reality but I had to use blood to make him so I don’t know what will happen with Peter.”

“Can I lay with him?” Wesley asked.

"Come on then. Get in here and hold your Sentinel," Spike said. “He’ll still need you as much as ever.”

Jim cleared his throat. “I want to get back to the nest and make sure everything is alright.”

“We’re fine now, Jim,” Spike said. “Tell Graham I’ll call him when Peter wakes up.”

# Chapter 3

Chapter by [Joan963z](#)

## Chapter 3

The night did not go well for Xander. He was distraught that Spike was not in the nest. His reaction to being without Spike see-sawed between a guide without his sentinel (Pacing and worried) and a sentinel without his guide (growling and angry). Jim and Blair's inability to calm Xander frustrated both of them. Jim offered to take Xander to Spike, but Xander refused. He didn't want to risk attacking Peter the way he had Graham. Finally, with a growl, Jim laid Xander on his back and claimed him. Afterward a glowing Xander latched onto Blair's neck and a few minutes later Xander had Blair on his back, urgently claiming him as his guide for the first time. Jim let Xander's action play out without interruption. It was odd to watch a sentinel with guide glow claim Blair, but at the same time he could sense Xander's overwhelming need and he wasn't about to deny a pack mate. It was only after claiming Blair that Xander calmed and fell into a fitful sleep. Blair held Xander and Jim held them both as they slept.

The next day wasn't much better for Xander he paced, growled and paced some more. Jim again offered to take him to Spike and again Xander refused fearing he might lose control. "I have to get through this myself. Spike can't be with me every minute," Xander insisted. "He's made a child, but I'm his mate, his guide and his sentinel. I have to let him come back to me, let him choose me over his childe."

Blair pulled Xander to him. "Xan, Peter is no threat to you; he is a grown man, there is no child. Graham will claim Peter and keep him for his own. Spike will be back in the nest tonight. You know Spike has to do this for Wesley and you, and all the guides and sentinels that are at risk because of the newly proposed laws. He's not abandoning you. He would never do that."

Xander looked up at Blair with pain filled eyes. "Peter is his childe. Blood is how vampires make children, you don't understand the bond that Peter and Spike have."

"Spike's not a vampire, Xander," Blair said. "He's a sentinel and a meta-physical guide. He's your mate and he loves you; he's devoted to you Xan, I know you can feel it in your bond with him."

Xander looked down at the floor. "I can feel it and I can feel the bond with Peter, but there is something you don't know. I lived our past life while I was in the coma and I remember all of it," he said quietly. "Spike was a vampire. We met in a town called Sunnydale. I hated him. I thought he was a soulless, evil, thing, and then he let himself be nearly tortured to death by a hell god, rather than giving up a little girl. All he had to do was give Glorificus Dawn's name. What kind of soulless thing goes through horrific pain for a little girl? After Buffy died he fought beside us to keep Sunnydale safe. And when Caleb tried to blind me, Spike saved me. He risked his life to get me out of there. I had never done anything for him, but he came



back for me. When he died the whole town collapsed into a giant sink hole. I stood on the edge grieving for him. I felt as if I was being told Spike was my soul mate and asked if I wanted to be with him in his next life. I said yes." Xander sighed and looked at Blair. "Spike doesn't know; I haven't told him what I saw."

"It was only a dream," Blair said, "brought on by the overdose of drugs. None of it was real."

Jim came over and wrapped his arms around his two guides. "No, Blair, it was real. Spike told us about it at the ceremony." Jim looked at Xander. "Was Spike sired by a female vampire?" he asked.

"Yes," Xander said. "Her name was Drucilla, Angelus drove her insane before he turned her."

"And he said there was another woman, a vampire slayer."

"Yah, Buffy, she was one of my best friends."

"Spike said he didn't realize what you were, Xander, until he got his soul back. He said that if he had lived he would have pursued you. But I also know that you're right too, Blair. Spike's not a vampire, not anymore; the two parts of him have merged into one being. However, Peter is his childe, Spike said so."

Xander returned Jim's hug. "Spike remembers?" Xander asked.

"I think he can only access the memories when his eyes are yellow," Jim said. "But he remembers. He said that you're his reward for saving that other world."

"Some reward I am," Xander said with a sarcastic huff. "A possessive half sentinel and a brain damaged guide."

"Don't talk like that Xan," Blair said. "If Spike had to wipe your drool and change your diapers he would still consider himself blessed to have you."

"I know," Xan said. "He's a pit bull when it comes to love. He holds on and won't let go for anything."

"Speaking as your sentinel," Jim said, "I don't want to hear you doubt yourself again. You're doing the best you can and it's a hell of a lot better then some guides I've known. No one can ask more of you."

Xander looked up into Jim's eyes. "Really?"

"Really," Jim answered. "You'd know if I were lying, you'd feel it through our bond."

A tear rolled down Xander's cheek. "Thank you, I feel better, now," he said, "knowing that I'm not just a burden to you and that you believe me about the past life stuff. I think I'll be able to get through the rest of the day okay."

Jim licked the tear from Xander's face.

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At sunset Peter awoke, sandwiched between Wesley and Spike. “What?” he said, confused about being protected. He was an alpha sentinel, a protector; something was amiss.

“It’s okay, childe,” Spike said as Peter tried to wriggle free. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine. What I’m concerned about is why my guide isn’t between us,” Peter said. “You know guides always sleep between the sentinels.”

“Exception to the rule,” Spike explained. “I didn’t know if you would wake up wanting to bite. You hungry?”

“Very,” Peter said, “But I’m not interested in biting you or Wesley for food, if that’s what you think.”

“I’ll go make us some breakfast,” Wesley said. He pulled on some sweats and padded off to the kitchen.

“So did it take?” Peter asked.

“You tell me,” Spike said. “Do you feel different?”

“What I feel is damn good, energized, and surprisingly glad that you’re still here.”

Spike smiled and patted his childe. “That’s the sire-childe bond.”

“So you thought I might want to bite you. Does that mean I have fangs?” Peter asked, putting a finger into his mouth and running it along his teeth.

Spike laughed and pulled Peter’s finger out of his mouth. “The fangs come when you need them. You can’t feel them unless they drop. Now go get some breakfast. I have to call Graham and Jim and let them know you’re awake.”

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Graham hung up the phone shaking his head.

“Who was it?” Riley asked.

“Spike. Peter is awake. He also said Peter is a virgin to being claimed and I better keep that in mind when I claim him or he would find a way to make me regret my loss of memory. He said we have to go through the ceremony of introducing a new member into the pack and suggested we hold it in a nesting room at the Guide Hospital. What’s really weird is he kept referring to Peter as his child.”

“Well, he did say it is how the meta-physical being inside of him multiplies.”

“But a child? I don’t know how Peter would take to that. If it were me I’d slug him in the mouth.”

“Then I guess,” Riley said with a laugh, “Spike’s lucky it’s not you. If you’re going to a nesting room there’ll be witnesses to the claiming. Are you okay with that?”

“I’m taking him as a second and we are forming a new pack. There are always witness to that ceremony. I can just do the sentinel-to-sentinel bond at the nest and wait to fully claim him when we return home.”

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Graham and Riley were waiting in the nesting room at the Guide Hospital when Peter, Wesley and Jim’s pack arrived. Graham stood in the middle of the nest with Riley kneeling behind him. Spike took Peter’s hand as soon as they entered.

Graham’s nostrils flared and he could smell that Blair now carried Xander’s scent as well as Jim and Spike’s. He made fists by his side and continued to open and close them as the little group took places around the perimeter of the nest.

Spike walked forward with Peter on his left and Wesley to Peter’s left. When they got to the center of the nest Graham put his hand behind him in a summons to Riley. Riley rose up from his knees and stepped forward. Graham spoke loud and clear in his best commanding voice. “I am Sentinel Prime Captain Graham Miller and this is my Guide Riley Finn.” Graham tilted Riley’s neck and offered it to Peter.

Peter tasted Riley and then took a step back. “I am Sentinel Prime Peter Wall and this is my guide Wesley.”

Peter offered Wesley’s neck to Graham and Graham tasted Wesley, but before Peter and Graham could share the traditional kiss, Spike stepped forward.

“This is my Childe, Sentinel Prime Peter Wall, I offer him to you as your second. Do you accept him?” Spike asked.

Graham was surprised and angered by the question; this was different than the usual ceremony. Who did Spike think he was offering Peter as if Peter was his to give or keep from him? There was nothing Graham could do so he fought back his anger and answered. “In the presence of witnesses I, Sentinel Prime Captain, Graham Miller, accept Sentinel Prime, Peter Wall, child of Sentinel Detective, William Spikeman, as my second.”

It was Spike that stepped forward and put his hands on either side of Graham’s face. Spike’s warm energy immediately flowed through him and Graham felt the now familiar pull to claim Spike for his own. When Spike bent forward for the traditional kiss, Graham wrapped his arms around Spike and pulled him into a passionate kiss. He opened his mouth, pushing his tongue through Spike’s lips. Spike opened his mouth and let Graham taste him. The drive to claim Spike for his own filled Graham and he growled his intent. Then Peter stepped in and put his hand on Graham’s cheek. Graham felt Peter’s energy surge through him, pure and untainted by another sentinel’s claim. Graham stopped the kiss and turned his head to look into Peter’s eyes. Peter’s energy was chaste and freely offered to him. There was no need to challenge another sentinel and risk death to have it. His hold on Spike loosened and Spike stepped away.

“Peter,” Graham whispered as his hand came up to stroke Peter’s face. More of Peter’s energy surged through him and he pulled Peter into a kiss. This energy was his to claim. He felt it in his soul. His desire for Spike was erased by Peter’s touch and replaced by the desire to make Peter his own. It was matched by Peter’s desire to cement the bond and make Graham his own. Urgency over came both sentinels and they fell to the floor, the onlookers forgotten.

Peter tore at Graham’s uniform, and then his own, using his new preternatural strength for the first time; in minutes the clothing lay shredded on the nest floor. They rolled together, two sentinels; growling and patterning each other with taste, touch, until Graham’s mouth found Peter’s weeping cock. Peter pulled Graham’s head away; he was determined to bond as equals before submitting himself for a full claiming. Graham growled and tried to break the iron grip, but he was no match for Peter’s new strength.

‘He’s too strong,’ a small voice inside of Graham whispered. ‘He plans to take you, lay you on your back and claim you for his own.’

“Sentinel-to-Sentinel,” was Peter’s answer to Graham’s struggle.

Graham lifted his head and lust filled eyes looked at Peter; he pushed the illicit thoughts away. “Brothers,” he said in a breathless whisper.

The two men lay together on their side, head to groin, pleasuring each other until they reached mutual orgasm. The Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond was complete.

Neither man wanted to let the other go so they moved to lie in each other’s arms, both softly purring.

Peter’s warm energy continued to flow through Graham and in five minutes he was hard again. “I need you, Peter, I need to claim you now.”

Peter allowed Graham to roll him onto his back. He understood that he needed to be claimed, but he also understood something Graham hadn’t learned yet, that Graham would be his as much as he was Graham’s. It didn’t matter who topped they would be one and belong to each other. Peter lay still, moaning with pleasure as Graham prepared him.

The driving urgency that Graham had felt at Peter’s first touch had calmed. He was immersed in Peter’s warm energy, secure in their new bond. Graham was a proficient and attentive lover and he reassured Peter with words and touches as he stretched his virginal opening.

When Peter was ready Graham hovered over him. The tip of his cock pushed gently at Peter’s opening and he slid in. The act of entering and claiming a strong alpha sentinel made Graham moan with desire for more. “Sentinel,” he said as he slid deeper with each stroke.

Peter began to moan as his sweet spot was rubbed and electric sparks of pleasure coursed through his body. He wrapped his arms and legs around Graham and rose to each thrust. He could feel the bond growing deeper as the pressure to come built. And then, unable to hold back any longer, he came and he began to glow.

Graham felt Peter's passage contract and the sudden glow appear. "Guide," he screamed as he felt the deeper bond lock into place.

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"XANDER!" Spike and Blair yelled at the same time. The dark haired young man jumped and nearly spilled his cereal.

"What!?" It was a high-pitched yelp. Xander startled and look at the pair. "Geez, scare a guy much?"

Spike was vigorously rubbing Xander's arm. "You just zoned, Pet." Spike cupped Xander's chin and tilted his head up making eye contact and evaluating the level of awareness he saw there. The chocolate colored orbs met his. Xander was all the way back with them, thank the gods.

"No, I didn't," Xander said, pushing Spike's hand away from his chin. "I was just looking at the bubbles in my tea. I never noticed all the colors they have and the way the light plays on them when I stir... Oh, shit, I just zoned didn't I?" He looked shocked and then embarrassed, pushing the cup away from himself he made as if to stand. Jim's big hand stopped him, coming to rest on his shoulder; it felt both firm and caring.

"You're okay Xanman," Jim said, reassuringly. "All sentinels will zone at some time. This was just the first time for you."

"Yeah, but why? I have two guides, I shouldn't be zoning," Xander said, hearing the guilt in his own voice. He knew how to guide a sentinel. He thought it would be an easy matter to apply it to himself.

"I have to teach you how to use your dials first," Blair said. "After that the zone outs will stop as long as you renew your bond."

"I'm a guide too, Blair, I know the exercises," Xander protested. "It's not like all this is new to me." He felt the flush rising in his cheeks.

"Knowing the exercises and achieving control are two different things," Blair said. "Besides you can't be your own guide. Don't worry. You'll do fine."

"It's going to make it hard to keep it a secret that my sentinel abilities have triggered if I zone out in public."

"Don't worry about it, Pet," Spike said. "We'll stay in until we're sure you have control. No reason we can't give you enough time to get the hang of it. You've only been a sentinel for a few days."

Xander buried his head in his hands. "Oh gods, this is hard," he moaned. When he looked up at Spike his eyes were full of pain. "You know what will happen if the wrong people find out I've triggered, they'll come after me and they'll kill you or anyone else that gets in their way."

“That’s not going to happen, Pet,” Spike said with a melancholy smile. His eyes were filled with understanding. He knew what it was like to be persona non grata. Maybe not so much in this life, but in the last one he’d played the role often enough. He’d been hunted, captured and made into a lab rat. He was going to make damn sure that it never again happened to Xander. He tried to offer what comfort he could. “You still have your hazard detection and with Jim and I protecting you... We’ll keep you safe; I promise.”

“You’re both police detectives, you shouldn’t have to be distracted from your work to care for me.” Xander pointed out. “What if you get hurt because you’re thinking about me? It will be my fault.”

“A sentinel’s first duty is to protect his guide, always has been,” Jim said. “I don’t want you feeling guilty about any of this. It will keep you from doing what needs to be done.” Jim walked over and took Xander’s chin in his hand and tilted his head up so that he could look into Xander’s eyes. “None of this is your fault. You should have been protected and cherished and you weren’t. You were tortured and used by greedy men that wanted to profit from you. It was wrong for you and it is wrong for our society. We could run, disappear in the jungles of Peru, and if it comes to that, we will, but only as a last resort. For now we are going to fight these new laws, we’re not going to become slaves to our government, so that a few men can have power and wealth at sentinels and guides expense.”

“So, we’re at war with our government,” Xander said quietly, “with an army of eight.” He felt ill, riddled with doubts, and more than a little fear. But under all of that he felt strangely exhilarated, as if he was a part of something important, something that was bigger than all of them. This was larger then individual sentinels and guides and bigger than the pack.

Jim saw the look in Xander’s eyes change from pain and despair to hope and determination and he let go of Xander’s chin. His fingers trailed over the soft skin... “I know,” he said as a diabolical smile lit up his face. “They are hopelessly outnumbered, but that’s their problem.”

Xander wasn’t so sure that their tiny two-pack hive of two sentinels, three guides and three combination sentinel-guides outnumbered their enemies but he could feel Jim’s cold hard rage through his bond and he almost felt sorry for the people trying to enslave sentinels and guides, almost.

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Graham and Peter’s heads popped up from their breakfast and their eyes locked. Their ears would have been erect and quivering if it were at all possible.

“Xander just zoned,” Peter whispered.

Graham pushed his chin forward and nodded. “I know,” he answered. He looked down at his guide who had shifted against his leg.

Riley, who was sitting on the floor at Graham’s feet, being fed his breakfast, squinted up at his sentinel. “How do you know that?”

“We can feel it through our link. You didn’t feel anything?” Graham asked.

“No, nothing. How about you Wesley?” Riley asked.

“Yeah,” Wesley said, “It felt like something was wrong, maybe dangerous.”

“Great,” Riley said, with an edge of anger. “I’m the only one left out of your expanded bond.” He didn’t like being the only one out of the loop.

“It’s because I haven’t claimed you,” Peter said with certainty. Riley gave Peter a wanton gaze.

“Wait a minute,” Graham growled, not liking the look Riley was giving his second. “Cross bonding with Riley was never part of this deal. I’ve only claimed Wesley to keep him safe. Riley’s not in any danger.”

Peter was calm as he spoke to Graham. “I never thought he was, Riley is yours and yours alone, Sentinel. But it seems that we’ve inadvertently started a hive, and it would go far in making our pack stronger...” He shut his mouth with a snap when Graham glared at him.

“Sorry,” Peter said as he went back to eating his breakfast. “Your Guide, your decision.”

Satisfied with Peter’s answer Graham reached down and took a handful of Riley’s hair in his fist and pulled his guide’s head back until he was looking up into his master’s face. “As for you, I better not hear anymore complaints about being left out, or wanting to roll onto your back for anyone but me. As punishment, no hot water for a week and that includes coffee and tea as well as showers. You understand me, slave?”

“Yes, Master, thank you Master.”

Graham let go of Riley’s hair. “Go get the lube. The sentinel needs to see me renew my claim on you.”

Peter had no trouble smelling the spurt of heat and pheromones coming off of Riley as the Guide scampered off to obey. Riley wanted this and was excited by it.

Peter glanced over at Wesley. His beautiful Wesley was no longer his alone. Graham had claimed him this morning while Peter held him in his arms. Today Wesley wore Graham’s scent and Graham’s alone and so did Peter. The appropriate papers would be filed, as soon as they got to The Agency, declaring the forming of a new pack and the cross bonding of Wesley. Now Riley would also carry Graham’s scent. Every Sentinel they passed by today would know that a sentinel and two guides now belonged to Captain Miller. They wouldn’t need to read the papers.

When Riley returned the claiming was hard, fast and without any release for the slave guide. It was the first time that Peter and Wesley had witnessed the Master/slave relationship in regards to punishment, but they had promised not to judge Riley so they simply watched without comment. Not that there was much to comment on. Any sentinel would have reclaimed their guide after the look of longing that Riley had given to Peter, but it would have been done in private with only the scent marking declaring the sentinel’s claim.

