

# Deus Ex: Neon Shadows Part 1

**Intro & Premise:** Okay, rollercoaster of emotions, you can stop now . At long last, here it is, Part 1 of a two-part story featuring Kain, Jensen's twin brother created by [@ukenceto](#) . Drawing inspiration from her wonderful art, [Neon City Nights](#), [Noir](#), [I'll Bring An Army With Me](#) and [Blood Red](#), Kain first made contact with Adam at the very end of the last chapter for [Stolen](#). This is set two months after they met the following day, which I do intend to eventually write a one-shot for. The muses for this idea were just too strong for me not to do this first .

Later on, I also fell in love with the father/son dynamic between Adam and Andreas created by [Crescero](#), as depicted in [Aurora-Silver's](#) commissions [Need You Dad](#) and [Proud Dads](#). Oh, and [Adam and Andi, Good Morning Dad](#) is just one of many Crescero has drawn as well. Just a heads up to my readers on this one... *get ready for the feels* because it does eventually deal with some pretty heavy topics. What kind of feels, you ask? The ones that made the author bawl her eyes out while she was writing it. You have been warned.

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In perfect unison with music heard as a muffled thumping from a distance, neon lights slid, spun and flashed across the walls and ceiling, illuminating the faces of augmented and natural humans alike whose hearts had long ago become one with the beat. The darkened floor exploding into tiny, multicolored stars beneath their feet, one among them stood out, a fluidity and purpose to his movements the other dancers were unable to ignore.

Throughout the night many had turned to soak in this dark-haired stranger with the white fringe and seemingly glowing blue eyes, watching and waiting for the chance to feel the touch of his hands on their hips, losing themselves in an intimacy shared on the dance floor only those caught in the moment would ever understand.

"Aw, he's so beautiful," Malik said, pausing in taking another sip of her drink and just watching with a dreamy look in her eyes.

From the other side of one of the high-set, small round tables located at intervals around the edge of the dancefloor, Shaali's eyes widened, enhanced hearing easily picking up on what she'd said without the usual need to speak louder over the music. "Wait... what? Malik, did you just call Kain beautiful?"

"Yes," she said, her speech slightly slurred. "He's so, soooo nice to look at."

Shaali sighed, shaking her head. "Ah, I think you may have had enough to drink," and she reached over to take the half-full glass right out of her hand.

"Hey, no," Malik said, fumbling for it, only to almost lose her balance, laughing as she held on to the edge of the table. "Maybe..." she agreed, motioning to her friend. "But you already have... have Adam. Least you can do is let me admire his twin."

Staring at her for a few moments, Shaali turned her head to look at Jensen leaning against the wall in the very corner of the bar nearby, Frank on one of the stools next to him. It was no secret Malik and so many of the other Sarif employees found the ex-cop pleasing to look at. Her best mate had been honest about once having a huge crush on him, and Shaali could hardly blame her for such a thing. Every time the man she loved caught her gaze, like

he did now, that shudder of yearning went up and down her spine, the smile reciprocated until Adam realized Pritchard was talking to him.

"You know, Jensen, you should let your hair down a little. Finally join your brother on the dancefloor. Might help get that stick out of your ass while you're at it," he said, lifting his glass and looking at the liquid inside. "That really is pretty, you know?"

Raising an eyebrow, Adam watched the computer genius bring the glass in closer, right up to his eyes, squinting at it. He wasn't sure if Frank was looking at the drink itself, or the colorful neon patterns cast over and almost through it by the light show that hadn't stopped since they'd arrived at the backward and out of the way cyberpunk club several hours before. Adam was as uncomfortable here as Frank was whenever someone invaded his personal space. The fact Kain had even managed to talk them into coming only added further proof to the bonds of friendship that had slowly built up between the group over the past couple of months. Learning his twin brother had held off until after Shaali had been found and brought back to Detroit went a long way towards earning Jensen's respect. His trust, on the other hand, that was going to take a bit longer.

"It goes in your mouth, Francis, not your eyes."

As if coming to his senses, Pritchard put the glass back down quickly. "Oh, hah hah, Jensen," he simply answered. "I'm not that drunk."

"Yeah, sure," was all Adam said, then noticing the same woman who had tried to hit on him earlier in the night pushing through the small crowd to his left, her eyes lighting up when she saw him. He shifted uneasily, for a brief moment considering activating his cloak. Of course, a certain hacker was quick to pick up on this, swiveling around on the stool and just grinning from ear to ear when he realized who it was. "Oh goodie. This is going to be fun," he started, savoring the change in his demeanor. "You better watch out, Jensen, don't think this one's going to give up too easily."

Augmented eyes watched the slightly older woman heading towards him, blonde ponytail swinging in tandem with her enthusiastic, yet clearly drunken strides. "Damnit, Pritchard, do something," he almost begged.

"I'm not your wingman, Jensen. A man like you..." he snickered. "I'm sure you'll be able to handle it," Frank taking another sip of his wine and waiting for the carnage to begin.

"Oh, there you are!" she exclaimed, eyes bright with anticipation as she came right on up and tried to plant a kiss on his lips.

Jensen hesitated none in gently but firmly grasping her by the shoulders and pushing her away. "I said no before. It hasn't changed," he made it clear.

