

Summary: Prozen has discovered how to create the ultimate organoid, and he want's Raven to help. Only Raven doesn't know what Prozen actually wants until it is too late.

MWAAAAHAHAHHHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!!!

Categories: [Zoids: Chaotic Century](#) Characters: Ensemble, Raven, Shadow/Raven

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Story Notes:

Chaotic Century Zoids do not belong to me. AU. OOC-ness. Bit of squeek... I think that's the right sort of term. Blah, blah... My evil muse has come for a visit! YAY! Comments welcome, but flammers will be slapped. Tee hee hee! ;p) November 2002

1. [Chapter 1](#) by Zuzanny
2. [Chapter 2](#) by Zuzanny
3. [Chapter 3](#) by Zuzanny
4. [Chapter 4](#) by Zuzanny
5. [Chapter 5](#) by Zuzanny
6. [Chapter 6](#) by Zuzanny
7. [Chapter 7](#) by Zuzanny
8. [Chapter 8](#) by Zuzanny
9. [Chapter 9](#) by Zuzanny
10. [Chapter 10](#) by Zuzanny
11. [Chapter 11](#) by Zuzanny
12. [Chapter 12](#) by Zuzanny
13. [Chapter 13](#) by Zuzanny

Chapter 1 by Zuzanny  
(secret underground location)

Prozen looked up from his desk as a young man with dark grayish hair was escorted into his cavernous office. The young man stopped in front of the desk, arms crossed and violet-grey eyes narrowed with suspicion.

"Ahh, Raven," Prozen smiled across the desk at his charge. He stood and motioned for the young man to sit. "how good of you to come."

"Get to the point, Prozen." Raven snarled. He hated the way Prozen always looked at him. Like he was a piece of meat or something. It was... unnerving.

"Sit, just sit." Raven did as he was told, watching every move that Prozen made. Prozen walked around him to a cupboard retrieving a bottle of red and two glasses. He brought them to the desk, poured two glasses and sat. "I've been rather impressed with your battle performance lately."

Prozen swirled the wine around in his glass, looking at Raven with hooded eyes.

Raven refused to touch his wine glass. "And your point is?"

Prozen took a sip from his wine, eyes fluttering closed with pleasure. Raven made an impatient sound and rolled his eyes. Prozen slowly lowered his glass. "My point is that you have great..." Prozen's eyes wandered up and down Raven's body suggestively. "Potential."

"Potential?" Raven sneered, and pushed his chair back to leave. "Is that all? Can I go now?"

"Actually, no." Prozen took another swallow of his wine. "Sit back down, boy."

Raven glared, but did as he was told.

"My researchers have made an incredible breakthrough. I plan on creating a new organoid. A more advanced species than there has ever been. One that combines Organoid DNA with that of a human."

Raven wasn't sure he was liking where this was going, but leaned forward anyway. "I'm listening."

"I want you to participate in this project."

Raven nodded. "How, exactly?" Prozen smiled in his disturbed way. "So glad you asked!" He pressed a button on his desktop intercom. "Shadow." The door opened again, and in clomped Raven's organoid. He stopped just behind Raven. Raven gave Prozen a questioning look. "Shadow," Prozen said. "TAKE HIM!"

Shadow's chest compartments opened, shooting out cords and cables which wrapped around Raven's arms, legs and waist, even as Raven jumped away from them. They pulled him off his feet and towards the gaping chamber inside Shadow.

"What the hell are you doing?!" Raven shrieked struggling ineffectively against his organoid's hold. "Shadow! Let me GO! What's wrong with you?! DAMN IT!"

Prozen just laughed and sipped his wine, watching Raven's struggles with amusement. "My dear Raven, didn't I tell you? You have been selected as not only a genetic donor, but a host."

"No, NO!" Raven shrieked in terror as he felt the cords sliding up under his clothes, reaching for all his intermit place, coiling around his body.

"You should be proud. Through you a new race will be born. For the glory of the New Empire."

"DAMN YOU PROZEN!" Raven screamed as the compartment closed with him inside. Shadow made a contented, throaty noise. Prozen rose and walked over to shadow. He could still hear Raven screaming from within the organoid. He grinned evilly, and patted Shadow's chest plate.

"Don't worry, Raven." He soothed, although he knew he could not be heard. "It won't hurt for long."

part 2 (?)

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by Zuzanny  
(twelve months later)

Van, Fiona and Irvine were sitting at a cafe catching up on life.

"So I told him he'd have to try a whole lot harder than that!" Irvine concluded his story to Van's laughter.

"You crack me up!" Van cackled.

"So how's business with the Guardian Force?" Irvine asked over his coffee.

Van took a sip of his. "Actually it's been pretty quiet for the last year or so. Now we're mainly doing drill, drill, and more drill." Van took another sip, frowning. "It's getting kind of boring. What about you?"

Irvine lent back in his chair and set about telling Van another of his Great Adventures.

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While the boys were talking, Fiona was looking out the window at the approaching gustave that was driving rather erratically. People and vehicles were scattering from its path.

"Va-an," Fiona tapped his shoulder to get his attention. "Look at that."

The gustave careened into the side of a building a few doors up from the cafe. Frightened screams filled the air. Van, Fiona and Irvine ran out to see what was going on. Irvine snagged a running boy.

"Go call an ambulance!" He ordered, and the boy nodded and ran to do so.

The gustave opened and a man in a lab coat staggered out, clutching what seemed like a bundle of rags. Van and Fiona ran to help him. He was bleeding from a leg wound.

"Sit down," Van told him, but the man refused.

"Gotta save the child!" The man gasped staggering away from the gustave. Van pried the bundle from the man and handed it to Fiona, then supported the man by letting him lean on his shoulder.

"Come on." Van said and dragged the man towards the cover of the cafe. Fiona looked up as there came the sound of approaching aircraft. The man made distressed sounds.

"Save the child! Please help me!" He gasped into Van's ear. Irvine also lent his support and they pulled the man into the cafe. Irvine then grabbed the first aid kit the shop owner was holding out and set about tending the man's wounds on one of the cafe tables.

"Everything will be okay." Van told the man.

Then the gustave exploded as it was bombed by the flying Zoids who then turned and flew off. All the glass from the windows exploded inwards, and the people screamed and tried to duck away from it.

"What the hell?!" Irvine yelled

"They just bombed the gustave!" Fiona said, then looked down at the bundle in her arms, her eyes widening. "Va-an," her voice rose with unease. "come look at this!" She turned to show what was fast asleep in the bundle of cloth.

"Is that a-a baby?" Irvine gaped while tending the man's leg wounds.

"Not one that I've ever seen before." Van said not sure if he should be horrified or not. The baby looked human except that it had a silvery sheen to its skin. It had dark grayish hair, and looked rather remarkably familiar. The baby snuggled closer to Fiona's chest, which made her blush deep red.

"Oh no, baby," She told it. "I'm not your mommy."

"Please help us," The injured man pleaded. "You must not let Prozen get this child back!"

"Hang on, did you say Prozen?" Van was shocked.

"I thought he was dead!" Irvine was also shocked.

The man shook his head. "No. He has been holed up in his secret base and has been making us research genetic cross breeding. It's horrible! If he were to get his hands on this child then... then his Zoids would become unstoppable!"

Van and Irvine exchanged looks. "We've stopped him before." Van said to the man.

"I know! But what if you were fighting not against a Zoid with a human pilot, but a human Zoid?"

"What do you mean?" Van asked slowly, thinking this man most likely stuck his head rather hard as well.

"This child," The man said, "Is an organoid like none other. It is capable of merging with any Zoid without the benefit of a pilot because it IS the pilot. It is an organoid with a human soul. The ultimate fighting machine. The power and strength of a Zoid with the passion and soul and mind of a human."

"An ORGANOID?" Van gaped at the man.

"Are there any more of these... children?" Irvine asked the man.

The man flinched. "Not... yet." He said cautiously. "I tried to release the child's sire as well, but..." He hung his head with shame. "I couldn't."

"Can you tell us about this base." Van said, reaching for his com unit to inform Shubaltz of what was going on, glad to have something more than drill to do. "Where it is, what kind of defences it has, blue prints, that kind of thing?"

The man nodded. "Anything I can." He looked out at the wreckage of the Gustave that the fire fighters were dealing with. "As you can see, they did not want the child to escape. If it was not to be His, then no one could have it. I just hope they don't think I survived and will change anything I tell you before you get there."

Van nodded.

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(later that night in their hotel room)

Fiona was giving the baby organoid a bath and thinking at the same time.

"Va-an," Fiona called grabbing the attention of both Van and Irvine. "this baby... Don't you think he looks a lot like Raven?"

Van and Irvine came to peer at the child over her shoulder.

"Yes it does." Van breathed. "So that's where Raven has been. All this time he has been quiet because he's been off making babies."

Back in the bed room behind them, the man cringed as he heard their conversation.

"Well that's better than blowing up bases." Irvine and Van then began making crude comments about Raven and any chance that the joining that created this child was consensual or not. The man cringed again.

"Don't say that!" Fiona snapped at them. "Especially in front of the baby!"

Van's com unit crackled to life and he used the opportunity to leave the room to talk to Karl Shubaltz about the situation. Irvine also apologised and backed away. Fiona pulled the baby from the water and wrapped him in towel.

"I wonder what happened to your mother?" Fiona wondered morosely. "You poor, beautiful, little thing, taken from your mother." she cooed down at the child. "don't worry, we'll take care of you."

The baby opened violet-grey eyes and looked up at her with a beautiful smile. Fiona suddenly felt warmth fill her from head to toe. A feeling of absolute trust and understanding and adoration. She beamed down at the baby. "Yes, we will." She told him.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by Zuzanny

(Secret underground location)

"Tell me he's dead." Prozen said to the pilot whose face was transmitted across his desktop computer screen.

"Target has been destroyed." The pilot confirmed.

"Excellent." Prozen disconnected the message and turned his seat away from his desk, frowning. He stood and walked over to his wine cupboard, pressing a secret panel on the wall that caused a door to open. Prozen walked through the door and into an elevator. He pressed the down button, and leaned in the corner, arms crossed and eyes closed. The elevator went down, down, down... Lights flashed across his white hair as the elevator passed floors. Finally it surged to a stop and the door opened. Prozen pushed himself away from the wall with his foot and walked out into the lab. It was a large room filled with equipment and machinery... and right in the centre of it all was the master piece...

A pod of man-made origin. Glass on the front allowed observation of what was inside. Wires and tubes running to and from the pod to the monitoring equipment allowed the scientists to pump oxygenated fluids into the pod, and nutrients directly to what was inside. All wastes were collected and analysed.

Prozen approached the pod, scientists scattered out of his path. His hand came to rest upon the thick glass with a soft plunk, and he looked within to the young man held suspended with thick cords twisted around his outstretched arms. The young man looked so peaceful, the flow of the ever cycling oxygenated water making it appear like a wind was stirring his dark hair.

"It's a pity you can't hear me," Prozen said quietly. "But it's just as well. I wonder how you would feel knowing that your first son was just killed? It was regrettable, but unavoidable, I'm afraid." Prozen turned away to talk to a scientist, not seeing the violet-grey eyes slowly opening behind him, and an expression of absolute agony crossing the young man's face. "How long until fertilisation can begin again?"

"Anytime now, Sir." The scientist said.

"Good. Do it." The scientists moved to do so. "The more we have of these the better. Losing the first one is unforgivable. Who was responsible for letting your former comrad escape?" Prozen looked around at the group of them.

Another scientist stepped forward, holding his head up. "I take responsibility." He said.

