**Earth**

**Canadian Adventurer’s Guild HQ**

**August 12, 2019**

**19:06 EDT**

It was quiet for about twenty seconds after Mason spoke, and then everyone started talking at once. Ben thought it was amazing while the girls thought they looked cute. Mason was silent, and all I was thinking was, *‘That’s what my natural form looks like?’*

“Quiet down, please!” Gabriel commanded. When there was silence, he continued. “We’ll allow you to ask one question each, but then we need to give a history lesson. Who wants to go first?”

Ben raised his hand and asked his question, “What things can you shapeshift into?”

“It all depends on the Scyftan. A Scyftan needs to encounter another species to be able to shapeshift into them. They can’t just look at a picture or a video and then shapeshift into that form. There is also a limit on how small or how big we can get with our ability. Most Scyftans can shift their forms to something as small as a house cat, or as big as a blue whale. The latter is extremely hard to stay in for long, however. The mana cost is too high.” Alexandra answered. “Next question.”

Sonja put up her hand. “You said that a Scyftan needs to encounter a species to shapeshift into them. How does that work?”

Gabriel picked up this one, “Scyftans have the ability to scan other beings with our minds, which gives us a very good understanding of their body’s systems. This ability originated from when our species was very young, and was a defense mechanism against predators. If a Scyftan felt a predator enter the radius at which they were able to scan, they could change their form to an exact copy. As time has gone on, that ability has evolved to the point it is at now, where we can scan the body of a member of a species, and then form our own, unique body.”

“How do we know that your current forms are what a Scyftan actually looks like? If Scyftans are shapeshifters then couldn’t you have just shapeshifted into another species, just now?”

Gabriel laughed. “There is no way to prove it to you, Mason. I guess you’ll just have to wait until Jonathan is able to shapeshift, and then you’ll know for certain.”

“Can you only transform into things you scan, or can you mix and match with different parts of different species?”

“Good question. A Scyftan can combine aspects of different species into a single form. For example, I have scanned a lion and an eagle previously. If I wanted to, I could transform into a gryphon, though it would cost quite a bit more mana than a regular transformation.” Gabriel answered.

“That is so cool!” Anja exclaimed.

“Indeed it is,” Gabriel said with a chuckle. “Do you have a question, Jonathan?”

“When do I learn how to shapeshift?”

“In a few days,” Alexandra answered. “We have some things that Mason, Ben, Anja and Sonja will benefit from learning. While they’re getting a handle on things, we’ll have someone teach you how to shapeshift.”

“Awesome.”

“Alrighty. Now that the initial questions are over with, how about I start with the history lesson?”

Anja’s tummy made itself known at that moment with a loud, easily audible rumbling sound. She blushed and everyone else laughed.

“I did say there would be dinner. How about we get that sorted out before Gabriel gets started,” Alexandra said. “I’ll pass around a piece of paper. Write your name and anything you want and we’ll have our chefs prepare it. Someone deliver it here when it’s done.”

She handed it to me first. I wanted to get some clarification before I started writing. “Anything? So you’re saying I could ask for filet mignon or lobster or a large three topping pizza and they’d deliver it here?”

“Yup,” she said with a nod. “Anything you want, though don’t go overboard on alcohol. You can each have a glass of wine if you want one. Other than that, stick with water, soda, or juice.”

A nice steak sounded pretty damn good right now. I wrote down everything I wanted, and passed it on. When everyone was done, the paper was passed back to her. She wrote a few more things down and then read it over.

“Aren’t you going to bring it to the kitchen?” I asked.

“No need. Gabriel will explain during his history lesson. Speaking of the history lesson, I think you can begin now, Gabriel.”

“Alright. I’ll give a brief background on early Scyftan history and then move on to the more recent stuff.”

“When our species was young, there were many predators we had to contend with. As you can see, we are quite small and not very strong in this form. We were all born with the ability to speak with our minds. We call it Mindspeaking. You would call it telepathy. Over time, our ability to Mindspeak evolved into a defense mechanism. We could sense when a predator was close and shapeshift into a copy of it. Usually this was enough to drive predators away, but they still did run off with one of our people every so often.”

