

## Final Sanctuary Gaulon – Chapter Two

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## Chapter Two

The Death Plague rips out your soul and mutilates your body. Your teeth become as sharp as a lion's not to mention your nails or should I say claws, your skin becomes pale and your veins more visible. Then your eyes turn black and the virus takes away your ability to speak. The infected found a new way of communicating. It's not telepathy, there's nothing remotely close to ESP in reality that we know of, but their behavior does indicate that they have developed some form of communication.

Did I mention that when you are infected your reflexes, senses and physical strength all become enhanced? No? That's the worst part; an infected person can tear someone to shreds in a matter of seconds. I lost my husband Leon to the Death Plague. He was the one person I loved more than life itself. It was Graeves initially who told me of my husband's death and later Nate who gave me the story in greater detail. The team was engaged in a reconnaissance mission out in the Wilderness beyond the Sanctuaries. There were concerns that The Infected were preparing for an offensive against a large farming district. RavenCroft couldn't let that happen so the Immortals went in to investigate. Anna, the KillSwitch at the time, got separated from the rest of the team. She confirmed that the reports were accurate but before she could get back to the Valkyrie, The Infected ambushed her. She called for backup before being dragged away. Leon ran on ahead of Malcolm and Nate. He tried to save her but also fell victim to their superior numbers. Nate arrived on the scene only to see The Infected dragging the two of them away.

At the time RavenCroft had been working with Doctor Addler on creating a vaccine that could immunise personnel out in the field. All The Immortals had been given the untested vaccine. But Addler went over to GenFourier before the research was completed. That was what my husband had with him that day, an untested and unproven vaccine. After a week of searching RavenCroft gave up all hope of finding Leon or Anna. It was concluded that the vaccine was a failure.

When Leon died I became stricken with grief, to say that I handled his death badly is an understatement. I knew he was a member of an elite team of commandos known as The Immortals and that he went by the alias of Eidolon, a name that had been passed down over

the years. When I found out that RavenCroft had given up on him and called off the search and rescue operation, I stole Leon's spare biosuit that he kept at home for emergencies. I figured if RavenCroft wasn't going to find him, I would. Eventually the remaining Immortals tracked me down and brought me back into headquarters. When they took me back they realised that I had bonded with the biosuit with an exceptionally high level of synchronisation. As a result they decided to offer me Leon's place on the team. So I signed on to The Immortals, mostly out of a desire for revenge, but also to finish what my husband began. My name is Claire Xin, but on the battlefield I'm now known as Eidolon.

Three days ago, our corporate sponsors at RavenCroft sent us on one of those 'this could turn the tide of the conflict' missions. It was all supposed to be so fragging easy, fly in, apprehend Doctor Addler then fly him and his research to safety. Doctor Addler, we were told, was working on a cure to The Death Plague. The catch was that he'd gone over to GenFourier, the largest bio-genetic corporation in the World, and our corporate rival. That wasn't our main concern, the real shit hit the fan when we came across a town called Ragnus located near Addler's research center, a town which in less than an hour would be overrun by The Infected. Ragnus had by the look of things, been set up by GenFourier and they'd sent in one of their transport ships to pull out their staff. We had two choices, steal their ride and use it to evacuate more of the townspeople or return to our own ship, the Valkyrie, and proceed with our mission to retrieve Doctor Addler and his research.

We'd all been in the briefing room listening as Liam told the tale when Graeves turned to Nate. "So you're telling me that you and your team were more than willing to steal a GenFourier transport and risk sending us into open war with our competitors over a handful of civilians?" he asked.

"You're damn fragging right I was! Correct me if I'm wrong, sir, but our orders said nothing about not evacuating civilians. Besides we needed that ship if we were to stand a chance of getting to Addler before The Infected. That was our mission, wasn't it, Sir? Isn't that why you sent us up there in the first place? It's not like we wanted the dropship to go joyriding in!" he replied, looking just a little pissed off.

"That's enough, Mr. Parker. Now Ms. Xin tell me about what happened next right up till you left Doctor Addler's lab," said Graeves as he wrote more notes in his notebook.

As Liam said we'd just arrived outside the GenFourier headquarters in Ragnus, their transport ship had just appeared and we'd made the decision to take it for ourselves. Once Nate gave the order we went in.

