Rise of the Guardians

Von Aqua111

Kapitel 10: Unexpected home

Rise of the Guardians
Chapter 10 - Unexpected home

Despite their exhaustion the Guardians only sank to the ground as soon as they appeared in the Forbidden Zone but didn't black out this time.
This part of the island never had too abundant vegetation before but now it was just a barren wasteland. The ground was churned up, the few dead trees uprooted. Smoking ruins in the distance indicated where once a village or town could have been.
"Seeing something like that in the area that once had been the Guardians' territory ... it's terrible..." Locke mumbled tonelessly.
Sabre wandered off a bit, his eyes on the hills in the north. Somewhere there they would have to face Enerjak soon. He didn't know what the demi-god was even doing that far north but now an awful thought was slowly forming in his mind. This wasn't just the place where the Guardians had lived but also where most of them had found their final resting place. Many centuries had passed but what if for some odd reason Guardian bodies didn't rot as fast as other bodies, just like they didn't age that fast? What if Enerjak was looking for them? A troop of zombified Guardians was about as terrible as if the demi-god himself took part in the battles.

"Sabre, watch out!"
The sudden call ripped him out of his thoughts but he couldn't react as fast as Spectre crashed into him and protectively wrapped his arms around him. Not even a split-second later the ammunition of a Death Legionnaire's gun was emptied into the dark Echidna's back. Silently Spectre broke down to the ground and nearly dragged Sabre with him who tried to catch him but lost balance.
With a loud curse Thunderhawk shot his boomerang at the Legionnaire and knocked him off the rock he was standing on but now several more of them appeared on top of the hills - not an army like the one that had attacked Echidnaopolis but still a few dozen. The way they looked they had died recently - probably in the battle for the ruined village - but there was no doubt they all were dead, telling from wounds no Echidna would have survived or sometimes just from life missing in their eyes.
Moving like reflections Thunderhawk and Sojourner were the first to attack and sent twin blasts against the nearest Legionnaires. Locke was next to rush into battle while Sabre stayed back to protect the last bit of life that could still be left in Spectre's motionless body and attacked from afar.
The experience they had gained in their battle for Echidnaopolis was immense and

even without the driving force of Spectre the Legionnaires were knocked out fast.

Now after the last enemy was gone Sabre knelt down at Spectre's side shivering. The blood on the ground had dried and the wounds under the dark fur nearly healed but still Spectre showed no sign of regaining consciousness and his breath came in shallow gasps.

"This seems to be some special kind of weapon", Locke said examining one of them. "Whatever kind of dark energy they contained, it looks like Spectre is fighting it at the moment."

"So what are we going to do?" Sojourner asked, despair in his voice. "We can't leave a wounded Guardian behind in the middle of nowhere but we also can't take him into battle with us. Teleporting somewhere safe to leave him there is also out of question since I doubt we four have the energy left for teleporting."

Sabre only silently stared at Spectre. No one had put the blame on him but sill he made serious reproaches against himself. If only he had watched out for enemies instead of walking around lost in his thoughts in a hostile area. If only he had activated his shield a second earlier instead of letting someone who couldn't create a Chaos shield of any kind protect him.

"I will carry him", he eventually said and somehow had to think of his dreams. The Sabre back then didn't have the possibility to carry the half dead Spectre because of his own wounds but the Sabre from now had mostly healed up and only felt exhausted.

When he picked Spectre up he was surprised how much of a lightweight the dark Echidna actually was. He might barely have touched their supplies but just a few days of fasting wouldn't cause someone to lose that much weight. It rather seemed like he had been through several periods of starving.

'How much else that you didn't want to tell have they done to you in that damn Legion camp?' Sabre grimly thought.

"Can you feel that too?" Locke asked after they had been walking for a while. "At first I thought it was only my imagination but now it's getting stronger the further we go."

The others had noticed it as well some time ago. At the beginning they believed it to be the waves of Chaos energy Enerjak was sending out but meanwhile it felt different - like sensing the first signs of spring after a long, hard winter.

"I'm also sure I never had been here before but still the whole area looks more and more familiar to me", Locke thoughtfully continued. "I wonder if..."

He stopped talking, indicated to the others that they should stay back and slowly continued his way.

"Be careful", Thunderhawk said. "We don't need another wounded Guardian."

"I doubt any enemy will ever be able to enter this part of the area", Locke replied and stopped when he had reached a certain point. "I think it's here. Whatever might happen now, follow me."

A second later he was surrounded by blue flames suddenly shooting out of the floor and when they were gone Locke had disappeared as well. The others exchanged bewildered glances but then they decided to do what Locke had told them and continued walking until they were engulfed by the cold blue flames.

At first darkness awaited them but only seconds later the lights went on. Bright neon lights, some of them flickering, others hanging off the ceiling shone on a half

destroyed and long abandoned corridor with several rooms leading away from it. Before them Locke buzzed around, enthusiastically examining the metal covered walls, the doors, absolutely everything he could reach without running away too far. The same way a treasure hunter must have looked when he found the lost treasure in the long forgotten temple.