“Mindspeak was, and still remains the way our people find mates. A Scyftan will always be drawn to one who is strong in Mindspeak. Usually it is a female drawn to a male with considerable strength in Mindspeak, though nowadays it can go either way. Over twelve thousand years ago, Egegal Kidravia became the first king of the Scyftan people. This marked the beginning of our calendar. For over two thousand years, our people prospered under his rule.”

“He put many laws in place that benefited our people, and paved the way forward. Back then, our world was much like Earth was over a millennia ago. Our world had a large number of dungeons, and a lot of time was spent in them. It didn’t quite get to the point that it had on Earth, but that is likely because our race is so long-lived. The King regulated it nonetheless. He wanted his people to pursue things other than power. He wanted his people to learn new things.”

“He founded the Adventurer’s Guild and used it as an extension of his will. Through it, some restrictions, though ones that were pretty lax, were put in place. Until a person was one hundred years old, they could only enter dungeons for three days of their choosing every week. The other seven days they were required to work or go to school. If they chose not to do either, then they would no longer receive access to the dungeon. This ended up working out extremely well for our people.”

“Over the course of over two thousand years, our knowledge increased by leaps and bounds. By the year 1500, we had progressed to the point where we had space faring ships exploring our galaxy and were within two hundred years of being able to terraform nearby moons and planets to support life. By the year 2100, our race had expanded to the point where we had colonized eleven planets and another twenty-seven moons.”

“In 2140, while exploring a world that was a candidate for terraforming, a science team found some strange readings. Upon closer investigation, they found a subterranean network of tunnels. They thought it was a dungeon at first, but upon searching it, they found that it was created by whatever beings used to live on the planet. The readings they got led them to a room deep in the facility. In the center, there was a pedestal filled with small white crystals. They found that the readings they were getting were being emitted by the crystals. They spent a few days testing the crystals and couldn’t find any signs that they were harmful, so they took them from the facility for more study.”

“When they arrived back on our homeworld, they were shown to the King after undergoing additional tests. When he picked one of them up, he was shocked to hear it speak to him within Mindspeak. It told him that if he bonded with it, both of them would get stronger. The crystal insisted it wouldn't be harmful to him or his people, so he decided to bond with it. It was immediately apparent when they finished bonding, because the King went running out of his estate and into the middle of the large, well maintained front yard. Once there, he placed the crystal on the ground and ran back a short distance away from it. As soon as it was placed, it started to grow in size. It started and stopped for several hours. No one knew what it was growing into at first, but eventually a door opened in the side and the King and his guards entered it.”

“Inside, there were hallways and doors all over. Apparently the King knew where he was going, because he led them to a room that appeared to be in the center of it. It turned out that the room the King and his guards entered was a bridge, and the crystal was, in fact, a ship. They found out that even while a person is at full mana, they continue to regenerate mana at the same pace. When the crystal bonded with the king, it started growing into a ship by siphoning off that mana that essentially went nowhere. If his mana dropped below maximum, it would halt siphoning mana and wait for it to reach maximum before starting again. The crystal said the size it could grow to is infinite, but so is the amount of time it takes to grow. Each time the crystal grows in size, it takes double the amount of mana to grow again. So one hundred, two hundred, four hundred, you get the point. The crystal soon became the flagship for the King. It was incredibly powerful, if small, but it would continue to grow.”

“Upon additional testing, it appeared that the only people who could bond with one of the crystals were those who had the blood of the King within them. Each of his children was given a crystal to bond with, and soon there was a small fleet of crystalline ships. They were significantly stronger than the ships that we were able to build. Our scientists attributed it to the crystals that made up the ship itself. They were incredibly durable, and were able to focus beam weapons better than any other crystal they had previously discovered. This also had an impact on the ship’s shields, since crystals are used in shield emitters strategically placed around the ship. The higher the quality crystal, the more power that can be sent to the shields, strengthening them.”