"Oh come on, baby, please. You've got to be one of the better-looking men here and I'm in need of some... some... well, just all of you will do nicely. I mean, you're gorgeous! This so-called girlfriend of yours shouldn't have left you alone," the heavy Afrikaans accent hard enough to understand, let alone with the inebriated slur added to it.

"She hasn't left me alone. Shaali is right there," Adam reiterated, nodding once in her direction.

Light green eyes followed his. "Her?!" she said, laughing. "Oh, come on, no way that little girl is better in bed than me."

Letting out a guffaw that saw Jensen narrow his eyes at him, Pritchard just shook his head at the pleading look also present. "Nope. This is my night off. You're on your own, Jensen."

The unnamed female tried to kiss him again, Adam hard pressed not to start threatening her. "I said, no. Go find someone else."

"Not until you give me what I want," and she tried to put her arms around him, surprisingly strong for someone so under the influence, one arm being augmented from the elbow down helping her somewhat. "She's not coming to save you, so clearly she doesn't ca..." it was then she felt the weirdest sensation, pausing and shaking her head a little.

As her face paled, Adam couldn't push her away quick enough, just in time to receive the splashback after she fell to her knees and vomited all over the floor directly in front of him. Frank literally spat out his drink at the sight, watching his friend sidestep to avoid the horrible smelling mess flowing in under his shoes. "Oh, this is priceless!" the tech said, fumbling in his pocket for his phone, desperately wanting to mark the occasion and never let the head of security live it down. It was only Shaali placing her hand on his that saw him almost pout at her attempts to stop him. "You can't... can't let this moment go by without documenting it. Sha, please?" now it was Pritchard's turn to start pleading.

"No," was all she said, finishing helping Malik onto one of the stools before moving over to Jensen. "You okay?" she asked.

"I'll manage," his response clipped and rather embarrassed.

"I was coming. Had to help Faridah. Just..." Shaali smirked. "Turns out nature did my job for me."

"Funny," Jensen said, glancing at the woman on the floor.

"You go get cleaned up. I've got this," Shaali told him, already leaning down beside her.

"Need any help, hun?" A groan was all the stranger could manage, Sha taking her under the arm and helping her up.

"Hey, hey, no, it's okay, I'll take care of her. Oh man, Mum, seriously?" another voice joined in then, a second, much younger blonde joining them. "I am so sorry," she apologized.

"She needs to freshen up. I can at least help you get her to the toilet," the healer offered.

"Was that your husband? Oh no, that was your husband she was fawning all over, wasn't it?"

"Boyfriend. Yes, it was, but it doesn't matter now. Come on," and she motioned for the girl to take her mother by the other arm, Frank and Malik watching rather amused as they headed off.

"Well, *that* just made the entire night worth the effort," Frank said, glancing at the nearest camera. "I'll hack their security later for the footage."

"No, don't, Shaali will kill you. Worse yet," Malik wagged a finger at him. "Jensen will." Pritchard shrugged. "Don't much care."

Faridah put her hand over her mouth, giggling loudly. "Okay, I can't hold it in any longer. That was classic. I mean, of all the guys to puke in front of..."

"I know!" Frank agreed. "Did you see his face? Couldn't hide it behind his visors this time. I'm going to make a meme of that moment and send it all over the internet."

"Ah huh, better make the best of it now then because you won't live for long once you've done that," Malik advised, raising an eyebrow at him as she shimmied around, leaning her elbows back on the bar. "Oh no, okay, just no. You couldn't pay me enough to do that job," she added, her attention caught by the poor employee chosen to clean up the mess.

Already facing the dance floor, Frank had been watching the younger guy clean up for a good full minute now, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Yeah, poor shmuck," he simply said, Malik just shaking her head. "What? Am I supposed to feel sorry for him? You choose to work in a place like this, it's going to happen."

Malik had long ago given up hoping for some sort of outward sign there was a heart deep inside the man who, with one single piece of coding, could single-handedly shut down an entire network. He cared for all of them more than he would ever admit, especially Shaali, their friendship going back as long as her one with David. When she'd gone missing, Faridah had briefly glimpsed the side Frank Pritchard refused to allow anyone else to see. Speaking of which, the skilled pilot's gaze fell on her best friend stepping around the last group in her way before rejoining them. "Oooh, that was enjoyable!" sarcasm dripping. "Let me guess, Jensen is still in there cleaning the muck off his coat and pants?" Malik asked.

"Yep," she answered, trying so hard not to smile. "I... I really shouldn't laugh at him, but what I managed to see was so funny, and he's just... his reaction..." her words trailed off, Shaali leaning her head to the side as the familiar chord and spoken lyrics to a favorite song began. Literally bouncing on the spot, she gripped Malik's arm so tightly the younger woman almost cried out in pain. "Oh! Oh! It's Sash! I love this song! Tell me you have enough left in you to dance one more time?"

"You've seen me, I can barely stand up," Faridah reminded her, smiling at her friend's enthusiasm.

"My nanites can take care of some of that for you," she offered.

Malik shook her head. "By the time you do that, the song will be half over. Go... find Kain. I'm sure he won't mind you being his partner again."

"I really shouldn't..." dancing so close with him was probably something Jensen didn't like seeing. He hadn't said anything about the last time... still, Shaali wasn't sure she wanted him to even think there was anything in it, let alone...