Reclaiming in front of a sentinel that witnessed a guide's disobedience was not unheard of but having another guide present was enough off kilter to make Peter want to say something. Of course, he couldn't, it wasn't as if he hadn't known about the Master/slave relationship; and Graham had even indicated that Wesley would be a witness to all of it. They had both come into the pack willingly. Now wasn't the time to try a renegotiation of terms.

They were a pack now and apparently they had also started a hive, two or more packs that are affiliated and have a psychic connection. Peter had expected that his psychic connection to Spike would continue. Somehow he knew it would but he was surprised that the connection had spread to Wesley and Graham. Riley, being left out of the connection could cause some adjustment problems, but their pack bond was new and even Jim resisted letting Spike claim Blair. He knew that in time Graham might relent, but only if Riley were in danger. Graham was the head of their pack, it was his call, and Peter was strangely content with it. It was not something he would have thought possible for himself before his bond with Spike. He just hoped the sentinels at The Agency would be as accepting when they caught Graham's scent on him.

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Byron Harris looked at the Sentinel and Guide Reports. The number of newly triggered sentinels was stable at three to six per month. The report covered a four state area of Idaho, Oregon, Alaska and Washington. The number rarely fluctuated, except during wartime.

It was the Guide Report that had him concerned. The Guide school at Rainer University trained one third of the guides in the country. The numbers had been steadily declining since world war one. And this month was no exception. The new laws requiring Sentinels to breed their guides would pass by the end of the week, none too soon as far as he was concerned.

He picked up the report of newly bonded Sentinels and guides, but it was a boring list of names he did not recognize. Luck was with Graham's newly formed pack. The Alpha Prime didn't notice the name Miller half way down the page. They were safe for now.

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Graham sat behind his desk glaring at Sentinel James Rohgah. The walk to his office this morning had been relatively uneventful. The sentinels that his new-formed pack passed in the hall did turn and look but with a warning growl from Graham they quickly went about their business. Now this. Sentinel Rohgah was an ambitious man and wanted very much to be promoted to Sentinel Prime. There was however one problem, he was not the kind of sentinel that could command the loyalty of the men that served under him and what he was doing now was a perfect example of why that was.

"Request denied," Graham barked.

"Sir," Rohgah said unwilling to give up. "Sentinel Wall has voluntarily surrendered his Alpha status by allowing another Alpha Sentinel to claim him. I am within my rights to challenge him for his rank."

"You would be a fool to do so," Graham said. "And I would be a murderer to let you."



“Sir,” Rohgah continued, bringing himself to attention, “with all due respect, it’s your scent he carries, I do not believe that you have the right to refuse me, Sir.”

“Are you challenging me now, Rohgah?” Graham growled.

“Sir, that is not my intent, Sir.”

“Give it up, Rohgah,” Graham warned. “Issuing a challenge to Sentinel Wall is not your fast track to a promotion. This type of challenge is one of personal pride, you would have to kill him to win his rank; Peter will not let that happen.”

“Sir, it is my fervent belief that Sentinel Wall no longer deserves his rank. He has surrendered himself and his guide to another sentinel. It is an admission that he cannot protect his guide. A sentinel that cannot protect his guide should not be entrusted with the protection of the public. I therefore wish to serve notice of intent to challenge Sentinel Peter Wall for his rank of Sentinel Prime, Sir.”

Graham sighed. There was no point in arguing with Rohgah. “Make sure your will is in order and say good-bye to your family before you make the challenge” Graham stood up and offered Rohgah his hand. “I am sorry it had to end this way Sentinel.”

Rohgah looked down at Graham’s hand. “Sir, you are not going to psyche me out by acting as if I have already lost. I won the gold metal in hand to hand combat at the last Sentinel Games.”

Graham dropped his hand, “I’m aware of your abilities, but you still don’t have a snowball’s chance in boiling water to win this challenge. Dismissed.”

A very arrogant Sentinel James Rohgah left the Captain’s office, convinced the captain was running scared. He and Peter had been sparing partners more than once while he was preparing for The Games. He knew he could win, he was a split second faster, bigger and stronger than Wall and he knew Wall’s fighting style... besides, right was on his side.

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“It was a formal challenge issued in front of my men,” Peter said. “I had no choice, I had to accept.”

“I didn’t give my permission for this,” Graham sighed. “Rohgah wouldn’t listen, he’s convinced he’ll win, and he doesn’t care that he will have to kill you to do it.”

“Technically he doesn’t need your permission. Even telling you about it was a courtesy. As far as winning...he doesn’t have a prayer. I was one of his sparing partners while he was preparing for the games. He may have had an even chance before Spike made me his childe, but now...” Peter shook his head, his eyes full of regret. “I know he’s an ass, but that doesn’t help. I’ll have to kill him.”

Wesley went to his sentinel and wrapped his arms around him. “It’s not your fault. It was bound to happen with him, sooner or later. He wants a promotion and he’s unwilling to wait.

If it weren't you he would have challenged some other Sentinel Prime, one that wouldn't have had a chance against him."

"Still," Peter sighed, "Maybe it was a mistake wearing Graham's scent to the Agency. Maybe we should have kept that part private and just filed the papers."

"No," Graham said. "I'm not the type to pussyfoot around. Either they accept us as we truly are or we take the challenges until they do accept us."

Peter broke away from Wesley's hug. "We?" Peter said, with a sarcastic laugh. He took a step and leaned forward on the captain's desk with both hands. "I'm the one that has to kill a fellow sentinel," he said, his eyes glaring as they locked with Graham's.

Graham glared back. "You're a pack member, my second and my guide. What happens to you happens to all of us."

Wesley stepped over to Peter and began rubbing his arm. "Peter, I think we need to bond. We didn't do that this morning; I think it could be affecting you. Let me wear your scent; let the other sentinels know that I still belong to you."

Peter straightened up and turned to his guide. "Oh, my love," he said, pulling Wesley into a hug. "You didn't think I gave you up, did you?"

"No," Wesley said stroking Peter's face. "It would take more than the fires of hell to make you give me up. We did what needed to be done this morning; it's been half a day, all the sentinels know that I've cross-bonded with Graham. It's time to let them know I still carry your scent too."

"Wesley's right," Graham said. "Half a day is long enough. You need to let the sentinels know that Wesley is still under your protection. It could quiet some of the rumors that are sure to be spreading."

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"That was Peter on the phone," Spike said, as he paced back and forth and ran his fingers through his hair. "He's been challenged. Both Wesley and Peter wore Graham's scent to The Agency today. Some asshole said he has given up his Alpha status by letting another Alpha claim him and his guide. He wants Peter stripped of his rank and take it for his own."

"Jesus," Jim said, "That didn't take long. Did he say who challenged him?"

"James Rohgah," Spike said.

"Rohgah," Blair said. "Isn't that the sentinel that won the gold medal in hand to hand combat in the last Sentinel Games?"

"That's the one," Jim said.

Spike walked over to the computer and sat down.

“What are you doing?” Xander asked, as he gave calming strokes to Spike’s arm.

“I’m going to find this guy’s address,” Spike said. “And then go over there and talk some sense into the idiot.”

“No,” Xander said in his strongest Alpha Guide voice. “This is Peter’s fight. I know he’s your childe and I know what that means to you, but he would rather be dead than marked a coward that hides behind his sire’s apron strings.”

“Xan, no one knows about Peter’s and my relationship except the hive members, and it’s not Peter I’m protecting here, it’s Rohgah. He may as well be spitting into a hurricane. It’s murder to let this happen.”

“Xander’s right,” Blair said as he sat down with his back against the door. “You’ll have to go through me to get out of here.”

“Me too,” Xander said as he sat down beside Blair.

Spike looked at Jim. “What about you,” Spike asked. “Are you going to join them on the floor?”

“No,” Jim said. “They can keep you here without me, I’d just be overkill. I’m going to call Graham and find out why he hasn’t put a stop to this.”

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Jim scowled as he hung up the phone. “Graham’s already tried to stop this. He even ordered Rohgah to get his affairs in order and make sure his will is up to date. It seems that Peter was his sparing partner before the games, so he is sure that he can win. Rohgah made the challenge in front of Peter’s men. It’s a matter of sentinel pride now. There is nothing that we can do to stop it.”

Spike sighed. “If anyone finds out about Peter’s new abilities...he’ll be a target too.”

“When the new laws pass,” Jim said, “we’ll all be targets anyway.”

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Jim and Spike walked into The Agency gym where the challenge fight was to take place. Spike had already talked to Peter and warned him to make the fight look “good” so that no one would notice his new abilities.

They walked to the center of the gym to take their places around the challenge circle. A very big, young sentinel, wearing an Agency uniform came over to them and addressed Jim. “Sir, this is a challenge fight, sentinel business, you’ll have to ask your guide to leave.”

Jim smiled at the man. “My guide is not present, Sentinel, I know better than to bring him to one of these events.”

“I’m talking about the man standing to your right, sir.”

Jim looked over at Spike who stood with an amused look on his face. Jim scowled and looked back at the young sentinel. "That is Sentinel Spikeman, brother sentinel to Peter Wall. I don't think you're going to get him to leave."

"A bit small for a sentinel isn't he?" the young man asked.

"Are you calling me a liar?" Jim growled.

"It's my job to make sure only interested sentinel's are present," the young man growled back.

All heads in the gym turned to look at the argument just as Graham entered the gym and hurried over to the group. "What's going on here, Bob?" Graham asked.

"This sentinel claims that the man to his right is also a sentinel."

"This is Sentinel James Ellison and his second, Sentinel William Spikeman, both are sentinel brothers of mine and Sentinel Wall's. They are interested parties and were personally invited here by Sentinel Wall."

"Yes, sir," the young man said. He gave Spike a disdainful look before turning and walking away.

"I think this whole thing has everyone on edge," Graham said. "I'll have to talk to him about respect for other sentinels tomorrow."

"It would seem it's not only Peter they've lost respect for," Jim said. "He didn't apologize, for calling us a liar, before leaving."

"Shit," Graham muttered under his breath. "Either of you are within your right to challenge him."

Everyone's head turned to the sound of Bob's voice. "It seems Peter picks weaklings and cowards to brother with," he said in a voice that was purposely modulated louder than needed for a sentinel's hearing.

"Excuse me," Spike said. "I think it's better if I take care of this." Spike swaggered across the fighting circle, a sign he was willing to make or receive a challenge. Bob was laughing with his friends and didn't see the predator coming until he stood in front of him. "I believe you owe my pack leader and I an apology," he said.

"Go away, guide," Bob said and spit at Spike's feet.

Spike grabbed the much larger sentinel by the shoulders and dropped to the floor, tossing Bob over him as he dropped.

Bob scrambled to his feet but when he got up he found Spike ready and waiting for him.

"Care to make that apology now?" Spike asked.

“Fuck you,” Bob said and charged Spike.

Spike sidestepped at the last moment and tripped Bob and then he quickly stepped on his neck and picked up his arm twisting it into an uncomfortable position.”

“How about now?” Spike asked.

“Go to hell,” Bob said and tried to buck Spike off of him.

Spike pulled on Bob’s shoulder and every sentinel in the gym heard the pop as Bob’s shoulder dislocated. “Been there, done that,” Spike said as he stepped back and waited for the big man to get back to his feet.

When Bob got up he was nauseous and sweaty with pain, he cradled his right arm against his chest. For the first time he looked at Spike, really looked at him, for the first time he saw the predator and he shivered. “I apologize,” he whispered, with his head hung, and then began to stagger from the circle.

Spike blocked his way. “I prefer a formal apology,” he said in a tone that let Bob know the topic was not open for negotiation.

Bob stood up as straight as he could. “I, Sentinel Robert Stevens,” he said, in a loud but obviously pain filled voice, “formally apologize to Sentinel James Ellison and Sentinel William Spikeman for my unfounded accusations as to their character.”

“Apology accepted,” Spike said and then walked back to Jim and Graham.

Graham looked at Spike. “That was damn impressive, you dislocated his arm with no more difficulty then pulling a candle out of a birthday cake.”

“Yeah,” Spike agreed in a bitter tone. “It’s always the same, if you aren’t big there’s always some guy that will make the wrong assumption. Just like Sentinel Stevens. Well, They’ll respect us now,” Spike said. “And isn’t that what sentinels are all about, the power to protect our guides and the respect that comes with it?”

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Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Washington D.C.

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"I do." The man standing at the table in front of the elevated bench that held four powerful Senators had his hand raised. At a nod from the man swearing him in, he lowered his hand and took his seat. He adjusted his tie, unbuttoned his coat and waited for the first foray. It wasn't long coming.

"Please state your name for the record."

"Dr. Aaron Shamus." He had been a physician in Washington D.C. for the last ten years. Gradually he had become part of the political machine. He had, what he believed to have

been, a chance meeting with a certain influential sentinel to thank for it. Alpha Prime Byron Harris, had been sent to feel the doctor out and make sure he was someone the black ops branch of the government could safely bring into their plan to genetically create a super sentinel and super guide. The doctor considered Byron Harris to be one of his closest allies in their endeavor to improve guide bloodlines. Four months ago he had been reassigned to a special project at a secret lab outside of Boston Massachusetts.

The senator chosen to lead the questioning cleared his throat before speaking. "Thank you for appearing before us today Dr. Shamus," he said, his face serious, but not unlike a kindly grandfather. The look was one he cultivated.

"You're quite welcome, Senator," the doctor said with a smile.

"You are a medical doctor, is that correct?" the senator asked.

"Yes, Senator, I have worked as a physician for more than 30 years, specializing in guide and sentinel medicine for the last 26 of those years."

"And," the senator continued, "You had extensive input with the drafting of this bill?"

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"That's correct senator." Dr. Shamus nodded again, his face composed, his voice steady and reassuring, perfect for the televised hearings. No one would be nervous hearing that calming voice, seeing those sincere, caring eyes.

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A few hundred miles away in his living room, Byron Harris smiled. It was all going according to plan. The interviewing senator spoke again. He was sticking to the script word for word. Byron sipped his whiskey approvingly. He appreciated it when a plan came together like this. Flawlessly.

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"According to the figures you've supplied us with," the senator continued, his eyes pinning those of the physician, "the guide population has been dropping steadily since world war one. Why are we only now addressing the matter?" His gentle sense of outrage was communicated in the tone of his voice, controlled, appropriate and concerned.

"An excellent question," Dr. Shamus responded. "It is a misnomer to say no attempt has been made to turn the guide birthrate around. We had wide-spread sweeping reforms twenty-five years ago. They were aimed at improving the quality of life for guides and hopefully increasing their birth rate." He looked at each of the men seated behind the bench. It took just enough time to increase the tension and anticipation in the room. Every ear was tuned to his next words.

"The reforms were not as successful as hoped," he understated. He didn't want to immediately jump into his proposal, which was as good as passed already. Still they did need

the general population behind them if possible. It would smooth the process.

"They failed?" the senator asked, conveying a grandfatherly worry.

"They were successful in improving the quality of life for guides, but the birthrate is still falling, albeit more slowly." Shamus allowed. "Half measures will not be effective. It is time we faced reality. We need a new plan."

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Far away, Byron frowned, his hand flexing around his cut crystal tumbler of aged whiskey. He knew that that little statement had strayed from the testimony he had been expected to memorize. It was getting a little too close to making people think of this as government grasping for control over private citizens. It was imperative that that not happen. The common man could not identify his own freedom with that of sentinels and guides. Shamus had to ease off. Get back onto the approved script.

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"And you have a theory on what is causing this declining birthrate?" the senator asked.

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Byron had seen him blink at the additional words. Damn it, Shamus had better not screw this up. Their little group of conspirators dealt harshly with careless men. Byron Harris glowered at his television set.

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"It's more than a theory, senator. I have compiled extensive interviews with sentinels and guides, as well as, statistical findings. Sentinels are the cause of the guide shortage."

There was a pause as the Senator let the shock of the statement sink into the TV audience's consciousness.

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Byron heaved a sigh. "Good. Back on target, you son of a bitch. Now stay there," he muttered. This was not the time for improvisation.

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"Can you be more specific, Dr. Shamus?"

"Yes, the sentinel gene remains dormant during childhood and into the early adult age range. Sentinels typically do not trigger until the age of 25 at the youngest, with the vast majority triggering between the ages of 29 and 33. That gives sentinels plenty of time to marry and have children."

"Guides are not so accommodating. They can be reliably tested for their level of empathy at the onset of puberty, usually 11 for girls and 13 for boys. Of course, that is too young to bond, but they are sent for training immediately upon graduation from high school so they will be prepared when they are old enough. Guides can successfully and legally bond with a sentinel at the age of 21; any younger and a true bond simply fails until the guide reaches maturity, with the current shortage most male guides are claimed by alpha sentinels as soon as they graduate from guide training at the age of 21. This means that guides do not have the same opportunity to procreate that sentinels do."

Dr Shamus paused for a moment, taking a sip from the glass of spring water provided for him. He appeared to be thinking deeply, weighing his words. He raised his eyes once more, as if he'd thought through a difficult problem and come up with the best answer. "Beta sentinels are the most rapidly growing population where sentinels and guides are considered. Alpha sentinels are as likely as guides to have a lowered reproduction rate. Whether or not they already have children, they simply tend not to go to the trouble of finding a surrogate mother to have another child with. That seriously impacts the birthrate of the Alphas. An Alpha sentinel is quite rightly focused on the relationship he has with his guide, and not the need to have more children. One reason Guides are so diligently tested for is so that we can monitor their population. The guide shortage triggers a sentinel to seek an early bond; it is a Sentinel instinct. That is why we have rouge Alpha Sentinels attacking high schools and even middle schools to place a claim on a guide. But it has widespread consequences. Even when the guide is 21, the practice takes a large number of guides out of the gene pool."

"Yes, doctor but if my high school biology serves, it is the female that determines the population," the senator remarked. He was glossing over the rest of the doctor's statement, not bringing undue attention to it; he didn't have too. The mention, in passing, of the risk of wide spread sentinel attacks on high schools and middle schools was enough to bring the mundane population in line behind the new laws. All the senator had to do was let it be part of the record.

"That is correct, senator, it is the females that determine the population growth as a whole but the females do not determine the specific genetic markers within that population, that is done by both the males and the females."

"But if female guides are not being claimed by alpha sentinels and pass on their genetic make-up to the next generation why is the birthrate of guides declining?" The senator asked the question Byron was sure many of the viewers were also asking themselves. Here came the answer that their secret group of the government wanted them to have.

"As the guide population drops more sentinels are forced to choose females as guides. The choice of a female guide is not the preferred state for a sentinel, unlike the majority of other males in our society. Sentinels are best served by male guides in bond. It is a matter of physiology that has never been adequately explained by science, but it is irrefutable. In addition to being a second choice as far as sentinel health and function, we can see from the data that Alpha sentinels rarely have children with their guides. Which is a problem. Moving on to the beta sentinels, a beta sentinel is more likely to have one child or two children at most. A female carrying the guide gene and mated to a sentinel or a mundane has only a one in four chance, per child, of passing on the guide gene. A female guide mated to a male guide



has a three out of four chance, per child of passing on the guide gene, but there are few male guides available, Alpha sentinels have claimed them all."

