

# Rise of the Guardians

Von Aqua111

## Kapitel 2: Stairs of memories

### Rise of the Guardians

#### *Chapter 02 - Stairs of memories*

Sabre walked through the busy streets of Echidnaopolis, his thoughts still circling around the dream. He barely paid attention on where he was walking to. His feet knew the way. First to a café to get some breakfast and then ... well, wherever he wanted to go next - he still could make plans for that while sitting in the café.

Another Echidna crashed into him. Sabre stumbled back and nearly lost balance but the other caught him.

"Whoops, sorry pal, didn't see you." The other Echidna smiled sheepishly. "But nothing happened and now you should better forget that you have ever seen me. Bye." With that he quickly continued his walk.

Sabre followed him with his eyes and scratched the back of his head. What a strange guy. Suddenly he noticed something - the little money bag he had worn on his belt was gone. He cursed and ran after the stranger but unfortunately the other Echidna turned around and when he saw he was followed he started running as well.

At first the thief stayed on the main street and tried to disappear somewhere in the crowd but when he couldn't cast off his follower he made a turn into a backstreet. Sabre knew it was a dead end. Now there was no way he could escape. But when he ran around the corner his gaze fell on another male with lavender fur who stood on the wall at the end of the street.

"Pass it, Sojo!" he called. The thief threw the bag up to him then quickly climbed one of the trash cans and his partner helped him up the wall. They already had jumped and landed on the other side before Sabre reached the wall. Breathlessly the young Echidna stopped. Now he really lost them. He didn't even try to climb one of the cans since he already had seen that he would have needed the help of someone else to reach the top of the wall. At least his little bag hadn't contained too much money or anything else of importance but that still didn't mean he had wanted to throw it away. Sabre groaned. What a great way to start a day. Hopefully the rest would be better.

Thoughtfully he stirred in his cup. His coffee might have been cold by now but Sabre barely paid attention to that. He had the feeling that he knew the thieves but he had no idea why. He never had heard the name Sojo and since lavender wasn't a too common colour for males he surely would have remembered the other one if he had seen him before. It also was very unlikely that they were long forgotten class mates from primary school or kindergarten since both looked like they were older than him.

Sojo must have been at least twenty-five, the lavender guy maybe twenty-seven or twenty-eight.

He took a sip from his cold coffee and suddenly remembered that he hadn't returned home after his bag had been stolen and now he also had nothing to pay with. Whatever. He was a regular and well-known customer in this café so maybe they would allow him to pay during his next visit. Still he didn't like the thought he was in debt to anyone.

The part of the shopping street the café was located at was very popular with the young people so he already had seen a lot of teens pass by without really paying attention to them. But the scene at the other side of the street now caught his eyes. Two teenagers were close on a younger one's heels shouting something. Telling from the grins on their faces they were probably mocking him. When the younger one in the white coat didn't react one of the older guys pushed him. The boy obviously wasn't in the mood for a discussion or a fight, turned around and wanted to walk away but the large group of guys that had appeared behind him apparently were with the two others and they pushed him back into the arms of one of the mockers who grabbed the boy's arms and held him tight while his friend slowly walked closer with a threatening grin banging his clenched fist into the meat of his left palm. Sabre lightly rose from his seat. If they really were stupid enough to start a fight on the open street he surely didn't want to stay back and watch the boy getting beaten up.

When the one guy lunged out the boy kicked hard against the shin of the guy holding him who cried out in pain and let go of his victim. Quickly the teen in the white coat spun out of the way, the attacker hit his friend's face instead and nearly knocked him out. So one was already out of the ring only seconds after the battle had begun. The other guy launched another blow which the boy dodged by dropping to the ground and when the guy wanted to swoop down on him he rolled on his back and rammed his feet into the attacker's stomach.

Sabre watched with slightly opened mouth. That boy surely knew how to defend himself and although he had barely fought, he already had taken down two guys larger than him. But now the crowd had tasted blood and four more guys entered the ring. No matter how good the boy was at fighting, this was definitely unfair. The chair fell over when Sabre jumped up and bolted out of the café. He didn't know how he alone should stop a crowd of a good dozen guys but he just had to try to help.