"I know what you are thinking. Jensen knows you better than that. Go, Sha, have fun! You can't miss out on this one," Malik urged, gently pushing her in the general direction.

Nodding vigorously, her face lighting up with anticipation, Shaali literally ran off, making her way through the sea of bodies until she was finally standing near Kain, who didn't realize she was there at first. When he did, he gave her an approving smile, moving in closer. Kain had learned pretty quickly that if given the right song he had a kindred spirit on the dance floor, following her lead, one of the few who could truly appreciate the look of pure joy on her face.

After watching them for a while, and finally losing sight of the two behind some of the other dancers, Faridah frowned, the question voiced before she'd really thought about whether anyone was actually listening, "Where the hell does he get all his energy from?"

"What?!" Frank's voice rising above the din.

Malik turned towards him, leaning in closer. "Where does Kain get all his energy from? I could've," she stopped, hiccuping and swaying for a couple of seconds before continuing, "I could've sworn he's had as much to drink as the rest of us. Well..." and she laughed, "You and me."

"I have not consumed as much as you," Frank protested.

"Yes, you have," Faridah teased grinning at the tech's attempts to lean as far away from her as possible until he was almost standing up and off the seat.

"I have better control than you," Pritchard went on.

Unnoticed by either of them, Jensen had returned in time to overhear at least the last part of that, rolling his eyes. "You two done?" he asked.

"She's crossing that line into my personal bubble, Jensen. Tell her to go away."

The whine in Pritchard's tone made Adam wish he'd stayed in the bathroom. Then a thought occurred to him and he just had to, "I'm not your wingman, Francis. A man like you... you should be able to handle it."

The direct quote of his own words made Pritchard glower at him. "Oh, you'll keep," he warned, his challenge met by a raise of an eyebrow.

"Bring it," Jensen said.

"You two are just so much fun to watch. Look at you both, bickering like little children," Faridah butted in then.

"Don't you start too, Fly Girl. Bad enough he does it," Adam's smirk belying the cautionary tone.

The song now finished, Shaali returned, clearly not yet over the excitement of the moment. "Oh heck, that was fun!" she exclaimed, heading straight for the jug of water on the counter and pouring herself a drink. While downing it she noticed the tenseness still in the air between Faridah and Frank. "Great, what's going on now?"

"Don't ask," Jensen answered, arms automatically opening to welcome her as she stepped over to him.

"Probably best to get them both home now then," she suggested.

"Before they start killing each other, yeah," he agreed, the gentle caress of her cheek met with a gaze holding an affection he couldn't get enough of.

It didn't take long for Kain to notice Jensen motioning for him, breaking away from his current dance partner and heading over. "Chickening out already, are we?"

"Didn't want to come in the first place, remember," Adam shot back. "Those two need to go sleep it off."

Kain's gaze fell on Frank unable to hold in the need to give his pilot friend a lecture about constantly getting in his face, to which Malik just rolled her eyes and tried to order another drink, her efforts quashed by Shaali shaking her head at the bartender. "What? They look fine to me."

Jensen just looked at him. "You won't be saying that in about 2 minutes when they start tearing each other apart."

Retrieving a smoke from the pocket inside his jacket and chuckling while he lit it, Kain merely nodded. "I'd actually like to see that," he admitted. "My money would be on Faridah."

"Not going to happen," Jensen said.

Kain shrugged. "I get it, they can't hold their liquor. Let's get 'em home. I'll come back later."

"No! Not yet," Malik protested, pushing Shaali's hand away. "I'm fine. Just a little bit longer, please?"

"You said it yourself, you can barely stay upright, Malik. Come on, time to go," the healer said, grabbing her firmly by the right shoulder and leading her towards the door.

"Don't touch me," Pritchard warned, eyeing both of the men now watching him get off his stool. "I can walk on my own."

Outside, as they headed away from the club and back down the street, Kain instantly reached out to stop Frank from falling after he stumbled over his own feet. "Don't need any help, huh?" he asked.

Looking into blue eyes sparkling with the kind of cheek that really got under his skin, Frank just glared at him. "Anymore from you and I'll... I'll..."

"You'll what? Come on Francis, spit it out."

Pritchard hated to admit he was having trouble thinking straight, his usual quick-smart replies lost under the haze of the alcohol he knew he'd be waking up regretting having drunk so much of in the morning. He said nothing just stewed on the fact he was both proven wrong and there was yet another person now calling him Francis. As if one Jensen wasn't enough!

"Can we... we stop for a bit soon?" Malik asked, hand reaching out to balance on the wall of the same alleyway they'd used as a short cut to get to the club. "My head is spinning. Yeah, yeah Shaali, don't say it. Up there," and she motioned to the two tires stacked on top of each other as a makeshift place to take a seat next to an industrial garbage bin.

"It's still a couple metres away, hun. Think you'll be able to make it?" Shaali teased, snickering at Malik's missed attempt to give her a sideways slap on an augmented shoulder. "Nearly there, you can do it."

"Oh shut up, you," Faridah said, shaking her head. "Just, let me rest a bit and I'll be able to keep going."

Shaali wasn't sure at what point the two men they passed on the way stopped their innocent look of conversing with each other, one of them reaching over and literally yanking Faridah out of her arms, turning her around into a chokehold and holding a machine pistol to her head. In the half a second it took for the shock to wear off, Shaali's nanites were already forming and flicking out the nanoblade. "Let her go!"