"Eidolon, Vulcan, we're taking out the troops. KillSwitch I need that ship hacked and disabled before they can use it to get the jump on us," ordered Lazarus as he reached for his gun.

"Just great!", exclaimed KillSwitch to himself. "The only way to override the ship's systems is by manually accessing the diagnostics port located underneath," grumbled KillSwitch.

"Don't worry. The rest of us will try our best to draw their attention. Just keep your head down and move quickly," said Lazarus before turning to Vulcan. "Vulcan, would you be so grateful as to make a door for us." he ordered as he pointed to the wall.

"It would be my pleasure" Vulcan replied before clenching his fists and pounding a section of the concrete wall until it collapsed.

As the wall collapsed I put on my biosuit's headgear for the first time in days. I had almost forgotten about the adrenaline rush I get when I immerse myself in the biosuit. The sensation never ceases to amaze me. When wearing it all my senses are heightened. If I focus I can hear a pin drop at a rock concert or pick up the scent of a team mate at a fish market. My vision in the suit is beyond anything you could ever imagine. I see what the suit sees and the suit has 360 degree vision. It was a little disorientating at first, but I got used to it. I still remember the first time I wore the biosuit and sensed its presence. I could feel its emotions and desires. As I prepared for battle I could sense the suit's bloodlust. It understood how vital this mission was and it was eager to be used in combat. Unlike the other biosuits, there is one other fascinating feature my biosuit is equipped with, its retractable blades. The biosuit is equipped with two, one on each arm. They're made out of the same organic compound as the suit itself and are a part of the same organism. The blades however are not just sharp but incredibly dense. They can easily slice through flesh and most materials with ease. The blades can cut through weaker metals if I apply enough force, but they struggle with some of the stronger and more durable metals.

As soon as we stepped into the complex an alarm went off. We had broken into the building's parking lot, right next to the shuttle pad. To begin with there were only about a dozen GenFourier troops. Six of the troops were now escorting GenFourier staff to the dropship, whilst the rest guarded the entrance to the transport vessel. I activated my biosuit's stealth mode making me completely invisible to the naked eye. Unfortunately I still find the stealth mode taxing as though it drains the energy right out of me. It's for this reason that I use it sparingly. Once the invisibility kicked in I sprinted towards the troops close to the ship in order to clear a path for KillSwitch, I extended my blades and used my left blade to gut one of the troops while I slashed the second troop in the chest with my right blade. As I pulled the blades out of the bodies, I ruptured an artery in one of the bodies causing blood to spurt out onto my biosuit thus giving away my position. The remaining four troops targeted me with their assault rifles and began firing in my direction. I did eight back-flips to put some distance between us. I took out a smoke grenade from a storage pouch located at the back of my biosuit. I threw it at the troops and ran back in to finish the job. The troops began to fire wildly as fear took hold. A stray bullet hit me in the leg, although the suit absorbed most of the impact, the shot still hurt like hell. I pushed through the pain and ran towards the enemy. The biosuit pumped me up with another dose of adrenaline, which psyched me up so much that I barely acknowledged the enemy troops as human beings. I swung my blades out and away from my body as I moved in between two of the soldiers slicing them in half. My biosuit secretes an organic fluid which enables it to clean itself of dirt or any other contaminants that might get stuck to it. Within moments the blood stains disappeared from the biosuit and I was once again invisible.

KillSwitch attempted to move safely towards the dropship, ducking behind cars. I could hear stray bullets flying over his head and narrowly missing him. One shot punctured a hole in his coat on his left shoulder, the biosuit underneath however protected him.

“Ouch...Guys how about some of that cover?!” he shouted.

I wanted to help him but I had a more pressing concern. Vulcan and Lazarus were firing at the troops assisting in the evacuation, but they soon got pinned down behind a jeep. I sprinted towards two of the troops who had fled from me and were moving around to outflank Vulcan and Lazarus. I leapt through the air and decapitated the troop on the left and sliced off a leg of his accomplice who screamed out in agony.

The GenFourier troops were equipped with assault rifles and were tearing the jeep to shreds. Lazarus turned to Vulcan. “Toss the jeep before it explodes. I'll lay down cover fire!” he yelled as he moved out from the left side of the jeep firing his twin revolvers at the troops. Vulcan picked up the jeep as if it weighed as much as a coffee table and threw it straight into the troops. Lazarus then blew it up by tossing a magnetic grenade at it. The explosion was deafening. A second unit of GenFourier troops rushed towards us from the entrance of the building. Vulcan picked up one of the larger pieces of wreckage from the Jeep strapped an explosive to it and threw it into the second team, scattering them and caving in the entrance in the process.