“One year after the discovery of the crystals, reports started coming in about a massive armada of unknown ships closing in on Scyftan space. They had very rudimentary hyperspace, and it seemed like they had to wait a few hours before each jump, but they were coming. An envoy was sent to greet these unknown ships when they were in one of their lulls before another jump. The envoy didn’t even transmit his message when one of the largest ships started launching some sort of fighters. Our engines didn’t need to recharge between jumps, so the envoy immediately ordered his ship to turn around and head home.”

“They tried many times to contact the ships, but never received a response, and if a ship got close, they would always fire upon it, or release fighters. The course the armada was taking would lead them right to our homeworld. The king ordered defenses to be built in case they needed to defend our planets. A ship, piloted remotely, was sent in to see what kind of capabilities the enemy fleet had, and to get scans of as many ships as it could. It was waiting when the armada jumped out of hyperspace, and started its scans. Shields were at full strength, and it sent detailed scans of the ships as long as it could. Unfortunately, that wasn’t long. Whatever the main weapons fired went through the shields like they weren’t even there, and then started corroding the armor of the ship. It took less than twenty seconds for the ship to be destroyed from the concentrated fire. The ship might’ve lasted quite a bit longer if the shields were effective.”

“When the scans were looked at later, they found out that the entire armada, including their fighters, were biological. They didn’t appear to have any shields of their own, but the armor of the ship was very thick, and it was hypothesized that it would regenerate over time. The ships were also massive. The smallest ships were along the edges, and the largest ships were at the center of the formation. The smallest ships were almost five kilometers long, and the largest was over ten times that. There were over ten thousand ships closing in our worlds.”

“The king decided that instead of building warships, all their efforts would be on building transport ships. They still attempted to stop, or slow down the fleet, but it wasn’t enough. Ships were set to jump in and self-destruct in the middle of clusters of ships. This worked well for a time, but the armada spread out so only one ship could be destroyed at once using this tactic.

Mines were dropped in their path, but they easily detected and destroyed them.”

“It was estimated that it would take a year for the armada to get to the closest planet, and everyone, whether it be man, woman, or child was assigned to work on building ships. They had almost fifty combined planets and moons to evacuate. That was a total of slightly over three-hundred-billion people. The King knew they wouldn’t have enough time to build enough ships to evacuate their planets. Even the crystalline ships were growing slower and slower. His own ship was now almost two kilometers long, and could probably hold tens of thousands of people, if they could shift into, and maintain small forms. The problem was feeding that many people.”

“Shortly after the crystals discovery, a stasis chamber was developed that was powered by the person who was in it. While in stasis, their body was still regenerating mana, so this would keep it going for the entire journey, no matter how long it would take. That is where the biggest problem came in. The Scyftan worlds lay at the edge of what humans call the Sagittarius Dwarf Galaxy, which is one of the closest galaxies to the Milky Way. Scientists didn’t think the enemy armada could cross galaxies, so rather than take the gamble of bypassing the enemy fleet, and heading coreward of the Sagittarius galaxy, the King wanted to come to this galaxy. That meant a thirty-eight hundred year long journey with our ships. That also meant that each ship would need to be filled with as many stasis chambers as possible.”

“The crystalline ships, however, had much more powerful engines. They could make the jump between the Sagittarius galaxy and the Milky Way and back in just under a month. The king had his five children take their ships and as many people they could fit with a supply of food that would last them a month and then sent them to find a habitable world to deposit them on. They would be able to ferry over a million people across to the Milky Way before they were needed. While his children were doing that, he and his admirals would be working on a plan to destroy all of the enemy ships, or make them turn around.”

“By the time the enemy was a week out from the closest planet, which had been evacuated closer to their homeworld, and the King’s plan was put into action. He and his children took their six ships and started fighting using guerilla tactics. They would jump in, all fire on a target and then jump out before they could retaliate. Oftentimes, this would destroy the enemy ship they all fired upon. Even the odd time they got hit, their shields managed to stand up to the strange weapons the enemy used.”