"So what you are saying is that it is possible that we can turn around the guide shortage in one generation?" The senator asked, his tone filled with amazed hope, and fierce if muted triumph.

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The emotion was ideal. The viewers would feel the rush of hope themselves. They would cling to the solution tenaciously, just as the government wanted them to. It was back on script and going well. Byron retrieved his glass and sipped.

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"Yes senator, it is possible with the cooperation of sentinels and their guides. In addition, we can match guides and improve the gene pool, strengthen it."

"Surely you are not proposing that we break the bonds sentinels have with their guides in order to mate them with other guides?"

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There was careful outrage there. God, the man should have been an actor, Byron thought. He raised his glass in a salute. Shamus's response, his expression was pure artistry.

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"No senator, sentinels need their guides. I am proposing artificial insemination and for those sentinels with female guides we could harvest eggs and use invitro fertilization with surrogate mothers. Of course sentinels would have the option of allowing their female guides to carry children to term themselves. Sentinels will also have the option of bonding into family units with both male and female guides. I believe that most guides, being empathic, will prefer to bond into family units and sentinels will allow it in order to keep their guides happy."

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Byron Harris shuddered. No way he was going to let any male guide into his own house. Personally he would never allow the intensity of his own bond to control him. His female guide's low empathic rating allowed him to maintain his autonomy through their weaker bond, not surrender it. The thought of being an equal partner with a male guide made him nauseous.

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"That makes sense, doctor, but there is one thing I don't understand. Your bill also proposes that sentinels be required to donate their sperm. Why is that?"

"The birthrate of Alpha sentinels is also dropping, it is not yet at a crisis level but if we intervene now we can head off a crisis. Alpha sentinels are leaders. Beta's need them to maintain their sentinel abilities. Beta's and Alpha's have a special bond called a brother bond. The brother bond is permanent and unlike the guide bond there is no drive to renew it once it is forged. Beta's, without a brother bond to an alpha sentinel will lose their sentinel abilities within a year of triggering. Their abilities will either slowly fade or suddenly shutoff while sleeping, we don't understand why, but the evidence is overwhelming. Since Alpha sentinels prefer male guides the only way to ensure that our society has enough Alpha sentinels in the future is through surrogate mothers who have the best genetic characteristics to combine with the selected male sentinels who are sperm donors."

"And you believe, doctor, that sentinels will simply comply with these laws?"

"I believe that there will be an adjustment period but when the sentinels see the need and logic behind the laws they will comply. We are flexible within the law. We are not forcing them to have children that the state will raise. The children can stay with their guide mothers. But if a sentinel feels strongly that a child will interfere with his bond then the child can be placed for adoption. Sentinels can bond into family groups: packs, prides and hives. Pack bonding is common among sentinels in the military. The family groups would simply be an extension of already documented sentinel behavior. Sentinels are dying from lack of guides," the doctor continued, "suffering needlessly, and worse some go rogue and attack private citizens. That will only get worse unless we do something about it. All we are asking is that sentinels insure their future generation and the continuation of our culture and society."

"Thank you for your testimony Dr. Shamus, you have apprised us of a crisis that should have been addressed years ago. We must act swiftly if the situation is not to become even more serious," the senator said with a grave smile. "We thank you for your concern and dedication to this problem. You are dismissed. It is now one PM, we will break for lunch and reconvene for a vote in 90 minutes."

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Byron Harris smiled. Done indeed, and well done, too. He felt an itch. Time to spend some time with his Guide. Her mouth and the rest of her body would feel that much sweeter on his cock tonight.

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Sentinel Prime Peter Wall walked into the gym; wasting no time on pleasantries he went directly to the spot that was his in this ritual contest. As the challenger, he stood on the lion's shield painted on the floor. A wall of sentinels, friends and supporters of his challenger, surrounded him, forming the walls of the fight circle.

He was both relaxed and resigned to the fight. He hoped that he could talk James out of the challenge but he knew that there was a slim chance at best. James Rohgah was all aggression and fire, no room for common sense. With him, might did make right.

Shortly after Peter took his place, the challenger, Sentinel James Rohgah, walked into the gym. He was smug and smiling, his shoulders squared, his chin high, he nodded amiably to

his friends that stood around the challenge circle. He flung off the shirt that had been draped over him and stood bare chested facing Peter for a moment of dominate display.

The gym became silent but for the soft sound of the two sentinel's bare feet on the wood floor as they paced a circle around each other. Peter watched Rohgah's eyes and saw the tell tale pulse of his pupils a split second before he charged. Peter easily stepped aside and pushed Rohgah off balance as he passed. Rohgah gave a low growl as he fell to his hands and knees, then rolled, letting his momentum carry him back to his feet.

Peter held his arms loosely at his sides, his eyes on his opponent, unconcerned with the look of rage on Rohgah's face. This time Rohgah came in low, like a human battering ram, intending to knock Peter's feet out from under him, but Peter jumped over him and made a graceful turn in mid air so that when he landed he was facing in Rohgah's direction. The move was child's play to avoid; he'd seen James use it a thousand times.

"You fight like a coward," Rohgah growled when he turned and saw Peter waiting for him.

Peter laughed. "Face it Rohgah, I'm better then you," he said. "All those mistakes you think I made while we were sparing, I made on purpose to teach you to recognize them in your opponent. End this Rohgah, call off the challenge and walk away. I don't want to kill you."

"It will be a cold day in hell when you can kill me," Rohgah said, through grinding teeth. "I'm going to tear you apart. You're a perversion of what an alpha sentinel should be. You're no Alpha."

When Rohgah charged again Peter stood his ground swaying side to side, blocking all of Rohgah's punches and countering with his own punches to torso and face. Peter gave Rohgah an uppercut to the jaw and the surprised sentinel staggered backward into the circular wall of bodies formed by his friends. They held him for a few seconds while they glared at Peter, giving Rohgah a chance to regain his equilibrium. It was calculated, deliberate and close to dishonorable. Peter let it slide.

Rohgah shook his head trying to clear the fog from his brain. Something was wrong; this wasn't the Peter he had spared with. This Peter was faster, stronger and dangerous, not just a sparring dummy. Rohgah crouched into a fighting stance and began circling; his muscles were tense and hard as he watched for a weakness in his enemy. He didn't find any.

Peter circled, his muscles were relaxed but ready to respond to whatever Rohgah threw at him. "Give this up, James," Peter said once again. "You can't win."

"You don't deserve to wear that uniform, you don't deserve your rank," Rohgah hissed at Peter. "You let yourself be claimed like a guide." He grimaced as if he smelled something foul. His friends were nodding.

"You say guide like it's a dirty word. Is that what you think of the men and women that save our lives and keep us sane?" Peter asked softly. He felt sadness at the remark the other man had made. He could understand if James doubted his alpha status, but to use "guide" as if it were a curse, that was wrong.

“You’re a sentinel you should act like one, instead you lay on your back spread your legs and let yourself be penetrated, claimed by an Alpha. No real Alpha would do that; you’re disgusting. You’re nothing more than a beta.”

And that was wrong too, Peter thought. A Beta shouldn’t be ridiculed for not being Alpha.

James charged with an ear shattering roar, Peter grabbed him and spun him so that he held him from behind with one arm around his neck the other pressed against the back of his head. He had to end this. Rohgah knew he was in trouble, the hold Peter had on him could break his neck. He grabbed Peter’s forearm and stepped back, attempting to flip Peter over his head. It didn’t work

Peter spoke quietly into Rohgah’s ear. “I am an Alpha Sentinel and Sentinel Graham Miller’s second, I wear his sent with pride and I’ll wear it again.” Peter put pressure on the back of Rohgah’s head until he felt and heard his neck snap. Rohgah died instantly. Peter let the body drop and turned slowly, making eye contact with each sentinel that stood at the edge of the challenge circle. It was never good to kill a fellow human being, even one as full of hate as Rohgah. “Anyone else want to challenge my right to wear my first’s scent?” He waited. There was no answer, only silence.

Peter walked over to his sentinel brothers and dropped to his knees in front of Spike. There was a small gasp from across the circle. Peter didn’t know about the fight Spike had had before Peter entered the circle, but the others knew and wondered, why kneel to that sentinel? Why kneel at all? Spike reached down and pulled his childe to his feet. He did the only thing he could do under the circumstances; he kissed him. To the other sentinels it appeared to be a brother-to-brother kiss. But Graham knew better. He reached out and laid his hand on his second’s shoulder. He didn’t try to pull Peter away, he only wanted Peter to know he was there.

Spike stepped back and looked at Graham. “Yours,” he said.

“I need Wesley,” Peter whispered.

“And I need you,” Graham said, as he put his arm around his second, stepping in close and tight.

Peter gulped and went rigid for an instant before letting all the aggression flow out of him and surrendering to his pack leader’s will. He gave a weak smile. “Do you think we can make it home first?”

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EVENING

Jim, Blair, Spike and Xander sat on the couch listening to the news report. None were happy with what the Washington, D.C., correspondent had to say.

“Can we expect a presidential veto?” the news anchor asked, his concern evident.

The correspondent answered in an appropriately serious tone. “No Bob, I’m afraid not. Even if the president did veto the law, the senate has the votes to override.”

“This law takes away the reproductive rights of both guides and sentinels, Anna,” the anchorman said. “Have there been any rumors of a constitutional challenge or protests being organized?”

“None, Bob,” the correspondent said. “As you know, any citizen with an empathic rating of 4 or above is drafted into the Guide Corps. They are required by law to go to Guide basic training schools. When they turn 21 years of age a sentinel has the right to choose from any one of them as his guide. The guides only right of refusal are due to chronic or terminal illness. It was hoped that the Guide draft would increase the number of guides available for bonding, but the numbers have continued to drop precipitously. We are in a crisis situation; even starting today it will take 22 years to stop the decline of available guides. Voluntary reproduction has not worked. I have talked to people on the street and they are in full support of the new laws. Sentinels are an intricate part of our law enforcement and our armed services. Loosing them is unthinkable. It would put our entire nation at risk.”

“Thank you, Anna,” Bob said solemnly, his blue eyes grave.

Blair turned off the TV. It was all so carefully orchestrated. The majority of Americans would believe the lie and support the new laws.

“Are you all right Xander?” Spike asked, his concern filling his voice.

“I’m okay,” Xander said, as he cuddled in even closer to Spike. “It’s not like we didn’t know it was coming.”

Blair moved in closer to Jim “So what do we do now?” Blair asked, as he stroked his sentinel’s chest and laid his riotously curly head on Jim’s shoulder. He felt helpless.

What could they do, a small group of grass roots sentinels and guides against a powerful government willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to win the peoples hearts and minds?

“Organize resistance,” Jim said, his certainty was absolute.

“But how much of this is true? Is there really a guide shortage?” Blair asked. “If there isn’t and we can prove it to the public we can convince them they are being used and manipulated and get them behind the resistance.”

“That part is true, the ratio of sentinels to guides has been dropping since we figured out how to trigger sentinels instead of letting nature chose who would trigger and when. Any man who joins the armed service and carries the gene is triggered as soon as he reaches the age of 25; it is a matter of course. More sentinels mean more guides are taken out of the general population, less are left to procreate. I haven’t seen statistics but it makes sense that the guide birthrate is dropping. Nature never meant for there to be so many active sentinels.”

“Then how do we form a resistance knowing that, in the future, there will be sentinels without guides?” Xander asked. “Are the people doing this, taking away our right to procreate as we see fit, are they actually right? Are we wrong?” Xander hated the doubt in his own voice.

“The answer isn’t to take away our reproductive rights,” Spike said firmly while running a comforting hand down his guide’s back. “The government needs to stop artificial triggering of sentinels. That will stabilize the population naturally.”

“But they won’t do that,” Blair said. “They are creating an artificial crisis and using it to hide their true agenda of developing a super sentinel and probably a super guide to go with it. They want as large a gene pool as possible to choose from.” He looked around at the men he called family, “and they want to control us.”

“So we have a decision to make,” Jim said. “Will our resistance be public or covert?”

“I don’t think the government will tolerate public resistance,” Blair said. “I think we have to be covert.” It would be a long, difficult battle, but it was the best avenue open to them. They would pretend to comply but resist to the utmost.

“I agree,” Spike said. “Besides it isn’t only the public laws we’re against; it’s the hidden agenda that is the biggest threat to us. Someday they are going to want to put behavior modification chips in our heads and turn us into their trained monkeys.”

To Jim and Blair, Spike’s words sounded like a bitter joke, but Xander knew just how serious Spike was.

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Peter stood frozen, staring at the letter, trying to comprehend the words while Wesley stroked his arm and made soothing sounds. He felt as if he were encased in glass with nothing quite touching his numb skin.

“What is it?” Riley asked, feeling the tension that filled the room. He hurried to Graham’s side.

Graham had his own letter from the agency. “It’s a summons, it says that Wesley is being called to account for being incompetent and gives a date for a hearing.”

“I thought that that was all taken care of with the cross bond,” Riley said. “They can’t strip Wes from both of you can they?” Riley looked as worried as the two Sentinels. In the short time they had been a pack he had come to value Wesley’s friendship. Wesley was an alpha guide but he accepted Riley’s need to be subordinate to his sentinel. He never judged Riley’s delight in sinking to his knees or his lack of hesitation when presenting himself for punishment.

“Harris must not realize we’ve cross bonded,” Graham said. “If he knew he would never have risked his charges being overruled.” Graham knew that Harris didn’t have nearly enough juice to publicly override his claim of Peter as his second and his cross-bond with Wesley.

Some assistant's head would surely roll over the oversight; or Harris has friends in high places that were willing to indulge his whims. The last thought made him shiver and he pushed it away. Surely no sentinel would go along with stripping a sentinel from his guide.

"You registered the cross bond, didn't you?" Peter asked, not able to keep the fear of losing Wesley out of his voice. His fingers tightened on the rolled paper, crumpling it.

"It's properly registered," Graham said, "and we have Jim and Spike as witnesses, not to mention all the sentinels at the agency that picked up my scent on Wesley." Graham looked at the letter with disdain and tossed it on the table and then he walked over and pulled Peter and Wesley into a hug. "There's no way for the tribunal to keep me from testifying in Wesley's behalf. And not only do they have to have evidence that Wesley is incompetent, they have to have a mind walker guide that can break a bond with minimal risk of brain damage to the guide."

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The mind walker scowled at the computer screen. She didn't like what she read. Both Sentinel Peter Wall and Guide Wesley Price were healthy, and there was another sentinel involved in the bond, Sentinel Captain Graham Miller. Her eyes widened when she read Miller's sentinel record. He came from a long line of well respected sentinels and was only one step down from Byron Harris in rank, not a man to be trifled with. This was not looking good.

Always before, when she had been ordered to strip a sentinel of his bond, one of the pair had been very ill, either in a coma or terminal. She would have to refuse to do the sundering, but she knew that that meant punishment. She sighed knowing that whatever they did to her would be far less painful than the consequences of complying with their order. Still, there was always the hope that the tribunal would overrule the Alpha Prime's accusations and disallow removal of Guide Wesley Price. She decided to see who the Tribunal Judges would be.

Her heart started pounding as she read about them and their guides. Like sentinel Harris all three were old school sentinels with long term bonds to guides with an empathic rating lower than 4. According to law they had to have a yearly evaluation of their emotional health. They all had the evaluations on record but they were signed by another sentinel, not by a medical doctor. Not a good sign at all. Her empathic sense told her that Guide Wesley Price was being railroaded. Something was going on and it was something she wanted no part of.

She made a decision. Three years ago a newly promoted General had told her if she ever needed anything to call him. She had never called in that favor but the General had kept in touch over the years; calling on her whenever he needed a Mindwalker, sending her a card on her birthday, holidays, and every time his phone number changed or he was moved for reassignment. Now he had climbed in rank to a three star general and was assigned to Washington, D.C., as head of the NCSIA, The National Coalition of Sentinel Internal Affairs. She took a deep breath, picked up the phone and dialed.

"General Gibbs' residence, Guide DiNozzo speaking." She was startled by the live voice; she had expected she would have to leave a message.

“Hello this is guide 915, may I speak with the General, please.”

“Red?”

“Um, yeah, that’s what the General calls me, Red. May I speak with him?” She was surprised that Tony would remember her. But then, maybe he was the one that sent out the cards.

“What’s wrong, Red? Are you okay?”

“It’s sentinel business, I need to talk to the General.”

“What’s going on, DiNozzo?” Gibbs said, annoyed at his guide’s delay. “Supper is getting cold.”

“It’s Red, she says she needs to talk to you. I can feel the stress coming out of the phone.”

Jethro gave Tony a light slap on the back of the head. “Then...give me...the phone.”

Tony handed over the phone.

“Gibbs, here.”

“Hello, Sentinel Gibbs.”

“No time for the small talk, Red, get to the point.”

“I’ve been ordered to Cascade to perform a sundering of a perfectly healthy guide from two perfectly healthy sentinels. The guide is a level 7.8. I am going to refuse. I think the guide and the sentinels are being set up.”

“You say this guide is bonded to two sentinels?”

“Yes, sir, and they are both registered as alphas.”

“Unusual, and improbable,” Gibbs said, trying to figure out why two sentinels would share a guide. The guide shortage could not be any worse in Cascade then it was in any other part of the country or he would have known about it. “Why the order, did the Alphas try to kill each other over the guide?”

“No, sir, both sentinels want to continue the bond, but the guide has been accused of incompetence by the Alpha Prime. The Sentinels and the Guide have exemplary records, General. I can’t believe that a healthy guide has suddenly become incompetent.”

“I need more than your belief and your empathic sense if I’m to intervene here, Red.”

“The Alpha Prime making the charges has a Guide with a rating under 4 and all three of the tribunal judges have guides with ratings under 4. Two I could see as a co-incidence but four sentinels with low functioning guides on the same case...”



"I don't believe in co-incidence," Gibbs said, beginning to see Red's point. "When was their last medical exam?"

"I don't know," Red said. "They have been signed off as emotionally fit by other sentinels not by a physician."

"Okay, Red, you've convinced me. What are their names?"

"Sentinel Prime Peter Wall, and Guide Wesley Price; the second bond to Guide price is Sentinel Captain Graham Miller."

"Miller, I know Miller. I'm on my way, Red. I owe you another one for this." Gibbs hung up the phone and called to his guide. "You have twenty minutes to get us packed. We're going to Cascade."