"Good." Prozen promptly pulled out his pistol and shot him once through the head. The other scientists shrieked and stared in horror. Prozen gave them all meaningful looks. "Any further slip up's will likewise be unforgivable." He walked out.

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(Elsewhere)

"Va-an," Fiona called across the room breaking the zoid pilot's meeting.

"What?"

She pointed down to the baby on her bed who was cooing and looking rather pleased with himself. "He needs a nappy change."

"So change him." Van told her.

"What?"

"You're a girl, you look after him." Van went back to his meeting, not seeing the other men exchanging looks of 'that was a stupid thing to say'. Then he sniffed. So did the other men. They checked the bottom of their boots.

"What is that reek?" Irvine covered his face, then looked up to find Fiona standing next to Van holding the baby, looking rather pissed off.

"So," she said quietly. "You think that just because I'm a \*woman\* this is all I'm good for?"

Van looked up at her trying to think quickly and tactfully. "Nooo... I'm just busy here-"

"And I'm busy too. Besides I remember you saying we'd take turns."

"I don't remember saying that."

"Actually Van-" Irvine began.

"Shut up!" Van hissed. "Fiona-" But then he had a stinky bundle of baby in his arms and the men pushed away from the table gagging at the smell. "Fiona!" He looked around and saw her back as she left the room.

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Fiona seated herself in front of the computer library researching nappies and other baby things. "Just because I'm a woman he thinks I know all about babies."

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"Doctor D," Irvine said to the com screen. "How is it possible that this child is an organoid? I mean... cross-breeding like that is, um, twisted enough, but how could it possibly work?"

On screen Dr. D frowned and thought for a moment. "No idea!" He said finally. "What does your scientist friend say about it?" "Not much at the moment. He lost a lot of blood. He said that they combined human and organoid DNA and this is the result. I still don't understand how this could be possible." Irvine shook his head.

"Well, I think I may have to ask him in person when you get here. By the way what's his name?"

Irvine and Van looked bashful. "We haven't asked." Van replied, bouncing a clean-nappied baby on his knee. The baby gurgled with pleasure.

Dr. D leaned in close to the screen to take a better look. "How old do you think the baby is? Do you know?"

Irvine and Van shrugged. "No idea." They replied. Suddenly the baby burst out crying making Van look rather panicked.

"Hmmm.... Sounds like he's hungry." Dr. D. told the two.

"How do you know?" Van called over the noise.

Dr. D. gave him a cryptic smile. "Trust me. I'll see you all later!" The screen went black.

Fiona came running in carrying baby bottles filled with milk. "Va-an! Look what I've got!"

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by Zuzanny

(secret underground location, brig.)

Prozen lead Shaddow to a well lit cell, unlocked the door and entered. Shaddow trudged inside then turned to face Prozen after the man had locked the cell again. Shaddow made a contented growl. A scientist and a doctor were waiting outside nervously.

"Release him. Now." Prozen ordered the organoid.

Shaddow's chest compartments opened letting the young naked man inside spill onto the cold floor like a bowl of over cooked spaghetti. Shaddow then stepped away so Prozen could approach and kneel beside the quaking young man. The young man curled in on himself when Prozen lay a hand on his shoulder.

"Easy, Raven," Prozen soothed.

Raven shrieked and flayed about, trying to dislodge Prozen's hold. "Easy!" Continued hysterically, his voice raspy from the lack of use. "EASY? Get your damned hands OFF me! Let's see you going through that then coming out to say it was 'Easy!' Would you STOP TOUCHING ME! YOU ASSHOLE! I HATE YOU I HATE YOU! I HOPE YOU DIE SLOWLY!"

Prozen simply smiled with amusement and waited until Raven was finished his rant, panting with exhaustion. That was when Prozen leaned close to his charge. Raven's eyes flew wide with alarm as he felt Prozen sliding his hands up and down his arms in a way that was not at all comforting. His hair stood on end and his heart - which HAD begun to slow- sped up again. He didn't fight it when Prozen levered him onto his back and began to nuzzle his neck. Raven tried to calm his frantic self but could not. A warm, wet, soft yet firm, something caressed his throat and he heard Prozen groan.

"You taste so good, Raven." Prozen told him as he shifted over Raven's body, grinding against his hip.

Raven felt his eyes tear up. "Please don't." He pleaded softly.

Prozen just laughed.

Out side the Doctor and the scientist tried to ignore the sounds coming from inside the cell.

Some time later Prozen stood and adjusted his uniform, leaving Raven curled up on the floor sobbing softly to himself. Prozen open the cell and together with Shaddow exited, leaving the Doctor and Scientist to do their job.

"No mistakes, gentlemen." He reminded them as he stepped out of the brig, the organoid trailing after him.

The world shook. Raven only barely noticed it as he rocked in his cell. Naked and shivering, he stared at the air in front of him, arms around his knees. The world shook again, and he blinked. Suddenly it occurred to him that the world had been shaking for some time now. And the feel of the shaking made him think of weapons exploding. The lights flickered, then steadied.

*/A Zoid attack?/* He thought with hope rising, briefly, before it crashed down again. */No one's coming for you./* He chastised himself, laying his head on his knees. A lone tear escaped down his cheek. */No one cares. I'm going to die down here./*

"Why, Shaddow?"

Van was not exactly sure why, but when he, Irvine, and Thomas had finished rounding up all the enemy for the other army officers to deal with, he jumped from his Zoid and entered the room that was identified as Prozen's office. Thomas followed him.

"What are you doing, Van?" Thomas asked.

Van stood in the centre of the room, just staring into the air looking lost. "There's... something..." He said quietly.

"What ever." Thomas went to the computer on Prozen's desk and set about hacking into it. Van wandered around the room vaguely, until he came to the cupboard. He pressed a section on the wall and a door opened up.

"Thomas, look at this." He said walking through the doorway to an elevator. Thomas followed him after radioing in what they had found. There was only one button with obvious use. Van pressed it, and braced himself for a trap. Only the elevator began to move down instead. Both men blew out sighs of relief.

"I wonder where this is going?" Thomas said noting the flashing lights showing passing floors.

"Where ever it is, it looks like it's a long way down. We'll have to get people to check out all the floors before we leave. Who knows what else Prozen has been developing or what we would find down here."

The elevator slowed to a stop, and they stepped out to a room filled with equipment of scientific origin. In the centre was an empty human-sized glass tube with wires and tubes connected to it. Close observation shown that it had been filled with some kind of liquid. Thomas tried to radio in again and found that they were too deep underground for the signal.



"We'll have to get the doc to test out what that is." Thomas said. Van nodded absently, wandering around the room. There was another door leading down another corridor. Van pulled out his weapon and went to explore.

Foot steps. Coming closer. Slow, measured foot steps. Booted feet. Raven felt his heart race with fear, and squeezed his eyes shut, trying to curl deeper into himself. How long before he would go mad? He wondered. Not long enough. Perhaps he was mad already? Damn, he hurt. Why wouldn't Prozen just kill him? Easy answer for that, he was too useful. Raven shuddered at remembered agony, quickly shaking his thoughts away from that. Horrific. Not again. Please not again!

There were cells down here. Well lit, showing no one was inside. Still Van walked, looking into each as he passed. He was almost disappointed at finding nothing until he reached the last cell. There he discovered a naked young man with dark hair, curled around his knees, huddled into the furthest corner of the cell, rocking. Van fished out his vibro dagger and sliced the lock so he could enter the cell.

"Hey," He said quietly as he approached the prisoner cautiously. The prisoner shrank away from him, whimpering. That was when Van actually recognised him. "RAVEN?"

Violet-grey eyes looked up at him, tears streaming down the pale face. Raven launched himself at Van and clung to him, sobbing. Van was shocked. He stood, not sure what to do with his hands as Raven pressed against him. Gradually Van lay a hand on Raven's icy shoulder, again shocked, this time by his temperature. He Gently pushed Raven away and undid his jacket. Raven looked at him wide-eyed when Van placed it around his shoulders. It did nothing to hide his nakedness, but it was warmer than the cold air. Raven pulled it around himself, and allowed Van to lead him out of the cell.

"Thomas!" Van called to him as they entered the room with all the equipment. "Look what I found." As soon as they entered the room Raven whimpered and pressed into Van's side, squeezing him with terror. Thomas looked up from the computer he was accessing and glared when he saw Raven. He paused just as he was about to draw his weapon until he actually saw the state Raven was in. Van's jacket did not cover the bruises on Raven's hips. Or legs. Or his shaking. Thomas' glare turned into a frown, then he pulled off his jacket too, and walked over to the two men.

"Here." He said offering it to his enemy. "It's not much, but it may cover your... um..." He found himself flushing with embarrassment. Raven reached out a shaking hand with bruises around his wrist and took the jacket, tying it around his waist. He bowed his head as a thank you, then went back to clinging to Van.

"Did you find anything?" Van asked. Thomas smirked triumphantly and held up a disk. "Good, let's get out of here."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by Zuzanny

Doctor D frowned as he examined the sedated young man who Van had brought back with him. Naked, bruised and bleeding, showing signs of recent abuse. At first Dr. D thought that VAN had done those things to Raven, but that went completely against all he knew about Van. And Thomas. No, it was not something that either young man would do. So who? Raven's body also had other curious scars on it. Scars that were thick and healing well. Recent enough to have happened within the last few months. Scars that spoke of surgery, but in a strange place for a boy. An internal exam revealed more of these scars. Then there were the other scars. Fainter, and thinner, spread out over his belly, too organic to have been inflicted unnaturally. These were more like stretch marks. But why would he have these? Raven had been out of sight for the last year or more, but that did not mean he would gain enough weight then lose it fast enough to do all that. Dr. D prodded his way around Raven's abdomen to make sure there was not internal

hemorrhaging. There was a slight swelling that he would attribute to a filling bladder, but that was it. Raven made a small sound when he pressed there.

"Curious." He muttered, continuing his observations. Raven appeared in perfect health if not for the scars and recent abuse. Doctor D. set up a special kit, and took swabs from between the young man's legs. He decided on what tablets would be best for him to take to ensure infection would not set in. Definitely Iron supplements. Raven was very pale, paler than usual, and had very likely lost a lot of blood. Doctor D pulled a warm blanket up over the young man then sat at his computer to order the prescriptions.

\*\*\* Raven felt heavy. His eyes slowly opened and he grimaced at the grit he wiped away. He was warm and comfortable... and lying down. He frowned trying to figure out why this would be happening. He looked around. He was the only one in the room. The door was open and lead to a nurses station and lounge. There were other rooms around the walls. No guards which Raven found very odd. And irritating. If they thought he was just a weak little thing that would not just walk out of here if it didn't suit him, they were wrong. He was Raven, damn it! And they should at least show him respect enough to post a guard at the door!

Why hold him here anyway? Why not kill him and get it over with? To heal him suggested that he was wanted alive. At least for now. Raven sighed and yawned and decided that he didn't care if they killed him. It wasn't as though he had anything worth living for now anyway.

Betrayed.

Alone.

Betrayed. Betrayedbetrayerbetrayer!

Raven traced a hand over his flat abdomen remembering fondly what it had felt like just a little while ago. Big and round. Swollen. Filled with a life he would never see. He smiled sadly as he recalled feeling it move within him. The times he would prod his belly and have that little one kick in response. At first he had been completely horrified by the reality, after all he was a MAN not a woman. It was unnatural! It was wrong! It was disgusting what Prozen had done to him!

But then, as it grew inside him he realised that it was wonderful. At times he had thought he could hear/feel it's heart beat. He still hated Prozen so much words could not describe it, but he was amazed at how incredibly protective of the little life he had felt. Prozen had had to have him sedated when the doctors tried to do tests on him after he broke the neck on that first one. He smiled wickedly at that memory. Bastard deserved it. Yes, he liked having the little life growing inside him. Getting it out was not an experience he ever wanted to repeat however. He shuddered at that thought.