They backed up slightly, smug smirks telling her there was more to this even before their words came, "Might want to turn around, clank."

Without fully taking her focus off them, and trying to reassure Malik with a look she alone would understand, Shaali turned in time to see Adam grab Kain by the arm, stopping him from going for the man now holding Pritchard in a similar fashion as the rest of his buddies began to surround them. Some identities hidden by turtleneck shirts pulled up over their faces, others completely exposed, male and female, each and every one of them holding either a machine pistol or a shotgun aimed straight at targets it was clear they wouldn't hesitate to take down. Whoever these people were, they meant business, and, with the look of hatred on their faces, it wasn't hard to figure out why.

"Back against the wall, now," one of the women ordered, the barrel of her shotgun right in Adam's face brooking no argument. "Move!"

Kain refused. They could take them, he knew it. Then he saw the look of panic on Pritchard's face, watching as he was brought in closer next to Faridah and he knew, like his brother, he couldn't chance it. The trigger of the gun pointed at the technician's head

could be pulled long before he'd even reached their position. He felt the anger rise, a rage often all-consuming, reprimanding himself for ever letting anyone get so close so as to stop him from reacting.

"Good little clank," she said, and with one quick movement, drove the side of the shotgun into Kain's face, laughing at Adam's attempt to help him. "That's for disobeying my orders, robot. Next time it'll be one of your friends over there."

"Okay Tammy, settle down. Here's not the place for the example we need to make," the circle around them parting slightly to allow the owner of this new voice to join them. Blonde hair that fell in short wisps over his face, well toned and wearing a sophisticated suit beneath a coat similar to Jensen's, it was obvious he was in charge. "Well, haven't we got a few good specimens to choose from. Very good work, my friends," his subordinates lapping up the praise. "Now, let's see, which one of you to take?"

Dark gray eyes began examining each of his captives, in turn, stopping directly in front of Shaali, Adam instinctively stepping closer. "Oh, don't worry yourself," he assured him.

"She's cute, but aside from perhaps some inner minor augmentations it seems she only has the arm. Not really worth the effort right now."

"Just give me a chance to drive my blade through your throat!" Kain snapped.

"Interesting," the leader began. "Either you're trying to take my attention away from your brother and his girlfriend or you're a hothead who doesn't know when to shut up. I'm thinking the latter," and he motioned to Tammy, who stepped back up and hit Kain in the face with the shotgun barrel again.

"Would you stop that, please!" Shaali spoke up. "Let them go and I'll do whatever you want."

"Sorry honey, you're not the one we want. Your boyfriend here may as well be the poster child for clanks like you," Tammy said.

Frowning, and already feeling she knew the answer, Shaali asked, "How do you even know he's my boyfriend?"

Their leader sneered. "The one thing some of your cyberpunk clubs should really think about - they let *anyone* in. I commend them for their equality but those of you with unnatural enhancements will never be equal to us." He turned his attention to Jensen, signaling the henchman currently holding Faridah by the throat from behind to squeeze that little bit harder. "You going to come quietly, or will I have to give you some more incentive?"

"He's not..." Adam's outstretched arm stopped Shaali from saying anything further, yellow-green eyes never breaking away from the threat in front of him. Glancing down at his hand, Sha reached out and clasped it with her fingers, giving off the impression of a lover desperately trying to stop the man she adored from just giving in like this. Instead, she was using the opportunity to discreetly send a small portion of her nanites in. "Jensen, no, don't do this," she said.

"We don't have a choice," Adam's tone deadpan.

"Hmm, this one has a head on his shoulders. Shame the majority of it is infected," the leader all but spat at him. "Let's go."

With a dreadful feeling permeating the air, Kain and Shaali watched Jensen surrounded and led away, shoved roughly into the back of a waiting van. The threat to Pritchard and

Malik ended only after the gang members still holding them hostage backed up and climbed in too, uncaring as the two fell in a heap on the road while the vehicle sped off. The dim light mounted on the brick wall above casting shadows over her face, Shaali briefly glanced at Kain before rushing over to see if their friends were alright. Claspings Frank by the chin, liquid black exited her fingers, moving in to clear out some of the alcohol from the tech's body, enabling him to think more clearly. "My nanites are already enhancing Jensen's GPL tracker. Focus Pritchard, find him," Shaali ordered, then taking hold of Malik's outstretched hand, the pilot too feeling the sensation of tiny little machines cleansing the toxins from her system.

"This is why Jensen should not have any attachments. None of this would've happened if he'd never met any of you," Kain's words cutting deep into the hearts of the two people who were used as leverage to get Adam to go with them.

Green eyes turned to catch his accusatory glare. "Then you shouldn't be here either, Kain. You're his brother, his twin... what does that make you?"

"Here," Pritchard interrupted, holding out the digital device in his hands and tapping the tracking circle with his index finger. "They're heading for the port. Lots of empty warehouses out there. Or, maybe they have a boat. I don't know. Come on. We don't have time for this!"

"I wouldn't be surprised if they're still watching us. No way I'm leaving you two alone until we're safely back in the Tech Lab," Shaali said. "Let's go."

"I can get you as close as possible," Faridah spoke up, falling into step beside her.

"We'll see," Shaali said, sensing her friend was about to say something else.