"Stop that immediately!" he shouted when he squeezed through the cheering crowd but the one of the fighters he tried to drag away just gave him a kick that made him stumble against the ring of Echidnas.

"Hey, this is our business so stay out of it, old man", someone behind him complained. Old man? The youngest here probably was the boy in the white coat and even he wasn't more than four years younger than Sabre.

Again he rushed into the fight eager to help the younger male who could barely defend himself anymore. That raging mob was probably capable of beating him to death.

"Get off of him!" Sabre shouted desperately. His skin was tingling as if electricity was dancing on his fur.

"I said *get away from him!*"

A green glow suddenly surrounded him and a wave of energy burst out of his body. It didn't harm anyone, only pushed the guys back some steps but Sabre couldn't have done anything more effective. Most of them immediately fled; the few who stayed

back for some more seconds still considered attacking him but then also decided to run away from this "freak".

Sabre gazed into space. What in Aurora's name had he just done? But whatever it had been, it was gone now. The green glow had faded and his skin didn't tingle anymore. Quickly he returned his attention to the young male who was kneeling on the ground, staring at his rescuer with wide opened eyes while wiping blood off his muzzle. When their gazes met the teenager quickly lowered his head and stared at the ground instead.

"Are you okay?" Sabre stretched out a hand and waited for the boy to take it. "Why on Mobius did these goons attack you?"

"Some of my former class mates", the younger male mumbled and remained sitting on the floor, "I always have been an outcast and things like that are nearly usual. But don't worry, my wounds heal fast. And thank you for your help."

Sabre gave him a look of commiseration - and noticed that some of his bruises already had disappeared.

"Looks like 'old man' Sabre isn't the only freak here. Sorry, I didn't mean to call you a freak", he quickly added when the boy quickly lifted up his head and stared at him again.

"Have ... have you said Sabre?" the younger one whispered breathlessly.

"Uhm, yes, that's my name."

"So you haven't just used a Chaos shield, something that has never been seen again since the last Guardian died but also have a Guardian name."

Sabre chuckled. "Hey, don't get too excited about it. It's just a name. Apparently my parents once thought it sounded cool to name their son after a warrior who died centuries ago. And this shield ... I have no idea why I suddenly could do something like that but I have never done it before and also don't know how to repeat it. I'm sure that I'm not a reborn Guardian."

"I ... I somehow have the feeling that I haven't thanked you enough for saving me", the teen suddenly said.

"You said 'thank you', that's good enough."

"No, let me at least invite you to a cup of coffee or something like that."

"You never give up, do you?" Sabre asked and a little smile wandered over his face.

"Well, I already have a cup of coffee but you can pay that for me if you really want to. By the way, I have told you my name so what is yours?"