Raven had never thought of himself as the kind of person who would like to have children, especially in the way the world still was. But at that time Shadow had been by his side. He purposely steered his thoughts away from the organoid and man that betrayed him and immersed himself in the memories of the little being that had lived inside him for what he felt was far too short a time. Tears began to leak from his eyes. With that little life he had not been alone. He had even been able to... love... for a while. Until Prozen said... No don't think about that. Pretend you didn't hear him.

Dead... Dead!

Raven curled up tighter covering his ears with his hands. I can't hear you! You're lying

Dead!

No! It's not true! I'd know it! I'd feel it!

Dead dead dead dead dead...

The tears streamed freely as he moaned to himself completely lost to his grief. Until...

What was that noise?

Fiona hurried to the hospital carrying a hysterical baby organoid from ward to ward searching for doctor D. For some reason she just could not find him. Nor Van, Irvine or Thomas.

"Come on baby," She tried to sooth the child by rocking and patting and singing. But the baby would have none of it. Fiona was getting awfully close to the end of her rope.

A nurse came over from the station. "Can I have a try?" She called to Fiona over the noise, reaching out her hands. Fiona gratefully passed the baby over. The nurse couldn't calm the baby either.

"Do you know where dr. D is?" Fiona asked her over the noise.

"No. Come on bubby, shhh shhh shh..."

Fiona looked up and froze as she saw Raven dressed in a hospital gown, standing in the doorway staring at her. /No, not at me./ She realised. /The baby./

Slowly he walked over and reached for the baby. The nurse looked a little unsure but handed the squalling child over anyway. Immedidatly he stopped squalling and began nuzzling Raven's shoulder. Raven's eyes were glued to the little bundle and he turned back to his room with a small smile.

"Kouryo." He whispered and disappeared into the shadows of his room. Fiona and the nurse blinked then exchanged glances. Fiona followed Raven. He was rocking the baby and cooing. The baby was reaching up to touch his face and hair.

"Raven?" Fiona began, then fumbled, unsure.

"Yes?" He whispered not even looking at her.

"Who is the baby's mother?" She blerted it out, then grimaced at herself.

Raven did not hesitate. "I am." He said.

Fiona gave him a funny look. "But you're a boy!"

"Last I checked I was male, yes."

"Then how-"

"I don't know. " He sat on the bed and began sliding the shoulder of his hospital gown down exposing his chest. Fiona stared as the baby found a dusky nipple on Raven's flat chest and suckled. Raven made a small sound, his eyes shuttered with pleasure. Fiona continued to stare as the baby drank, contented slurps and swallows. Raven leaned against the head of the bed looking dazed but also content. Fiona sat next to the bed, fascinated.

"Who's the father then?"

Raven's mouth twitched, something dangerous flashed over his eyes for a second, but he said nothing.

"Is it Shadow?"

"My my, you sure are curious today." He said quietly putting on his normal teasing. "Have you been sent to be my interrogator?"

"No. I'm just curious."

"It doesn't matter who the father is. I'm here now. That's all. No one will separate us again. Will they Kouryo?" He looked down at the baby with such adoration that Fiona began to feel out of place. For a few moments she sat there in an uncomfortable silence. "Thank you." Raven said suddenly.

"What? What for?"

He raised his eyes to look at her. "For looking after him."

Fiona bowed her head slightly. "How do you know I did?"

Raven gave her a vague smile. "Because I do." Then he looked over her shoulder to the nurse floating anxiously by the door. "You better go before Van has a fit."

Fiona nodded and stood to leave. Raven went back to feeding his baby and rocking him. Fiona thought she could hear him softly humming.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 6 by Zuzanny

Doctor D read out loud a few lines out of the thousands on the computer screen, trying to make sense of everything that was on the disc Van and Thomas had retrieved from Prozen's underground lab.

""Although anxious, Human test subject responding well to the serum, showing considerable compatibility to the organoid genes. Fertilisation to be confirmed.""

""Fertilisation confirmed. Human test subject showing suicidal tendencies through attempted self starvation. Has been restrained and an iv line introduced.""

""Human test subject unresponsive when questioned about nausea or other discomfort.""

""Foetus confirmed.""

""Human test subject forcibly restrained and sedated after becoming violent resulting in the death of a lab technician.""

""Ultrasound showing healthy foetal development.""

It went on and on describing the... well, pregnancy, like it was any other. Only every now and then there were little comments about how the "Human test subject" would protest. They grew less and less in the later months. Dr. D cringed when he read the details of the labour. No wonder Raven had those scars! It was amazing that he even survived it! He was shocked that They did not perform a cesarian as that would be less traumatic on all individuals and less risk to Raven's life. But then, perhaps Raven's life was not important enough. The way They only referred to him as 'Human test subject' seemed to suggest it.

Doctor D poked his head into the ward room that Raven was being housed in and saw him lying

on the bed with his back to the door. There was a portable crib, but he could not see the baby so Dr. D had to assume that he was on the bed as well.

"What do you want." Raven 's voice came over to him. Dr. D cleared his throat and slipped in beside the bed.

"To check on you." Dr. D told him. Now he could see the baby was feeding. Dr. D blinked with shock. Fiona had told him about it, but he had never thought she was really talking about reality. But then she did not have the baby and he had just spoken with Van, Irvine and Thomas who did not have the baby either. "How is the little one?"

"Fine." Raven said icily.

Dr. D moved around the other side of the bed so he could look Raven in the eye. And observe the baby. "You know the nurses can take him if you need a rest."

Raven just gave him a look. Dr. D grinned. He pulled a chair over and reclined in it. Raven watched every move he made, a lethal gleam in his eyes. Dr. D found it interesting from an observational point of view. Like a mother tiger guarding her cub. "His name is Kouryo." Raven told him matter-of-factly.

"Very nice. Did you name him or someone else?"

Raven looked down at his now sleeping son, frowning. "I did." He said quietly.

Dr. D shifted closer. "May I?" He waited for Raven to nod before lifting Kouryo, gently placing him in the crib, and covering him with a blanket.

"Prozen just wanted to call him 'It' or 'Thing' like he wasn't even a living being." Raven continued. Dr. D was not exactly sure why Raven was talking to him about this subject but he was glad anyway. "Like he had no soul. But he does. I felt him. From the very first moment I was aware of him. I didn't want him at first, but... As he grew I realised it didn't matter."

"What didn't matter?"

"That I'm male. What they were doing to me. What HE did to me."

"From the notes I have read I take it that this was not a consensual experiment?"

Raven frowned. "No. It was not consensual."

"You are taking this very coolly for someone who had been..."

Hatred flared in Raven's eyes. "Been what?" He demanded.

Dr. D picked his words carefully. "Been violated so."

Raven snorted. "You have no idea. What do you care anyway? As far as you're concerned Kouryo is just another THING for you to gawk and prod at."

"Actually no. I'm more interested at your physiological changes." Raven snorted again. "And I have been wondering why."

"Why what?"

"Why would Prozen do this to you. Not just because you are you, but because you are male. Why

not a woman?"

Raven looked tired, lost in unpleasant memories. "I don't know. Perhaps he just wanted to see how much agony he could inflict on someone. I don't know what he did to Shadow either." Anger flared back into his eyes. "But if I ever see that BASTARD again, I'll kill. him!"

Dr. D went to the nurses station, flicking through a chart. "I'm afraid mister Raven will need to be taken off of that particular sedative." He told one of them.

"Why is that?"

"Because while it tends to loosen the toungue, that drug is not safe for breast fed babies."

The nurse gave him the oddest expression, but typed the commands into the computer anyway.

Raven sat watching his baby sleep. Kouryo's eyes fluttered as he dreamed, and he made the sweetest noises when he snored. Raven was amazed at how perfect Kouryo was. Perfect little hands with perfect little finger nails. Perfect toes. Perfect eyes, nose, mouth, ears... Kouryo was just beautiful. Raven felt his heart swell with love for his child and tears started to form.

He squeezed his eyes shut and turned away trying to sort out his confused emotions. How could he love this little creature? Was he even human anymore? Were either of them human? What would happen to them when the Guardian Force realised that he was actually healthy enough to imprison? The idea of Kouryo being taken from him again terrified him. This in it's self was something he found odd.

Then came the darker set of emotions. How could he love Kouryo so much when he HATED the little creature? Raven shied away from those thoughts. Did he really hate Kouryo, or just the acts that caused Kouryo to come into existence? Thinking about this made him realise that it was the circumstances that he hated. Kouryo could not be blamed. Only Prozen could. Kouryo did not ask to be... born. Could it even be called a birth? Raven didn't know. He didn't want to think about that any more. So he sat watching his baby and feeling strangely drained of all emotions.

Some hours later, interrupted by hospital staff coming in and doping him up with something that did not seem to be effecting him at all, Raven was just letting his eyelids droop from watching Kouryo, when there came a strange squelching noise from the baby. Raven sat up his heart speeding. "What the hell?" It continued to happen. Kouryo slept on for a few minutes but then opened his mouth and squalled. Raven continued to sit on the bed staring at his son, stunned. What was it? What was going on? He reached for the buzzer in a panic, and a nurse came in.

"Yes?" She inquired.

Raven pointed at the crib. "He made a strange noise then started crying. What do I do?"

"Have you burped him?"

"Huh?"

"Try picking him up. Yes that's very good. He knows you. Now hold him against your shoulder, support his neck Good. Now pat his back gently."

Raven did as instructed, patting his baby's back and waiting for something to happen. "He smells funny." He said. The nurse nodded her head knowingly.

"Then it is time to change him."

Raven was confused. "I don't want to change him. He's fine as he is, even if his skin colour is different to ours."

"No, no... I mean change his nappy." She smiled patronisingly down at him.

Raven blinked, uncomfortable. "Um... I don't have any nappies. And I don't know how to do it. I've never changed a nappy before."

"Didn't you go to birthing classes?" The nurse was incredulous.

Raven gave her an odd look. "Nooo..."

She rolled her eyes. "Come with me." She promptly marched out, impatient for Raven to follow. He could hear her muttering. "I don't know. Women these days, always expecting to get other people to do everything for them. No thought to what they are actually doing when they get pregnant. I bet she didn't use protection either." It went on.

Raven trailed after feeling dangerously close to tears. "I'm not a... " Woman. He didn't say it. Why correct her when even he wasn't so sure what he was anymore. There were already so many people staring at him as he was lead down the hall and through elevators and more halls until he was thoroughly lost and they were standing in the maternity ward. Lots of women. Lots of babies in wheelie-cots. Lots of babies crying. Flowers being delivered. Women sitting around exposing their breasts to feed their crying babies. Raven felt light headed all of a sudden. Crowded. Suffocated.

"I shouldn't be here." He whispered. The air was starting to change colour. The world was going gray. The nurse turned to look at him oddly.

"Why ever not?" She managed to snatch Kouryo from his arms with a cry of alarm as he slumped to the floor.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 7 by Zuzanny

"He's been asleep for far too long now Doctor D." One assistant told him regarding Raven. Dr. D ran his thumb and index fingers down the hair of his chin with thought.

"Hmmm..." He said. "And how long is it now? Ten hours?" At their nods, Dr. D thought some more. "How are his obs otherwise?"

"Stable." the first assistant replied showing Dr.D Raven's chart. Dr. D was silent as he flipped pages and read. Then his eyes lit up.

"I see you changed the sedatives like I asked. That's probably all it is. Did he sleep at all before this?"