“It still wasn’t enough. Even if they could destroy a ship every time they jumped, which was about every five minutes, there were still over ten thousand of them, and they kept trundling along. They had to try to buy as much time as they could, though. They were staying longer and longer each time they jumped. When their shields went down, they found that the enemy shots did very minimal damage to the crystalline armor. All this did was cause the enemy to use their fighters as ballistic weapons to try to destroy their ships.”

“After the first day of harassment, they had destroyed nearly one thousand ships. To counter this, the enemy kept their fighters deployed at all times, allowing them to immediately fire on the crystalline ships, greatly reducing the effectiveness of the tactic they were employing. By the end of the second day, they were only able to destroy an additional one hundred ships. They kept it up, though. They would have just over two weeks to destroy as many ships as they could before the enemy reached their homeworld.”

“After a year of work, they had about enough ships to evacuate almost three billion people. That wasn’t even one percent of the total population. Our ship building industry just wasn’t big enough, and there wasn’t any time to ramp it up. A lottery had been drawn over the preceding year. Everyone who would be evacuating was already on the ship they would be leaving on. Everyone else was digging in on their respective planets, ready for a fight. They didn’t know how the enemy fought on the ground, or even what they looked like, but they would give them a fight regardless.”

“When the enemy reached the first planet that was inhabited, they made quick work of planetary defenses and then started launching troop ships. Out of those ships, rushed out a variety of insectoid-like creatures. Some were no bigger than a dog, while others were the size of tanks, and armed like one as well. Their regular ground troop stood on two legs and had four arms. Two of them held a weapon similar to the one fired from their ships, and the other two arms were like swords. The bigger ones had large cannons strapped to their backs that fired the same weird energy.”

“It seemed like whenever those weapons hit something, it would eat right through it. Fighting went on for days, while the main fleet kept moving towards our homeworld. They kept track of the worlds that the enemy landed on and saw that the enemy was loading anyone they captured onto one of the ships that had landed on the planet. Fortunately, there was a fallback plan in case something like that happened. Each planet or moon that still had people on it also had a series of very powerful bombs placed around it. Somewhere on the planet, deep underground, would be someone ready to press the button that would destroy the planet, and anything on it. They weren’t about to let their people be taken for some unknown purpose.”

“When the King saw the first planet disappear as the bombs went off, he and his children gave it one last attempt. When the enemy was waiting between jumps, he and his sons jumped in and attempted to destroy the largest ship they had, hoping it would force them to turn around. When they jumped in, they were supposed to go in guns blazing, but nothing happened. They weren’t even maneuvering. We don’t know what happened to this day, but the ships were all being drawn towards the largest ship. When the crystalline ships were within a few dozen kilometers of the ship, they all self-destructed at once. The explosion blocked the sensors of the people that were monitoring, and they were horrified to see that the large ship wasn’t even damaged.”

“As the enemy armada continued on, they didn’t even bother setting boots on the ground anymore, after the first few planets and moons blew up. They just glassed each of the planets and moons and continued on. When they were within a day of where the fleet was finalizing preparations, over two hundred ninety-eight billion Scyftans were dead, and a paltry three billion began fleeing across the expanse towards the Milky Way.”

Gabriel paused when he was done talking and the door opened. A person rolled a cart into the room loaded with food. Everyone was so engrossed in what he was saying that we didn’t even realize thirty minutes had gone by.

“Good timing, Michelle,” Alexandra said. She helped Michelle hand each person what they ordered, and then Michelle wheeled the cart over to the corner of the room. We all thanked her and then she left the room, and we started digging in. I got a large medium-rare steak with mashed potatoes covered in gravy, along with a variety of vegetables. While we ate, Gabriel gave us the opportunity to ask some questions.

“Why didn’t the King attack with all of your military ships before they even got close?” Mason asked.