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The mind walker looked at the dead phone in her hand and wondered how things had gotten turned around from asking for a favor to doing one. She shrugged and hung up. She had done all that she could and there were other things for her to worry about. She had already gotten notice that the sundering would be her last act as a healer. She had been transferred to the new "Guide Proliferation Division" of the agency. She was to become a breeder. It made her shudder; not the having babies part, that she would welcome if that had been all there was to it, but she knew it would go further than that. She was a double X guide, a level 9.9 empath and she saw things that other people couldn't see. She saw people as they truly were and the people in power lately were not people she would want to raise children. They were hard, cold, and above all else, arrogant in their surety that power made right and any means to an end was a valid lifestyle. She decided to meditate on the matter. She hoped she could get in touch with the spirit guide, Incacha. He had been coming to her a lot lately. She knew she could not give these arrogant bastards her children to use as guinea pigs. If all else failed she would simply shut down and die. But that was a last resort. Her first choice was to fight. It was fate that landed her in Cascade, the Western US center for guides and sentinels, she was sure of it. If there were a resistance she would sense it and she knew they could use someone of her capabilities.

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Peter, Graham, Wesley and Riley waited in the hallway of The Sentinel Court Building. They had been there less than five minutes when the rest of their hive members arrived.

Peter, unwilling to let go of Wesley, pulled him along as he fell into a hug with Spike. "I want to kill them," Peter whispered into his sire's ear.

"The tribunal will do the right thing and over rule the Alpha Prime," Spike said. "I see you're both wearing Graham's scent. That's good. Harris won't be able to argue that the cross bonding was nothing but paperwork."

Graham walked over to the group. "They will be starting in a few minutes, we need to go in and take our seats."

A guard stopped the group at the courtroom door. "I'm sorry but only the Sentinel and Guide named in the report and those who may be called as witnesses may enter. If you wish to see the proceedings they will be telecast over The Sentinel/Guide News Network."

Graham scowled at the guard. "I am Sentinel Graham Miller and this is my second, Sentinel Peter Wall, it is our Guide, Wesley Price, that is named in the summons. These are our brothers, Sentinel James Ellison and Sentinel William Spikeman and their guides, Blair and Xander. They may be called as witnesses to Wesley's competency."

"All right, you may enter," the guard said, "but seating is limited and any other witnesses will have to wait in the hall before being called."

"That will be fine," Graham said, knowing that they had no other witnesses.

The courtroom was small and smelled of old wood and polish. A large portion, the two back rows, was taken up with television cameras and their crew. Usually Sentinel Tribunals were kept private; Graham hadn't expected television cameras, they were a doubled edged sword. Who they would benefit was entirely up to the point of view of the observer and the spin the newscaster would give the proceedings. Graham's stomach churned. There was no doubt in his mind that the correspondents had been ordered to put Wesley in the worst light possible.

Peter, Graham and Wesley sat at the defendant's table with Wesley in the middle, the rest of the group sat behind them in the first row.

There was a small flurry of activity as a guide, absent his sentinel, entered the courtroom and walked over to the defendant's table.

"Hey, Graham," he said with a broad smile.

"Tony, what are you doing here? Graham asked, confused by the guide's sudden appearance. "Where's Gibbs?"

"He'll be in in a minute," Tony said, as he entered the first row of seating and sat between Blair and Xander.

"So Graham," Tony said as he wiggled his eyebrows like Grocho Marx, "Riley wasn't man enough for you, hummm?"

"All rise," the bailiff called out before Graham could answer.

The three judges entered the courtroom in full dress uniform and took their seats. Sentinel General Robert Eldred, as slim as when he served in the field fifty years ago, sat in the right hand chair. Sentinel General Sebastian Rigby, shorter than the first man, but wider, sat in the left hand chair. The last of the men who entered sat in the middle chair, indicating he was the highest ranked of the judges though he was ten years younger than Eldred. He was Sentinel General Jethro Gibbs. His uniform jacket sparkled with medals and ribbons for service, valor and honor. A hush fell over the court. Everyone in attendance knew exactly who General Gibbs was.

"You may be seated," the bailiff barked smartly before taking up his parade rest stance and gazing at the far wall.

General Gibbs gave everyone in the room the benefit of his stern gaze as he waited for them to settle back in their seats, his eye contact transferring from face to face, holding the look for long enough to freeze them where they sat. "Who authorized the TV cameras at the tribunal proceeding?" he asked as his eyes continued to sweep the room. The question was delivered with deceptive quiet. Tony sat with an amused look on his face. He knew the true feeling behind the General's question, he waited for the order he knew would follow.

Byron Harris closed his hands into fists so tight that his perfectly manicured fingernails bit into the palms of his hands. Something had gone wrong; he could feel it in his bones. Jethro Gibbs was not one of the sentinels he was told would be a tribunal judge. The Alpha Prime stood up, willing himself not to show hesitation or fear. He could not afford to appear intimidated. "I authorized them," he said, his voice held a challenge that was not lost on General Gibbs.

Gibbs looked at Harris with disdain, his head tilted very slightly as he examined the man. "And you are?" He asked with chilling indifference.

Harris fixed Gibbs with an equally hard stare. "Sentinel Alpha Prime Byron Mcfae Harris." Harris was used to sentinels backing down when faced with his stare, even sentinels that outranked him, but Gibbs didn't back down. Harris watched as Gibbs' eyes dilated and the muscles in his face moved, he felt his sphincters contract involuntarily.

Imperceptible to anyone but a sentinel, Gibbs' disdain deepened as the silent laugh crossed his face.

The Alpha Prime's face turned scarlet with rage.

Every guide in the courtroom above a level 6 felt the tension and gave a soft moan; every guide except Tony, who was used to his boss' presence causing stress and distress alike. Tony simply reached forward, and with his bright, indomitable smile, rubbed both Wesley's shoulders as he whispered into his ear. "It's all right, everything is under control." He rubbed over the fine tremor until he felt it fade. The courtroom filled with the sound of soft purring as the Sentinels offered comfort to their guides, Jim and Spike among them.

Byron Harris felt his hackles rise. He bit his lip to keep the scathing words inside. Here they were, sentinels, conducting a serious case, and they chose to stroke their whores instead of keeping them decently locked away from such proceedings.

Jethro Gibbs fixed his look at the camera crews. There was a thump as one of the cameramen, focused on a tight close-up of Gibbs' face jumped back and hit the wall. "Turn off the cameras and the sound equipment," he barked, "put on the lens covers and leave the courtroom. I will not have these proceedings turned into a media circus."

The camera crew simply stood frozen in place by Gibbs' stare.

"Now!" Gibbs ordered, his voice snapping like a whip around the room.

The order startled them into action and he watched in silence as the crews scrambled to comply and hastily leave the courtroom.

"Tony," Gibbs said his voice returned to its normal tone, "check and make sure everything is turned off. If there is any equipment still running I want it confiscated." Tony stood and strode over to the few remaining men holding recording equipment. They eyed him like a mouse being stalked by a particularly hungry tabby. They rushed to stuff their things into carry bags and leave the courtroom.

Gibbs' attention returned to the Alpha Prime. "You're the sentinel that brought the accusations of Guide Pryce's incompetence before this tribunal. State your case and present your evidence." No nonsense. Gibbs conveyed the threat of dire consequences if his time was being wasted.

Byron Harris cleared his throat and began his prepared speech. "Upon his promotion to Sentinel Prime, Peter Wall was given a long term covert assignment. He failed in every aspect of that assignment. When debriefed on his failure the only conclusion that could be made was that he was continuously distracted from his duties. It is a guide's duty to keep his sentinel in top functioning shape. Wesley Pryce not only failed in his duty, he caused the failure of his sentinel and the failure of the covert operation. This cannot be tolerated. Guide Pryce needs to be replaced and I ask this tribunal for an order of sundering."

Byron remained standing, his chin lifted proudly. This was it, his chance to convince them of his case. He was not going to let the cold stare of the General take that chance away from him. He stood his ground with shoulders rock hard and rigid.

"Do you have any hard evidence that Guide Pryce was at fault?" General Eldred asked smoothly. His lined face was intent. Listening to every word spoken. This was the question he was told to ask and he would not divert from the plan, General Gibbs be damned.

"None that can be presented before the tribunal. The assignment was covert and therefore it cannot become public record." Byron reminded them, pleased at the tingle of satisfaction that filled him. Eldred was keeping to the script, as long as Rigby did the same they could still win this thing and make an example of Guide Pryce.

"A covert assignment," Gibbs said. "A fact that goes far in preventing Guide Pryce from presenting his own defense. I don't like witch hunts, so you better have something more to convince me of the validity of your case."

And there it was...exactly what he needed to insure that he would win this case. No sentinel would take the word of a guide over an Alpha Prime. "You have my word as Alpha Prime that Guide Wesley Pryce needs to be replaced," he said with smug assurance. And now for his killing blow. "There is a mind walker with the ability to sunder the bond with minimum risk to Guide Pryce. I wish to call Guide 915 to testify to her abilities." The short speech was delivered with smug arrogance.

Gibbs smiled; it was a predatory smile that made most of the sentinels in the room shiver. Sentinel Byron Harris smiled back with his own predatory smile. The smell of testosterone in

the courtroom became stronger. Harris was sure that Guide 915 was in his pocket; his co-conspirators had assured him that she was owned by The Agency and would do as ordered.

The bailiff called Guide 915. A slim redheaded woman approximately 5'6" walked into the courtroom. She was slender, perhaps a bit too thin, and frail looking. Her skin was pale as milk. She walked carefully up to face the judges before she lifted huge green eyes. She stared right back at them, her face serene.

Xander gasped. "That's Willow," he whispered directly into Spike's ear.

Spike looked at Xander his eyes full of questions.

"Willow, from Sunnydale," Xander whispered when he saw Spike didn't recognize her. "What the hell is she doing here?" His anxiety level rose, a thing Spike couldn't miss.

Spike's eyes flashed yellow as he accessed his Sunnydale past life memories.

The bailiff swore Guide 915 in and she took the stand.

"Please relax, Guide 915," the sentinel Alpha Prime said, silkily. "I will only be asking yes or no questions."

To most people the sentinel's voice sounded calm and reassuring but Red could feel the emotion behind the voice. Sentinel Harris was a viper ready to strike. His anger, arrogance and disdain for her worth as a human being made him blind to his impending court defeat. The guide knew this was one person she would not be able to find any compassion for. She nodded her head.

"Now, Guide, you are registered as a level 9.9 and carry the guide gene on both X chromosomes. Is that correct?"

"Yes."

"And you have the ability to break a sentinel/guide bond?"

"Under certain..."

"Guide!" the Alpha Prime interrupted. "This tribunal does not want to waste time with long answers a simple yes or no is all that is needed. Do you have the ability to break a sentinel/guide bond?"

"Not in..."

"Tribunal," Byron Harris interrupted again. "Please instruct the witness to answer the questions yes or no."

"You are deliberately asking misleading questions," the redhead said, her voice soothing and utterly reasonable, making Harris sound like a frenzied madman. "I can not answer yes or no and keep my oath of telling the whole truth." She blinked up at him with her incredible eyes.

Sentinel General Robert Eldred spoke. "It is not your place, Guide, to decide if the questions are misleading. You will answer the questions as asked. If the tribunal needs more information we will ask for it."

"Have I been released from my oath of telling the whole truth?" the guide asked.

"Guide," General Gibbs said. "The Alpha Prime has a right to question you as he sees fit. I would hate to hold you in contempt. Please answer the questions as Sentinel Harris has instructed you and trust that this tribunal will ask for any additional information if we feel it is needed."

"Yes General," Red said with a knowing smile directed at Gibbs. When she looked back at the Alpha prime her smile vanished. "Would you repeat the question please."

"Do you have the ability to break a sentinel/guide bond?"

"Yes," she answered in a deadpan voice.

"And you recently preformed a successful sundering of a sentinel with a guide rated 8.1, is that true?"

"Yes."

"The report states that there was no mental damage to the guide. Is that correct?"

"Yes,"

"Thank you guide, you may step down now," Byron Harris said quite pleased with how the proceeding was going.

"Hold," Gibbs voice broke through the courtroom. "I wish to cross examine this witness."

General Rigby spoke up. "I do not see the point in cross-examining this Guide. She has already stated she has successfully preformed a sundering on a guide with an 8.1 rating. By law that is all the information we need from her."

"General Rigby," Gibbs said. "Are you questioning my right as head of this tribunal to cross-examine a witness?"

The General glared at Gibbs. "Do you doubt the Alpha Prime's word, General?"

"It's not the Alpha Prime I'm going to cross examine," Gibbs said.

Gibbs smiled at the red headed guide. "Guide 915," he said. "I would like to hear the complete answers to the questions that Alpha Prime Harris asked. You have stated that you have an ability to sunder a guide/sentinel bond. Why do you feel your yes answer to that question may be misleading?"

The young woman looked up at him with grateful eyes, beautiful eyes. Almost as beautiful at those of his own guide, Tony, but Tony held the edge.

“I can only sever a bond under a narrow parameter of circumstances,” 915 said. She was sitting tall in the witness chair, her attention focused on the man questioning her. He nodded as she spoke.

“And those circumstances are?” Gibbs asked, when she had stopped speaking.

“The guide must be rated below a 6.5 or...” She stated, her voice growing stronger with each word. This man was listening to her, to what she said, not dismissing her as a guide who knew nothing and should follow commands or undergo reeducation.

“Objection,” Eldred yelled, his face flushed. “The guide has already stated that she has successfully broken a bond with a level 8.1 guide.”

Gibbs looked at the General. He looked like a man about to lose his chance at a tidy bribe. Which suited Gibbs just fine. Gibbs managed to keep his satisfaction secret and his expression only faintly disapproving. “Over ruled,” Gibbs said with an unmistakable warning in his voice. “The purpose of this cross examination is to hear her complete answer. Please continue guide.”

“I have only successfully severed a bond with a guide rated over 6.5 when either the Sentinel or the Guide is suffering from a terminal injury or illness.” The thin redhead said. “That is the only circumstance in which I have ever been successful.”

“In reference to the recently performed sundering of a sentinel with a guide rated 8.1, was one of the pair terminally injured?” Gibbs asked, pointedly seeking unambiguous clarification. He’d be damned if he’d let anyone misconstrue the guide’s words at a later date. What she meant would be crystal clear.

The young woman was eager now; her words tumbled out. “Yes, both had a living will with a pre-signed request for a sundering should either of them be terminally injured. The sentinel received a gunshot wound to the head in the line of duty and was being kept alive on life support. The guide, although uninjured physically, was also in a coma due to his bond with the sentinel. He would have died if the sundering had not been successful.”

Gibbs eyes lifted for an instant, finding Tony’s. The reality of such a possibility hung over them each day, as it did with all sentinels and guides that worked in the field. He tore his attention away from his guide and back to guide 915.

“I have a question for this guide,” General Sebastian Rigby said “Are you telling this court that the reason you were to successfully break the bond between that Sentinel and his guide was because both the Sentinel and his Guide were in a coma?”

Gibbs could predict just where this was going and he wasn’t going to have it. He decided to let it play out these men were showing their true colors in an attempt to railroad Guide Pryce.

“That and the head injury to the sentinel were the factors that allowed the sundering to be successful.”

“Well that solves the problem,” the General said, feeling quite proud of himself for saving the day. “We simply induce a coma in the Sentinel and his Guide and 915 will be able to dissolve the bond with minimum risk of brain damage. This should have been documented as soon as it was discovered.”

Over my dead body Gibbs thought. “General, you are disregarding the testimony that stated the Sentinel’s head wound was also a contributing factor. Surely you’re not advocating shooting Sentinel Wall in the head?”

“Of course not,” the General said. “Comas can be induced chemically with medical supervision. We have no reason to believe it would not work.”

“And no evidence to show it would,” Gibbs said.

Guide 915 cleared her throat. “I wish to make a statement to the court,” she said with her chin held high and her eyes snapping with fire. “I will not perform an order of sundering on Guide Wesley Pryce or any other healthy sentinel and guide bond.”

“That’s our girl,” Xander whispered to Spike.

Peter squeezed Wesley’s hand.

Alpha Prime Harris jumped out of his seat livid with rage “It is not your place, Guide,” the word was spit out in disgust, “to refuse an order of this court or the agency you serve. You are the property of the Agency of Sentinel Affairs and you will obey or I will remove all the skin from your back. Do you hear me?”

“Sit down,” General Gibbs said clearly pissed. He locked eyes with Harris. “This tribunal has not yet made a decision. Your outburst is out of order.”

The Alpha Prime found himself slumping back down into his seat. He sat there in absolute shock. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d backed away from a fight, verbal or physical. Now he had lost his temper and gave his anger vent in the tribunal. There were powerful people that would see it as a weakness.

When it was apparent that Harris was going to remain in his seat Gibbs speared the audience with his steely blue gaze. “I’ve had all the theatrics I will tolerate. It stops now! What is this, the dark ages? We don’t flog Guides and we don’t threaten them with it or anything like it in my courtroom.” Gibbs turned his sight on the Alpha Prime. “You are hereby warned, Alpha Prime Harris. Now, if you think you can regain control of yourself we will continue. If not I am ready to dismiss this case with prejudice, which means you will not be able to bring these charges up against Guide Pryce again. It’s up to you.” Gibbs settled back in his chair, hands folded on his desk, watching the Alpha Prime, he waited. It wasn’t difficult to tell he was serious.

The Alpha Prime rose and deliberately turned his back on the tribunal judges, as if he intended to address the proceedings attendees. However, he looked over the heads of the sentinel’s and guides sitting in back of him and focused on the wall. “I wish to apologize to the court for my inappropriate behavior. It was in my mind to remind the guide of her



obligation to perform her duty as her superiors see fit. However it was not and is not proper for me to do so at this time. I give my word that my behavior for the remainder of this proceeding will confirm to the rules of the court.” The Alpha Prime turned back and sat in his chair, looked General Gibbs in the eye and with a flick of his hand announced, “You may continue.” ‘There,’ AP Harris thought. ‘Let’s see what you do about that.’

General Gibbs understood exactly what Harris had done. He apologized for his behavior but not the content of his statement. By turning his back on the tribunal judges he was in essence bating Gibbs. He decided to play Harris’s game. “General Eldred, do you find the Alpha Prime’s apology acceptable?” He asked in a perfectly reasonable and calm voice.

Eldred turned white. To say Harris’s apology was anything but insulting to the court was unthinkable. But Harris was a staunch supporter of the new laws. He was a man strategically placed to be of service to their cause, to judge him in contempt was equally out of the question. Harris had put him in an untenable position. “I found his apology less than satisfying.” Eldred said. It was a weak answer but at least it would give Harris a chance to make it right.

“General Rigby,” Gibbs said. “Did you find the Alpha Prime’s apology acceptable?”

The general’s eyes darted from Harris to Eldred and back to Harris he licked his lips nervously. “I have to agree with General Eldred. Alpha Prime’s apology was unsatisfactory.”

