

Chapter Two: Welcome Back, Ardax

Derrick looked at everyone, and was dumbfounded. One of the closer entities came towards him

“Fdfzxfmbhjm dfz hft?” it said.

“E-excuse me? I can’t understand you.”

The entity grabbed him by the arm, and slapped something on the back of his neck. The patch phased into his skin.

“I apologize on behalf of the Razon conglomerate, but we had to retrieve you, Ardax. Skargisch is surging on Maelovan, and you are needed.”

Derrick could finally understand the words, but the concept of the vernacular befuddled him.

“I’m sorry. I comprehend your words, but I still don’t understand you.”

“My apologies again. You wiped your alpha cognition waves to avoid the hunting of you, and of course you do not know of what I speak.”

Derrick was feeling stranger by the second. They were humanoid, but no doubt alien. He was wondering if they were going to probe him when a different looking staunch female humanoid interrupted them.

“It has been confirmed, Renmehl. The mind purge is absolute with no chance of recovery.”

“That’s why you were recruited, Breylin. Ardax purged himself for his safety. You have to retrain him in combat. He has no idea, but his unique sequential essence, and muscle memory will take over.”

She nodded to Renmehl, walked to Derrick, held out her arm with her palm facing downward, and spoke.

“Breylin Cheddix, Warrior. I am honored, and humbly privileged to acquaint you to your champion advocate status.”

Derrick knew this had to be a dream. A nightmare was more appropriate.

“Excuse me, Ma’am, but I am the polar opposite of a warrior. I believe all of you have made a huge mistake.”

Renmehl had to confirm to Derrick he wasn’t a warrior by Derrick’s own design.

“Your true name is Ardax Kray. You have been defending our people from all attacking entities. After your *defeat* of the Garknash, you had to replenish before Skargisch awakened from its dormancy to obliterate our system,” Renmehl revealed. “The reason for your doubt is because you engineered a self-wipe for defensive purposes.”

Derrick thought this was a joke, but no one was laughing.

“This is enough doubt, Ardax. Maelovan is our closest habitable planet, and Skargisch is arbitrarily feasting on its unfortunate inhabitants.” Breylin grabbed him by the arm. “We will commence your training immediately.”

As she dragged Derrick to another area, he saw the rest revering him. If this were true or not, he was urged, if not forced, to perform.

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She took him to another area where others were training. It reminded him of a gym he had seen in many boxing movies, except more vast.

“Take those flimsy garments off. I will retrieve your battle outfit,” Breylin said.

“What, here? Isn’t there a changing room somewhere?” he asked.

“When did you acquire the technique of a morpher, and why would a room be necessary?”

Derrick was definitely in a different environment, and had to clarify.

“No, I cannot morph into anything. I don’t even know what a morpher is. The ‘change’ I’m talking about is into new clothing. Don’t you have rooms for privacy?”

Breylin knew he had adjusted to his previous environment, but their practices were apprehensively primitive.

“I really do not know what rituals you had to adopt in that underdeveloped habitat you resided in, but an Aeon-Zanna Razon switches their clothing without any modesty. Our skin withstands nature’s elements. We wear gear for protection in battle in case of an unknown weapon. Take off your useless, thin coverings. I will come back with your gear.” She turned around, and began to walk away.

Derrick looked around, and saw a few of the combatants switch from their nakedness to don their sparring gear. They were definitely naked earlier, and no one seemed to care. Derrick had to adjust. He was a rational person, but his fear towered over his rationality.

Breylin came back with his battle gear, and still saw him in his pajamas.

“Did you not understand, Ardax? Is your universal translator faulty?”

“N-no, Ma’am. I can actually hear you fine.”

She threw down his gear.

“Then why haven’t you taken off those useless, frail, baggy garments?! Your physiology can’t meld with your gear with any obstruction between your skin, and your protection. Take them OFF!”

She frightened Derrick, and it was in his nature to listen to his fear. He began to strip.

As Derrick felt very humiliated being vulnerable, and naked, Breylin walked to him, and slapped a band around his arm.

“What is this?” he asked as the band phased into his arm.

“Wow, you really have wiped everything away,” she said. “That’s your revita-shackle.”