A third contingent of troops fanned their way out of the dropship and joined the fight. The ship's door closed behind them and the pilot started up the engine. We could hear the ship preparing to launch and knew we had to act fast. The troops took up defensive positions around the ship which posed a problem for us. We had to neutralize them quickly without damaging the ship. That meant we had to avoid using the heavy artillery such as Vulcan's pulse cannon. KillSwitch who was the closest to the troops took up a sniper position behind one of the cars. Vulcan pushed over a limousine to provide cover for himself and Lazarus, meanwhile I snuck up to the troops. I extended my blades and stabbed the closest one in the chest and before the other troops had time to react I had sliced the hand off a second one. The remaining troops began to flee from the ship giving Lazarus, and Vulcan an opportunity to fire at them. KillSwitch on the other hand made a run for the ship sliding under it and accessed the diagnostics port. He was finally able to gain control of the ship and prevent it from taking off. Lazarus and Vulcan managed to stop a few of the remaining troops with kill shots to the head, while the survivors took cover behind a black van. KillSwitch took aim from under the ship with his sniper rifle and fired a shot straight into the vehicle's fuel tank causing it to explode.

We soon neutralized the other surviving staff members, it was brutal, they were unarmed and defenseless, but we had a job to do and we couldn't leave any witnesses behind. I continued to pick off any GenFourier personnel isolated from the main group. Whilst Vulcan took care of the remaining troops with his assault rifle.

When the firing had stopped and the air was beginning to clear, we walked over and inspected the bodies. There were no survivors outside. Vulcan stood over them softly reciting

a prayer to the fallen troops. KillSwitch walked out with a look of remorse on his face, I felt sorry for the poor kid, he really hates it when we have to kill people. We all do, but it seems to weigh harder on his conscience more than anyone else's. "The transport is secure" he announced as he joined the rest of us.

"Eidolon, I want you to take the transport and carry on the mission, you'll rendezvous with me back at the Valkyrie in an hour. Land the transport over there and be careful. I'll stay here to erase any evidence of our presence and to make sure there isn't anyone left in that building," ordered Lazarus.

"No problem. We'll be back with Addler before you know it," I replied. It all seemed so straight forward at that point. We had no idea how fragged up the mission would get. We seriously thought that taking on GenFourier would have been the worst of it, how stupid we were.

"Mr. Parker, in hindsight do you believe it was the right decision to place Ms. Xin in command for the duration of the extraction?" asked Graeves, his face looking as cold as ever.

"I stand behind her one hundred percent. I want both Claire and Liam to be capable of commanding troops and operating independently of Malcolm and myself, this was the ideal opportunity for Claire to start working on those skills. Look Graeves, we both know that this mission could probably have gone down a thousand different ways. But I gotta tell you, we were gonna get fragged no matter what we did. Right now you're probably scribbling away writing down each and every thing we did that resulted to our mission failing. But you know what? The fact that we came out at all is a miracle." answered Nate, his voice slightly raised. It was clear he hated these debriefings, we all did.

"That's enough Mr. Parker, I've never said that your mission was a failure, I do however think that you and your team could have handled the situation better. That's what this debriefing is for. It's simply to assess the efficiency at which the team operates. RavenCroft invests millions of dollars in The Immortals project and we need to know that it's members are making the right choices in the field. If you are making mistakes we need to know about it. Ms. Xin continue from where you left off," ordered Graeves.

We got into the dropship and began passing through the cargo-hold. There was about a dozen or so bodies on board. The dropship was much larger than our Valkyrie, I estimated that we could fit about twenty five civilians on board. Not nearly as many as I had hoped. The dropship had clearly been designed for transporting fewer supplies and personnel than we had previously assumed. KillSwitch went to a nearby computer terminal and began overriding some of the security protocols whilst Vulcan and myself checked to make sure that none of the troops had survived.

Suddenly the door to the cockpit opened and the pilot and copilot armed with revolvers stepped into the cargo hold. I needed time to regain my strength from the previous battle so

going into stealth mode was out of the question. Whilst inside my biosuit, bullets couldn't kill me. They could cause some nasty bruises, but my concern was for Vulcan and KillSwitch who could die from a single shot to the head which unfortunately was where the pilot and Co-pilot had targeted us.