“I must agree with Generals Eldred and Rigby,” Gibbs said. “This is your last chance. Are you able to show this court the respect it deserves, Alpha Prime Harris or shall I dismiss this proceeding?”

AP Harris clenched his jaw. He could not let the proceedings be dismissed. He decided that everything comes to those who wait and he could wait for Gibbs’ down fall. The bigger they are the harder they fall and he would be sure Gibbs fell very hard, in fact he intended to be the one that pushed Gibbs over the cliff. His anger was replaced by a predatory smile and he stood up once more and this time facing the judges, in a calm voice, repeated his apology.

“Thank you A.P. Harris,” Gibbs said. “Do you have anymore evidence to present?”

“I rest my case,” Harris said.

Gibbs turned to the defense table. “Do you have any questions of Guide 915?” he asked.

Graham stood. “None, General,” he said.

“Guide 915 you may step down.” Gibbs turned to his guide. “Tony, I want you to stay with Guide 915 until this proceeding is over and then I would like to speak to her in chambers.”

Tony nodded and followed Red out of the courtroom.

“The defense may state its case now.” Gibbs said.

“There are four Sentinels present that would like to make statements in support of Guide Pryce’s competency.” Graham began.

“Four Sentinels?” Gibbs interrupted. “It was my understanding he was cross bonded to two Sentinels.”

“Yes General,” Graham said. “Guide Price is fully bonded to both Sentinel Wall and myself. Sentinel Ellison and Sentinel Spikeman are Sentinel brothers to Sentinel Wall and ask the court to let them testify in Guide Pryce’s behalf.

“Objection!” both General Eldred and General Rigby shouted at the same time.

“General Eldred,” Gibbs said. “State your objection.”

“Sentinels Ellison and Spikeman are police detectives, they have no knowledge of how the guide has performed during Agency assignments.”

Jim stood up. “If it please the court, the General is mistaken. I am Sentinel Liaison officer for the Cascade P.D. and have often worked with Sentinel Wall and Guide Pryce in that capacity. In addition Sentinel Spikeman also worked with Sentinel Wall and his Guide while a Detective in Lakeview P.D.. More recently both Sentinel Spikeman and myself worked alongside Sentinel Wall and Guide Pryce when our Guide was abducted a few months ago. We can testify to how well the Sentinel and his Guide work together.”

Gibbs looked at Sentinel Rigby, “And your objection, General Rigby?”

“I don’t believe the cross bonding is anything more than an attempt to force this tribunal into refusing an order of sundering. I believe this cross bonding nothing but a show for the court.”

“General Rigby,” Gibbs said. “Turn up your sense of smell, the Guide wears the scent of both sentinels, and I have a report that states there was a challenge to the death over this cross bonding issue. That hardly speaks to a false bond. Your objection is overruled.”

“General Eldred,” Gibbs continued. “I find that Sentinels Ellison and Spikeman do have pertinent information for this court. Your objection is also overruled.”

Gibbs looked at Sentinel Miller. “This tribunal is ready to hear your statements.”

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# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### Chapter 4

“I need to talk to Willow,” Xander said, as he looked toward the courtroom door. His ‘red alert’ siren was screaming. The court had adjourned for deliberation and as far as Xander was concerned it was emptying out far too slowly. He gave a low growl of frustration.

Spike leaned in and bit Xander’s Guide gland. The action served its purpose; Xander stopped growling.

“Ow! Wha’cha do that for?” Xander asked, annoyed at the distraction.

“Guides don’t growl,” Spike whispered directly into his ear. “The wrong ears might hear you.”

Xander turned back to the crowd, scanning the wall of people for a glimpse of the exit. “Willow’s in danger, I can feel it.” Seeing an opening in the crowd, Xander pushed through, with Spike right on his heels. No way was the Sentinel going to let his Guide face any danger alone.

When Xander got to the hallway he saw Willow pushed behind Tony who was trying to protect her from an enraged Alpha Prime Harris. The big Guide was strong, but he was no match for a Sentinel. He didn’t stand a chance without some serious help.

No one in the hall was moving, they were all frozen in horror, watching the scene play out. To them threatening a Guide meant someone was going to die. A P Harris picked up Tony and threw him into the crowd. Several people screamed as Tony’s body knocked them down.

The Alpha Prime turned to Willow. “You will obey,” he said and raised his hand to strike the redhead in the face.

Xander slid to a stop, taking up the place in front of Willow that Tony had occupied only a moment before. “Leave her alone!” he yelled at the Alpha Prime. The Sentinel’s face, twisted with rage, looked barely human. Xander braced himself for the coming blow.

The Alpha Prime laughed nastily and began to swing his arm at Xander.

Spike caught his wrist in both his hands, grinding the bones together with the power of his hold. “Touch my Guide and I will see to it you never use this arm for anything again,” he said with a deep warning growl and glowing yellow eyes. Spike was prepared to rip the arm off the Alpha Prime’s body if he so much as touched Xander.

Harris, scarlet with rage, growled at Spike and tried to jerk his arm free. “915 belongs to the Agency, I have the right to discipline her anyway I see fit. Get your Guide out of my way,

Sentinel.”

“Tony’s bleeding,” Blair shouted as he bent down to attend to the people on the floor. “Call an ambulance.” He pressed a corner of his shirt against the sluggishly oozing wound.

“We have several injured,” Red shouted as she tended to a woman who had been knocked to the floor and now had a bleeding head wound.

Jim moved up behind the Alpha Prime and snapped on handcuffs, taking delight in tightening them down. Not to the point of injury, but letting him know they were there. “You’re under arrest for the abuse of…”

“You can’t arrest me,” the Alpha Prime screamed, trying to break free of Spike and Jim’s grasp. “I am head of the Agency of Sentinel Affairs in Cascade.”

“You’re a menace is what you are.” Spike mumbled under his breath, but every Sentinel in the hall heard it clearly.

“What the hell is going on out here?” Gibbs asked as he exited chambers. He dialed up his senses when he saw Tony on the floor and then he caught the odor of blood, Tony’s blood. “Jesus Christ, what the fuck is this!?” he asked as he rushed to Tony’s side, bent down beside him, and reached out to run his hands over Tony checking for source of the scent of Tony’s blood.

“I’ll be okay, boss,” Tony said, a little weakly. He coughed, pressing a hand over his side, as Blair moved away to give Gibbs access to his Guide and to attend to a young man who was clutching his arm. “I don’t think anything vital was hit. I think I just got stabbed with a pen, but I may have broken someone’s ribs when I landed on them.”

Gibbs could see his Guide was in pain. He scanned the hallway and saw Jim and Spike holding the struggling and cuffed A P. The man was an out of control idiot, and made even more dangerous by the position he held. Gibbs had been willing to let things take their course through the courts, slow as that could be, but this incident made it abundantly clear that that was no longer possible. Harris had to be stopped...now!

“Did that asshole do this?” he asked Tony, even though he already had the answer. He could smell Harris on his Guide.

“He picked me up and threw me into the crowd. Someone in the crowd must have been holding a pen. Man, that guy is strong.” Tony winced, trying to sit up. He was uncomfortable on his back and the center of everyone’s attention. “I’ll be fine.”

“Don’t move,” Gibbs said, putting a hand on his shoulder to keep him from sitting up. “The ambulance will be here in a few minutes.” He looked around the corridor; the court Sentinels were busy trying to clear out the hallway. He caught the eye of one of them. “Get the A P out of here,” Gibbs ordered. “Before I rip his throat out. I want him taken to the NCSIA building and see to it that he is scheduled for a psychiatric exam and make sure the court guards get names and addresses of the witnesses.”

“Will do, Sir,” the court guard said as they took the Alpha Prime away, eager to make up for the fact that a Guide and civilians had been injured on their watch. They knew that unless they were very very lucky the Alpha Prime’s arrest would not be the end of this. They could lose their jobs for not protecting General Gibbs’ Guide or worse be brought up on charges of ‘Complicit In Injuring A Guide’.

Gibbs settled on the floor beside Tony to wait for the ambulance. He put his hand on Tony’s chest, as much to feel the comfort of Tony’s heart beat as to keep him from trying to sit up again. “Graham,” Gibbs called when he spotted him standing beside Jim. “Watch over Guide 915. I want to talk to her later.”

“I’m on it,” Graham said and then he turned to the others in his hive. “Come on,” he said. “Let’s find a private room.”

Jim walked over to assist Blair with the injured. There was no way he was leaving his Guide alone in the charged up atmosphere that A P Harris’ actions had caused. “Blair and I will join you as soon as we get things cleared up out here,” he told the others.

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Xander looked into the redhead's eyes. “You okay, Willow?” he asked as soon as the group had gotten into a private room and turned on the sound deadeners so no Sentinels could eavesdrop from the hallway.

The Guide was surprised that her rescuer was making eye contact. Most, Guides and Sentinels alike, avoided eye contact with a Mindwalker. But this one not only looked her in the eyes he was genuinely concerned for her well being, she could feel it. He didn’t consider himself a stranger. He considered himself her friend, boarding on family. “My name isn’t Willow,” she told him as she searched his face for a clue as to why he thought he knew her.

“Oh... Well, I’m still Xander and Spike is still Spike... And hey...Oz and Tara are here too. It’s a regular Sunnydale reunion. So what is your name this go round?”

“I’m Guide 915,” she said, her voice full of caution, this Guide was beginning to sound more that a little nuts, he seemed friendly but acted a little too familiar for her comfort, add to that how much he looked like the Alpha Prime... Well the whole thing was giving her a case of the wiggins. She knew the warmth she felt rolling off of him wouldn’t last. It never did.

“Xan,” Spike said. “She doesn’t have the memories.” He looked at the slim woman sadly. “Maybe she doesn’t even believe in reincarnation and from the look on her face she thinks you’re right bonkers.”

“She must have the memories, Spike. Why else would she be here?” Xander said as if it were the simplest thing in the world. “This is Willow, she helped us save the world.”

915 listened to the two men's conversation and absorbed the energy they were giving off. The one called Spike was a strong Sentinel, in spite of his size, and although he felt warmth toward her his main concern was his Guide. The dark haired Guide was desperate to make a connection with her, as if they had been linked at some point and now the link was lost. “My

name isn't Willow, I've never heard of Sunnydale and I have never helped anyone 'save the world'; you've mistaken me for someone else," the young woman said softly not wanting to stress out the Guide any further.

Xander looked at Willow, aghast. "You really don't remember?" he asked, disappointment evident in his voice. Then his eyes lit up and he snapped his fingers. "The yellow crayon!" he said. "You have to remember the yellow crayon. That's how it all started."

"The only thing yellow I remember is his eyes," she said pointing at Spike.

"All right, that's enough," Graham said; all the talk of past life memories and Sunnydale gave him the creeps. "Spike, get your Guide under control."

Xander whirled around in full Sentinel mode. "Hey!" he said. "I'm no slave Guide that's going to kneel at your feet, if you want to stop me why don't you stop me yourself," he snarled at Graham, who raised a brow in the face of all that heat.

"Whoa," Spike said, putting his hands on Xander's trembling shoulders. "Graham's on our side, Xan, there will be no challenges. Red doesn't remember. You have to let it go." Spike began purring and stroking Xander's arm in an attempt to distract Xander from glaring at Graham.

Wesley walked over and offered Xander his neck to suckle.

Suddenly everything she was seeing came together and 915 understood. "Oh, my god," she said as she jumped up from her chair and backed away from what she was seeing. "He's a highbred and you all know it."

Peter walked over to the distraught Guide. "It's okay," he said, stroking her arm and offering comfort. "He's not going to hurt you."

Red's eyes squinted as she looked at Peter and felt his comforting energy course through her body, she didn't pull away but she didn't relax either. She was wary, on edge, this was another sentinel not afraid to look into her eyes. "You're a healer," she said, her heart pounding, "a Sentinel/ healer..." She looked around the room, pushing away the panic that began to rise within her. "Who are you people?" Whoever they were, they weren't normal, at least not like any other Sentinels or Guides she had met in her career as a Mindwalker, and she had met a lot.

"Xander walked forward and took her hand, "It's okay Willow, we just want to make sure you're okay."

"You're trying to renew our link, but we've never had a link. I don't know you and I don't need to be healed."

Spike pressed himself against Xander's back and reached around removing Xan's hand from Willows. "Luv, you have to let this go," he said softly into his guide's ear. "We're the only two with the memories. Let it go, Luv."

Xander turned to Spike. "That bastard said he owns her. He said he can punish her any way he wants. How am I supposed to let that go, Spike, tell me how?"

"The wanker's in custody now. We'll make sure she's okay, I promise."

The door to the conference room opened and Sentinel Jim Ellison stood in the doorway scanning the room with the precision of a laser. He scowled even more than usual when he saw the red headed Guide pressed against the back wall.

"The ambulance is here" Jim said, making his way forward, cautious, not wanting to spook the Guide in the midst of all the confusion. "General Gibbs wants Red to ride with him and Tony to the hospital."

Jim knew the Guide had been threatened; he would let her come to him if she needed reassurance. But she didn't step up to him for comfort, or protection, either of which he'd have offered her without question. He watched her gather her impressive composure and give him a quick nod of greeting. She did not have the appearance of one who had been traumatized or stressed. She was strong and solid. His admiration for her grew.

"Sorry, Gentlemen," the Guide said to the room in general. "Duty calls." She never took her eyes off the odd group as she walked by. She was intrigued, curious, and she let her empathic abilities absorb whatever the group was broadcasting. They wanted to protect her, and not just the way any Sentinel wanted to protect any Guide. For two was highly personal. They believed they knew her in spite of her telling them that they were mistaken and woe be to anyone that tried to hurt her. She filed away the information but she knew her work wasn't here with them, not now...not yet.

"Over here, Red," Gibbs called as soon as she came into view. He was standing next to his Guide who was stretched out flat and being strapped into the ambulance gurney. Tony's shirt was unbuttoned and Gibb's hand lay firmly on his Guide's chest monitoring his heart beat by touch as well as sound. Tony, who had insisted on waiting for all the other injured people to be taken care of first, wanted to walk out of the courthouse under his own power. But Gibbs wouldn't hear of it. So now, he could do nothing but wait, helpless, until Gibbs gave the attendants permission to cart him off to the hospital.

Red walked to them. "May I help?" she asked, hiding her amusement at the rebellious light that gleamed in Tony's eyes even as he lay still under Gibbs' hold.

Tony knew the question was a formality that any healer went through before touching a Guide that was not a pack member. "Please do," he said with a weak smile. "My side is throbbing and my head feels like someone is trying to tunnel their way out with a spoon," he complained.

Blair stood back and watched the red-haired woman move in. He was a strong healer in his own right but he was no comparison to a Mindwalker. He had been channeling off as much of Tony's pain as possible, but without more skin-to-skin contact the best he could do was take off the edge. He opened his empathic channels in an attempt to learn what the Mindwalker was doing.

Red lightly laid her hand on Tony's forehead. Her fingers folded to the contour of his brow. The tips of her fingers came to rest on his left temple, cool and soothing. "You don't need the pain," she said and just like that all the ache in Tony's side and the throbbing in his skull were gone.

"Wow," he said, "you're better than a bottle of single malted scotch and a whole case of aspirin."

"I should hope so," she giggled, showing him a quirky smile, the same one he always loved to see on her too serious face. She walked along beside the gurney keeping her hand on the Guide's head to channel away his pain.

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The ride to the Guide Hospital had been fast and bumpy but they were expecting the General so everything went smoothly. Tony's wound was cleaned and deemed not serious, though he whined a bit for show. He and Gibbs were quickly assigned a nesting room, a necessity for a visiting Sentinel and a wounded Guide. Red was surprised when General Gibbs insisted that she join them.

"Tony is going to be fine. You don't need me any longer." She told him as soon as Tony stopped grumbling about being forced to ride to their room in a wheelchair.

"We need to talk in private and a nesting room is as private as it gets," the General told her in his 'not open for discussion' voice. He wanted to be next to his Guide, that was clear, and her protests were keeping him from that. She gracefully surrendered to his decision.

She had been in many nesting rooms, as a healer, and witnessed many a Sentinel, coping and re-bonding, with their injured Guide. But they had been strangers, men and women she had never seen before and, would most likely, never see again. This was different, she knew the General and his Guide, they sent her Christmas Cards. It just seemed... overly intimate. She sat down at the edge of the nest just far enough away so as not to intrude in their personal space and watched while Gibbs efficiently got Tony settled in, his strong hands fussing as carefully as any mother's.

When Gibbs was sure Tony was comfortable and sleeping he walked over and sat beside Red. "I'm sorry about what happened to you at the courthouse. Harris will be relieved of duty so you won't have to worry about him coming after you and hurting you. He crossed over the line today."

The Guide scowled. "I think he probably crossed over the line a long time ago," she said bluntly. "But he had power and no one was willing to question him or look too hard at what he was doing. They didn't want him to concentrate on them. I think maybe Sentinel Miller and Sentinel Wall took a chance and looked too close. This legal case was the Alpha Prime's way of punishing them."

Gibbs agreed wholeheartedly. "You're very astute, Red," he told her. "Harris was not known as a forgiving man. Anyone who spoke against him, or disagreed with him paid a price. He didn't care that the sundering could have caused brain damage or death. Sentinel Miller has



been trying for a year to get enough evidence to have AP Harris removed. But Harris has always been careful and he has friends in very high places. What you did was very brave,” Gibbs said. “Standing up in court like that and refusing to do the sundering. It forced him out in the open. He’ll find his friends have deserted him now.”

“I just did what had to be done,” the slim woman said.

“There are things going on in the Agency right now, dangerous things,” Gibbs said. “These new laws make no sense, I believe they’re more than they appear to be. This crap they are feeding the public is just that, crap. It’s designed to get public support. There have been clues for a while now that there is another Sentinel agency, a covert agency. I’ve been trying to get info on it, but I just run into dead ends. I need your help again.”

“I know there are bad things happening. I can feel it in the air. But what can I do?” Red asked. “I’ve been reassigned to the Department of Guide Proliferation. I’m going to be living in a fertility clinic, I doubt if I’ll have any access to the outside world.” She didn’t say that she would also be too busy getting and staying pregnant to do much else.

Gibbs lifted his hand and stroked the young woman’s hair. “I know, Red, and I’m sorry. I’d claim you myself, if I didn’t need someone on the inside so much. When this is over...”

“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. So tell me what you need me to do.”

“You’re an extraordinary woman,” Gibbs said with genuine sincerity. “I wish I didn’t have to ask this of you, but you’re the only one I can ask and there is no one I trust more. I need to know if the lab is conducting genetic experiments.”

Red could sense the General was telling the truth. There was no one he trusted more, a few people he trusted as much but no one more than her and Tony. “You want me to be a spy?”