"Do you know where we are?" he asked and turned around. His eyes were sparkling with excitement. "This is Haven. We are where the Guardians used to live."

"Haven..." Sabre silently said as if he just had realised what this word meant. "But ... hasn't it been completely destroyed centuries ago?"

"If it's destroyed then why did the protection still work?" Sojourner asked. "And how could it know we are Guardians too and let us through. Or why is there still electricity?"

"Yes, it was destroyed by the Quantum Beam", Locke said. "But that doesn't mean it was destroyed beyond repair. Think about what the Guardians used as Haven II. This complex we're in in was their home; Haven II was just a storing place with a bit technology in it. I doubt it was more than a transitory workplace for the time Haven was reconstructed but they never had the time to even start with it. This lair was built to withstand millennia and while the Quantum Beam might have damaged some of the walls or the electronic devices it never could touch the inner core. Haven was never shut off; it just ... slept for all these centuries waiting for the Guardians to return."

Marvelling the others followed Locke through a few of the accessible rooms and corridors. The youngest Brotherhood member moved around as if he was born in here.

It was a strange kind of feeling - they were walking through a long abandoned, half destroyed and completely unknown complex but still they felt as if they had returned home after a long time of absence.

"Let's get Spectre to the medical bay", Locke suggested. "I doubt we can use any of the devices there but at least it's a place to rest."

Tentatively Thunderhawk tried a few of the medical equipment but gave it up fast.

"Even in a place built for eternity nothing works", he commented. "Should we ever want to move into Haven we might have to exchange about everything except for a few walls, the ceiling, the floor and the neon lights."

"And the beds in here still look usable too", Sojourner said.

Carefully Sabre laid Spectre down on one of them. The dark furred Guardian was shivering, cold sweat dripped off his forehead, his breath was still fast and shallow.

"This isn't looking too good", Sabre said. "Whatever he's trying to fight, it seems he's losing."

"There might still be a way to help him without needing any of the equipment", Locke said. "Therefor I need to connect with his mind. But I'm not sure how good it will work if none of us has ever used this kind of connection before."

"If it's our only hope then just do it", Sabre said.

"Alright ... can you help me with the helmet?"

Carefully they took Spectre's helmet off - that he also had some cybernetic spines barely surprised them anymore - then Locke placed his hands at Spectre's temples and closed his eyes.

~~~***~~~

Running through a deserted wasteland, similar to the one Enerjak had chosen as his newest residence, Spectre was only accompanied by whispering voices. He couldn't understand what they were saying and he also knew that it was better not to try to.
A moment later he stopped dead in his tracks. Just a few meters ahead of him a faint green glow had appeared that now slowly took the shape of Enerjak.
"Poor Echidna, carrying the call of my Legion inside of him and still trying to run from his fate."
The demi-god's voice was silent but therefor it seemed like it was coming from everywhere and not just from the glowing figure.
"I'm not running", Spectre shouted. "I only have decided to be in control of my own destiny."
"Then look around and see what your destiny is holding for you. Go on, I allow you to snap out of the unconsciousness my Legionnaire's weapon has sent you into - provided you make it out of this wasteland."
The dark furred Guardian turned around and his eyes widened in shock. Thousands of wraithlike Legionnaires - spirits of these that had fallen and put to eternal rest on the battlefields around Echidnaopolis - surrounded him and Enerjak. The first few were flying towards him. Spectre wanted to defend himself and to his horror found all of his abilities disabled. He was completely and utterly at their mercy and of course the spectral Legionnaires didn't care how defenceless their victim was when they drove through his body, taking part of his energy with them each time.

Though he knew how low his chance to get out of the wasteland before the last bit of life had been drained from his body was Spectre struggled along, dragging a trail of attacking beings with him. And when his legs were about to give in a familiar voice called his name - a voice he hadn't heard any more for over two decades. The Legionnaires were shying away from the black orb that had appeared in their middle and unbelievingly Spectre stared at the female who was standing in this dark gate.
"M-mother?"
She smiled and stretched out a hand.
"Come, you must hurry. The dark orb won't keep them away for too long. Follow us into the darkness. It's the only safe place for you."
"Spectre, no! Don't give in to the darkness!"
The call behind him sounded as if it was coming from far away and he barely listened to it. Like hypnotized he walked towards the black gate, stretched out his hand to take his mother's. Now other Echidnas had appeared inside the orb as well, people he had known in his past but lost such a long time ago. Other people from the camp, his brothers and sisters... Kali...
At her sight Spectre recoiled and snapped out of his trance. No, it couldn't be true. It couldn't be possible that there had been a second attack on Echidnaopolis during their absence. Kali was still alive - she had to be.
Within the blink of an eye the shadows of the past were gone and all that was left were the orb and the spreading darkness, swirling around him like thick black fog.
"Spectre!"
This time the call was closer and he also recognized the voice of Locke. The fog hindered most of his movements already but still he managed to turn far enough to see the youngest Brotherhood member. The wraithlike Legionnaires held him back

but he struggled to get closer to his friend.
"Take my ... hand!"
The darkness now was all around him. He barely saw anything but he felt Locke's fingers when he bent forward and stretched out his arm as far as he could. But before he was able to grab his hand Spectre was suddenly jerked back into the core of darkness.