"Drop your weapons to the ground and turn around now!" shouted the pilot, a middle aged man with a disturbingly bushy moustache.

We dropped our weapons and were about to turn around when the sound of rock music burst through the ship's intercom at full blast. Vulcan ran into the pilot shoulder first, ramming into him whilst KillSwitch pulled out his revolver from under his coat and shot the co-pilot in the forehead. Vulcan wrestled the pilot for his revolver, eventually managing to position the gun under the pilot's chin and pulling the trigger.

KillSwitch shut off the music and followed after me into the cockpit. "You did good back there, let's get this bucket of bolts into the air. Plot a course for the research facility." I instructed.

"You're the boss," he replied as the ship lifted off the ground and sped off.

At my request Vulcan helped me move the bodies to the airlock so we could dump them once we were clear of the town. Vulcan gave me his trademark 'this is wrong' look. He gets that way when we have to compromise our ethics to get the job done. Deep down he knows that it's an unfortunate necessity but that doesn't make the job any easier. I think if we'd had the time he'd have insisted on a proper burial. For that reason alone I consider it a small mercy that we were racing against the clock. Once we'd finished, we stepped into the cockpit and flushed the bodies out the airlock.

It took the dropship five minutes to reach the extraction point, but by then the Infected had almost reached the facility. From the air we could see them running towards the building. Unlike zombies in horror movies, The Infected don't stagger around. Instead they run at you as fast as they can. Just as my biosuit increases my speed and agility, the Virus does much the same thing to The Infected.

Addler's research building was positioned at the top of a hill. According to data files on the dropship, the facility had originally been a maximum security mental asylum. The building consisted of six floors and had been retrofitted with all the equipment needed to conduct state of the art biological research. Unfortunately the files contained no information on the facility's security systems and staff. Located at the top of the building was a landing pad which is where we landed the dropship. I braced myself for the mission and turned to the ship's new pilot.

"KillSwitch, can you log into the facility's mainframe from here and download Doctor Addler's research files?" I asked.

"I wish... I'm already into the mainframe, but there's no sign of his research. He must have

kept all his data separate from the network. I'll need to access that information directly from the inside. Also I'm having trouble getting into the security systems. Looks like they are using newer polymorphic encryption. That's going to make it more difficult to track down Addler's location." said KillSwitch.

"Looks like you'll be going in with us then." I replied as I prepared myself mentally for the next stage of the operation.

"Frag!" exclaimed KillSwitch. "I managed to bypass the surveillance cameras for the top floor of the building, we've got six hostiles headed our way. We could try posing as GenFourier personnel, after all we do have their ship and they're probably expecting us," he suggested.

"Negative, our cover wouldn't last five minutes. We stick to the plan. KillSwitch, take up a sniper position at the base of the ship," I ordered before turning to Vulcan who was standing behind us.

"You and I are going to hit the enemy head on."

We'd barely gotten out of the ship when the door on the roof burst open and the six GenFourier troops streamed onto the roof. The commanding officer looked us over. "You're not with the corporation. Identify yourselves!" he barked as he aimed his revolver at Vulcan.

Some questions are best left unanswered I decided as I switched into stealth mode. I sprinted towards the troops, whilst Vulcan opened fire with his pulse canon. Hitting two of the men with blasts to the chest. KillSwitch took out another two with headshots with his sniper rifle, Meanwhile I took out the commanding officer, he fired a few shots at Vulcan, but thankfully the bullets only hit his armor, I stabbed him through the chest with my left blade killing him instantly. I then materialised in front of the last of the troops and thrust my right blade up through his chin and into his brain in one swift motion.

"There should be a security checkpoint on the top floor, it'll be a lot easier for me to hack into the system from there," said KillSwitch as he walked over. His glasses were slightly tinted indicating that he was using his biosuit to hack the complex. From his perspective he could see a series of visual displays projected from his glasses directly into his retinas. To anyone else however, he would simply appear to be wearing sunglasses.

"Sounds like a plan, we'll lock things up here first" I replied.

KillSwitch put in place a few security protocols. The door to the roof was set to magnetically seal once we'd cleared the rooftop and the ship itself was placed in a security lockdown. Nobody other than KillSwitch would be able to override the lockdown and pilot the ship.