"He should've just... he could've..." Malik paused, the regret in her tone disappearing, replaced with a dangerous edge not often seen in the usually very friendly pilot. "If they touch him, I will kill them."

It took all of ten minutes to return to Sarif Industries. Another 20 to figure out exactly where Jensen was being taken, and a further half an hour before Malik's V-TOL touched the surface of the port's Helipad, Kain and Shaali honing in on where the GPL signal was coming from, beneath one of the smaller warehouses further up the river. Infiltrating via the now closed mechanics garage it was only after finding the hidden hatch in one of the 2 car pits and dropping down through it that what this place was really for became apparent. The sounds... they had to shut them out. The pain they could only imagine he was in... neither of them could handle it, the two keeping flush to the walls, hidden in the shadows and encountering no one until they located the open door leading into the large room Adam had been positioned in the middle of like some sort of trophy. Hunkered low, they slowly crept out, using the closed in sides of the gantry above to get in closer. While the features of Kain's face clearly showed a depth of reactive control that could only come from experience, the healer's nanites played in liquid black patterns all over her skin, their reaction to the visual confirmation of scenes of torture that would turn the stomach of even the most hardened of individuals.

"Don't you dare ask me not to kill them, Shaali," Kain warned.

"My main priority is getting to Adam. How  
*you*



choose to keep them off my back to ensure that happens is up to you. I only ask that you hold off attacking them until I'm closer. You'll know when," she told him.

"Shaali? Kain?" Pritchard's voice in their ears. "Tell me he's alright?"

"We can't," Sha answered.

"What's going on? Damnit Shaali, I can hear him. What the hell are they doing?"

"You don't want to know, Pritchard," Shaali responded, trying so hard to hide just how much it was getting to her behind anger slowly starting to consume.

"Do something then!"

"We're about to," and with that she cut off all communication, vaulting over the rail. Liquid black rose from every pore of her skin to form several layers of shielding, gone from the visible spectrum by the time she landed and started to move towards the people surrounding the table tilted at an angle. Above her, Kain turned around, slid through the railing on the other side, and fell silently to the floor below.

"Does that hurt?" Tammy asked, as she slipped the lever back in and lifted yet another of the clamps holding Adam's left arm in place. "What did you think was going to happen when you were so quick to play the hero for your friends? Shame you won't live to see what we plan to do to your brother next."

"And your girlfriend. Oh, we are going to have so much fun with her," another of the male members chimed in.

Despite the blood dripping from and into his eyes, Adam's look changed, intimidating enough to cause a couple of his captors to exchange a glance with each other, while most just used it as a further chance to taunt him. They'd obviously had some sort of organization in whatever group they stood for. How they had slowly and meticulously started to remove his augmentations, one by one, piece by piece, deliberately making it as painful as possible showed there was an understanding of how the process worked, even if they claimed to hate it so much. They wanted to see him suffer. Wanted to watch him die an excruciating death at their hands, but the more he'd refused to give in to what they were doing, the less precise they became. When they'd started to hack, Jensen had let out the cries of agony they were now reveling in.

And when the last clamp came up and his left arm was literally pulled off and dropped like a heap of nothing on the floor, Adam lost all his ability to cope. The cry of pain ripped through the area, tearing at the heart of the person now able to reach out, pull back, and take down the first of the group to come, his face hit with a fist solidified with nanites before he even knew what was going on. Shaali's head snapped around to take in the blood now pouring from in-between the mounting points on Jensen's arm, watching those closest to him, and still oblivious to her presence, start poking and stabbing at it in an effort to remove the rest of the machine from flesh as well.

In an open space consisting of only the sounds of captor and captive, the sudden shot ringing out from a Desert Eagle saw every member of the anti-aug group react instantly, crouching low, retrieving their weapons and searching for the source of the gunfire. All except for Tammy, a single hole now present in her forehead, the look of shock permanently plastered on her face as she slumped to the floor. Kain stepped from the shadows he'd been keeping to, pulling the trigger a second time and taking down the other person directly responsible for removing his brother's arm from its socket. He emptied at

least six of the remaining 20 rounds before the returning gunfire forced him to turn sideways into the nearest shelter.

Eyes narrowing, Shaali inquired of her symbionts whether they were ready yet without words, the evidence of the energy building within already showing in the electricity pulsing in white-blue waves all over her body. With a sense of deep regret, they conveyed their answer, Shaali ducking behind a nearby support pillar and telling them to drop the cloak, drop the shield and move back inside so they could concentrate on making it happen quicker. They complied, their host staring at the floor for a few more moments before nodding in an effort to further convince herself of the decision she was about to make. Stepping from the cover she advanced on the nearest two, nanoblade from an augmented arm put through the guy's shoulder while the other one felt the yank. Shaali using all the extra strength she could muster to send him flying backward, where he slid along the floor until hitting another metal post several meters away. With the confusion of a second assailant still sinking in, she moved on without hesitation taking another member by the neck and watching as her nanites went in, rendering him unconscious in the time it took them to get from her hand to his brain. While she waited those precious few seconds for them to return, she let the next person coming for her feel the wind taken out of him as a combat boot foot made contact with his chest.

Not naive enough to think she could avoid all the bullets now flying towards her, Shaali mounted the metal crate to her left and slid down beside the male assailant using it for protection while he reloaded. The shock registering momentarily he tried to lift his machine pistol in time, only to be aided by the woman he was trying to finish, both hands grasping the weapon and driving it straight back into his face.