Both assistants exchanged glances. "Not that I'm aware of. But he should have been with the sedatives-"

Dr. D gave a knowing smile. "Mister Raven is a Zoid pilot who has been under the personal training of Prozen. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he has developed a high tolerance for most of the drugs we are using. Keep taking his obs, and if tonight he shows no sign of waking, inform me." He wrote something in the chart then put it back on the end of the bed. He watched the assistants go about their work before regarding Raven's sleep induced innocence. Raven's dark hair and red clan mark stood out sharply against the paleness of his skin and the stark white of the bed sheets. Raven was breathing by himself, but Dr. D had decided an IV should be introduced. Raven was still so deeply asleep that he was not in the REM stage yet. When Raven was relaxed in this way Dr. D could hardly recognise him from the angry young man they all

knew.

"Hmmm..." Dr. D thought out loud suddenly. "Perhaps I should not have discussed your background with those two. They may yet cause some trouble. I think I'll call up Van."

Dr. D paused at the nurses station. The receptionist looked up and smiled at him.

"You don't by any chance know what happened to the baby belonging to Mr. Raven, do you?" He asked.

Raven tried to sit up as soon as he realised he could no longer hear Kouryo's breathing, and found he was being held down with hundreds of cords around his arms and legs. He pulled at them in a frantic attempt to be free and get to his son.

"Kouryo!" He called out into the inky darkness that was the hospital room. "Somebody! Help me! Kouryo's not breathing!" Surely the nurses would ignore his personal status as Enemy and help an innocent child!

Wouldn't they?

Wouldn't they?

But nobody was coming.

Then he heard a familiar growl that turned his blood icy. He had no idea what he/it was doing here, or how it came, only that he knew it wanted to harm.

"Shadow!" Raven pleaded with the organoid. "Please Shadow! Leave him alone!" Shadow appeared slightly from the darkness and Raven watched helpless as the organoid clomped closer and closer to the silent cot. Raven screamed with horror as Shadow lunged down and snatched Kouryo from the cot and stood with him in its jaws. Shadow tilted his/its head back and swallowed the child head first. Raven saw one perfectly formed foot hanging from Shadow's mouth for a second before it was gone. Raven felt as though his heart was ripped from his chest and he screamed and thrashed and sobbed.

As he was doing so, Shadow's chest compartments opened and out emerged Prozen, his white hair stained with Kouryo's blood. He grinned from ear to ear as he beheld Raven trapped on the bed.

Raven then realised, to his ever increasing horror, that he was naked and helpless to escape Prozen's hot hands as they slid up the inside of his thighs. Raven bucked as Prozen settled himself between Raven's legs with his hands pressed on either side of Raven's abdomen. Prozen smiled down at Raven. Raven hissed with shock as he felt his belly heat up under those large hands which stayed there while Prozen lent down to whisper in Raven's ear.

"This one is MINE."

"NOOOOO!" Raven screamed, flinging himself up from the bed he was tangled in the sheets of and was standing before his mind registered that it was day and he was in the hospital. And Van was sitting there in the chair watching him and looking rather startled. Of course Van's presence did not really settle his nerves.

"You." Raven said coldly after he settled his heart a bit.

"Bad dream?" Van asked, grinning. Raven wanted to punch him, but right now was more concerned with Kouryo. The portable cot was gone.



"Where's Kouryo." Raven demanded. Van blinked and shrugged.

"After you fainted the nurse took him. I guess he'd be with her some where."

"I did not faint, you idiot." Raven hissed and stormed out of the room.

"Could have fooled me." Van jumped to his feet and raced after him. "Oi, wait. Wait! RAVEN!"

Raven wasn't listening. He was halfway down the hallway storming past anyone who moved out of the way, and just knocking down those that didn't. An icy glare that he wore on his face usually clued the nurses and others in the way to move it. Van finally caught up and grabbed Raven's shoulder to stop him. Raven span with such fury on his face that Van was almost too shocked to react, but his training kicked in before the clenched fist heading his way could actually connect with his face. He caught Raven's fist in his hand, ducked, and twisted the hand so that he pinned Raven's arm behind his back, then slammed him face first into the wall.

"What the hell is wrong with you!" Van hissed, pressing up against Raven while Raven struggled to free himself. "Do you want to be thrown in the brig instead of here, huh? HUH?" Van twisted Raven's arm more, making Raven arch his back. "Well? Because if you don't like theses accommodations I sure as hell can organise a nice, small, cold, cell for you. I doubt your kid would be allowed down there either."

That made Raven stop struggling, breathing heavily.

"There, that's not so hard is it? Believe it or not we are trying to help you."

"I find that hard to believe."

"Really. Well it's true."

"Then let me go so I can find my son." Raven said firmly.

Van paused, then released Raven's arm. Raven glared ice at him and continued to stalk down the hall. Van shrugged and followed him. "So," Van said conversationally. "What's the hurry?" Raven simply looked at Van through narrowed eyes for a moment, and kept walking.

A nurse in the maternity ward recognised Raven, and she hid her giggle the moment he fixed his glare upon her.

"Where's my son." Raven demanded of her.

The nurse quickly placed her professional persona in place. "He's asleep in the day room. [1]" She tilted her head to the side as she looked over Raven and Van who was slightly behind him. "If you follow me, I'll take you to him."

They followed her through a door behind the nurses station that had couches with curtains hanging around them so new mothers could breast feed in privacy, a long bench with a sink in it and a television attached to the wall playing a educational movie about different breast feeding techniques. Raven ignored all that while Van blushed heavily and tried not to look at any of it. On another wall there as shelves filled with linens for use as nappies, as well as baby clothes and blankets. In front of the bench with the sink were five portable cots with sleeping babies wrapped in blankets. Each had a chart clipped to the end of the cot. There were a few empty cots around the corner that continued to the premy baby room with humi-cribs. Some more nurses were busy holding babies against their chests allowing their mothers time to rest.

One of the five cots had a distinctly coloured baby sleeping peacefully. Raven felt his heart lurch when he saw his Kouryo, and went quietly to his baby's side.

As if sensing his presence, Kouryo opened his eyes and smiled up at Raven.

Back in Raven's room, Raven watched Kouryo discover his hands. Kouryo watched his fingers as he held his hands in front of his face, absolutely fascinated. His eyes were a smokier violet than Raven's right now, but that would change as Kouryo grew and developed. Raven realised - with some delight- that they resembled each other. The silvery tinge to Kouryo's skin aside, he had Raven's eyes, nose, mouth, hair... on close examination he even shared the same birth mark on the belly. It was amazing. Simply remarkable. Even Kouryo's eyelashes and eye brows were like Raven's.

Raven wondered, not for the first time, what it was Prozen had really been trying to do? Raven's piloting skills came from long years of practice and hard work. He knew he was better than any other pilot ut there apart from Van, but still...

Van. Wasn't that an Interesting Thing. Rescued by Van after many a defeat by Van. The Shame. Van, his nemesis, now his saviour. Van saw what a state Raven had been in after all Prozen's goon men had finished with him, not to mention Shadow and Prozen himself. He felt another pang in his chest. He didn't know what Prozen had done to Shadow to turn the organoid against him, but it sure worked. Raven took a deep steadying breath, and slowly released it, well aware of the brown eyes of his saviour/protector/guard/shadow/annoyance/what ever watching him. Raven would not let it all bother him. He now had a child to take care of and protect and nothing else was important any longer.

Van cleared his throat nervously. "So." He said from his seat against the wall. "How does this actually work?"

Raven tore his attention away from Kouryo over to Van. "Why are you still here exactly?"

Van crossed his arms over his chest. "Look, the powers that by want to, well, crucify you. The only thing that is delaying that is the way you were found and of course your kid."

"His name," Raven interrupted angrily. "is Kouryo. Not 'kid'. Not 'it' or 'thing'. Kouryo. Either use his name or don't talk."

"My, my, grumpy! Gees. There's no need for that."

Raven's eyes flashed with anger, but his voice stayed calm. "No need for me to be grumpy? You have no idea! You go through what I've been through and then tell me if I have no need to be grumpy. Fuck you, Van."

Van was going to snap back, but closed his mouth instead. "As I was saying," He continued stonily. "For the moment your situation regarding Kouryo is the only reason why you are not in a cell awaiting trial for war crimes. However there are hundreds of people out there who more than likely don't give a shit. That's why I'm here to protect you."

Raven snorted sarcasticly.

"When I'm not here," Van continued, ignoring Raven's attempts to wriple him. "Then another member of the Guardian Force will be."

"Great. Don't tell me it will be that idiot Shoebultz."

"We'll just have to wait and see. Now I know what is like being a soldier, and having to take

orders. The powers that be are willing to go lightly on you if you tell us what Prozen ordered you to do."

Raven gave Van a confused look which concerned Van, but then Kouryo fussed so Raven picked him up and opened his shirt to let Kouryo suckle, and the moment was over. Raven settled at the head of his bed tilting his head to look at the ceiling back as Kouryo fed.

Van watched openly, himself oddly fascinated. Van shifted from the chair to sit on the bed on the opposite side to Kouryo. Raven turned his head and watched passively as Van reached out to lift the other side of Raven's shirt away to reveal his pale chest and shoulder. Van flicked a look at Raven's wide eyes then down to the dusky nipple. Slowly he ran his fingers down Raven's hot shoulder skin to touch the slight swell of what on a woman would have been breast. Only here it was much much smaller. Only a slight swelling. Van leaned in close to examine the area better, fingers lightly sliding over silky soft skin. When Van brushed the darker skin Raven made a small noise and his breathing hitched. Van raised his eyes back to Raven's then sat up straight again.

"So," Van said quietly. "How does it work?"

Raven turned his eyes away first, avoiding Van's, and readjusted his shirt. "I don't know." He replied truthfully. "They had me dosed with drugs a lot of the time." He risked a slight smile at Van before flicking his sight back to Kouryo. "I broke one of the scientists neck." He said it like it explained every thing. To Van it explained a lot. "After Kouryo was...born..." Raven paused, he found it difficult to talk about. Especially with one's 'enemy'. But really he had no idea who was his enemy anymore. "They told me some things, like how to feed him and how to hold him, but they would take him away in between times. When they first said how I was to feed him I couldn't believe them. I mean, come on. A MAN? Breastfeeding? But they did something so it works." Raven focussed off into the air. "The bastards." Then he sighed. "But... I can't really blame them. When Prozen wants something done, you do it. No matter how stupid or disgusting it is. If you want to live, that is. Perhaps that's why he chose me. I was the only one that defied him on a regular basis." Raven closed his eyes fighting to control his emotions. "But he got what he wanted in the end. He always does."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 8 by Zuzanny

Thomas had been assigned to watch over Raven and the baby while Van was off, and grudgingly accepted. For the last hour or so he had sat in the room watching while Raven stonily ignored him and did... woman's stuff. It was so odd to see Raven breastfeeding, let alone learning to change a nappy for the first time.

A nurse who was older than both of them and built like a battle ship had come in with a bundle of linens and clapped her meaty hands together. "Now, gentlemen." She said briskly. "Since no one has bothered to educate you on the basics of child maintenance, it has fallen to me to teach you." Thomas was about to object when she shot him a look that dared him to object. Thomas wanted to melt into the floor. Raven was incredibly interested, which made Thomas nervous.

"Observe closely," She ordered as she shook out a square of cloth nappy with a snap of her wrist that spoke of years of practice. With that one flick the cloth was layed out on the bed perfectly flat. "Now you fold the corner here, and then here." She folded it into neat triangles with one edge having two loose ends. "You place the baby onto the nappy here, fold up this part between his legs, bring to the center the top loose bit, then this single corner to the middle, then the last loose bit tucks into the top like this. See?"