"Lets do this. KillSwitch you're coming with us" I said as I put my headgear back on. We began walking down the staircase towards the door that accesses the facility from the roof. Two GenFourier troops took aim and fired at us the second we busted through the door. I

dived for cover behind some crates. KillSwitch got hit by a bullet in his right arm.

"Frag! What is it with these guys and shooting me in the arm?," he griped as he dived behind me and started rubbing his arm. Vulcan swung around his pulse cannon and returned fire taking out the two men with two out of three shots.

"If you like I could ask them to shoot you in the head next time," I replied as I got off the ground.

We ran past the dead troops as we moved down the corridor leading to the Security control room.

The room was occupied by a single GenFourier officer and it was a safe bet he was coordinating the facility's troops. He was in his forties, receding hairline, blonde going grey and skin starting to dry out like a prune. The room itself had two desks and a shit load of security monitors.

I kicked down the door to his office and extended my blades. The officer was taking cover behind his desk. He fired his gun but I instinctively dived to the ground pulling KillSwitch with me at the same time. Vulcan fired his pulse cannon into the desk blowing it to pieces. Meanwhile I crept around in stealth mode behind him.

"Drop the gun, if you want to live!" I shouted lining my right blade against his neck.

"I'd do what she says. We ain't got no reason to keep you alive and Eidolon's been itching to decapitate someone," bluffed Vulcan.

"Okay okay" he stammered as he dropped his gun to the ground. I slid the gun over to KillSwitch with my left foot.

"Vulcan I need you to monitor the corridor and make sure our position isn't compromised," I ordered. Vulcan nodded and headed back out into the corridor.

"Now then, we're going to play a little game, I'm going to ask you a question and you're going to answer. If you lie or I suspect that you're lying, you'll lose a body part. Now tell me, what's the pass-code to access the security systems for this complex? I think I'll start with your eyelids, I've been meaning to improve my accuracy for some time now."

"You're bluffing, you haven't got it in you," said our captive trying to act tough. Still I could see the fear behind the words and hoped that he would crack.

"If you don't co-operate with us, your eyes will be one of the few working parts you'll have left" I replied as I grabbed the cowering hostage by the collar and extended my blade an inch from his eye as I walked around to face him.

"Just don't go slipping like last time, I want this fragger to see everything we do to him,"

chimed in KillSwitch.

"Okay, okay. I'll give you the code. Alpha Gamma Sigma n-n-nine f-f-five four," stuttered the hostage before I retracted my blade and threw him to the ground. I looked over at KillSwitch who was now sitting behind the second desk plugging data into the computer.

"Pass-code's bogus, if I enter the wrong code again, additional security protocols will be activated." said KillSwitch after punching the code into the system.

"Let's try that again and this time if you lie to us, I won't kill you but I will disassemble you piece by piece, until there's nothing left but your head and torso. We'll leave the rest of you as a snack for The Infected." I ran my right blade up the side of his leg pressing it against his leg so that it scratched ever so slightly. "This time we'll try starting with something a little more important to you, after all eyelids are so easily reattached these days." I continued as I lined up the blade with his groin.

The captive started walking backwards. I imagine scared shitless. I punched him in the stomach and pushed the man to the ground. I walked over and sat on his chest. Using my blade I began to cut open the front of his pants.

"Please, don't do this" he said trembling. KillSwitch swiveled his chair around and sat watching.

"Shush... This'll just take a moment," I said as I lined the blade up with his manhood.

"OK. OK. You win, It's Alpha-one-nine-six-Gamma-one!"

"KillSwitch can you confirm?," I asked before I stood up.

"Checking it now. The pass-code is good. I'm in!" said KillSwitch grinning. His glasses tinted again as he jacked into the GenFourier systems using his biosuit.

"Thank you, you've been most helpful, now where is Doctor Addler?" I asked as I pulled down my headgear to scratch my nose which had been itching for the last minute.

"I... I don't know, His extraction is being handled by Beta squad. I'm just supposed to organise the extraction of cargo."

"Frag it, let's keep moving. Eidolon, I should be able to find him in no time now that I'm in the system." said KillSwitch as he jumped off the desk.

"Agreed, cuff him to the desk, I'll take point," I replied.