For a second the younger Echidna hesitated but then he answered, "My name ... is Locke."

~~~\*\*\*~~~

"I don't think you have invited me just to say 'thank you'. So what else do you have on your mind?" Sabre asked when they were sitting in the café.

Locke turned his cup in his hands.

"I wanted to find out more about you. How can it be possible that someone uses Guardian moves without being a Guardian? As far as I know these abilities can be trained or inherited but Knuckles, the last Guardian in the line, died before he had offsprings. The line of Edmund was eradicated completely. And I also don't think that you have been trained."

"You seem to be very interested in the Brotherhood", Sabre noted.

"At first it was just a little hobby because I wanted to know where my name came

from", Locke replied. "But soon I collected any information I could get about them."

"Good that at least someone still knows a lot about history. I barely remember the basics. I learned about them at school and am glad if I can name more than my own namesake", Sabre said. 'And I probably know his last few minutes thanks to my dreams', he added in his thoughts.

"I always thought my name combined with a rapid healing ability was a strange coincidence and my fascination in technology and history I blamed on reading somewhere that the Guardian Locke had these interests and then thinking I had to copy him. But actually I had these interests long before I knew about the Brotherhood. And today I met another one with a Guardian name and one of their trademark abilities. That is not a coincidence anymore."

"But if we really are Guardians reborn ... why have we returned several hundred years later?" Sabre said. His head slowly started buzzing and he still couldn't believe that Locke's theories might be true although something inside of him told him that it was that way. "What is so different about nowadays compared to any other time during the past centuries?"

"I wish I knew", Locke answered. "Maybe I already could have solved that riddle if I was able to sleep a bit longer."

Sleep? That made Sabre prick up his ears.

"For some days I always have the same dream", Locke continued. "The Brotherhood members have been separated during the battles with the Dark Legion and I'm all alone at night, trying to fight my way to the bastion of Echidnaopolis. During a silent minute Spectre teleports at my side to tell me that some of the other Guardians have fallen but before he can say anything else the next attack wave is there. If it hadn't been for Spectre I would have died immediately because I haven't noticed them at all in the darkness but he shields me with his own body. Their first volley he gets right into his back but although he's losing a lot of blood that only caused him to go berserk. We try our best and are able to fight them off but I'm already wounded too badly and in the end I succumb to my injuries. I think Spectre catches me when my legs finally give in and holds me in his arms until the end but at that time I can only feel anymore and don't see anything else but blackness. And that his the time I always wake up. But I still hope that one day I will stay asleep and I get an explanation why these dreams are haunting me."

Sabre's eyes were still on Locke but he looked right through him.

"That is where he got his injuries", he mumbled. "He tried to protect my son. No, not mine, Sabre's son." He groaned and held his head. The buzzing became faster and more confusing.

"Is something wrong?" the younger male asked worriedly.

"Everything is right as it should be - that's what's wrong", Sabre said and when he saw Locke's confused gaze he added, "I mean, it seems as if fate predestined us to be the next generation of Guardians to fight whatever is threatening the world so everything is right for fate. But we know nothing - neither that we are Guardians or chosen ones or whatever, nor what we have to fight, nor where the others are or if there are no others and we are the only ones - that's the wrong part."

Locke made a pensive face. "I guess all we can do now is to wait and see what happens next."

"Do you know someone called Sojo?"

The question was out before Sabre could hold it back and now he wondered why he even asked. Of course Locke didn't know him. First of all the thief was nearly ten years

older and second why should this boy be concerned with muggers?

"Sojo? No, I don't think I know that name. Unless of course it's the short form of Sojourner but I can't remember the Guardians ever used that nickname. Why do you ask?"

"Oh it's just ... I think I heard that name once and since I remembered it right now I thought it could be important."

He also could have told him the truth but he didn't want to destroy the young Echidna's image of the good guys called Guardians by telling him that someone of the new Brotherhood was a member of a street gang. Or maybe he had nothing to do with them at all and his name similarity was a strange coincidence - another one.

"I think you are right", he said after a while. "For now we really can't do much more than waiting for instructions."

"We might go our separate ways again after today", Locke added, "but sooner or later we will meet again for it's our destiny."

~~~\*\*\*~~~

Late at night Sabre was lying in bed, staring into the darkness. At the beginning of that day he still had been a normal Echidna with strange dreams. Now that time seemed to be far away. Under other circumstances he would have believed Locke's theories to be the stories of a boy with too much imagination but it was no coincidence that two Echidnas with Guardian names had dreams about the same war only from different points of view and furthermore he had felt the Chaos energy tingling on his skin, had seen it breaking out of his body. And of course there also was Locke's rapid healing ability.

Provided that he could even sleep in with so many thoughts in his head - would the dream return tonight the same way it had been the past few days or would it mix with something he had heard today? Or maybe he was finally able to get past the scene he normally woke up at. Sabre closed his eyes and waited for the sleep to come.

Once again he was running through the darkness but something was different. Instead of soft forest ground he felt stone under his feet. Torches lit up at his sides and he could see that he was running on a narrow street leading through emptiness. Around, above or under him there was only pitch black darkness. After a few more steps the torches revealed stairs going up in front of him. He looked up, tried to figure out how high it was but the steps disappeared in the darkness after several meters. Sabre continued running.

Step by step, higher and higher his way led him. By now he must have been several hundred meters over the road he had come from and though he hadn't stopped a single time he didn't feel tired. Of course not, this was all just a dream. Or wasn't it? Normally he just saw the things that happened in his dreams as a given thing and neither wondered if nor was absolutely sure that he was still dreaming. This was more like he had been sucked into a different reality and he was wide awake while running through it.