Raven nodded, amazed at the ease of how she did that, and wondering who the first person was who discovered how to fold like that.

"Using this particular technique means you don't have to worry about pins, which is best for both of you." She continued. "Now, you try." She spent the next half hour observing the men practice

folding.

"I don't see why I have to learn this." Thomas grumbled. Nurse battleship slid over to him to growl in his ear.

"It's a skill no one should be without." She hissed. "You either learn it now, or put yourself to shame when your own children come along. And they WILL come along. I can assure you of THAT!" Then she turned to observe Raven, and beamed down at him. "Excellent work, young man." She said, then grabbed hold of what Thomas had been trying to fold. "Not at all as pathetic as this little lily."

Raven smiled slightly. Thomas glared at him.

Eventually they had been shown how to bath, change, dress, burp, hold, and even play with Kouryo. Thomas was thoroughly bored and looking forward to the end of his shift. He had other things to do, important, MANLY things, than baby sitting. Speaking about babies, Raven was feeding the little thing again.

"Doesn't that ever stop?" Thomas snapped without really meaning to.

Raven looked up at the sound of his voice and his eyes narrowed as he looked at Thomas. But he made no comment. Just like he had the entire time. It made Thomas suspicious and itchy to pound something.

Raven traced Kouryo's silvery skin lightly, and ran his fingers through the dark curls. Kouryo was once again asleep, but was still suckling strongly. The nurse that had actually bothered to teach him things (he had no idea of any of their names because they seemed to change with the hour), had warned him about problems with 'incorrect nipple attachment' and 'engaging in sexual intercourse with his partner too soon after the birth' which had made him go red all over. As if he would ever have to worry about THAT again. He couldn't understand what was so great about it anyway. There was nothing pleasurable about the disgusting sex act that would make him even consider allowing that kind of vulnerability again. Not consensually anyway. He frowned, lowering his eyes and curling himself forward, shuddering. What could he do? What if Prozen came back for him? For Kouryo? For... No don't think about that. Don't think about it!

After a while Raven became aware that Thomas was watching him. It made his skin crawl. "What do you want." Raven's voice was a hiss.

"I want to know what you're up to."

Raven blinked and frowned. "What makes you think I'm up to something?"

"You haven't insulted me once today." Thomas leaned forward menacingly, Raven cringed slightly then tried to cover it up by looking away. It made Thomas smirk.

"You want me to insult you?" Raven refused to look him in the eyes, instead he looked at his sleeping son dressed in a blue singlet, booties, pants and a little knitted cap. "Seriously, I'm too tired to even be bothered thinking of something so simple enough for you to understand it. If you want insults go listen to what the other pilots are saying about that monstrosity you 'created'." He sneered the last word and waved Thomas away like he was a servant or something.

Thomas beamed.

All was as it should be.

Van approached the bed silent as a hunter, simply observing his lover relaxed in sleep. A sheet was draped artfully around the sleepers hips, dark hair spread out over the pillow. The sleeper

lay on their side, one hand under the pillow the other resting on their large round belly. The sleeper stirred at Van's presence and rolled onto their back. Violet eyes opened and lips turned up in a smile as Van was seen.

"Come feel our baby kick." Raven invited softly.

Van sat up with a gasp, his pleasure still escaping onto the sheets. He sat panting, his sweat cooling in the night air, and willed his heart to slow down. He ran his fingers through his hair getting it all out of his face.

"Shit." He whispered, then got up to have a shower. He blinked when he turned the lights on, then he turned on the taps and stripped off. Just what he needed. A wet dream about an enemy. A MALE one. One who has been altered in horrible ways. One who was already bordering on psychotic before this particular mess started.

/But he might not have always been our enemy/ He thought as he soaped himself down under the spray. Van found his curiosity pricked. Where did Raven come from? Who was he when he was not fighting a war? What sorts of things was he interested in? He would have to do some research...

Van was shocked to look down and find himself aroused again. He turned the water to cold and tried to steer his thoughts away from that particular young man and towards Fiona. He tried to imagine her without her clothes on, but grimaced. Fiona was too much like a little sister than anyone he could find sexually attractive. What about Moonbay? Nope. No good either. At least his arousal had gone down... but was that really a good thing?

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 9 by Zuzanny

Van stood guard outside the room Raven was currently getting his psych review in. He would have preferred to be IN the room- not out of curiosity (he kept telling himself), but out of protectiveness to the lady shrink. Doctor Elizabeth Makee would not be able to defend herself should Raven decide to turn nasty on her and use her as a hostage... Or worse. But she had insisted and threw Van out of her office before slamming the door on his face. Smiling all the while too.

Van crossed his arms, leaning back against the door, hoping he wasn't so obvious to those around him in his frustration of sound proofed offices. What were they talking about? Van looked at the clock on the wall opposite. Another hour to go. He considered sitting on the beige lounge chairs under said clock and reading a magazine, but... HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON! And he was so NOT going to start passing the doorway.

No way.

Nope.

Not going to happen.

Yeah.

Eventually Dr. Makee opened the door and smiled warmly at Van. She said her fair wells to a rather dazed looking Raven who blinked at her and nodded his head.

"I will be expecting to see Raven here again in two days time." She ordered Van before closing the door again.

Van turned to Raven who kept his eyes down. "So, how'd it go?"

Raven said nothing at first, before raising his eyes up, looking grim and... even disturbed. "It was... enlightening."

Van hoped for more, but Raven raised his cuffed wrists up reminding him it was time to go. Raven was... very quiet... for most of the rest of the time Van was there. A few times Van thought Raven was about to say something, but then he didn't. Raven spent the afternoon staring out the window, or feeding/changing/burping Kouryo. Van didn't mind. It gave him time to observe Raven without being noticed. He was trying to figure out what "it" was he was felt towards his nemesis. Van found his heart skipping beats when ever he even thought about Raven (the dreams also didn't help). And now seeing him with the sun streaming down over his dark locks, highlighting almost violet in places; eyes distant, dark lashes casting shadows upon his face; lips almost pouting... Not to mention the erotic line of his back and is backside! Oh My Goodness! Van was finding sitting still rather difficult. Maybe HE should go see the shrink. "Uh, Dr. Makee... I keep getting boners thinking about my captive, and have had wet dreams about getting him pregnant. Yeah, you know who I'm talking about. What do you suggest?" "Cutting you nuts off might help."

"Great." Van muttered out loud with out realizing it. Raven lifted his head at then. Van expected an inquiry, or even a simple "Hm?" but none came. Just those deeply troubled eyes looking at him. Van grinned and shrugged, and Raven turned back to the window with a sigh.

They were quiet again for some time before Raven abruptly asked, "Why did you join the guardian force?" It made Van jump, and he had to think.

"It, uh, seemed like the thing to do at the time. The attacks happening and all." He gave Raven a pointed look. Raven glared back.

"No, I mean, given the choice between the Republic and the Empire, why did you choose the way you did?"

"I was brought up to value life and freedom. Everything Prozen and your lot did went against that. It was an easy choice. i was protecting the people I love and our way of life."

Raven looked thoughtful at that.

Van thought he would plunge in. "Why did you chooses to fight for Prozen?"

Raven closed his eyes and ground his teeth a little. "I didn't" He replied quietly.

"What do you mean?" Van leaned forward in his curiosity. Raven pierced him with his eyes.

"I have had no choices in this life. And even when I thought I did, it was all a lie."

Van wanted more information than that, but Kouryo started fussing in his crib thing, so Raven had to deal with that. Van watched him bend to pick the organoid-child up and had to fight to tear his eyes away from the enticing backside that hospital garbs did nothing to hide. Van fanned himself, sweating a little.

Raven hefted Kouryo up against his shoulder like Nurse Battleaxe had instructed him, patting his nappy-clad behind gently and rocking from side to side. "What do you think they will do with us?" Raven quietly asked Van.

"I don't know." Van replied as honestly as possible. "But I don't think you will be executed. So don't worry too much."

Raven shook his head with disbelief. Did Van even comprehend what Kouryo was? What kind of future would he have if Prozen or scientists the likes of him were to get their hands on him? Not

to mention the changes he himself had been forced though! "I can't go to prison." He stated firmly.

Van canted his head to the side. "Oh yeah?" He crossed his arms.

Raven's eyes flashed dangerously, and he held Kouryo against himself protectively. "I will not let anyone to experiment upon my child!" Van thought he saw a glint of tiger teeth there for a second. "I will kill us both first!"

Dr. Makee sat at the desk in the meeting room. Around her also sat Dr. D, and various other important members of the higher ups who would decide Raven's fate. In front of her on the desk top was Raven's file with a blurry picture from a past battle, assorted (yet limited) notes about his personal life out side said battles, and Dr. Makee's notes from her session.

"You understand," She said as she finished presenting her findings. "that I will need further sessions to back up my prognosis. But purely based upon this one session with young mister Raven - true name unknown to even him- I can say he is not responsible for his actions."

There was strong disagreement from some in the room. Dr. D clapped his hands loudly to get attention. "Gentlemen!" He called out. "Our society is built upon protecting the weak and defenseless, and also forgiving those who deserve it. We know that Raven was a child when he witnessed his parents' slaying by an organoid. We know that the man who would have taken him in, protected, and nurtured him as a second son; commit suicide, also before his eyes. And we know that Prozen found him - still a child - and indoctrinated him, no, brainwashed him thoroughly for the next ten or so years of his young life. I would like to see anyone in this room go though half of what that young man has gone through and come out without any sign of confusion. Yes, Raven is dangerous, but he was made that way by a madman. For all his skills, Raven is still a defenseless citizen in need of help and reformation into decent society."

"Rubbish!" Said one councilman. "If he were a dog trained to kill children there would be no talk of trying to reform him, he would just be put down. For the Better of society!"

"But he is not a dog." Dr. D interjected. "He is a human. And humans can be trained and can be reformed... If given the right motivation and support."

"This is stupid. If we let him go, chances are he would go on a killing spree and run back to his master."

"Prozen is Not his master." Dr. Makee pointed out. "Not any more."

"That is not the point. You are suggesting we just let him go free with little more than a few counseling sessions! Ridiculous!"

"That is not what I'm suggesting at all." Dr. D snapped. "I'm suggesting he be supervised by at least one member of the Guardian force at all times; counseled, questioned and debriefed on all past operations; kept in a secure location out of the towns, and taught about what we expect from him. You never know, he might make a powerful ally against Prozen."

"And don't forget," Dr. Makee added sarcastically. "that he can produce organoid children." Raven was once again changing a wet nappy, Kouryo lying on his bed looking rather pleased with his effort, and Van trying not to look too closely, when the door burst open letting Dr. D and some senators enter with fanfare.

"Good news!" Dr. D was grinning from ear to ear. "We have a solution!"

Van and Raven exchanged glances, not even remotely clued in to what Dr. D was talking about, but not liking where it was headed anyway.

"Van, it has been decided by the highest level of our government, that since you are such an elite member of the guardian force, with skills most people could only dream of, you are the perfect person to guard Mister Raven here on a full time basis!"

"Huh?" Was Van's eloquent reply.

"Raven is being taken into protective custody." A senator said.

"You are to move in together." Dr. D translated with a stage whisper and wiggling eyebrows that spoke of indecent things

"WHAT?" Raven shrieked, ripping the cloth nappy neatly in two. Kouryo kicked his legs and gurgled.

"It's all been arranged. Van, don't worry, all of your things have already been moved to the apartment."

"A-part-ment?" Van echoed.

"Thats right. And Raven, since you have no possessions to speak of, we will be transporting you both to the facilities as soon as you have finished changing that nappy."