KillSwitch took out a pair of handcuffs but as he did so, the troop dived and grabbed his gun off the ground. He aimed it at my head. I turned around but I didn't have the chance to respond. I saw the gun and a fraction of a second later I heard the sound of the gunshot. I

froze for a split second waiting for the pain. The pain never came, KillSwitch had shot him between the eyes with his side arm. His body slumped to the ground his pants still undone.

KillSwitch, who now had access to the security camera footage along with the mainframe, informed me that the research was carried out on floors three and four. Accommodation for the staff was on the lower two levels with the fifth floor being used for administration and the sixth one by the security staff. We decided our best bet was to take the elevator to the ground floor and make our way up.

As we stepped outside we were greeted by Vulcan. "Ain't no sign of any hostiles out here. If you've got the codes we'd best be moving."

We ran down a flight of stairs into the complex and headed for the elevator. The interior of the building was made from plaster with steel beams reinforcing the structure. The building had a very sterile and clinical feel to it. Lighting was provided by fluorescent light bulbs that flickered intermittently most likely from poor wiring. We sped down the corridor without encountering a single soul. At the end of the corridor were two elevators one of which was heading our way. Vulcan and I took up defensive positions.

"I've sent one elevator up for us. I've locked down the second since I saw seven troops get into it from a security camera. Wait a minute, the Infected have begun attacking the complex on the ground level, would you like me to send them down there instead?" asked KillSwitch confirming our worst fears.

"Do it," I ordered.

As we stepped into the lift, our tensions ran high, we knew that the Infected would make for a great distraction, but honestly at that point, I'd have much rather just take on the GenFourier troops. My biosuit was becoming a little tense and apprehensive, I didn't know if it was in regards to the proximity of The Infected or whether it was something it was sensing in regards to Addler's research. We went down to the first level under the assertion that we should search the areas that The Infected would reach first and make our way back to the ship, conducting a sweep of each floor until we found the target.

The second we hit ground level we knew we'd made a mistake. If he was down there, he was probably already dead. The elevator opened into what had at one time been the Lobby for the Asylum. There were hundreds of Infected rampaging through the front doors. We stepped out of the elevator with guns blazing.

"Aww hell no!" yelled Vulcan as he saw what we were up against.

"Target the Infected over the troops!" I shouted as I began hacking into an infected fat man.

Suddenly we were startled by the sound of a window to the left smashing open. Three Infected's jumped through the broken window. Vulcan blew off the head of the one on the left whilst I ran into the other two stabbing them repeatedly in the head until they went

down. KillSwitch picked up a semi-automatic rifle from one of the GenFourier troops and began shooting at some of the Infectees at the end of the room. "This is getting us nowhere, there's just too many of them down here!" he shouted over the gunfire and the screams of GenFourier troops being eaten alive.

"Fall back to the elevator. We'll give the second level a try. All we're doing here is wasting ammunition." I shouted as an Infectee jumped at me claws extended. I stabbed him straight in the chest with my right blade which passed through his heart and out his back. I tossed the corpse to the ground and ran into the elevator followed by Vulcan and KillSwitch.

I pressed the button for the second floor and began closing the doors. "Hold the elevator!" yelled one of the GenFourier troops as he ran towards us fleeing for his life. I ignored him and watched as two Infected males tore him limb from limb. The troop screamed out in agony as the doors closed.

"Let's not go back down there... ever" said KillSwitch.

The door slid open revealing an empty corridor with a number of dorms located on either side. The wiring in the lighting was shot to hell causing the bulbs to flicker constantly. We stepped out of the elevator and started walking down the corridor. Suddenly my heightened hearing picked up the sound of an Infectee sinking its fangs into a victim. I could smell the blood from the open wound. I indicated to Vulcan and KillSwitch to stay back whilst I snuck on ahead with the element of surprise. I was about halfway down the corridor when one of the doors crashed open and a young infected male in his twenties lunged towards me with his claws out. I reacted instinctively and threw my right fist into his stomach with my blade extended. So that it punched through his stomach and out his back. I grabbed his neck with my left hand and pushed his head up and back until I snapped his neck. Inside the dorm was a woman whose body had been brutally ripped apart. I was about to step outside when I heard gun fire and the shriek of one of the Infectees being blown to pieces. The gunfire was consisted with the type of semi-automatics the GenFourier troops are equipped with. I slipped out into the corridor and activated my stealth system. I quietly crept around the corner of the corridor and saw two troops heading towards me. I carefully maneuvered towards them and positioned myself in the middle of the walkway so that as they approached I was standing between them. As soon as they were within arms length I extended my blades and sliced their guns in half. I then took a sweeping blow to the troop on the right slicing off his legs, he shrieked in agony and fell to the ground whilst I kicked his partner in the stomach, and pushed him into one of the dorm rooms before knocking him to the ground. I materialised on top of him holding him down with my left blade pressed against his neck.