"ENOUGH!" the voice of the unnamed leader rose above the commotion. "Unless you want to see me reopen this old bullet wound here, I suggest you show yourself."

Turning her head, Shaali's nanites activated a retinal enhancement similar to smart vision, allowing her to see through the crate without moving an inch. The highlighted revolver held at the front of Jensen's head was all she needed to immediately stand and hold up her hands. "You pull that trigger, and I'll have nothing left to lose," she said, the warning clear. Meanwhile, Kain took a hold of another of Jensen's kidnappers from behind, snapping his neck and dragging him further into the shadows in one fluid movement. About to repeat the process on another he was moving up on, blue eyes narrowed in the direction of the threat, his only reaction, putting away the Magnum and pulling out his weapon of choice for close quarters combat.

"Well, aren't we a feisty, brave little augmented..." the leader used a word that should've gotten some sort of reaction. Like Jensen however, Shaali refused to give him even a hint.

"Seems we aren't just a pretty face then," he verified, nodding at those nearest to bring her forward. "Shaali, am I right?" he asked, dark gray eyes looking knowingly into hers.

"Could you please tell your friend out there, Adam's brother, I assume, that if he doesn't cease and desist in killing my men, he'll be directly responsible for the death of his twin."

"I have no control over him," was all she said, and as if to emphasize that point, Kain came up behind his next victim, slicing the black karambit-style knife across his throat. Shaali went silent then, the only indication she was even paying any sort of attention, the occasional movement of her eyes to look at Jensen, who, by now, was only just conscious

enough to register she was there. "You took the wrong Aug to make an example of," she simply said.

"Oh, how so?" and even as he asked the question he was motioning to one of the underlings close by. "Go get the other prisoner. Now," he ordered.

Shaali inwardly gasped.

*There's someone else?*

she thought, not allowing her reaction to show. "Here," she said, openly showing him the nanotechnology concealed within all parts of her body, liquid black flowing out, flipping over, and lowering back down in one fluid movement. "If you want to make someone suffer, pull these out of me."

"Shaali, no," Adam's voice hoarse and so full of pain it took all of Shaali's inner control not to even look at him for now.

"Not until your friend stops killing my men!" and he grabbed her by the arm, pushing down so hard she had no choice but to kneel down in front of him. "Perhaps some more motivation is needed. I was working on this one when you two so rudely interrupted me." Shaali saw the younger man, dressed only in a pair of tattered black denim shorts, dragged half conscious the distance to where he was forced to stand and look up at the leader. So close to her now, the healer's heart clenched in her chest, signs of torture all over the paleness of his skin, one arm missing and his hair so coagulated with blood she couldn't tell exactly what color it was. Without warning, another shot rang out, this one from the leader's revolver, the bullet entering the stranger's leg just above the left knee. Shaali watched him slump, unable to fall because the Natural holding him wouldn't allow it. "I'll keep filling him with holes until you come out," the blonde yelled in Kain's direction. "And, when he dies, your brother will be next."

Kain didn't answer, a scuffle heard as he ended yet another life, the curved blade already slicing through its next victim, the control he'd had before now replaced with an unbridled rage. All he could think about was making these people pay for daring to hurt his brother. In the back of his mind, he acknowledged what he was allowing to happen to his fellow Aug and, it wasn't that he didn't care, he just... they'd taken his twin right in front of him and for that alone, he couldn't allow these people to live.

The revolver was fired once again, the knee cap below the previous bullet wound blown to bits. The fact the young boy didn't even react sent Shaali into a form of meltdown only someone with the ability to heal would ever comprehend. Green eyes filling with tears she struggled against those stopping her from getting to him. "KAIN!" she yelled, her voice breaking. "STOP IT! PLEASE!"

Her voice cutting through the fury almost instantly, Kain blinked, took in the sight of the kid's missing knee and then simply let go of the young woman he was just about to kill. Lifting his hands in a form of surrender, the Naturals still left standing ran to yank the knife out of his hand, kicking out his legs from behind so he fell to his knees, proceeding to lay into him with a few more blows before they were ordered to bring him in to join the rest of them. The person they'd brought in to use as further motivation to get Kain to stop what he was doing was then released, pushed away to fall at Adam's feet, reaching out a hand to grab onto his pant leg to stop himself from faceplanting the floor.

Lowering the revolver, the Leader came forward, smashed it across Kain's cheek then returned to take Shaali under the arm and roughly maneuver her towards one of the other tables set up nearby. "Now that we have some quiet again, lie down like a good little clank. No fighting it now. Time to let us cleanse you of this disease that has overtaken mankind." The pain was all encompassing, Jensen taking his eyes off the boy holding on to him for dear life, and moving his head to watch Shaali lean back against a table now positioned upright, there no attempt to fight the many hands working to tie her in. Yellow-green eyes found the seemingly glowing blue of his brother's, the twins swapping a silent understanding. She was stalling, they both knew that. Still... Adam renewed his efforts to break free, while, unbeknownst to any of them, Shaali's nanites appeared shortly after they'd tightened the straps around her wrists, hidden beneath and rising on top of one another to force the restraints to expand.