Raven sat down on the floor hard, staring off into the air in front of him in shock. "Some one kill me now. Just kill me and end this madness."

Then Van was crouching beside him, one hand on his shoulder in a steadying/comforting manner. "Come on," Van said quietly. "at least it's not prison. You wont have to worry about Kouryo being experimented on." He looked up and stood again, protectively, formidable compared to the old and pampered men watching them with a mixture of hostility, curiosity, and speculation in their eyes. "That is right, isn't it? Both Kouryo and Raven will be safe from experimentation? From anyone?"

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 10 by Zuzanny

Raven held Kouryo protectively against his chest- one hand under his little backside, the other at the back of his neck- and slowly stepped out of the black limousine they had arrived in. An MP held the car door open, and then went to the apartment block door to do security things. Raven noticed all the drivers, guards, doormen (MP's in various roles), all wore not-so-discrete ear pieces that they would quietly consult each other over before letting him take even a few steps in any direction.

Then Van was beside him, not quite touching him, but close enough that Raven could feel his warmth against his arm and side. "Come on," Van said quietly. "It'll be okay, you'll see." Then he drew Raven forward with a hand to his lower back.

Raven moved almost mechanically, walking up the steps of the building, hearing his heart drumming in his ears. With each step he felt light headed, like he was approaching his execution. Only Van's hand at his back kept him moving.

The foyer was made of beige marble, and had real potted plants beside the two elevators. Looking around Raven saw that there was a stair case on the right of the elevators, and that the doors to both the elevators and the front doors were swipe card protected. He couldn't see any air vents, but there were pillars around, so they could have been out of his sight.

Then Raven and Van were escorted into the elevator, two MP's on each side, and taken up to the seventh level. Although he didn't show it, Raven felt almost smug that he was still enough of a threat that at least four MP's was considered necessary to make sure he got to his room.



Up on the seventh floor the door of the elevator opened and they were again greeted by Dr. D and his insane, cheesy grin. Arms flung wide, an apartment door open behind him. "Welcome, gentlemen!" Dr. D cried out with what Raven thought was far too much enthusiasm. "I hope the accommodation meets with your approval!" He ushered them inside and closed the door leaving all the MP's standing out in the hall way.

Raven stood in the middle of the lounge room looking around in bewilderment at the comfortable couches, home theater set up, and the open plan kitchen joined to the lounge.

"In we go," Dr. D announced and lead the way past him and around th the right where there were three doors in the far wall. "This is Kouryo's room." D opened the door on that wall closest the the front door. Raven frowned thinking he'd rather have Kouryo where ever he decided to put him, but was again shocked when he actually went in to look. The room was painted pale blue and was filled with toys, books, baby clothes and furniture. All set up and ready to use. There was even a mobile made of stuffed sea creatures hanging over the cot. "Fiona's been busy." D continued. "Do you like it?"

It took Raven a few moments to shake off the shock and the awe to be able to reply. He tried to stop his voice shaking, emotions threatening to make his eyes tear up. "Why... Why did she do this?"

Dr. D patted his shoulder lightly. "Because she wanted to." He said.

"But... I'm your enemy!" Raven looked up and back at the Doctor who smiled kindly back.

"Not any more. Not unless you decide to be. Here we believe in second chances, especially when situations like yours happen."

Raven bristled, but Dr. D was already out the bedroom chatting with Van. Raven went over to the cot and lay his very sleepy baby down, taking a deep breath as he covered Kouryo with a the blanket. "What do you think?" He whispered. "Should we stay?" Kouryo blinked sleepily up at him then kicked his feet out when he saw a blue teddy at the end of the cot. Raven's lip twitched, and he reached out to bring the soft thing close for Kouryo to touch with his hands. Kouryo fell asleep looking at it. Raven did smile then. "Okay."

It was pleasing to find everyone except Van gone by the time he had settled Kouryo and was ready to leave the bedroom. Van was on the floor in the kitchenette rummaging around in the cupboards and muttering things to do with "stupid politicians" and "dirty minded Doctor".

Raven closed Kouryo's door, then came over and coughed to let Van know he was there. Van jumped, banging his head on an open door above him, letting out a loud curse and bending over clutching at his head.

"Painful?" Raven stated as he stood leaning against the door frame. Van glared at him through tears and the gap in his arms. Raven ignored the glare. "What are you looking for?"

"Food." Van snapped, checking his hands for blood. Raven leaned down to look in the open cupboard in from of Van, one eye brow raised at the malamine dishes stored there.

Raven turned and opened the fridge which was laden with all sorts of fresh fruit, vegetables, and meats. "What's wrong with what is in here?" He asked.

"No good." Van sighed in reply. "I can't believe they took away my chocolate. The bastards. AND my BEER!" Van continued to rant about it. Raven just shook his head, almost even feeling amused. "You think this is funny?" Van once more glared at him. "Have you ever TASTED my

cooking?" There was horror evident in Van's yes that spoke of evil undead and other nasty things (that Raven put down to food poisoning).

"Have you ever tried to follow a recipe, or to actually COOK your food before eating it?" Raven quipped.

"Ha ha. Very funny. Just for that YOU can cook." Van looked oh so smug at that... Until Raven's lips spread into an evil grin of delight, and Van just knew he was thinking about the kitchen knives. "Or... we could order out."

Raven considered pizza... all the grease involved... and doubled over like he had been kicked in the guts, hand to his mouth, pale and groaning as he struggled not to vomit all over the kitchen floor.

Van just managed to ask "Oi, do you need a bucket?" before Raven span and scrambled to the bathroom just opposite Kouryo's door. Van followed at a much slower pace, grimacing at the horrible sounds Raven made as he vomited up what little was in his stomach. Taking a deep breath, Van passed through the bathroom doorway, and watched Raven worship at the porcelain throne, admiring the backside presented to him. Then he blinked, observing the bathroom, and swore loudly when he realised there was an essential piece of structure missing: A door.

Raven slowly raised his head looking very pale and miserable with his hair mussed and eyes bloodshot. He blinked back at Van trying to figure out what he did to cause him to be cursing so much.

Van stood rigid, fists clenched, teeth grinding. "I'm... going to... KILL THOSE BASTARDS!" He growled.

Raven's brow crinkled as he still tried to wrap his mind around the situation, but then saw what was missing and realised that having no door meant that Van could watch him in the shower. And if not Van, then someone else. The thought sent shudders through his body and almost made him vomit some more. Raven wrapped his arms around his middle, bending so that his forehead touched the cool floor.

"I'd like to... hold them for you..." He ground out through waves of nausea. "but I'm... kinda... indisposed... right now."

Van calmed watching him, then went to the sink to wet a face washer and knelt behind him to lay it on the back of Raven's neck. Hesitantly he lay his hands upon Raven's stiff shoulders and began to massage gently. Raven tensed at first, but then accepted his touch with a sigh, closing his eyes and even relaxing a little as Van kneaded his sore shoulders. After a few minutes of no words between them Van said "I take it you don't want take out." And Raven surged out of Van's grasp once more hurling into the toilet. Van backed out of the room stuttering apologies with Raven's ground out "Bastard." trailing after him.

Raven curled up in front of the toilet shuddering and panting from the violence of his stomach. He closed his eyes trying to decide if it were over. After some time of nothing more happening he flushed the toilet and pulled himself up by the sink to wash his mouth out.

He groaned, avoiding looking into the mirror, and rubbed his burning eyes. "This confirms it." He whispered bitterly, trying to compose himself before leaving the bathroom. "I need to lie down." He muttered out into the lounge room, not really caring if Van heard or not, and staggered into his designated room. He had barely pulled his boots off and curled up fully clothed and shivering under the blankets before Van was at the doorway.

"Are you alright?" Van asked what Raven thought was the stupidest question in the galaxy.

"Really?" But the concern was real, which... kind of surprised and touched Raven.

"No." Raven replied honestly, still shivering. Van remained quiet, waiting. Raven sighed. "The experiments They performed on me... have had a... lasting effect."

Van was by his bedside now. "How bad?"

Raven laughed mirthlessly. "Bad." And that's all he wanted to say on the subject.

"...Would you like me to get you a bucket?"

Raven almost automatically said no, but didn't. Instead he slowly inclined his head. Van left and was soon back, placing the bucket on the floor near Raven's head, before turning to leave.

"Van," Raven called out, making him turn in the doorway. "Thanks."

Van smiled charmingly and waved before switching off the light.

Raven was asleep almost instantly.

Van waited until he was sure Raven really was asleep before pulling out his mobile and dialing Dr. D. "What on Z were they thinking? No door on the toilet..." He muttered while the phone was ringing. He pushed the thoughts of watching Raven shower out of his mind with a shake to his head. "Besides!" He said a little louder. "It's unhygienic!" While waiting for the Dr. to pick up, Van wandered to his room and was relieved to find all his things set up and waiting for him. He flopped down on his double bed, which had been his first major purchase after his employment with the Guardian Force. He sank against his pillows now, phone to his ear, enjoying his own familiar things.

"Hello?" Dr. D's voice sounded.

"Finally." Van hissed.

"Ah, Van! How are do you like you new place?"

"Mostly good except-"

"Except?" There was a smug sound to that voice that made Van want to pound him.

"Except there were a few things missing."

"Really?" Such fake innocence. Yes, Van was sure this man was going to fry. "What?"

"For starters," Van ticked them off on his fingers. "my chocolate bars, my beer,"

"Have you checked in your bedside drawers?"

"No." He rolled over to do so and found them there. He snagged out a chocolate bar and rolled to his back again. "Who keeps beer and chocolate in bedside drawers? Seriously. But also the bathroom door is missing. What the HELL is that about?"

"For safety reasons, I assure you."

"Safety reasons MY ASS! Shuddup. There are a set of very sharp and pointy knives on the kitchen bench, so how is having no door in the bathroom a safety feature?" Van heard Dr. D's frown through the phone, and Van felt smug that he could hear it.

"Very valid point." It was said after a pause. "I'll see that the knives are removed."

"NO!" Van yelled, then calmed himself down. "Just get us a damned door. I really don't want to see Raven puking his guts up any more, never mind anything else."

"What?" Dr. D snapped to attention. "Raven's been ill?"

Van gave a shuddering sigh. "Yeah. Afterwards he said it was to do with the experiments. He's sleeping now. Do you think they may have hooked him onto some kind of drug he now can't live without?"

"...I doubt it, or we would have picked it up with his blood work. Listen, I've got to go. For now I want you keep an eye on him and let me know immediately if this happens again. It could just have been a combination of shock over what happened to him and nerves about living with a stud like you-

Van hung up. "Sheesh." He sighed looking at the phone in his hand. "I think I'm starting to feel sexually harassed." Then he shuddered thinking about Dr. D looking at him like some... "Yech." The thought was even turning him off his chocolate.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 11 by Zuzanny

Dr. D frowned as he yet again read over Raven's blood test result, Van's words about Raven's illness echoing around in his mind.

"This... could be a problem." He muttered to himself, then began to lock down his computer. When that was done, he gathered the materials he needed for a visit to Van and his reluctant room mate.

Van woke to the sound of Raven retching in the bathroom, and covered his ears to go back to sleep, but decided against that. With a curse he rolled out of bed, stretched, yawned, scratched, and dragged himself out to the door of the bathroom. He pulled aside the bed sheet he had hung the night before across the door way and leaned against the frame. Once more his eyes were drawn down the line of Raven's spine and he had to drag his head away before his heart started pumping too much blood away from his brain.

"You're still sick?" Van asked the obvious, to which Raven just turned his head to glare back over his shoulder. A glare that was not nearly effective as it should be with the haggard, red rimmed eyes it came from. So Van ignored it and walked up to crouch beside him. "Were you sick during the night?"