There was a note of interest and a flicker of humor in her bright eyes. She was intrigued with the proposal and at the same time it seemed a bit ludicrous.

“I want you to listen, that’s all, just listen. Don’t take any risks; I don’t want you getting hurt. You don’t have to invade anyone’s mind. Listen to what they’re projecting and report back to me if you find anything is going on.”

“How am I supposed to keep in touch? If these people are as dangerous and covert as you say I don’t think they’re going to let me use the phone or e-mail.”

“Is there a Guide or a Sentinel that you’ve healed and have a telepathic connection with, one that you can trust? They can’t block a telepathic message.”

I would have to force my way into their minds, without permission. I won't do that I'm not a mind rapist. The only other being I have a telepathic connection with is Incacha, an ancient Chopec Shaman to Sentinels and Guides, long dead." Red tilted her head, lifted her hand and pointed. "And he is standing right there," she said in a squeaky and mildly surprised voice. Incacha had never come to her unbidden, she had always had to seek him out

Gibbs knew that it was not unusual for high rated Guides to see their animal spirit guides so he took the appearance of a dead shaman in stride. "Ask him if he'll help us."

Red nodded her head and seemed to be listening and then she turned to Gibbs. "He said he is in touch with Sentinel Ellison's Guide, Blair. He said I should trust his Hive, they were telling me the truth."

"Telling you the truth?" Gibbs asked. "Ellison and his Guide were in the hallway helping with the wounded, they never had a chance to talk to you. I told Graham to watch over you."

"Graham is part of the Ellison Hive, two of the members said that they knew me in a past life, they kept calling me Willow. One of them was surprised that I didn't have the memories. They weren't normal Sentinels and Guides."

"What do you mean by 'not normal'?" Gibbs asked, his interest heightened.

Red gave a sarcastic laugh. "Where do I begin? There were three hybrids in the room, two Sentinels with healing abilities and one they referred to as a Guide but he was a Sentinel too, I'm sure of it. Spike, one of the sentinel/healers, eyes turned from blue to yellow in the hallway and he was preternaturally strong. He held off the Alpha Prime until Sentinel Ellison got him cuffed, the other one touched me, I felt his healing energy and I wouldn't be surprised if he is as strong as the one called Spike, but I got an impression that he was a lot younger than Spike. Spike and his Guide are the ones that claimed to know me in a past life. The energy they were projecting to me felt like pack energy, as if I were a member of their pack, but I had never seen them before. Xander, the Guide was desperate to renew our link, but I know I've never met them before. And your friend Graham...his reaction was off somehow, he wasn't surprised by any of it. The way he just raised his eyebrows when Xander challenged him was weird. Spike started stroking Xander and purring like a Sentinel would do for a stressed Guide and Wesley offered Xander his neck to suckle like he would do for a stressed Sentinel and Graham didn't object. The whole thing was very strange. They've formed a resistance and they want me safe and I do mean that in the most committed Sentinel/Guide way. They think that these new laws will use me.."

"And you've never met any of them before?"

"Never."

"You're absolutely sure of that Red, it's important?"

"That was the first time I met them in this life, I'm sure."

"It looks like this new Hive, that Graham is in, has more to it than meets the eye. I'll have to contact Graham before I return to Washington. It's odd enough that two Alphas are sharing a

Guide without challenging each other. What you've told me just adds to my need to investigate.” Gibbs said, his thoughts racing.

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Two Days Later

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“Shit!” Gibbs said and threw his coffee cup against the nesting room’s wall.

“Well,” Tony said startled at the sudden outburst. “I guess it’s pretty obvious that you just read something you didn’t like.”

“That’s putting it mildly,” Gibbs said as he dropped the papers he was holding, got up and started pacing and kicking at nesting pillows.”

Tony picked up the report and started to read. “Jesus, this Ethan Rayne guy used electric shock on a Guide to develop telepathic hazard detection?”

“Not just any Guide. Xander Harris, he carries both the Sentinel and Guide genes. He was trying to trigger his Sentinel abilities. Instead the kid developed hazard detection. He’s like you Tony, he carries both genes and they did that to him.”

“Harris...Is he related to ‘The Harris’?” Tony asked.

“That’s him.”

“This Rayne guy took a hell of a chance torturing a Harris.”

“The Harris family abandoned Xander, for being a Guide.”

“That makes no sense,” Tony said. “Sentinels take care of Guides, protect them. My family may not of understood me but they didn't abandon me.”

“The Harris’ are old school, Guides are property.” Gibbs said. “Apparently he meant it when he threatened to flog Red”

“So, this Ethan Rayne guy, tell me we're going to get him.”

“Ellison and Spikeman already did. He was involved with Xander’s kidnapping. They caught him and killed him along with six highly trained, covert ops Sentinels.”

“I’d like to read that report,” Tony said.

“Everything is there,” Gibbs said as he sat down and shoved the pile of reports over to Tony. “It answers my questions as to why they’re committed to resistance. They know first hand what these bastards are up to. Red said that Harris’ Sentinel abilities have triggered. If the wrong people find out every Guide that carries the Sentinel gene will be at risk. I have to talk to Graham.”

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Gibbs sat in the back of the limo with his Guide. Rank had its privileges and requisitioning a limo to take him to and from meetings was one of them. Meeting with the Sentinel Liaison officer for the Cascade area, Detective Ellison, was certainly one of the things that the director of Sentinel Internal Affairs was expected to do. When he talked to Graham on the phone, the Captain had refused to give him any information that wasn't included in the reports. He claimed, and rightly so, that it was Jim Ellison's pack and the questions should be asked of him. So here he was, traveling to an Alpha Sentinel's home, in hopes of forging an alliance for the purpose of resistance.

When the limo pulled up in front of the nesting house Gibbs and Tony got out and sent the limo away. Graham and his pack were waiting outside for Gibbs to arrive. "What are you doing out here?" Gibbs asked. "You could have waited for me inside."

"I forgot to tell you not to sit next to Spike," Graham said. "Xander gets very possessive of him. If you feel a pull to him sit next to Peter, He'll channel it away from Spike to him."

"Graham," Gibbs said confused. "I haven't felt any pull like that since I bonded with Tony. I'm not expecting it now, and certainly not to another Sentinel."

"There's a lot that is going to surprise you," Graham said. "Just keep an open mind."

"Not the closed minded type, Graham." Gibbs said as he walked toward the front door.

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Gibbs sat in the living room holding a half empty bottle of beer. "Interesting history this little group has," he said after Jim had finished filling him in on the happenings in their pack since it was formed. "So let me go over everything again and make sure I got all this right. Jim and Blair are pretty much normal Sentinel and Guide, Spike is a Sentinel with healing abilities and he has some non-traditional guide abilities. Xander is a Guide that triggered as a Sentinel after brain damage caused by the kidnapping. Graham, also felt this guide pull I feel toward Spike. A Chopec Shaman spirit called Incacha, who by the way is also in touch with Red, told you that Spike could 'teach' his abilities to Peter so now Peter is a healer Sentinel with Guide abilities and your two packs have a telepathic link which makes you a hive. Did I get everything?"

"Not quite," Blair said. "You left out the cross bonding."

"Ahh, yes," Gibbs said. "Everyone is bonded to everyone, within their respective packs."

"Except for Riley," Graham said. "He's not cross bonded."

"Why was he left out?" Gibbs asked. "You claim the cross bonds make you stronger, if that's true why weaken yourself by leaving Riley out?"

"My Guide, my choice," Graham said.

"That brings us back to you," Jim said to Gibbs, "We'd like you to join our hive."

"I appreciate the offer," Gibbs said. "But I have to go back to Washington, I can't stay in Cascade. There is too much going on. I can best serve the resistance there."

"We won't ask you to stay," Jim said. "But if you want us to be one of your resistance cells than you'll need to join our hive. There is too much at risk for us to do this any other way."

"I don't have a problem with taking any of you as Sentinel brothers," Gibbs said, "and that includes Xander, but to join the hive we have to create a telepathic link. I don't see how we could do that."

"The link comes from Spike and I," Peter said. "Whatever Guide we claim has the link along with his Sentinel."

"Your telling me I have to allow my Guide to cross bond," Gibbs said, "you've got some nerve and you are way out of line if you think I'm going to order Tony to let some other Sentinel claim him. I'll take all of you for my brothers but no one touches my Guide."

"Tony's in danger," Xander said. "He's like me, isn't he? He carries both Guide and Sentinel genes. We're keeping what I am secret, but we're no fools it's not going to stay secret forever. Once it leaks out what I am, how long do you think it will be before Tony is taken, strapped down to a table and given an overdose of drugs, the same drug that was given to me, just to see if they can trigger him. I survived because Spike healed me. He kept me from having a brain cascade. We need you, and you need us. I don't like sharing Spike. If you don't believe that ask Graham. But there are people in the government that think of us as property, so if sharing Spike can stop the bastards I'll do it."

"I'm proud of you, Love," Spike said as he nuzzled Xander's neck.

"Is this speculation, on your part?" Gibbs asked. "Or is it your hazard detection at work?" Tears filled Xander's eyes and his voice cracked as he spoke, but he never broke eye contact with Gibbs.

"Hazard detection," he whispered. Then he turned to Spike and laid his head on his shoulder. "God, I hope I'm wrong."

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"Care to let me in on your thoughts?" Tony asked his Sentinel, keeping his voice low. "I know you haven't excluded the possibility of cross-bonding all together or we'd be back in D.C. by now." He was intrigued. Gibbs was putting a lot of thought and energy into making this decision. Usually the Sentinel made his decisions quickly. Not this time. This was a hard one.

"I don't like ultimatums," Gibbs said, frankly. And boy did Tony know that already. "This seems too much like an ultimatum to me."

"So why don't we just pack up and get out of Cascade?" Tony asked. He was ready to go. He missed DC and he missed their condo. He missed his own things, and their own, perfectly broken in bed. Hotels, no matter how expensive, never measured up.

“Because Xander is right, you are in danger,” Gibbs said. “I knew it as soon as I read what Rayne did to him, I can’t just dismiss what they are offering. The thing is, cross bonding with Spikeman won’t make you any safer. You’ll be in Washington and they will be here in Cascade. If these bastards want you they’ll take you and there is nothing their little hive, or I, can do about it.”

“Except to get me back, the way they got Xander back,” Tony said. “Alive.” Alive was a very important point to make.

“And brain damaged,” Gibbs added. “If that was done to you, I don’t think I could be the Sentinel you need. I’ve watched Spikeman, he’s...”

“Weird?” Tony asked. Yeah, the man was weird. Gibbs nodded. That was precisely the right word to describe the other Sentinel and whatever else he was.

“You don’t like him,” Gibbs said. “How can I ask you to bond with a Sentinel you don’t like?”

“Never said I didn’t like him, Boss.” Tony responded immediately.

“So you do like him?” Gibbs asked, not sure that was what he wanted to hear either.

“He is deeply in love with Xander. I think if Xan had come back a blubbering idiot, Spikeman would take care of him, and I get the sense that Spike doesn’t do anything halfway, I wouldn’t be surprised if his spirit guide is a Pitbull. If he does claim me as his third Guide, it wouldn’t be lip service. It would be real; I can sense the connection he has with Blair, Jim and Peter. I have to admire him for that. What I’m apprehensive about is whether or not I can meet him halfway. You’re my Sentinel; I don’t want anyone else.”

Gibbs felt a warm wave of pleasure over that declaration. Of course he’d already known how Tony felt about him. But it was nice to hear it as often as his Guide wanted to say it. “Peter said it surprised the shit out of him that Ellison let Spikeman anywhere near Blair and that Blair wanted to bond with Spikeman. He said Ellison would have killed anyone who tried to lay a finger on Blair and still would, anyone except their little nest.” Gibbs looked Tony in the eyes. “So what is it with Spikeman; do you feel a pull to him or is it just me?”

“I think it may be time for a little Guide wisdom here,” Tony said stroking Jethro's arm, sensing the stress in his Sentinel. He moved his thumb in a soothing circle across his Sentinel’s skin. “We are in a war and we need to form alliances, alliances that we can trust. We are at a crossroads boss. We either accept that we need each other to fight this war or we walk away and let someone else fight it.” Tony knew that walking away was not something his Sentinel would do.

Gibbs stood up and started pacing; he was counted and counted on when it came to fights like this one, and this one was going to be major. The future quality of life for all Guides and Sentinels depended on its out come. Leroy Jethro Gibbs did not back down or wimp out from a fight worth fighting and this one was as worthy as they came. Gibbs stopped pacing. “I know Sentinel history, Tony,” he said laying his hand on the back of Tony’s and wondering why he wasn’t receiving the comfort he usually got from his Guides touch. “Sentinel’s bond,

Sentinel-to-Sentinel, they become brother in arms, but the Guides have always remained sacrosanct; apart; inviolate. None of this makes any sense. What is it with that group? We need to get back to DC.”

The last sounded petulant. Tony hid his grin. “It’s the pull to Spikeman isn’t it?” Tony asked. “They said that a Guide couldn’t channel it away.”

“I just need to get some distance and perspective. Once we get back home I’ll be fine,” Gibbs grumbled. He needed to get away from the temptation to bond with another Sentinel and a freaky one at that. Christ, the consequences of a rash decision here was that his Guide, his Tony, would be bonded with another man, another Sentinel and linked telepathically to several of them. Gibbs felt his lips peel back from his teeth. But, darn it; he wasn’t as pissed as he should be. He was actually thinking about it.

“No you won’t be fine,” Tony said. “We’re finished going around in circles about this. If you won’t make the decision than I will. You’re going to take Spikeman, Ellison and maybe Harris for Sentinel brothers and I’m cross bonding with Spikeman. It’s what we need to do. I’ve never asked anything of you Boss, and I’m not asking you now. I’m telling you, as your Guide, it’s what we’re doing.” Tony walked over to the phone to call Ellison, but before he could pick it up Jethro’s hand stopped him.

“I don’t want to betray you,” the Sentinel said looking into his Guides beautiful eyes.

“Betray me? That’s not possible.” Tony said with a melancholy smile. “We’re both going into this with eyes wide open; that’s not betrayal.” His hands reached up to cup the lean, tanned face of his lover. God he loved this man. He loved him with every cell in his body. Gibbs turned his face and kissed one of Tony’s hands.

“You didn’t answer my question,” Gibbs said, enjoying the feel of Tony’s big hands. “Do you feel a pull to Spikeman?” He should feel jealous, well, more jealous. He didn’t want to share Tony. But he would. It was the smart thing to do, add one more layer of protection to the many that he’d constructed around the most precious being in his life.

“I told you boss, you’re the only Sentinel I want.” Tony murmured. His hazel eyes testified to the truth of his words; the love in them was vast. Huge. Gibbs felt heat fill him.

“And you’re the only Guide I want, but Spikeman is more than a Sentinel, he’s some kind of Guide too. Jim said Blair felt a strong pull to Spike, I feel a strong pull to, strong enough to make it feel like I’m looking at betrayal. So tell me the truth, do you feel it too?”

“Blair felt the pull after Jim took Spike for his second. He said there was a part of his Sentinel he couldn’t reach and Spike was the doorway. I belong by your side. I always have and I always will. If Spike is a doorway to a closer bond with you then hell yes, I want it. That’s not a betrayal to either of us.”

“I love you, Tony, this pull I feel toward Spike, it doesn’t change that.”

“Love you too, Boss, and that’s not going to change either.”

Gibbs made his decision. "Make the call, Guide."

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"We've been invited to dinner," Tony said after he hung up the phone, "Six PM tonight the bonding will take place afterward, at the nest house." He stood by the phone table, gazing down at it, feeling a tingle of nerves make its way through him. This was not going to be a night that was typical of any they'd had before. Gibbs made a sound and Tony glanced up to see his mate step in front of him.

The Sentinel reached out his hand, sliding it up to cup around his Guide's arm. Unusual, that kind of touch outside of the bedroom. Tony could count on one hand the number of times he'd been claimed anywhere else. Gibbs was a traditional guy. He liked beds and bedrooms, secure and private.

The Sentinel spoke, his voice a whisper of heat against his Guide's ear. "Good, that gives me time to scent mark you," Gibbs said as he half-pushed, half-dragged Tony toward the bedroom. The Guide went along willingly; this he knew; this he loved. This wasn't strange like the upcoming night promised to be. He let Gibbs pull him into the darkened bedroom.

"Do you think that's wise?" Tony gave a token protest bringing up the possible problems that might arise from his being covered in Gibbs scent. "Spike will probably take me in the shower and wash it off before he claims me," Tony warned. Sentinels were like that, wanting a clean canvas to do their work on. "It's just one more thing to go through. I would rather just bond with him and be done with it. I can shower with you afterward." He wanted to have the other Sentinel's scent on him only as long as he had to, to make the bond take. After that he was up for a long hot shower and getting as deep into Gibbs as he could and Gibbs getting just as deep into him.

"And you will Guide, believe me, you will," Gibbs said, a dark promise and a low growl in his voice. "But if he's going to claim you he's going to do it with my scent on you. I want him to know every second that you belong to me first. If he wants to shower it off then we're going to have a little problem."

The growl was doing funny things to Tony's insides. Each beat of his heart sent blood to his cock hardening him and heating his body. Tony shifted onto his back, opening himself to Gibbs' questing tongue.

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They were both naked now, the Sentinel licking him and purring. Tony moaned and quivered with desire. This wasn't something Gibbs did often; lick his entire body like this. This was special and Tony was into every hot, wet second of it.

Tony fisted the sheets on either side of his body as Gibbs licked and nibbled at his sensitive inner thighs, lapping at them with his surprisingly agile tongue. The moist tip moved up, encountering silky, furred testicles. And then Gibbs sucked one sensitive orb into his mouth and rolled it over his tongue. Tony whimpered and gasped as a hot wave of sensation washed over him from head to foot. Jesus. If Gibbs would just...back a bit further, down... god if he'd



just... “Oh, oh, oh, Sentinel please. Oh. Please my love.” Tony moaned as the tongue licked at him again, across the skin of his perineum, behind his tight balls. He was going to do it. Tony couldn’t breathe. He couldn’t... a flicker of tongue across his opening, kissing the furled flesh. He held so still he wasn’t even drawing in air. Shivering, hot. Tight skin contracted all over his body. God, god... then the mouth was gone, leaving Tony’s body singing and pliable, ready to surrender everything his Sentinel asked for, or wanted to take without asking.

Gibbs nuzzled Tony’s stomach, his cheek rough with the faint bite of whiskers, over Tony’s belly and then the warm wet mouth closed over his straining cock, tongue swirling. The subliminal purr changed to a hum and Tony screamed as he thrust into the willing mouth. “Jethro, my love, my love, God. Sentinel, what you do to me. All yours. All yours.” And then he felt it as the nerves started to fire, the sensation spreading across his body as he emptied himself into his Sentinel’s demanding mouth.