“We didn’t have enough ships. It’s as simple as that. We hadn’t built up a large military at that point in time because it wasn’t necessary. In our searches of our galaxy, we hadn’t found any other races with ships that could reach our worlds. We did have a few hundred ships that could have fought, and they would have, if not for the weapons that the aliens used. If our shields were effective, then our entire fleet could have taken part in the guerilla tactics and slowly whittled the fleet down. Also, for every military vessel lost, that would have been thousands of people we had to leave behind.”

Ben was up next with a question, “How many of those crystals remained when they departed the Sagittarius galaxy and arrived in the Milky Way? You said they found a lot of them, and only six were used. Are there any left?”

“I only know of one. More may have been brought over, but in all our history since arriving in the Milky Way, there has only been one that has been present. It has been handed down from previous kings to their sons if they should pass.”

“Does that mean that the King had children that escaped to the Milky Way? You said only Egegal’s line had managed to bond with a crystal. Did that change upon arriving here?” asked Sonja.

“The Queen and their seven month old son were evacuated in the ship that used to be the flagship before discovering the crystals. A crystal was set aside for the boy when he came of age and was ready to lead his people. His mother, Queen Ateru, ruled our people in the interim. They both remained in stasis until they arrived in the Milky Way.”

“What about the million or so people that had been brought over in the crystalline ships? Did the Queen and all the other refugees meet up with them?”

Gabriel nodded. “They did, though there were a lot more than one million when they finally arrived after thirty-eight hundred years. Over one hundred billion people welcomed them when they finally arrived. A few mainframes were deposited on one of the planets when they were dropped off by the crystalline ships. Every ship had the schematics of the ships they were waiting for, so they were very excited when a fleet of them appeared one day.”

We continued asking questions while we continued to eat until we were finished. We placed our empty dishes on the cart and then sat back down so he could continue.

“The year they finally arrived was 5956. Now, as I said, when the fleet arrived in the Milky Way, they were greeted by over one hundred billion people. Not all of those were happy to see them, but the vast majority were. Leadership was passed on to Queen Regent Ateru, while the council that had led their people for almost four thousand years stayed on to council her. She ruled for twenty years until her son, Enoch Kidravia, came of age.”

“Under his rule, the Scyftan military grew and grew. He wasn’t going to allow an invading fleet to push them out of their homes again. Thousands of ships were commissioned, and Scyftan planets were surrounded by layers of planetary defense platforms. He also got our scientists working on improving our shields to the point where they would be able to block the odd weapons the aliens fired. They were confident that they improved them, but there was no way to know without facing those aliens again.”

“Those aliens back in the Sagittarius galaxy were not the most pressing thing to worry about, however. There were many different space faring species that call the Milky Way home. Some of them were friendly, while others, such as The Confederation, have remained enemies to this day. King Enoch thought it was beneficial for the Scyftan people to have enemies they could test their mettle against. That being said, he didn’t go out and purposefully make enemies.”

“Not much happened in the galactic sense for the next thirty-seven hundred years. There was the occasional war between The Confederation and us, as well as our allies. That all changed one day when Enoch, his mother Ateru, and his wife, Erydah were murdered in an explosion while at a dinner welcoming the first of our allies to join our kingdom. Enoch was sufficiently powerful enough that he probably could have survived anything else, but he didn’t have the time to put up shields to absorb the blast. Thankfully, their young son, Derech was asleep at home or it might have been the end of the Kidravian bloodline.”

“Remember I said that not everyone was happy to see the fleet arrive? It took them nearly four millennia, but they finally made their move that day. They didn’t want to be under the rule of a king, and they didn’t want other species to join our kingdom. They attempted to attack the royal palace, but that failed thanks to the people guarding it. Many of the ones responsible for the attack were found and hanged for their actions, but we definitely didn’t get them all.”

“For the next fifteen years, our kingdom was ruled by a council. When Derech Kidravia took the throne, he continued what his father started. He beefed up defenses while continuing to allow other races to join our kingdom. During his over fourteen-hundred year rule, seventy-two different species joined our kingdom, which was eventually named the Scyftan Protectorate.”