"Where is Doctor Addler!? Your friend just lost his legs. Unless you want to be next, answer me!" I shouted.

"The next floor up. The scientists are packing up their data and getting ready to evacuate. Addler's probably with them, Oh god let me go I've told you what you wanted," sputtered the troop as he started to break down, I could smell sweat under his protective helmet.

"Thank you. You've been most helpful" I replied as I got up. I walked over to the door and locked it shut behind me. The locks had remained on the doors from when the building had been used as a mental institution. It was just lucky for us that GenFourier had been too lazy to replace the locks when they'd moved in.

"You're locking me in here? You can't do that!" he shouted.

"Oh yes I can, but if I was you I'd be quiet. You wouldn't want the Infected to hear you." I said before running back to the elevator.

Once I'd got back to the others we went up to the third floor to obtain the research. When the door opened nothing could have prepared us for what we saw. There were nine stasis chambers each with people at different stages of infection. Some seemed almost human whilst others showed the claws and fangs. There was a group of GenFourier bio-engineers scrambling at the computers. They stopped when the elevator doors opened and we stepped into the room. The room itself was much more spacious than the other areas we'd visited. It had high ceilings, wall to wall monitors, a wide range of medical equipment and computer systems. Unlike the floor below the lighting here consisted of fluorescent tubes that functioned flawlessly.

"My god what are they doing here?" asked Vulcan as he ran over to one of the stasis chambers.

"Research. I'll bet a week's salary that these are the missing townspeople. This must be where they tested the drugs they were developing. I'd heard that GenFourier was working on a treatment for the Death Plague, but I never imagined they'd have taken things so far, this place its... its..." KillSwitch was cut off before he could finish.

"An abomination!" screamed Vulcan finishing the sentence off. He swung his pulse cannon under his arm and targeted the closest chamber and opened fire. The chamber smashed open and the victim on the inside was killed instantly as the blast tore a melon sized hole in his stomach. The scientists scrambled to the back of the room as Vulcan blasted the chambers one after another.

"Vulcan, leave the computers, we still need to extract the data, KillSwitch get to work." I ordered as I walked over to the scientists. "Which one of you is Addler?" I shouted as Vulcan destroyed the last of the chambers. "I sincerely suggest you answer me!"

"He isn't here. He has his own private lab upstairs. You have to help us. The Infected are coming. The work we're doing I know it looks bad, but you have to understand what we're doing here could be our best chance of beating this virus. You can't leave us here!" pleaded one of the male scientists.

"After what you've done, I'm letting the lot of you stay for the Infected. I hope they eat the lot of you slowly. As for the research, we're taking it with us."

"KillSwitch how's the upload going?"

"I'm just about done here, the bad news is that most of the data in here looks like patient information, worse still the Infected from the lobby have breached past the first floor and are beginning to enter the other levels. I've managed to seal off all the other entrances to the lab so we should be safe for now but we'd better get a move on if we're to get Addler out of here," replied KillSwitch as he walked back over to Vulcan. We could hear the sound of people being slaughtered outside now, it was clear the Infected were getting much closer.

"Does the facility have a self destruct mechanism? I want this place blown sky high." I asked KillSwitch as I went over to my two comrades.

"You better believe it. The guys running this place had strict orders to destroy the facility if their security was compromised. The building has explosive charges connected to gas pipes which run throughout the building. They've tried to start the countdown three times, but I blocked each attempt." replied KillSwitch. At that moment I felt a sense of awe just thinking about how many systems he was able to hack and control simply by using his biosuit.

"Set the countdown for forty-five minutes. I want to make sure we have time to do our job. We hit the third floor, grab Addler and get the hell out of here. Lets move!" I ordered.

I'm not sure if it was the fact GenFourier had been infecting innocent civilians that had gotten me so fired up or that the mission was rapidly spiraling out of control, but I was getting furious. I never used to be like that, but ever since Leon died, I've felt myself becoming increasingly frustrated with life and becoming hostile at times.