Jethro swallowed and then lay down next to his Guide and pulled him into a hug. He smeared the few drops of seed left in his mouth across his lips and then he kissed Tony’s throat and bit the tender flesh.

Tony groaned, he was spent, every muscle in his body relaxed. “I wasn’t expecting that,” Tony said in his sated, sultry, bedroom voice.

“Let him try to top that,” Gibbs said softly, brushing his hand through his Guide’s hair. Let him try to make you his own.” There was a definite challenge in the tone. Tony stirred, rubbing his chin over the short bristles of hair at Gibbs’ temple.

“He couldn’t, not on his best day and your worst, he could never top you.” Tony said.

“And don’t you forget it Guide.”

Tony reached up and held Jethro’s face. “Never,” he said and then he kissed his Sentinel on the lips, his tongue exploring his lover’s mouth, delving inside to taste the bitterness of his own seed. He didn’t have to be a Sentinel to taste his cum in his lover’s mouth, it was unique, not as good to his palate as Gibbs’ flavor, but Gibbs said the same thing about his own flavor. Seems each preferred the other’s taste. Which was a good thing, a ~great~ thing. Tony grinned against Gibbs’ mouth.

“What?” Gibbs asked as he rolled Tony onto his back and slid a slickened finger into him.

“Just a few nasty thoughts, Boss. Nothing as hot as this.” He drew in a sharp breath, raising his knees. Gibbs knew just how to touch him and where to find every hot spot he had. He arched his head back, trembled, his thighs falling open as wide as they could.

Gibbs nuzzled Tony’s neck and began suckling at his Guide’s throat, finding the vulnerable Guide gland with gentle teeth and preparing Tony for claiming.

When Tony was ready Gibbs entered him with one long, slow, thrust that hit him beyond perfectly. One thrust and he was melted butter. Hot and ready to be used, on his back, wanton, waiting. Making hungry little noises, desperate for Gibbs to do something more. Anything. Just more. His legs quivered.

Gibbs closed his eyes and reached for the bond, the bond that went beyond the physical, the bond that was a dance of their souls. And Tony was there, as he always was. There for the dance, the dance of life. It was the dance that made it possible for Gibbs to be the Sentinel that he was. It was the dance that made it possible for him to exist and function. It was the dance that made him burst filling his Guide with his essence and call out, "Tony, my love, my own."

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It was 6 PM on the dot when Jethro Gibbs rang the doorbell to the nest house. He had learned punctuality while serving at the behest of Uncle Sam; it was one of his calling cards. General Gibbs was never late and anyone meeting him, hoping to leave a favorable impression would be on time too. Jim Ellison answered the door instantly; Gibbs looked him over, liking what he saw. Ellison was a military man. The kind of man Gibbs had spent most of his life working with. A man of honor, one who could be relied on in any situation you found yourself in, no matter how dire. In fact Gibbs' educated eye told him that Ellison hadn't been a run of the mill grunt, or officer. He had that edge that only came in the men who went above and beyond, men who found themselves in Special Operations or Black Ops groups. Dangerous men, men who got the job done no matter what the job was.

Gibbs admitted to himself, not for the first time, that if the question had been one of Ellison bonding with Tony, the decision would have been a lot easier to make. This was a time of war; he needed his Sentinel brothers. He glanced away, over the taller man's shoulder, his eyes lighting on the slim, blond haired detective who could just be seen doing something helpful in the kitchen. But it wasn't Ellison who Tony was going to bond to; it was Spikeman and Spikeman was weird. He definitely was not military. He was a mystery to Gibbs, an ex-school teacher that moved like a predator and looked like a Guide; and the pull he felt toward him, that damnable pull. Gibbs took a deep breath steeling his resolve. He did not like to leave mysteries unsolved where his Guide was concerned.

"Come in, General, My word it's safe." Ellison said with his usual serious look as he stood back to let the couple in. "Have a seat in the living room. Dinner will be ready in about half an hour. Can I get you a beer?" He seemed to be waiting for Gibbs to be the one to change the topic of the conversation if he wanted to talk about less impersonal things.

"Yeah, sounds good," Gibbs said as he scanned the living room before walking in and sitting in one of the loveseats with Tony.

Tony went with a tug of his arm, unhesitating, following Gibbs' lead. He wanted to be close to Jethro as much as his Sentinel seemed determined to keep him within arm's reach.

Jim came back into the room carrying the promised beverages followed by Spike and Xander. "I hope you like roast," he said, as he handed two cold ones to Gibbs, not even making eye contact with Tony. "Blair's a great cook and he's made his famous pineapple upside down cake for desert."

Gibbs opened one of the beers sniffed it and handed it to Tony, who promptly took a large swallow. Ellison was nothing if not traditional, he'd behaved perfectly if the goal was to keep Gibbs comfortable and to reduce the edge of anxiety any Sentinel would feel under these

circumstances. Jim would gradually increase the obvious awareness he had of Tony, but slowly and only as long as Gibbs appeared at ease. If Gibbs showed signs of stress, Tony would go unnoticed again.

“I’m not the type to ignore the elephant in the room,” Tony said after Ellison took a seat. There was a gleam of a little boy’s amusement at shattering the formal, polite interaction that was getting underway, far too slowly, in the Guides opinion. He knew that if Ellison and Gibbs had their way, they would be sitting here for a week before any meaningful conversation took place. But Spike was an entirely different animal, so, instead Tony took the bull by the horns, and fixed his gaze on Spike who was now sitting on the sofa giving calming strokes to Xander, very much like a Guide calming his Sentinel.

Gibbs almost laughed at Tony’s sudden statement, that kind of behavior was typical of his Guide. He was no great respecter of tradition in any sense. Not after the way he’d grown up, in a cold, far too regimented household where he’d been the only child Guide in a family full of Sentinels, terribly embarrassed that the DiNozzo bloodline could have produced a Guide of all things. Tony enjoyed acting out, upsetting the apple cart and putting people on the spot. Gibbs snorted at him delicately, but made no effort to intervene.

Tony, for his part, ignored Gibbs, not acknowledging the snort, which he’d heard quite clearly. He asked his question. “I want to know exactly what is going to happen tonight, a blow by blow description. I don’t like surprises.” Gibbs snorted once again and Tony gave him a sideways look before looking back at Spike. “Well, Okay, I do like surprises, but not in this situation. I want to know everything, all of it, nothing left out. I want to know the process. No offense Spike, but you’re not a normal Sentinel.”

Xander gave a low growl. “Bet your ass he’s not a normal Sentinel; he’s a champion. Jim wouldn’t take just anyone for his second.”

“It’s okay, Pet,” Spike said, with a smile and a kiss. He met Gibbs eyes and let his gaze slip past to light on Tony. “No offence meant, none taken.”

Gibbs stiffened fractionally. For all he was expecting Spikeman to act less formally than Ellison, his subconscious didn’t like it, and wasn’t ready, it put him on alert.

Spike turned his attention back to Gibbs, “Xander’s as nervous about this as you and your Guide are. We spent a good part of the day scent marking each other, as I’m sure you can tell. Xan has a hard time sharing me. He’s not a Guide like other Guides. Don’t make the mistake of thinking he is. He’s afraid of what you might do if he can’t behave in the way you think he should.”

Spike was right, Gibbs could tell. Spike and Xander were wearing each other’s scent and Xander was also wearing Ellison’s scent. “Okay, I can see we need to work this out before we get down to business. First, I take it Tony wearing my scent won’t be a problem, because he’s not washing it off.” Not really a question there, just a bald statement of fact.

“The scent is not a problem, Xan and I aren’t going to shower either, but you’ll still need to hold Tony while I bond with him.” Spike said coming right to the point. Confusion would be

bad here. It all had to be laid out. Because General Gibbs was a strong Sentinel and he could cause some major damage if he thought any agreements were not being honored.

“Tony is willing to do this,” Gibbs said with a growl. “There’s no need to hold him down. What kind of a Sentinel do you think I am? I don’t force my Guide to do anything he’s opposed to.”

But that wasn’t entirely true. Gibbs could no longer count on one hand the number of times he’d had to insist Tony go to the ER when he wouldn’t admit to being hurt or injured. But those incidents weren’t comparable to the idea of holding an unwilling Tony down so another Sentinel could bond to him. Gibbs growled again, the sound rising up from deep in his chest.

Tony patted his Sentinel’s thigh and moved closer. “Shhhh. I’m fine,” he murmured.

“I’m not asking you to hold him down,” Spike said, patiently. “A forced bond would not work and I’m no rapist. But it’s obvious that Tony’s your soul mate. You love each other. If you’re not with him to open the door for this bond then it’s going to fail and none of us want that. He has to go to you first, open himself to you, or he’ll never be open to bonding with me.”

Gibbs had to admit the skinny guy had a point. He nodded.

“How did you know?” Tony asked, more surprised than his Sentinel over the observation skills Spike was displaying. “How did you know that I was afraid I couldn’t meet you halfway and bond with you?”

“I know soul mates when I see them,” Spike said. “I can feel you all over my skin. There is something really right about the bond you have. No point in me trying to break in, it’s rock solid. The only chance we have of making this work is if you both want it to work and you do this together. I won’t be bonding to one of you; it’s both of you or nothing. I don’t know what will happen when we bond. Gibbs may feel the need to claim me as a Guide.”

Xan made an unhappy noise, in fact he growled. Tony and Gibbs both looked at him. It hadn’t sounded at all like a noise a Guide would make. It sounded like a Sentinel’s warning growl. They knew, intellectually that Harris had triggered as a Sentinel, but they had expected it to be diluted somehow, either by being a bonded Guide or by the brain damage he had received while in the kidnappers custody. But there was no sign of a handicapped Sentinel in the growl he heard, or in any of his actions for that matter. Gibbs moved subtly so Tony was more hidden behind him.

“Shhh, Pet,” Spike said, burrowing his nose in his mate’s hair. He ignored the others in the room, talking into Xander’s ear. He licked it. “I’m yours, your mate. No one’s going to take me away from you. They’re going to be family is all. This is just what we have to do to make them family.”

Gibbs fought the blush. He wasn’t used to seeing other Sentinels and Guides do this. Touching each other in public was one thing, sometimes necessary, but tonguing each other was another thing entirely. He averted his eyes, finding himself looking at Ellison and Blair.

“I doubt I’ll need to claim Spike as a Guide.” Gibbs said, a little stiffly, hoping it was true, and making himself believe it. “I plan on taking the three of you for Sentinel brothers before you bond with Tony. I don’t think I’ll need anything more. I can control myself.” No one in the room doubted him.

“Xander is out of bounds,” Jim said. “He’s been wounded. I’m not willing to let him bond with a third Sentinel, at least not yet; we have no way of knowing how it will affect him. His control improves everyday but a new bond means new pathways. We can’t risk a mental cascade.”

Gibbs was surprised that it was Ellison making the statement about Xander. It seemed more like Spike’s responsibility. He decided to test the waters. “Is Spike okay with that?”

The response came from an unexpected source.

“Hey!” Xander said pushing Spike aside and trying to get to his feet, but Spike’s arms encircled his waste and wouldn’t let go. “He’s my Sentinel, I’m his Guide; we’re not playing house here. This is real; you have no right to challenge his authority as my Sentinel.”

Gibbs sat quietly watching and analyzing everything that was taking place. Spike held the larger man with little effort, a fact to be stored away. Spike was far stronger than he looked. He turned his attention to Xander; he had switched instantly from a possessive Sentinel to a Guide defending his Sentinel, and a Sentinel that wasn’t his first bond. That meant the bond he had with Ellison was strong. His reaction was similar to what Tony had done when they were first bonded. It took him years to train that aggressive stance out of Tony and he had been only partially successful. Now, on the rare occasions they ran across someone who didn’t know better, Tony only laughed and informed the offending person that he or she ‘soooo said the wrong thing’.

“Xan,” Jim said, his voice firm and commanding. “It was just a test. He needs to know there’s no disagreement in the ranks, he needs to know we’re together on this.”

Xander relaxed at the big man’s words, settling more easily back into Spikeman’s arms. Spike licked him again.

Jim turned to Gibbs. “Xander is right about one thing, if you think this is just a polite contract between strangers than it’s not going to be what you expect. If it’s anything like what happened when I held Blair, you have to know and believe you’re not betraying each other when you do react to us. There is no way you’re going to get through this without being moved. There’s no way to prepare you for it.”

“Try me,” Gibbs said, his jaw rigid as a slab of granite.

Jim shrugged. “I don’t know how to put it into words,” he said. “The best I can do is say Spike focuses and intensifies my bond with Blair. He doesn’t interfere with our bond but he is a part of it, a part of us. But you have to bond with Spike first for that to happen and it can’t be a surface bond it has to go deeper.”

“I don’t see how my bond with Tony could get any deeper,” Gibbs said with a shake of his head. “As for claiming Spike for my Guide, yeah, I feel a pull to him. But the Sentinel-to-Sentinel bond should take care of that. I don’t want or need another Guide.”

“We’re not saying that you’ll want to claim Spike as a Guide, only that it is a possibility you need to be prepared for. You’re like me, a strong Sentinel with an exceptionally strong bond with your Guide. It’s not going to be easy for either of you to open to a bond with Spike. You’ll have to help each other. I’ve done both and it hasn’t taken away from my bond with Blair.”

“Both?” Gibbs asked, with the rare sound of confusion in his voice. “How? He doesn’t have a Guide gland.”

“You’re right, he doesn’t,” Jim said. “But we bonded anyway. As for the other, I didn’t see how my bond with Blair could deepen either. All I can tell you is that it has, I didn’t expect it. I held Blair because I wanted him to know that even while Spike was claiming him I was still there, still his Sentinel, and he could depend on me to be there for him no matter what. Then this...thing...happened and I was transported. To say it was earth shattering is an understatement.”

Blair, who had gotten up and gone into the kitchen to check on dinner, came out again, delicious smells coming with him. “Gentlemen, dinner is on the table, we should eat before it gets cold.”

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“So Xander?” Tony asked as he pushed his empty dessert plate away from him. “The AP Harris is your uncle? Cause you sure look a lot alike.”

Gibbs nudged Tony with his knee under the table. It had been a peaceful quite meal, with Gibbs and Ellison comparing soldier’s stories. Now Tony was bringing up things best left alone.

“That’s what I’m told,” Xander said. “I don’t remember him from growing up. I don’t think he and my dad got along.”

Gibbs relaxed when there was no accompanying protest from any of the Sentinels at the table.

“I heard you and your family were estranged,” Tony said, he could truly understand Xander feeling alone and lost in the world. “I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to be,” Xander said, giving a loving look and pat to Spike, who had a mouthful of Blair’s pineapple upside down cake and the look of a man in heaven as he chewed and swallowed. “I have a new family and this one is better than I could have dreamed of. What about you?” he asked, looking back at Tony, “How did your family take it when they found out you were a Guide?”

“It was a shock,” Tony said. “But mostly I think they were embarrassed. Until I was eleven and tested for the Guide gene, I was brought up to be a Sentinel, despite my obvious lack of talent in that area. Then all of that suddenly stopped. It seemed like everyone started ignoring me. I think they just didn't know how to bring up a Guide so they avoided me.” Tony smiled and looked at Gibbs and wiggled his eyebrows like Groucho Marx. “I learned other ways to get attention.”

“I know what you mean. My grandfather used to take me to his house every weekend. I can still remember him telling me how important it was for me to carry on the Harris name. My father never triggered and I was the only male grandchild. I never saw him again after my father told him I was a Guide.”

“Your father never triggered?” Tony asked. “But your mother must have been a Guide.”

“She was,” Xander said. “They married young. She came from a poor family and thought it was a good match. She expected him to trigger and then she would get all the prestige of being married to a Harris Sentinel. But I think my father was afraid to become a Sentinel. He was told often enough that alcohol could keep him from triggering; it just made him drink all the more. I became her hope, a Sentinel son, and then even that was destroyed.”

“Not your fault, Pet,” Spike said, stroking Xander’s leg. “It’s their loss that they couldn’t see your worth.”

Gibbs' felt it was time to change the subject. “A toast,” he said raising his wine glass. “To Guides, who allow us to be all that we can be. May every Sentinel acknowledge your worth.”

“To Guides,” Jim and Spike said together.

Spike lifted his water glass into the air. He and Xander were still not drinking any alcohol. “May we never have to live without the annoying little buggers,” he added

“I’ll drink to that,” Tony said with a flourish.

“Here, here,” Blair and Xander added with a laugh.

Gibbs waited for the sound of the laughter to fade before he spoke. “I am curious, Spike.” he said, not willing to pass up the opportunity to find out more about the mysterious Sentinel. “According to your records you’re a first generation Sentinel. You triggered while in a coma. Not unheard of but rare. I read the reports about how you saved that kids life during a bank robbery. That was very brave of you; but still, it had to be quite a surprise going from a school teacher to a Sentinel.”

“Not as much of an adjustment as you might think.” Spike said, holding Gibbs gaze without a flinch. He didn’t feel the need to explain that the schoolteacher history was just a cover; and that he was placed in this reality by a cosmic intervention caseworker, that was a can of worms best left closed for now.

“You move like a predator,” Gibbs continued, watching Spike for any sign of weakness. “According to records, since bonding with Xander, you’ve killed a hit man, and three highly

trained black ops soldiers, with nothing but a handgun and a Bowie knife. I'd like to know where you acquired your skills?"

"Kidnappers not soldiers. Didn't use the handgun, wouldn't have been a good idea to give away my location." Spike said leaning forward, his eyes turned yellow and his voice took on an English accent. "For the record I also killed Ethan Rayne, cut off one of his balls and crushed it underfoot."

"Only one?" Gibbs asked, his voice was quiet, strong, and showed no surprise at Spike's sudden transformation. Tony watched with a growing interest, what the heck was this Spikeman? It was clear he wasn't a normal Sentinel; Tony knew that from the first contact they'd had. Some kind of mutation was his best guess. Interesting.

"Jim claimed his right as pack Alpha to the rest of Rayne's package," Spike said.

"Which brings us back to the question, how did you acquire your skills?"

Spike pushed back his chair and took off his shoes and socks, flexing his feet and toes. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you, Luv."

"I'm not your love," Gibbs said, uncomfortable with the inappropriate endearment, but still showing no emotion and wondering where that English accent come from.

Spike ignored the protest, stood up and started to move toward Gibbs. Barefoot, and graceful, each step like a tiger stalking its prey, eerily silent, yet weighty and powerful.

Gibbs swallowed hard. The man had turned into danger incarnate. The hair stood up along his spine. Not someone Gibbs would want for an enemy, no way. When Spike circled outward Gibbs moved, shifting to keep him in direct sight. It wouldn't do to let a man like that get behind him; he stood up and faced Spike.