“It revitalizes you to keep up your stamina for training?” he asked.

Breylin looked exasperated, but instead of clarifying the shackle’s use, she pulled out a weapon, and shot Derrick in the chest! The last thing he saw was an aggravated Breylin firing at him point blank before he died.

Derrick felt stupid for asking anything to her. He didn’t know this species, or anything about them. That was his last thought.

Then, miraculously, he awakened with Breylin standing over him with her arms crossed holding her weapon.

“The revita-shackle brings your entire being back from exsanguination. You cannot die in training.”

“I-I just... died?”

She shot him in the face this time.

When he came back once more, she stared at him.

“You just died twice. Do you want to go for a third?!”

“No, no! I get it!” Derrick got up from the shots.

Breylin picked up his gear, and slung it at him.

“Put it on, and let’s go.”

Derrick put on the gear, but it really didn’t fit him well. His waist was too rotund, and his chest was too small. He wasn’t tall enough.

“I’m very sorry, Ma’am, but this doesn’t fit me.”

Breylin became testier, but she didn’t shoot Derrick again. She just tapped her throat.

“Renmehl, we need his origin graph. He completely lost his physique there. He looks more like a brilliant than an advocate.”

Derrick wondered what a brilliant looked like when he heard her say acknowledged.

She came towards him, and said, “We are returning to refit your true physique. Let’s go.”

Derrick didn’t know what she was talking about, but he followed. Curiosity got to him.

“Excuse me, Ma’am?”

“Call me Breylin. At first I thought it was your translator mixing your words, but I think you call everyone ma’am in that primitive culture.”

“I’m sorry, Breylin, but you are a woman, and we address any female as ma’am out of respect.”

“I’m not ma’am, I’m Breylin. Break yourself from their odd traditions. You want to respect me? Call me Breylin. What was your question?”

After all that, Derrick almost forgot. Then he remembered.

“I’m sorry, Breylin, but what is a physique refit?”

“I believe from atmospheric changes, and the absence of Razon nourishment and gravity, your physique was severely compromised, and your physique has to have a refit.”

“You mean this process will make me look the way you do? I mean in stature, not you exactly.”

“I must understand. Since the wipe, you do not remember anything,” she said. “You go into a processing booth which reads your unique sequential essence, and organically reconstructs you back to normality.”

Derrick panicked. He wasn’t this Ardax guy! He was Derrick Santos, and this was truly what he looked like.

“Breylin, if your essence isn’t exactly correct in the process, what happens?”

If your unique sequential essence is different in any way, the process destroys anyone trying to infiltrate fraudulently. Don’t worry. We have safeguards to prevent any unauthorized refits from happening.”

Whew, at least he wouldn’t be killed by the process.

“If it rejects you, we kill you immediately before the refit. A basic protocol you will learn later.”

Just when his sigh of relief emerged, terminality knocked relief to the ground with a bloodied nose. Be careful of what you wish for, you just might get it.

As they walked to the initial area, they saw Renmehl pulling out a poor inhabitant’s entrails through an eviscerated rip in his stomach, and pouring a caustic liquid over them. As his entrails smoked, and begin to dissolve, Breylin alerted him of their presence.

“What did Arrogas do, Renmehl?”

Renmehl turned to see Breylin.

“Arrogas didn’t acknowledge humility when Ardax arrived. He doesn’t believe this is our savior, and refuses to believe because of his brilliant-like physique.”

“When he recovers through his shackle, Ardax will have returned to advocate, and he’ll believe.”

*Who are these people?! Derrick thought. They use death as a punishment. And not just the boom, you’re dead type death! They are scarily malicious!*

“Have you loaded in Ardax’s unique sequential essence in the booth?”

“Booth epsilon tetra zenod is ready.” Renmehl thumbed over his shoulder.

“This way.” She turned, and walked in the pointed direction. Derrick followed.

As they went to the booth, Derrick thought of his shackle, and would try to explain through deaths he wasn't Ardax.

"Breylin, how could they kill an imposter if that individual already has on a revita-shackle?"

"The Tarzek guards have authentic Aeon-Zanna Razon ammunition, so every infiltrator will die."

As they walked into the booth chamber, Breylin turned to Derrick.