“As it always seems, someone else thought they should rule. In 11189, which was fourteen hundred twenty-one years ago, a man named Kaldrus Dhir staged a coup to take control of the Protectorate. Who knows how long he was preparing for, but even having inside help, he failed to complete his objectives. The king’s young son, as well as three newborn daughters were spirited to safety. They undertook a three hundred year long journey which brought them, and us, to Earth.”

“Upon seeing the state of Earth at the time, we dared not take the boy or his sisters out of stasis right away. We started the Adventurer’s Guild to help put humans back on track. We’ve continued to run the Adventurer’s Guild for the past eleven hundred years. That brings us to today, and to you, Jonathan,” Gabriel said, looking at me.

“What do you mean ‘brings us to me’?” I asked with a confused look. He stayed silent, letting me run it through my head. It was like someone flipped a switch in my head and I realized what he meant.

“No, no, no, no! You’re not telling me I’m Derech Kidravia’s heir!”

“That you are, my boy. Your real name is Jonuth Kidravia. You were born fourteen hundred twenty-five years ago on the Scyftan homeworld of Nedovis. Your parents were Derech and Zandra Kidravia.”

“I don’t want to be a King! I don’t know the first thing about ruling!” I whined. I looked at my friends to see they all had a stunned look on their faces. They weren’t expecting that revelation at all.

Something else just clicked for me, so I looked back to the people I thought were my parents. “Wait, you’re saying you aren’t my parents?”

Alexandra shook her head. “No, we are not. Gabriel and I were members of a unit your father put together to guard his children and other people who would be considered high-value targets. Gabriel and I, along with two other members of this unit were responsible for getting you off of Nedovis, and away from the man who was, and still is, trying to have you killed.”

“What do you mean still is?”

“He has never stopped having people search for you. He is a sadistic tyrant and the people would rally behind you given the chance. Unfortunately the system we put in place on Earth also alerted him to your whereabouts. He is sending various resources at his disposal to eliminate you. Fortunately, he doesn’t know about your sisters, yet, and we want to keep it that way.”

“Are my sisters here? Can I meet them?” I asked.

“Certainly. Your sisters aren’t the only people waiting to meet you, either. Follow us,” Gabriel said.

They were both in their Scyftan forms, so they switched back to their human forms before opening the door and leaving the room. We all got up and he led us down another hall. Mason was walking beside me. He must have seen some sort of look on my face so he nudged my shoulder. “Why do you look so down, man? You were just told you’re a king! You look like someone pissed in your cheerios.”

Anja heard what he said and she punched him in the shoulder. “Leave him alone, Mace. They just dropped a huge bomb on him.”

Gabriel led all of us into an elevator. When the doors closed, he sent a pulse of mana at a panel that opened up. We watched him go through some sort of security process and when he was done, the elevator started descending. It took a few minutes to reach the bottom. When the door opened, we were led into a small room with a man and a woman guarding it. They both wore armor and had some nasty looking assault rifles on quick release slings.

When we all exited the elevator, Alexandra introduced us. “Everyone, this is Yuki Morikawa and Omar Berrada. Both of them have been part of the team guarding Jonathan’s sisters since we departed Nedovis. In fact, if not for Yuki having the same skill you learned today, Anja, Jonathan’s sisters would not be here today. Yuki, Omar, this is Jonathan and his team.”

“Really? You have Precognition as well?” Anja asked Yuki.

“Indeed I do,” she replied with a nod. “I look forward to working with you so you can get the most out of it. After all, if you’re going to be traveling with Jonathan a lot, it will probably end up saving your lives at one point or another.”

I didn’t even know my sisters at this point, but I was extremely thankful that both of them were able to keep them safe. I gave them each a big hug before Gabriel led us through the door that appeared when Omar pressed a button on the console next to him. I didn’t know it was a portal at the time, but I would find out shortly after walking through.

Upon stepping through the ‘door’, I was immediately tackled to the floor by three young women with long blond hair. “Happy birthday, Jonathan! Nice to meet you!” they exclaimed.