"It is him. He answered our call", a female voice suddenly echoed through the darkness.

"He really looks like the Guardian", a male voice added.

"But he is still so young", a second male voice came. It sounded worried. "A Guardian would just have finished his training at that age and would have ancestors with a lot

more experience by his side. And the others are as inexperienced as him."

"I know", the female answered with sadness in her voice, "but time is running out and we have no other choice."

Sabre stopped to listen.

"Who are you?" he called.

"Go on and you will see", the first male answered. "You're not too far away from us anymore."

Not too much later he reached a platform lit up by a bright white glow but the longer he looked at it the more the glow faded and three figures took shape. Sabre's mouth opened in astonishment. He knew the female. Anyone who had ever entered an Echidna temple had seen her at least once in his life. And by recognizing her he also knew who the other two had to be. Aurora, Athair and Merlin - the Neo Walkers.

"Welcome, young Echidna", Aurora greeted him. "I wished we could have met during less troublesome times."

"What is this place?" Sabre asked.

The goddess looked around. "I don't know. This is your dream and we are at a place you thought to be worthy for gods to appear at."

"Today we already had been in something that looked like Haven or went through hell", Athair said. "At least that's what I picture hell. And believe me, it might look spectacular being surrounded by black rocks and lava and fountains of fire erupting whenever someone wants to say something but it's also pretty uncomfortable and way too hot."

"You mentioned trouble", Sabre said, returning his attention to Aurora. "But what trouble? I thought we lived in peaceful times."

Sadly Aurora shook her head. "Not anymore. Thirty years ago we suddenly felt that trouble was lying ahead. Neither did we know what to expect nor when the darkness would strike. That was also the time the first Guardian Avatar was born. We didn't choose him - it was more like the Guardians' spirits chose each of you themselves. Every time the darkness upon us grew stronger another Guardian Avatar came into the world with Locke being the last. We had so many years to tell you what you were destined for and to let your training begin but we always thought it to be too early and that we could still take our time since the darkness wasn't spreading too fast. And now it's too late."

"It actually was my fault that we waited for too long and I feel sorry for it", Athair said.

"I thought at such a young age you wouldn't be able to understand and that the early training would only take your childhood away. Since I once had been a Guardian the others accepted my advices and did nothing. I wanted to avoid the mistakes of my ancestors but did other ones instead."

"But what is this darkness you were speaking of?" Sabre asked. Each second he felt more confused.

"How much do you know about the last war the Guardians fought in and the short period of time before it?" Merlin asked.

"Not too much", Sabre replied. "Maybe just a few basics. The Guardians had disappeared after fighting the Dark Legion off in the chamber of the Master Emerald but they were back right in time when Enerjak returned. They were able to defeat the demi-god but stood no chance against the mass of Legionnaires."

"At least you know the base", Merlin said. "Then let us fill up the holes. At that time an Echidna called Dr Finitevus held the weakened Guardians captive to study the Chaos

Force with the ultimate goal to resurrect Enerjak. At first he planned that the demi-god's new body would either be the Guardian Knuckles or Remington, the son of the former Grandmaster Kragok. But then the megalomaniac Echidna decided to make himself a godly being."

"But although Enerjak is purest Chaos energy he can't be controlled, no matter how much you have studied the Chaos Force", Aurora continued. "He might have taken Finitevus' body but not in a way the doctor had planned it. Either he died from the Chaos overload or the demi-god drew the last bit of life out of him - Finitevus was no more. When he still was in Dimitri's body Enerjak once had found allies in the Dark Legion and so he took control over them once again. The previous war against the Dingoes and Robotnik had weakened the Legion but after Enerjak's return they quickly gained more and more followers - all of them people who wanted to survive because Enerjak granted them protection while fighting against him and the Legion led to a sure death."

"And then the Guardians returned", Athair now started telling. "Finitevus might have wanted to ban them into another Zone once he had gained enough strength but Enerjak had no interest in them anymore and simply ignored them because he didn't see them as threats in their weakened state - one of his biggest mistakes. Once they regained their strength they didn't linger over fighting Legionnaires for too long, immediately went for Enerjak and were able to ban him back where he came from. But even with their leader now gone the Dark Legion still had the strength of the many. The Guardians continued their fight but they soon succumbed to the enemy. That was my hardest time as a god. What is it good for to be a godly being if you can't help your relatives when they need you? Destiny had decided it was their time and not even as a god I can fight off destiny. Like behind a wall of unbreakable glass I had to watch how each of them fell. At least now I should have helped them if I already abandoned them in the past."