Raven spat into the bowl then reached up to flush. "No." He croaked while the water churned. Then he sighed and hung his head in a way that Van thought could have been embarrassment... but was not sure what over. "Um..." Raven continued. "Last time... with Kouryo... I was only sick in the mornings. But there were no bad smells and things there, I guess. It was really sterile."

Van blinked, having what Raven just said going straight over his head. "O-kay..." He drew it out. "But why were you sick last night, if bad smells make you chuck? I mean, we were talking about-

"DON'T SAY IT!" Raven shoved his hand over Van's mouth, desperately fighting the wave of nausea that was threatening to hit the back of his throat. Van watched Raven's expression crumple as he panted, pale faced over the toilet bowl. "I can't do this again." He covered his face with his hands, shaking all over, while he curled in upon himself. "Why does this shit always happen to me?"

Van pulled Raven into his arms, just holding him while Raven sobbed loudly against his

shoulder, trying not to show just how FREAKED OUT he was getting over Raven's show of emotions. Raven clung to his top and cried and cried, and cried, before suddenly lifting and turning his head, jerking to attention. "Kouryo," He breathed, before he was gone from Van's arms and into his son's room. Van stayed crouching where he was, arms still like he was holding Raven... a very puzzled expression on his own face.

/I can't believe I just balled like a weak little girl./ Raven thought bitterly to himself as he pulled Kouryo out of the cot and tried to sooth his cries. /And on HIS shoulder. Of course. Of course it had to be him. My life doesn't suck enough, I obviously need to be humiliated more. I hate this. Why do I keep putting up with this shit? If Van wasn't such a stickler for gun regs, I could take his and end it all. It would be so easy.../ More tears started gathering in his eyes and he shook them off with a sigh, thoughts turning to his son having to survive without him, always wondering where he came from and why he wasn't loved. Why he was all alone in the world. "No," He breathed out long. "It wouldn't be easy at all."

Raven carried Kouryo to his bed, stiffly ignoring Van who was still standing in the bathroom doorway watching, and lay curled on his side, shirt open to let Kouryo suckle. As he lay there, mind drifting, he found himself thinking about Van. Van always screwing up his missions, always SOME how defeating him. Van who even though they were enemies, found him and protected him in his hour of need. Van who treated him... very well, considering the way Raven had been trained regarding prisoners of war. Van who did not push him away with disgust, didn't take advantage, didn't deliberately humiliate him further especially after finding him in that cell. Van who's morning shoulder smelled... nice. Raven found himself blushing as he remembered what it felt like to have Van's warm, strong, fingers gently caressing the skin around his nipple back in the hospital room, how... good... it had felt. How it had made his heart jump start. Then strangely enough he began imagining Van kneeling before him, placing his mouth where Kouryo's now was, Van's arms wrapped around his waist while licking, kissing, sucking. Raven arching into the embrace... /Maybe... this place will not be... so bad./ He chose to ignore the fact that Van's hair in his mind was turning white and growing longer...

He was just on the edge of dozing, pleasant feelings waring with the feelings of horror flowing through his mind when there was a knock on the apartment door. Raven jumped which startled Kouryo and made him clamp down hard on what was in his mouth.

"AAARGH!" Raven screeched arching his back and rolling, desperately trying to pry the strong jaws off him. Eventually he managed to do so (Kouryo started crying enough to open his mouth), and Raven rolled away from the baby clutching at his chest and swearing loudly as he tried to sooth the pain away. Then a knock at the bedroom door had him looking up at Van and a Dr D that was really asking to have his head kicked in by the amused turn of his mouth. Raven's face went red when he realised they were watching him (Van wide eyed with a very red face) rub himself in what could be seen as an intimate way and clenched his teeth against the pain instead.

Dr. D bent down to pick Kouryo up, talking all baby-ish himself, holding the squalling thing against his shoulder and rocking side to side while patting the nappy-clad bottom. "He bit you, eh?" Dr. D said after Kouryo had calmed enough to start hiccuping cutely.

"I think he drew blood." Raven affirmed with some horror. "He hasn't even got teeth yet!"

"Ah, yes... Just you wait!" Kouryo let out a loud belch, which Dr. D seemed to think was the most amazing thing in the world. "Such a clever boy! Yes you are!" and other such nonsense spilled from his mouth.

"Oh, God. Shoot me now." Raven groaned.

"Now, now, now..." Dr. D. tisked still using that silly baby voice. "That's no way to speak in front of

impressionable young minds."

As if to echo those same thoughts, Kouryo turned his head to look back at Raven and said "Blaaah!"

Raven found himself smiling slightly, and nodded his head in acceptance.

Van hovered at the end of the bed, watching Raven while Dr. D lay Kouryo down, examining the little thing's reflexes or whatever he was doing. Van felt tingles run through him when Raven looked up from watching Kouryo, their eyes meeting briefly before Raven looked down again. Then Raven looked up, and again their eyes met, and there was a definite blush on his cheeks before he looked away again that made Van grin like a dope.

"Well, Kouryo looks like he's doing very well. Did he sleep the night through?" Raven nodded in reply, and Dr. D. grinned at him. "Very lucky. We'll have to see how long that continues, won't we. Now, young man, it's your turn." Raven blinked, the small smile he had had on his face quickly fading, his skin paling. Dr. D hefted Kouryo up to his shoulder and turned to Van. "Here you go," He said, handing Kouryo over to Van, who looked like he was about to panic. "You won't break him you know. I need to talk to Raven for a bit. Grab a few toys and put them on the floor together and let him have a kick." Dr. D winked. "You'll be fine!" Then he closed the door in Van's face.

Van stared at the door in a daze, not really even remembering being ushered out of the room to begin with, but jerking back to awareness when Kouryo kicked out. "Oh!" He turned to the baby room. "The toys!"

Van sat on the couch and watched Kouryo rock from side to side on his back while looking at and reaching out to the stuffed teddy Van had placed just out of his reach. Kouryo would kick his legs out every now and then, and gurgle. Sometimes he would reach up with both his hands and feet, pulling feet down to taste his toes. "They sure must taste good," Van mused out loud. Kouryo looked at him, gurgling happily with his mouth full of toes, saliva sliding down his chin. "Now that's just yuck." Van smiled, and stood to get something to wipe the drool away with. Kouryo watched him from his spot on the floor, following every move he made, which Van found surprising. "I thought babies couldn't see very far." He said as he knelt to wipe away the drool. Kouryo blew raspberries up at him, and Van laughed at more mess to clean up. "Ah, you're cute."

Kouryo smiled, and Van felt that now familiar warmth spread through him. Van bent down to pick Kouryo up, grinning with affection as he bounced the baby on his knee. "I don't know what it is with you, but..." He paused, looking across at Raven's door, not sure if he should continue with what he was going to say. He reached for the remote and turned on the tv instead. "I really like cartoons. What do you say we see what's on."

Van was almost sure he heard a reply, but that could have just been Kouryo burping.

"You can put your clothes back on now." Dr. D said gently, to which Raven quickly complied. He kept his back to the doctor, not wanting to see if the old man was looking at him. Not that Dr. D had been anything more than professional... It was just... the whole thing left Raven feeling shivering cold to his bones.

"You are healing up well, which is very pleasing. How have you been eating?"

Raven sighed, finishing adjusting his clothes to turn and face the man. "I haven't." He replied. "Last night Van mentioned..." The nausea returned, and Raven had to push it away. "a... type of food that... has put me off eating since."

"Hmmm..." Dr. D frowned, jotting things down on his data pad. "I take it you have been nauseas again this morning?"

"...Yes."

"Any bowel problems? Fever? Aches or pains?"

"...No."

Dr. D pierced Raven with his eyes. "Do you know what the problem is?"

Raven swallowed and curled in upon himself. "Yes."

"Would you like a test for confirmation?"

"No point."

"Then.. what do you wish to do about it?" It was gently asked, in a way that Raven understood meant that the doctor knew exactly what he was talking about.

Raven sighed. "I don't know. Last time was not at all... pleasant. But... I don't think I could just KILL it. I mean, that would be the easiest thing to do, but with Kouryo I came to realise that a child doesn't ask to be made, so it shouldn't have to die for something it's... father... did. I don't know if that makes any sense? I don't know what I'm doing or how I'm going to handle keeping them. One will be hard enough normally, never mind the whole war-politics or me-freak thing. And the idea of someone else having them..." Raven felt adrenaline kick in. "It makes me want to smash something." He sighed again regaining his composure, and looking the doctor in the eye. "But what choice to I have, really?"

Doctor D rubbed his chin with his fingers as he listened and thought about what Raven had said, and what he hadn't said. "It takes real strength of character to be able to have that kind of attitude."

Raven gave him a hesitant smile.

"I don't know what the future holds, but I do know that if you us a chance, there will be a place for you here."

"The Guardian Force?"

"Yes."

Raven looked away bitterly. "They wouldn't want me."

Dr. D. patted Raven's shoulder. "You may be surprised." Then he was all business again. "Now, I can prescribe you something for the nausea that should be safe, or you could try some old fashioned remedies first?"

Van was absorbed in a show that combined live actors with puppets and cartoons to be educational with Kouryo sitting up, leaning against his chest, when Dr. D emerged from Raven's room.

"You know," Van said with awe. "I never had a chance to watch shows like this growing up. It's strangely... hypnotic."

Dr. D chuckled, then marched with a grin over to him, holding out a piece of paper. Van looked at the paper, then up at the doctor, one eye brow raised.

"What's this?"

"Some extra orders regarding Raven's care."

Van took the paper and read. "...A cup of tea and some savory biscuits in the morning? What the-?"

"To help relieve the nausea. Hopefully it will go away in another two months or so, but it may be for longer than that. I also recommend you get some carob covered ginger delivered for him to snack on. And ginger ale. Ginger should help a lot. But this," Dr. D tapped his finger on the paper. "Is essential. Got it? Good." Then he bid his farewells and was gone.

Van sat thinking for a few moments. Where the hell did one get carob covered ginger anyway? Flicking through his mobile he called the one person he knew who could give him supply pointers.

"Hey Moonbay, it's Van. How you going? Good, good. Listen, I was wondering if you had any idea where I could get some carob covered ginger from? Yeah, that's what I said. Moonbay, you know I don't have a girlfriend." That was said with some laughter, then Van looked at the phone with confusion. "What do you mean, who'd I get pregnant? ... Morning sickness?" He paused and said to himself (loud enough to be heard on the phone) "Why would Raven have morning sick-" Past conversations filled his mind, making connections with things he only vaguely knew anything about. "Oooh. Gotta go Moonbay! Thanksbye!"

Moonbay looked at her phone with confusion as it beeped the disconnection at her. "Well his brains sure have just melted out his ears."

"Who was that?" Irvine piped up as he emerged from the bathroom, dressed only in his pants, drying his hair with a towel. Moonbay crossed the room, snagging his belt loops in her hands to pull him against her. Something that made Irvine purr low in the back of his throat and lean down to wrap his arms around her shoulders.

"That was Van, wanting to get supplies for morning sickness."

Irvine blinked, raising an eyebrow at the amused glint in her eye. "Who'd he knock up?"

"Come here and I'll whisper it to you..."

Irvine lowered his head further, eyes widening in with shock when Moonbay spoke, before dropping to the floor with hysterical laughter.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 12 by Zuzanny

Time passed. Raven and Van grew to have a routine that included vomiting in the morning; seemingly never ending nappy changes and clothes washing; Van watching tv with Kouryo while Raven has psych or doctor sessions in his room; and Fiona cooking. Fiona was cooking for them because Van Should Not cook, and Raven seemed to vomit at the mere mention of anything containing more than water and salt. Or carob covered ginger. He was living on that. (Van wasn't sure it was actually helping, but then with the way Moonbay had laughed about morning sickness lasting 24/7, perhaps it was.)