"Out of respect for your bravery and compassion, I will spare you the horror of seeing us dismantle the rest of your partner over there. His brother, on the other hand, he's going to watch every little thing we intend to do to all of you before he meets his own very painful demise..." the Leader's words trailed off, the man laying the platform down flat and proceeding to run his fingers over the flesh of her exposed arm. "Where to start..." he began. To him, she was nothing more than a specimen in a lab. "Now I understand why you were so quick to come with us, Adam," he said over his shoulder, smirking. "What a prize and an example this one is going to be."

"Can't we have a little fun first?" one of his subordinates interrupted.

"No, this one is mine. Finish him off first," and he motioned behind him to Adam, his attention caught by the liquid black flecks in Shaali's eyes. "Hmm, very interesting. I will need the right kind of tools to remove them from there. Don't go anywhere now," he said, turning and walking away.

Sha's heart sank a little, unable to see where he had gone, her tech stalled in their charging while they too had reacted to what was happening. All she could do was hope he had returned or was still within range when they were ready to go, unable to think on that for too long, however, lifting her head at the cry of agony that so suddenly echoed around the room. Augmented hand and flesh alike curling into fists, Shaali gritted her teeth, inwardly begging her symbionts to hurry up, her own concern for Adam amplified by the panic they were feeling in an effort to help him too.

"Hey!" Shaali yelled. "Your boss is gone. Come and have some fun."

Four sets of eyes turned to look at her, the smirks of anticipation clearly seen. Still, only one made to head towards her, the others either too loyal or too scared to defy the order given them. "Trent, don't, he'll kill you," his friends warned.

"Oh come on, just a little fun," and it was clear in his eyes he wasn't just talking about removing the augmentations either. As he closed in, he paused, unsure what was happening when liquid black showed in all its glory, covering their host from head to toe and pulsing at intervals with lines of electrical energy. "Hey, stop that, what are you doing?" there was uncertainty in Trent's voice now, the young man backing away, some of the others moving to aim their weapons at her.

"Might want to start running," Kain taunted those closest to him.

"Bastion! Boss, get out here," one of them called, witnessing with ever growing fear and fascination the pulsing simply stop. Glancing at each other, a few letting their curiosity get the better of them, they were right there when the white-blue energy wave suddenly exploded outwards from the protected figure on the table, anyone within its path without some sort of built in protection either thrown backwards or rendered inert as their bodies reacted to the electricity flowing through them. Even as they continued to convulse all around her, Shaali pulled her hands free of the restraints, sitting up and untying her ankles before sliding off the table and heading straight for Jensen.

"Would've been better if it was lethal," Kain commented, the backhand he gave the guy directly to his right ensuring he fell that little bit harder.

Ignoring the jab, with a brief glance at Jensen, who nodded his agreement, Shaali knelt down to check on the young man whose leg she wasn't sure her nanites would be able to heal completely. "Hey, it's okay. It's going to be alright. What's your name?"

In too much pain to even lift his head, the answer was muffled, and followed with a violent cough that saw the healer tell him not to try and talk any further. "It's okay. You can tell me later. I'm going to help. Can you see my hand?" and she lowered it down so he could catch glimpse of the nanotech out of the corner of his eye.

"Yes," he managed, his accent for now indecipherable. "An..." he coughed again.

"Andreas!" he almost yelled, great effort exerted to get that out.

"Okay Andreas, I'm Shaali. Please don't be afraid. I'm going to use my tech to heal you," she explained, cupping the back of his neck.

"Oh, what..." Andreas' eyes widened, body tensing at the sudden feeling of what it was like to be healed from the inside out.

Glancing up at Kain now beside her, Shaali said, "Please keep an eye on him," Adam's brother nodding once, reaching down to pick up Jensen's arm and holding it out to her. Her nanites moving into the damaged prosthetic the moment she took it, Shaali couldn't think about whether this Bastion had been close enough to feel the effects of what could inevitably be described as an entirely new form of the Pulsed Energy Projection System or PEPS, gently placing a normal hand over a mounting point covered in dripping and coagulated blood. "It's okay, Adam, I'm here."

"You shouldn't have come," he managed, the relief from the agony her nanites gave him palpable.

"You shouldn't have let them take you so easily," Kain rebutted, bending down when he noticed Andreas was struggling to get to his feet. "Careful. Slowly."

"I can do it," he said, his Austrian heritage now unmistakable. "What the... where in the world did you get that kind of technology from?" recovering his wits quickly now there was no more pain wracking his body. "I can actually *feel* my kneecap healing but it's not hurting," he then began to watch what Shaali was doing to Adam very closely.

"That's a story for another time, maybe," she answered without looking at him, concentrating fully on placing Jensen's arm against the socket and listening to her nanites go to work in both healing and fixing what they could, serving as the temporary connections to hold it in place until they could get him back to the recovery wing. Tearing a piece of material from the bottom of her purple shirt, she used it to start cleaning the blood off his face.

From a storage room set in the far corner beneath the gantry they'd used earlier, Bastion stumbled out, careful to keep the fact he was still conscious from the only four people still standing. Oh, he'd felt the pulse, that was for sure, caught on the edge of an energy already dissipating. Taking a moment to gather himself, he pulled the revolver from the shoulder holster beneath his jacket and slowly made his way towards the woman who was currently so focused on saving the pitiful excuse for a human being she called her boyfriend.