~~~***~~~

Locke stumbled back so sudden as if something had crashed into him but Sabre caught him before he collided with the wall.
"The darkness ... It's consuming him ... I couldn't help anymore", the youngest Guardian mumbled before his head sunk against Sabre's chest.
"He just lost consciousness", Sabre explained when he saw Sojourner's and Thunderhawk's worried gazes. "It all was probably a bit too much for him."
"Then let him rest for a while", Thunderhawk said. "I think we all might need a bit of it by now unless we want to face Enerjak feeling completely drained. We don't even need to search for rooms since the sick bay has two more beds we can share."
Yes, rest...
Sabre now too noticed how tired he actually was. For days they hadn't slept anymore and barely eaten or drunken. Actually they all were at the edge of their powers and the only thing that had kept them going was a permanent adrenaline rush. But in the safety of Haven they suddenly were aware of their exhaustion again. Their actual plan might have been not to rest until Enerjak was defeated but now in their sanctuary they realized that it would have been pure suicide to even get near the demi-god with such a lack of strength.
When they dozed off they knew exactly that they were still in hostile territory, their enemies never too far away, but it all didn't matter as long as they were protected by Haven.

~~~***~~~

When Sabre slowly opened his eyes he at first wasn't sure what had even woken him up. Probably it was the lack of Locke at his side.
The youngest Guardian aimlessly wandered through the room, sometimes he checked on Spectre, sometimes he started trying to repair one of the medical devices but he never could concentrate on something for more than a few seconds. He created the impression of someone who was in desperate need of sleep but still tried to keep himself awake.
Sabre stopped him when he passed by his bed again.
"Locke, you really need some rest. Have you even slept at all?"
"No, I have gotten up as soon as I snapped out of unconsciousness. I just ... couldn't sleep anymore", the younger Echidna said evasively but the way he looked told the opposition, namely that he really had to force himself to stay awake.
"No, it rather seems as if you try to damage your health even more than Enerjak already did", Sabre said sounding really worried. He grabbed Locke's arm and dragged him down to sit beside him on the bed. "What is wrong?"
Locke wrapped his arms around his body and stared at the ground.
"Not having to sleep was a salvation. But now I'm afraid that ... everything will come

back to my mind as soon as I close my eyes."

He didn't want to continue but Sabre also understood without further words. Masses of Legionnaires, people dying right in front of their eyes and now Enerjak at the very end of it. They all went through the same but the others seemed to have found their own ways to deal with it. Locke on the other hand suffered silently and his occasional enthusiasm for everything concerning the historic Guardians wasn't enough to help him through the pain. Just a boy of fifteen but if someone looked into his eyes he could see the sorrow of a war veteran.

With a sudden touch of affection Sabre wrapped his arms around Locke and while the younger male didn't return the embrace he also didn't draw away and leaned his head against Sabre's shoulder.

Probably Sabre wasn't able to put Locke's mind at ease but maybe Haven itself was. It might have sounded strange but Sabre was sure that something hidden inside this complex had been whispering in his dreams - words of courage and confidence, words that Locke didn't hear because he hadn't been asleep.

'Why not?' he thought. Haven had been the home of several generations of Guardians and it was very unlikely that not a single bit of them had remained in here - if nothing else then at least part of their work that had been stored to the main computer, the core that was still keeping Haven alive.

"Do me a favour and close your eyes", he silently said. "No, I don't want your mind to wander around aimlessly and come back to the things you desperately try to forget. I want you to concentrate ... on Haven. Let your mind wander through that instead - not the Haven you have seen but the one your Guardian namesake knew from head to toe."

Sabre didn't know too much about Haven but he scratched together even the last little bit of the things Locke once had told him and kept on talking until the arms Locke had still wrapped around his own body loosened up a bit and the relaxed expression on his face indicated that he had finally slept in.

With a little smile Sabre tried to lean back a little without waking up Locke again so he could also get a bit more sleep.

~~~***~~~

Author's comment:

When I first imagined that little moment of comfort between Sabre and Locke it only looked like an overload of cuteness in my mind. Then a bit later I realized that it also could have been a little hint on a romantic moment. I didn't even mean it that way, not at all. ^^; You can interpret it any way you want it though but I still rather see it as bromance than as romance.

This chapter also was a bit inspired by Captain Harlock. The main computer of the Arcadia, Harlock's ship, contains the mind of Harlock's late friend who once had built the ship thus giving the Arcadia a bit of its own free will. At first I only thought of Steppenwolf's mind still being present in Haven's core but then it sounded better if a little bit of all Guardians was still there in some way.