His Sentinel senses were screaming at him and he extended them. Tony was the only one at the table whose heart rate had increased, when his Guide turned in his seat and tried to stand Gibbs put out a hand to stop him. "It's okay," Gibbs said, taking his lead from the others at the table. "He's just making a point."

Spike came forward, slowly stopping a moment before invading Gibbs' personal space and then leaning in, head tilted he kept eye contact until the last possible moment and then he closed his eyes as his head bent closer and he ran a warm wet tongue over Gibbs' pulse point.

"What the hell are you trying to do, Spike?" Gibbs asked, keeping his feet planted and forcing his hands to remain hanging at his sides. His skin contracted rather too pleasantly. Only Tony had the right to make him respond like that.

"Don't bond with anyone I can't love," Spike said as he suddenly pulled the generals shirttail out of his pants.

Gibbs still didn't move. "I don't need or want you to love me," he said. "You have your mate, I have mine. We're just going to bond, Sentinel-to-Sentinel, brothers in arms."



“Wrong.” Spike said, as he moved his hands under Gibbs shirt and ran them over the generals hard abs. “I know you want to dance, General. I can feel it.” One of Spike’s hands rested over Gibbs heart. “But you’ve put a wall up. You have to take it down, let me in. Dance with me.”

Gibbs swallowed again, he could feel Spike’s energy filling him, and it felt good, too good. Okay, this was not going as planned. He had seriously underestimated Spikeman. The man had read him like a book and manipulated him into this position.

Tony moved up behind his Sentinel, his own shirt already discarded he slid his hands up Jethro's sides, anchoring him. Very public, too public, Gibbs upbringing screamed. But Spikeman moved against him, Tony echoing him, achingly perfect. Gibbs didn’t care anymore; he let himself slip into a bonding thrall. Tony helped Spike tug off Gibbs’ shirt and threw it aside as they moved toward the nesting room.

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Spike held the thickly muscled body of the other Sentinel to him as they made their way down the hall. Gibbs, as Spike had feared, was already straining to get out of his hold and back to his Guide, who was trailing behind them, anxiety radiating off of both. Their determination to go through the bonding had lasted all of thirty seconds. Now they wanted only each other. Spike stepped up his advances and pulled some of Gibbs attention back to him as he coaxed the enthralled Sentinel to move faster.

Tony reached them before they all entered the nesting room. His long arms wound around his Sentinel and incidentally, Spike. But Spike may as well have been a stuffed animal for all the attention DiNozzo paid him. Tony had one thing on his mind, Gibbs, his Sentinel. Gibbs however, wasn’t ignoring Spike. He was torn between the touches of his Guide and the caresses of the other man at his back. His head was moving from Tony’s mouth to Spike’s, sucking and licking at both. They half walked, half tripped forward; Gibbs stumbled and was held up by two sets of hands.

Spike pulled Gibbs down as soon as he felt the soft floor of the nest underfoot and the Sentinel tumbled to the floor with him. Tony followed them down, using the bulk of his solid body to try to wedge himself between Spike and Gibbs, unbuckling his Sentinel’s belt and tugging off his pants as Blair knelt at Gibbs feet pulling off his shoes and socks. Spike, though, was proving difficult to push away, sliding around Tony’s shoving and avoiding the Guides attempted elbows to the ribs. He was wrapped around Gibbs as if they were one person, sharing one body. Gibbs had started to moan.

Blair and Jim reached out and pulled Tony away from Gibbs and Spike. Spike continued stroking and licking Gibbs who moaned with pleasure and called out to his Guide, his hand reaching, grasping after Tony even as he reached for him within the bond. Tony was there but a hair’s breadth too far away for him to touch. He writhed, arched his back, it was agony not to be able to touch Tony and hold him for the dance.

“Tony, I need you,” Gibbs called again but this time the call was urgent, it held a demanding need. Even in his bonding thrall he was resistant to Spike’s energy. Every cell in his body called out for his soul mate.

Tony's head shot up and he moved toward his Sentinel only to be stopped by Jim's strong unflinching hold.

Blair stroked his arms as Tony called out to his Sentinel, "I'm here; I'm right here."

It was Blair who spoke to him, softly stroking him, filling him with his healing energy. "Spike has him," he whispered, grateful to have Jim's strength helping to hold Tony and to keep him from breaking free and going to Gibbs. "If you go to him he'll never bond with Spike. This is what you need, both of you. Remember that, Tony. Your Sentinel is safe; no harm will come to him, not from this."

Tony shivered and laid his head on Blair's shoulder as he listened to Gibbs call to him and watched Spike pattern his Sentinel in exacting detail, until no square inch of the body that Tony loved was unknown to the blond Sentinel. He ground his teeth and felt tears start to trail down his cheeks.

Xander sat beside them. He reached out and tried to comfort the distressed Guide. "There was no way to prepare you for how intense this would be," he said.

Tony made another noise that let them all know how not okay all of this was.

"You have to tell Gibbs that he's doing this to honor you and protect you." Xander continued. "You need to do it now before Spike's energy weakens."

Tony met the younger man's eyes. They held only sympathy, understanding and truth. There was no hatred; no intention to hurt, he and Gibbs had chosen this. Tony had talked Gibbs into it. They needed it; damn it. As much as he wanted to run away and burrow into a barricaded nest with his Sentinel and no one else, they couldn't afford it. This had to work.

Tony swallowed hard, squaring his shoulders; he took a deep breath and sat up. "Boss," he called. "We came here for this. You're doing this to keep me safe. This will honor me. It will make us stronger. Dance with Spike, Boss; honor our bond and dance with Spike." He choked, but he got the words out with enough certainty in his tone that Gibbs stopped fighting against the bond.

The older Sentinel roared and rolled Spike onto his back, his forearm going to the other man's throat, hard as a bar of iron, pinning him down. He bit at Spike's pale skin, reveling in the taste of blood in the brutal contest of warring Sentinels bonding, testing each other first, to be certain the other was worthy of being called brother, a warrior to protect vulnerable Guides within the pack. The testing was vicious, but Spike didn't resist. Gibbs clawed and bit and growled. Red welts rose across Spike's arms, abdomen and back. Gibbs pushed him to the edge, measured every response, and found him acceptable for claiming. Gibbs tilted his head back and roared again, sending a wave of goose flesh over every man's skin who heard the primitive sound.

Spike wallowed in the savage attack, his heart thundered with victorious joy. He was a warrior among warriors; he belonged. He would fight to keep the pack, the hive, safe. His brothers would stand with him. Together they would be stronger, harder, and formidable. His yellow eyes blazed as he opened to it, to the wild energy that started to rush from the man on

top of him. The energy filled him building to a fever pitch. Spike welcomed it, encouraged it. "Yes, my Luv, yes, give it to me, give it all to me." His voice was deep and raw, as if he had screamed his joy over and over until there was little or no voice left in him.

Gibbs responded with a throaty growl of triumph as he moved up covering the smaller man's body with his own. Their eyes met, blue fire and yellow flame. The kisses were feral. Soft lips pressed hard against sharp teeth split open; blood flowed. The Sentinels sucked on the tiny cuts, drinking in the taste of each other as two slick fingers slid deep into Spike, preparing him for the claiming. And then Gibbs was kneeling his legs wide and pushing into him, Spike arched up to meet him and his fangs dropped.

The X-vampire opened his wrist and pulled Gibbs' head to it. "Drink," he ordered, "This is my blood, blood I would shed to protect all of us, Drink and join us, Sentinel."

"Mine," Gibbs' roared before partaking of the blood offering and then his mouth fastened on the bleeding wrist drawing the crimson wash into his mouth. Coppery-sweet the blood flowed into him, down into his belly and became a part of him. Spike smiled even as he winced, his skin going tight, hot and wanting. The need to drink was irresistible. He eyed the strong column of Gibbs' neck and pushing his mouth up against the sweat-drenched temptation of the pulse, he kissed it, feeling it beat against his lips, a siren's song calling to drink.

"Mine," Spike answered, as he sunk his fangs into Gibbs' neck and the two Sentinels came together and locked into a bond. It exploded dizzily over them, binding them tightly. Gibbs let out a groan, deep and echoing, so primal it had little to do with humanity, or with conscious thought. It filled the room.

"Jesus, what's he doing!?" Tony yelled and jumped up. He found his way blocked by Jim, who shook his head though his expression was sympathetic.

"It's okay," Jim said, "We told you it could get intense."

"Get out of my way," Tony said through gritted teeth. "He's hurting him, he's killing him." Jim let him charge and caught him, holding him tight.

"Let him come," Spike said, sounding shockingly normal if terribly drowsy and pleased. "He needs to hold Gibbs while he sleeps. Didn't think it was going to work, but it did. He's with us now. Your Sentinel is one hell of a man," he said the last to Tony who was on his knees hovering as soon as Jim let him go.

Tony hung over Gibbs, hands searching, looking at the bite on his neck. "We should get you to the ER and have that checked out," he said grimly. He glared at Spike, his arms going around Gibbs, resisting, just barely, the urge to pull his Sentinel out of the other man's arms and to give the pleased face a knuckle sandwich, while he was at it. "What the hell did you do that for?" he demanded of Spike. You could have killed him if you misjudged the angle just a bit, if you'd hit his artery."

"No hospital," Gibbs said, his voice calm and sated. "Just hold me while I sleep."

Tony obeyed, keeping a sharp eye on Spike who didn't move away. "Human bites are dangerous, Gibbs," Tony murmured. "You need to have it cleaned, and get antibiotics, the sooner the better. You made me go when I was bitten." The growl caught Tony by surprise. It came from Spike.

"Who bit you?" He seemed outraged, offended at the idea... He seemed possessive.

Xander pulled Spike away, "We'll talk about the need for vengeance later," he said. "Right now I need to check you over."

Tony frowned at them and didn't answer, turning instead to Gibbs and kissing his cheek. "I'm okay," Gibbs said. "Don't blame him; I drew first blood." Gibbs closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

Tony laid down beside his Sentinel and pulled him into a more secure embrace. Then he looked over at Spike ready to give him a good piece of his mind but what he saw stopped him. Spike was glowing, guide glow, why hadn't it registered before? But not only that he was covered with scratches and bites, some of them deep. His lip was swollen where it had split and bruises were starting to appear on his body. Behind him Xander was frantic, looking over Spike's naked body, searching for all the wounds making sure none were life threatening. He bent down and licked at the worst ones, making Tony grimace. That definitely wasn't clean.

Tony looked away from the tender care Xander was lavishing on his satisfied Sentinel and down at Gibbs who rested against his chest, except for the split lip and the bite to his neck he didn't have a mark on him. "Why did you let him do that to you?" Tony asked Spike, puzzled. It didn't seem to him to be a way to make any kind of lasting bond, more like the way to make an enemy.

"It's what he needed, to bond," Spike said, as if it were as natural as rain. "I've taken worse when the stakes were a lot smaller. Sides, Luv, I'll be mostly healed by morning." Behind him Xander nodded.

Tony bit his lip. They were all freaks; damn it, and he and Gibbs were now joined to them. Tony could feel it and the bond was ~strong~.

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The morning sun came in through the skylight and brightened the room. The three couples awoke together, bio-synced, Gibbs, through his bond with Spike and Tony through his bond with Gibbs.

All of them stretched, but it was Xander that spoke first. "I need you to make me glow." Spike didn't have to be told twice and he set about pleasuring his mate.

"We should go," Tony said, sounding resigned and more than a little down. It wasn't like him to wake up in a funk. He always woke up happy, and why not? He had Gibbs, his Sentinel; he was valued, wanted and loved. But last night something had happened. A blond volcano, named Spike had invaded their dance floor and he was still there, a mountain, waiting to

erupt, Tony could feel him. All he wanted now was to get himself and his Sentinel as far away from Spike as possible, back to DC and away from these weirdos. He wasn't going to let Spike bite him and he certainly wasn't going to drink the mutant's blood. If he said no, Gibbs wouldn't force him and he was most decidedly saying no!

"We can't leave," Gibbs said quietly, not wanting to disturb the couple next to them. "Xander needs us to see this, and I think you need to see it too. What happened last night wasn't meant to come between us. Spike and Xander are soul mates and so are we."

"They lied to us," Tony said, letting his anger take him. "Your bond with Spike is interfering with us; I want to get out of here and get back to our own bed."

"I know what you're feeling," Blair said, putting his hand out to offer comfort. "I felt it myself. Once you bond with Spike he won't be in the way anymore."

"It's not Spike I need to bond with," Tony said still angry at the situation. "I'm not letting that pervert bite me and I'm not drinking his blood. I want to leave now."

"Spike's never bitten Jim or Xander or me," Blair said, in his most soothing Guide voice and pouring healing energy into his touch. "It's not usually part of the bonding process. I doubt that he'll bite you."

"Damn right he's not, because I'm not going to bond with him," Tony said, as he tried to stand.

Gibbs pulled Tony onto his back and rolled on top of him. "We're not leaving this half done," Gibbs said. "You're the one that made the decision to do this; we're going to go through with it."

"You planning on holding me down Boss?" Tony hissed. "Because, I just said no."

"I'm planning on renewing my claim, my love," Gibbs said, lifting his hand to run it through Tony's soft brown hair. "I'm going to prove to you that you're still mine and I'm still yours. After that, I promise you we'll get rid of this interference you're feeling, and we'll do it together."

"We didn't lie to you," Blair said, putting both hands on Tony's arm. "This is just part of the process. I swear to you, as soon as you bond with Spike this interference you're feeling will dissolve. You'd know if I were lying, you could feel it."

Tony could feel it. Blair was telling the truth, or at least what he believed to be the truth.

"You're my soulmate," Gibbs said, with a sultry half growl that always got Tony hot. "You belong by my side." He began stroking and kissing his Guide, running his hands over the younger man's body, touching all the erogenous zones that made Tony's back arch and his skin turn to goose flesh. "Let me show you how much I love you."

"Oh Jesus, Boss, It's just..."

“Shhh, my love,” Gibbs said, putting his finger over his Guide’s mouth and then nuzzling his neck and suckling his guide gland.

Resistance was futile; Tony knew it. Gibbs was right he did need this. He needed his Sentinel to take control and claim him. He rolled his head and looked to his side to give Gibbs better access to his neck. Spike was just entering Xander, and Xander was rising up to meet him, wrapping his arms and legs around his Sentinel as they rocked back and forth together, in their dance. Tony closed his eyes and concentrated on the things his Sentinel was doing to his body. Waves of pleasure washed over him, he moaned and with that sound the last of his resistance, along with his anger, was washed away.

Gibbs heard the sound and understood it’s meaning. Their bond was as strong as ever. The hormones and pheromones released by suckling Tony’s Guide gland had done their job, they had calmed his Guide and renewed his trust in his Sentinel. Gibbs knew he would have to tread carefully. He would have to get Tony to say yes to the bond with Spike and the first step was letting him know that their Sentinel/Guide bond was still intact, still strong and show him he was still loved above all others. Gibbs lifted his head and turned his Guides face toward him. “You’re my life,” the Sentinel whispered with such a look of devotion that Tony’s heart melted and his cock hardened even more. “Without you, I’m nothing.” And then Gibbs kissed him. Not the hard demanding kiss of an aroused and wanting man, but soft and loving. Gibbs tongue brushed Tony’s lips, asking for entrance and Tony opened to him. Their tongues met, licking and tasting each other in a miniature dance.

Tony moaned again and arched up trying to rub his aching member against his Sentinels hard, hot body. He lifted his foot and ran his instep along Gibbs softly furred leg. He loved the combination of hair and hard muscle, especially on his feet. It gave him the same joy he remembered as a child running barefoot over a newly mowed lawn. He pulled his head out of the kiss, “lube,” he breathed, sending a message to his Sentinel of what he so desperately wanted and needed.

Gibbs began kissing his way down Tony’s body; stopping to give love bites to his Guides sensitive nipples. Tony hissed and arched up again and that’s when he heard Xander call out to Spike, he couldn’t help himself he turned his head to watch.

“Mine!” Xander called, as his body seemed to explode in pleasure and began to glow.

“Yours!” Spike answered as he pumped his seed into his soul mate.

For a moment Tony was lost in confusion. His mind told him Spike and Xander had it backward but his empathic sense told him it was right, and the couple was one. A vision flashed through his mind, of the priest at his sister’s wedding. “Let no man put asunder.” Tony whispered.

“Impossible,” came the answer from Gibbs, just before his warm wet mouth closed over Tony’s hard and dripping cock.

Gibbs took his time giving oral pleasure to his Guide as he readied him for claiming. Tony tried to push away the awareness of his Sentinels bond with Spike, but no matter which way

he turned Spike was there, within the bond. “Jethro, help me,” he cried out; it was a plea from his heart.

Gibbs moved up beside his Guide. “Do you trust me?” he asked, stroking Tony’s face and hair.

“With my life,” Tony answered.

“It’s time, my love. We’ll do it together.”

Tony nodded, giving his consent; Gibbs moved behind him and held his Guide in his arms.

Spike came to them and knelt beside Tony. “It’s okay,” he said as he began to pattern Tony’s body. “Your Sentinel has you; he won’t let go.”

Spike’s energy coupled with the touch of his Sentinel filled Tony with a feeling of comfort and security and he slowly relaxed into the bonding process. Tony became lost in the dance. Two Sentinels held him; two Sentinels valued him as his soul twirled with theirs.

Tony never felt Spike enter him; he was only aware of the dance. He rose and turned in perfect precision to the beat of the drum that was his Sentinel’s heartbeat. He was home, the only home he would ever want; he was in his Sentinel’s heart and mind.

Gibbs was also lost in the bond. The synchronized heartbeats, the feel of Tony’s back rubbing against his hard and aching cock, the scent of his Guide’s pheromones and the feel of his skin as he held his Guide in his arms filled his awareness. Then it happened, something shifted within him, both subtle and monumental. He suddenly saw what it was to be a Guide, to be responsible for a Sentinel and how his Guide loved him unconditionally. “Tony, my own,” he screamed as all the nerves in his body fired and the three released their seed.

“Yours forever,” Tony answered as the three-way bond locked into place.

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Epilog:

That afternoon Sentinel General Leroy Jethro Gibbs took Sentinel Detective James Ellison in a sentinel-to-sentinel bond and the core of the resistance was formed. The General and his guide returned to Washington D.C. that evening.

Three days after the events in the nesting house the Sentinel Tribunal issued a dismissal with prejudice for an Order of Sundering from Guide Wesley Pryce. One week after that the sentinels in Washington State received certified letters informing them and their Guides of the new laws and the new Department of Guide Proliferation, located at the old Washington Genetics laboratory.

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Please feed the muse. Comments get her to come back to work on my new stories. RG5 - The Aftermath is started but the muse needs some encouragement. Thank you.

## Chapter End Notes

Please look for Runaway Guide 3 - The Resistance



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