Surveying his men on the ground, and believing every single one of them was dead, the venom dripped from the words spoken as he closed the last of the distance between them, "Forget the slow and painful torture. I'm just going to end you all right now."

Bastion raised the revolver, pulling back the hammer pivot, and had about 3 seconds to realize the threat of being shot in the back of the head was not going to get the reaction he was hoping for. Shaali turned, lifting an augmented arm to smash into the side of his, the momentum sending him sprawling sideways while the pain saw him let go of the weapon, the revolver flying through the air and landing somewhere in the back of the room. In his attempts to recover, he caught faces so full of anger he knew his life was about to end, panic filling his every feature at the sight of both Kain and Shaali advancing on him. The layer of shielding protecting the flesh from any impact, Shaali drove the blade her tech could form from her left hand straight through the heart of the man behind the torture of so many. They'd seen proof of that on her way in, augmented pieces discarded in bins covered in bloodstains, and she couldn't bear to think where the ones they had come from had been put.

He should've been dead in an instant. Instead, he was struggling to breathe. Shaali could see he couldn't understand it, leaning closer and saying, "I so badly want you to die, right here, right now," she said, pausing to take a deep and silent breath to fight against the urge so strong. "You almost killed the man I love. Even while hanging on the last threads of life, all he could think about was making sure the boy you so horrifically abused was alright. He... is... as... human... as... you... are," there were tears in her eyes, anger mixed with the emotion of wishing the world would stop hating them just because they were different. "Do you feel that?" she asked, her nanites now serving a twofold purpose, mending his heart and keeping him alive, while relaying memories of the Aug Incident into his mind, along with all the feelings of disbelief and helplessness.

Not from the side he'd already experienced. No. From those who had been hacked, their freedom of will taken and used for a purpose so disturbing many had ended their lives even after because they hadn't been able to handle the overwhelming guilt. "Open your eyes, stop focusing on the one side. They were in there fighting it all along, like a puppet on a string with no control. Feel it. Experience it. Look at the child killing his Mum and screaming that it wasn't real but couldn't stop it. Feel the wife attack her husband, telling him she loved him even while the voices convinced her he was a monster that had to die." "Stop it!" Bastion cried out, the hatred replaced with the same kind of emotions he was seeing reflected in those he'd come to despise so much.

"You refuse to acknowledge those with augmentations are just like you, we feel, we hurt... so many of them killed people they loved and, instead of being helped to cope, they have been ostracized, beaten and punished for it. As you slip into unconsciousness think about

this: I was one of the few not affected, there that day using my technology to heal. I can help ease the suffering in this world while all you want to do is add to it.”

With that, she gave the order, and the blade retracted, several of her tech staying within the Leader as he fell to the floor where they would continue to save the life of someone who didn’t deserve it. Looking down at him, Shaali could only hope Bastion would wake up with a better understanding and maybe even stop what he was doing. Yes, she acknowledged the only way to really ensure that was to end him but she wasn’t about to give the Naturals more fuel to throw on a fire already well-lit and burning out of control. “He’s still alive, isn’t he?” Kain stated.

Fed up with his constant disapproval of her unwillingness to kill, she turned to him. “Yes, he is, and what exactly are you going to do about it?! Can’t you see you’re giving them exactly what they need to continue hating us? Be the better person, Kain. Break the endless cycle!” the healer said, feeling Adam’s touch to her wrist. She turned, focusing her attention on the lenses counter-turning in his eyes for a few moments. He’d seen that look before, back when she’d given up one of her arms to save his life.

“Shaali...” he started, feeling her place a finger over his lips to quieten him.

“Save your strength,” she said. “I’m okay.”

Jensen shook his head, “No, you’re not,” he said, looking past her to his brother.

The fact Kain walked away from Bastion’s unconscious form without doing anything further gave those with him pause enough to think maybe Shaali’s words had gotten through to him in some way. Considering he’d never allowed her nanites anywhere near him, it was what he said next that proved there was a trust forming where it hadn’t been before, “I don’t need it now but when we get back to Sarif’s, think you can do something about these bullet wounds?” and he pointed to the holes in his arm and the grazes across his chest. “I think my nose is broken too.”

Visibly shocked, and grateful all at the same time, Shaali nodded, “Of course I can.”

“Let’s go,” Adam urged.

“I have to go find my puppy,” Andreas said, respectfully staying quiet until now. “I was taking him for a walk yesterday evening when they surrounded me.”

“Do you know if they bought him with you?” Shaali asked.

Andreas shook his head. “No...” he looked down at the floor. “I never saw what they did with him and I haven’t heard anything else since then either. I just hope... hope he’s still alive.”

With the help of Shaali’s nanotech still within and repairing parts of his body, Adam reactivated his Infolink, “Pritchard, run a heat scan of the place, will you?”

“Oh, well it’s about damn time, Jensen! No, hey Frank, I’m alive. I’m alright. How you doing?”

“Just do it, Francis.”

“We should probably get Malik in here to help look around for Andreas’ missing arm too,” Shaali suggested.

“Oh no, that I *do* know what they did with. Don’t bother. It’s useless now,” he told them.

“Where we’re going, our boss will fix that for you in no time,” Adam assured him.

“Thanks!” Andreas’s huge smile rather contagious. “For everything,” he added, glancing between the three of them.

would say.

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