"It's time to refit you, Ardax. Just walk in the open booth."

Derrick had to come clean.

"I can't, Breylin. I'm not Ardax."

"You are Ardax Kray. You just wiped your alpha cognition, and don't remember."

"No, Breylin. I was abducted by your species from my bathroom, and I was never an advocate. I'm a lowly payroll accountant. I've never held a weapon before in my life. Now that I've told you, just send me back to my system, my planet, my apartment, my bathroom."

The guards began to aim at Derrick, but Breylin stopped them.

"Stand down! None of you get this at all!" She grabbed Derrick, and took him to the booth. "Your incognito façade was designed in detail, so you wouldn't be found even with meticulous investigation. Get in the booth, and this kerfuffle will be over very soon."

"But what if I'm right?!"

"Then you will be destroyed, and we will have no evidence of our mistake."

She flung him into the booth, and sealed it.

A burning sensation began, and Derrick cried out.

"I told you I wasn't this Ardax guy! Please don't kill me!"

His body began to stretch in unbearable pain, and he wept.

A guard went to Breylin.

"Are you sure he's our champion advocate, Breylin? The warrior is crying."

"This process is made for a Razon with memory fortitude. He doesn't have that. Arrogas will tell you what happens when you doubt... when he is revived from dying from his self-doubt. Your question is a radical one. Watch yourself, guard."

Derrick felt the pain of dying slowly, but it wasn't terminal what was happening. Changing a pudgy physique to a warrior Adonis was a difficult process of removing extra fat by turning it into muscle..

As the doors opened, Derrick was in a fetal position, with tears streaming.

Breylin kneeled in front of him.

"Welcome, Ardax. Your gear fits now."

Derrick opened his eyes, and wiped away his tears. She was correct. He wasn't destroyed. He looked like a god. He must have been Ardax.

He got up, and was much taller with a statuesque physique.

"We will continue your training forthwith."

He looked radically different, but he was still in incredible pain.

"Breylin," wow, his voice was much deeper. "This process has taxed my entire being. Can we continue tomorrow?"

Breylin smiled for the first time he had ever seen.

"I think you need a little revitalization." She shot him again.

As he woke up again, he felt stronger than ever.

"You know killing me again was wrong," he said. "But thank you."

The Tarzek guards dropped to him to acknowledge his stature of superiority. Derrick never had this type of adulation directed towards him. It felt strange, but good.

Breylin and Derrick went back to training. Derrick learned many different movements for battle. With his new body, his flexibility, stamina, and equilibrium assisted in doing impossible things in his mind.

"You must replenish, Ardax," Breylin said after Derrick did a summersault, and splits to avoid a barrage anti-neutrino blasts. "Your revita-shackle revives you, but constant resurrection will tax your body."

"Great. Where do I sleep? I'm not even hungry."

"I will show you your quarters, and you really need to shed your incognito persona. A Razon stores energy for a chinak. We do not need constant replenishment."

How long was a chinak? He guessed when he became hungry again, he would know.

They went to his quarters. They weren't like his bedroom. They didn't have windows, drapes, a dresser, or even a bed. It was just a room.

"I will return in a zeko," she said.

"What's a zeko?" he asked.

"After witnessing your ability in training, I actually forgot you do not know anything about our craniological terminology. In your primitive environment, a chinak is equal to two months, and a zeko is two hours."

After everything he went through, two hours didn't seem like it was near enough time to replenish.

"I usually sleep eight hours, Breylin."

"You aren't a brilliant anymore. When you were transformed in the booth, everything was restored. You are Razon now. A zeko is more than enough replenishment time. You could even perform at warrior level in only a wik with your power. Replenish."

He guessed a week was an hour. He had to learn the oddity of this new place. He assumed they didn't sleep in beds, so he didn't ask. He was very different than his mousy, apprehensive mentality earlier in his bathroom. All the disrespect, disgust and berating should have disappeared with what he looked like now.

What Derrick didn't understand was his berating wasn't because of his physique, bullies thrived from your attitude. If you weren't self-confident, you were fresh meat in their eyes. Hopefully, this new impossible battle would give him some self-confidence.

He closed his eyes to replenish.