Raven still looked far underweight, but wasn't quite skeletal like before. Dr. D had advised they both practice katas together so that Raven's muscles could rebuild after the months of being virtually unused, so mornings and evenings that was also part of the new routine.

Raven had been very frustrated at first. He had been one of the top fighters prior to this... experiment, and now he was only beginning to make it though the katas without breaking out



in a sweat and loosing his breath. And Van was so... irritating with his attempts to encourage him.

"It's alright," Van smirked down at him while Raven lay spread out on the lounge room floor, panting heavily. "You're getting better. Soon you'll be back to your old... well, FORMER self."

Raven groaned and covered his eyes with one arm, visualising how he wanted to be able to really spar with Van and kick his arse! Van laughed with good nature and flopped down to sit by Raven's side. "Argh, I HATE this!" Raven ground out.

"I know." Van said quietly, looking away and no longer smiling.

"I'm actually surprised you are letting me get my strength back."

Van turned his eyes back, one brow raised in question.

"I could escape once I'm strong enough."

Van smiled slightly. "But you wont."

It was now Raven's turn to raise a brow in question. "Oh?"

"Where would you go?"

Raven closed his eyes and sighed deeply.

"Dr. D. told me about the offer, and how you don't believe him."

"Stupid doctor. What happened to confidentiality?"

"This has nothing to do with your medical stuff. I want to let you know that it wasn't just him offering. If you wanted to. Stay, I mean. I mean, half the force were considered enemies at one point of another."

Raven snorted. "And that doesn't bother you? You're far too trusting, Van."

"I choose to believe in people." Van retorted. "I do believe that I have been proven right with them too."

Raven fell quiet, lifting his eyes to meet Van's, who had a strange and intense look in his own that Raven didn't know what to think of. "My experience has taught me other wise." He said seriously before turning his head away and rolling to his feet, leaving Van sitting there while he padded across to Kouryo's room and crib, to gaze down at the sleeping baby.

More time passed. But not too much more.

Irvine stepped up to the table, watching Van nurse his mug between his knees, staring down into it's depths as though it held all the answers to the world there. Irvine threw his leg over a chair beside Van, waiting. Van looked up slightly.

"Hey," Van said in greeting with barely a smile before ducking his head again.

"Hey," Irvine replied, then leaned in to look into the still half full mug. "What's going on? I haven't seen you look so down since, well, ever."

Van's shoulders slumped further and his head stayed bowed. "I did something stupid." He said.

"Okay..." Irvine drew out. "What was this stupid thing you did?"

Van took a swig and mumbled into his mug.

"What was that?" Irvine leaned in, prodding Van's arm.

Van swallowed, hung his head again, and mumbled lowly.

"I still can't hear you."

Van's head shot up. "I KISSED HIM!" Then he blushed heavily, eyes wide, and looked around to see who was listening. Thankfully the base music playing was loud and the people around were minimal. No one was listening.

"What?" Irvine blinked. "Who?"

Van sighed, looking back down to his drink. "Raven."

Irvine's eyes widened, then he doubled over with laughter.

"It's not funny!" Van protested, which made Irvine laugh even harder. "Irvine!"

Irvine choked back his giggles and wiped a tear from his eye. "Aw, come on Van. It can't have been that bad, right? You're still alive and in one piece... I presume?"

Van nodded. "I know, but... you should have seen his face. He went... all blank and white, then grabbed Kouryo and baracaded them in the kid's room."

"And you're out here in the pub instead of trying to get him out because?"

Van sighed. "I tried. He refused to talk to me. I tried to explain that it was an accident, that it didn't have to mean anything, but nothing I said worked."

"Uh-huh." Movement from across the street caught Irvine's eyes and he looked past Van's head to watch as someone climbed down the drain pipe in the ally beside the building Van was now having to live in. "Again, why are you down here and not up there? He's supposed to be in custody, right?"

"Yeah," Van nodded. "Thomas is watching him. I just needed to get out for a bit and think."

Irvine watched the person slip down the last few meters, landing badly and falling on their backside. Slowly, the familiar person climbed to their feet and staggered against the wall of the apartment block. "Uh-huh." Irvine said again, then pointed. "So then that won't be him out there now?"

Van span on his chair to watch Raven, clutching a bundle to his chest with one arm, the other bracing his stomach as he staggered out of the allyway with his shoulder against the wall, and out onto the footpath where he slammed against the next building, doubled over, then fell to his knees, curling into a ball. Passer-by's all stopped and stared. Van ran across the street and pushed through the small crowd before he knew it.

"What the hell's going on here?" Van demanded of Raven as the dark haired young man scrambled away from him, kicking out weakly.

"Leave me alone." Raven rasped through clenched teeth before curling up again with a loud moan. Kouryo started wailing from the sling Raven was wearing.

Van crouched beside Raven, frowning at how pale he was and how fast he was panting. "Shit, Raven." He breathed, "I didn't think you were so upset with me that you'd risk killing Kouryo as well."

Raven turned glassy, dilated eyes upon Van. "Prozen." He said simply before his eyes rolled back and he fell unconscious, Van managed to catch some of his weight before he fell on Kouryo.

"Van!" Irvine called out, pointing to the blood that was pooling under Raven's hips, and coating the hands pressed to his belly.

"Shit! Shit! Shit!" Van rolled his former nemesis into his arms and heaved to his feet. "Call the medics!"

"I'm on it!" Irvine was already on his phone and running along side Van to his zoid that was parked down the road.

"Zeke!" Van yelled to his organoid. "Start her up! We've got an emergency here!"

Zeke growled his reply and the zoid came to life, hatches opening and making the way easy for Van and his bundle to enter.

Irvine jumped in behind them, still with the phone to his ear. "Hospital knows we're coming. Thomas isn't answering. I saw glass all over the ground."

The zoid lurched to its feet and was off and running to the hospital. Van grit his teeth as he felt warm wetness leaking over his thigh where Raven's body connected with his. Kouryo had stopped crying at the sight of Van, but was still hiccupping. Raven was a dead weight in his arms.

"Van," Irvine continued. "Those windows were supposed to be bullet proof. Only high calibre rounds can crack them."

"I know."

"Medics and evac are also going to check the place out."

"Keep trying to contact Thomas. There's a chance he's... still alive. Raven said Prozen before. There's no way Prozen can get his hands back on either him or Kouryo." Van squeezed Raven tighter, surprised at his own... possessiveness over his two charges. It was only when Raven made a small whimper of pain that Van relaxed his hold slightly. But only slightly.

"If that's true, then how the hell did Prozen find out he was here? He's getting bold to attack the inner cities in broad daylight."

"Remember who you're talking about here?"

"Yeah. Good point."

Raven slowly opened his eyes to sunlight streaming in through the window and birds chirping, and wondered where he was. He had vague recollections of faces, gun powder, terror and pain, but now? He went to roll onto his back and found himself propped onto his side by pillows. Shifting his arm found an IV in the back of his hand connected to an emptying bag of blood on the stand at the end of the bed. Not really finding any reason to change this, he just stared at the bag of blood and watched it drip into the line. A few moments later a nurse came into check it and him.

"Oh, hello!" said the chirpy thing that Raven just blinked at. "I'm Cass, your nurse. How are you feeling?" She started taking his blood pressure.

Raven blinked. "...Fine." He rasped as he watched her. "What's going on?"

"You're out of surgery. How's your pain?"

"Surgery?" Raven echoed. "What surgery?"

Cass examined the hand that had the IV in it, then looked over the bag of blood, and (to his horror) the drainage bags for his catheter and wound, although the wound one was a bit beyond his comprehension at that time. After that Cass picked up the data pad with his file on it. "Abdominal surgery." She replied, and his eyes widened with panic. "I can't tell you all the details. Would you like me to get the doctor?"

Raven nodded shakily, and Cass pressed the call button beside the bed before making sure he knew about the remote button and lay it on the bed next to his hand. "Okay. A doctor should be in soon. Now, are you feeling at all nauseous? No? Okay, now I'm just going to check..."

She went on to examine his body and even the bandaged incision site low on his abdomen, recording everything in the data pad as she went. By the time she finished, there was a knock on a door, and Raven only just realised he was behind a curtain and the door was on the other side.

"Come in!" Cass chirped and left the curtain to talk in low voices with the doctor. Raven watched their legs on the other side of the curtain, the nurse leaving the room before the doctor pulled the curtain open and waved brightly.

"Hello again, Raven!" Dr. D. grinned down at him.

Raven sighed loudly.

"Good news, the surgery was a success. The bullet missed all your vital organs and arteries, and what it did hit we were able to repair."

Raven blinked up stupidly. "Bullet?" then he remembered everything and lurched with panic. "Where's Kouryo?"

Dr. D waved his hands in a peaceful manner. "He's safe. He's with Van." Raven wasn't sure about how 'safe' Van was anymore. Dr. D then grew serious, which almost alarmed Raven in itself. "There's one thing that needs to be said though." The doctor sat on the chair beside the bed. "During the surgery it was necessary to remove a... growth that was discovered." Raven's eyes went wide as he understood what the Dr was referring to.

"Really?"

Dr. D nodded slowly.

"Oh thank God." Raven flopped back against his pillow. But Dr. D was still being very serious. "What is it?"

"Raven... that growth... it was completely organic, and made from your own cells, even though it was not in your genetic make up. None of the documentation we managed to get from Prozen covers how that is possible, except it was there before the scientists got their hands on you. Do you... I don't know. Are you able to shed any light on this?"

Raven closed his eyes, trying not to remember the agony and terror he had gone through. "I think... it was Shadow." He said quietly. "I don't know specifics, but I'll never forget... him... cutting..." Raven covered his face with one hand. "He held me still inside him and cut into me! I couldn't do anything except scream and hope that I would die."

Dr. D said nothing, just held out a box of tissues, which Raven took from using his other hand, but just crushed it in his grasp.

"It was high pitch, the saws. I could hear them from inside me. And Prozen." Raven spat his name. "I could hear him laughing."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 13 by Zuzanny

Thomas blinked up through the blur around him as he felt he was being dragged along by two men, one on each arm. His head pounded, and the jirking momentem made him want to hurl all over the place. He wasn't exactly sure, but he may have been dragged into a small room or a cell, where he was held upright my the two eitherside him, and approached by someone with white hair.

"Well, well, well," Came a voice from the white-haired man, and Thomas's vision shifted as his chin was lifted by this man's fingers. "One of the Guardian Force's Elite?" He snorted. "Or not so Elite. Tell me, 'Guardian Force'," The white-haired man's grip on Thomas' chin tightened painfully making him wince and try to pull back. "Where is my property?"

Thomas frowned with confusion. "Wha-?"

The man tilted Thomas' head back painfully far and ground out. "Where. Is. My. Raven?"

Thomas' mind finally cleared, and his eyes widened. "Prozen!" He gasped with horror, before becoming determined. "Do what you want, but there is no way you can make me talk."

Prozen chuckled at Thomas' bravado, and stepped back, turning to look over his shoulder at the sound of heavy footfalls and low reverberating growl that signaled the black organoid ending the room. "Is that so? What do you say, Shadow?"

Shadow clomped over to Thomas, stepping far into his personal space and leaning down to sniff at his throat. Thomas pulled against the arms of his captors as he felt the black organoid's hot breath slowly steaming against his neck sending shivers down his spine.

And Shadow growled...

[Back to index](#)

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