Sabre saw tears glint in the former Guardian's eyes and with a feeling of commiseration he said, "I know how hard it is to lose someone. But it wasn't your fault that you couldn't help them. I'm sure the Guardians would have understood that. If anyone knows about strict rules it's them. I also don't think you ever really abandoned them. The Ancient Walkers chose you to lead the Forgotten Tribe and as you said if destiny calls no one can fight it. Besides with leading the tribe you did nothing else but helping your people who needed you - that's something every Guardian does."

Athair gave him a thankful smile. "I know you are not my son but you look so much like him. Hearing these words from Sabre really means a lot to me."

"I'm sure it was the Guardian in me as well who spoke", the young Echidna said. "He might have been mad about your decisions in his youth but understood it when he was older."

"I wished we could help you in the task lying in front of you", Athair sighed, "but you are on your own. That leads us back to our story once again. If you learned your history lessons then you know about the long years of war until the Echidnas were free from the Dark Legion and peaceful times followed. However about thirty years ago we felt a wave of darkness originating from the Legion. They were still a small group - not more than bandit hordes who were attacking villages once in a while but were fought off very quickly - but we couldn't get rid of the feeling that they were planning something. Whatever demon they tried to summon, he at first only gained strength bit by bit with yearlong breaks between each bit - and after every gain one of the Guardians who had fallen in the war, except for Knuckles, was reborn. We don't

have an explanation why he was the only one missing but maybe we weren't the only ones to think they had more time. After Locke the break lasted for nearly sixteen years but then the darkness erupted and we were finally able to see what they had planned. Enerjak has returned. And this time he doesn't need a body. Inside his armour of gold he's pure living Chaos Energy."

Sabre was filled with horror when he listened to the last part of the story. It was not just a nightmare for the Echidna kind to come true but it also sounded as if the only ones who were able to stop it was a small group of inexperienced Echidnas who didn't even know each other. But then courage flooded his heart. If his fate was inevitable then he had to face it.

"Okay, I'm ready. Just tell me where to find the others and what to do next and I will try my best to stop Enerjak once and for all."

"You already sound like a true Guardian yourself", Merlin said. "Your way might be a hard one but facing it with courage is the best way to get through it. First of all go to the chamber of the Master Emerald. The Emerald will find a piece of itself in each of you and grant you the help you need. But how to use the Chaos Force you will have to find out by yourself and you will have to prove that you are quick learners because while you are training Enerjak's might is growing as well and people will start joining the Dark Legion again. The best way would be to go straight for him and not to lose time and energy by fighting the Legion but this is just a suggestion from me. Who knows where destiny leads you. I can only wish you all the best."

"The morning is near, young Guardian, and we have to depart but although we can't help you too much I want you to know that our blessings are with you", Aurora said.

"Good luck, Sabre", Athair silently said.

Sabre's eyes snapped open. He was still lying in his bed, a new day had begun and the sun was shining through his window although he had the impression it was darker than usual. Like in trance he stood up and went out of his sleeping room.

The Echidna who stared back at him from his bathroom mirror looked as if he had seen a ghost. No, worse than that, he had seen the return of Enerjak, at least in his imagination.

"Remember what you promised yourself yesterday", he told his reflection. "You said you will face destiny once the tide has turned. And now the time is ripe. Besides you won't have to do everything all alone."

'Yes, you will have Echidnas by your side who know as less as you and one of them is a sixteen year old tech freak with an obsession for Guardian history', a little voice in his thoughts said but he shoved it to the back of his mind.

"At least he's a good fighter and it seemed he can learn fast. We all will have to learn fast."

He quickly packed up things he might have needed on his journey - the Chaos Chamber was a good while away and he wanted to be prepared for everything - then he left his apartment and hoped it wouldn't be the last time he saw it.

*'Destiny, here I come.'*