"Please! You have to take us with you!" called out one of the scientists. Grabbing onto one of Vulcan's arms.

"There isn't a chance in hell of taking you freaks with us. You can either stay here and go up with the building or you can make a run for it and hopefully get slaughtered by the Infected. The choice is yours. We're moving out." I replied as Vulcan pushed the scientist into the side of the wall and then knocked him out with a single punch.

We made our way back to the elevator and headed for the next floor.

"Bad news everyone, the Infected have broken onto the fourth floor. Addler may already be dead," added KillSwitch.

"Great, just great! KillSwitch, hold the elevator and take up a sniper position, shoot anything that moves. Leave the rescuing up to Vulcan and myself." I added.

When the elevator doors opened it was clear that a large number of the Infected had already beaten us to there. The whole level was crawling with them. The GenFourier staff had largely been massacred with just a handful of them left firing into the group. The floor itself was comprised of four corridors leading off in different directions.

"We'll start with the corridor on the left and eliminate each path systematically." I said as I ran on ahead. On the left side of the corridor was a mirrored panel about ten meters in length. I had barely covered that distance when I heard the mirror crashing behind me as a dozen Infectees broke through it. Vulcan fired a shot from his pulse cannon at the head of the Infectee closest to him. The head exploded and the lifeless body dropped to the ground. I dived onto the ground and slid onto my back as one of the Infectees lunged at me. I extended my blades and sliced him into three pieces. Using my blades in a scissor action with one blade over the other. My right blade going across his ribcage whilst my left blade sliced him across his abdomen. Vulcan switched to his assault rifle and fired a rapid burst of shots taking out the remaining Infected.

At the end of the corridor were six doors with three on each side. Vulcan blasted the first three to pieces with his pulse cannon. I smashed through one of the doors on the left and slaughtered two Infectees with my blades decapitating one adult male and slicing one female across the chest. There was a scientist underneath a table who had come within an inch of being dinner.

"Who are you people?" he asked as he climbed out from under the table.

"We're with the Copyright Infringement Board, we've had reports of a Doctor Addler downloading copyrighted material. You wouldn't happen to know where we could find him by any chance?" Said Vulcan before reloading his pulse cannon and blasting an infectee in the head who had come running down the corridor.

"What kind of material?" asked the scientist.

"A bunch of songs from Guitar Wolf's latest album and some unsavory movies involving barnyard animals." Vulcan replied with a straight face.

"Oh... Keep heading down this corridor and turn left at the intersection, after that try the third door on the right. I'm gonna make a run for the stairs." he said before running out of the room. Ten seconds later we heard him scream out in pain.

"This place is a fragging maze," I said to Vulcan before running down the corridor.

We had almost reached our destination when we heard a voice scream out. "Get away from me!," the voice yelled out. It was coming from the second door on the left.

Vulcan smashed the door down, leading us to a small room in which Doctor Addler was struggling against an infected woman. He was trying to bat her away with a briefcase. Vulcan got to her first and grabbed her by the neck. Using his enhanced body strength he snapped her spine in two as though she were a twig and tossed her across the corridor.

"You're too late! My god! You're too fragging late!" Addler cried out. Vulcan took up a defensive position at the door, shooting at the Infectees which were closing in on our

position.

Addler had severe bite marks around his neck where the skin had been torn open and unfortunately the virus is highly transmittable. If a single ounce of blood or saliva gets into your system, that's it for you. It's a slippery slope from there, within an hour of being infected the transformation begins, an hour after that the last ounce of humanity left in you fades away and The Virus takes complete control of you.

"Frag! We had orders to take you out of this facility and escort you back to RavenCroft. But with you infected that's no longer possible, not unless you have a working cure." I said feeling a sense of failure.

"So you're with RavenCroft? My dear, I can assure you, since leaving RavenCroft I have never spent a single day working to develop a cure. My research is vastly more interesting." replied Addler his voice was both eloquent and sinister.

"So you've done nothing to complete your vaccine or even work on a cure?" I asked perplexed.

"Do you really think that the corporations want to develop a cure? The virus offers us so many remarkable opportunities," he replied.

"Eidolon! Just grab him! We're getting swamped here!," shouted Vulcan as he lobbed a grenade it into a group of Infectees.

Whilst I was distracted, Addler took the opportunity to make a break for the other side of the room. I ran after him and managed to swipe with my right blade, slicing his hand off. Addler shrieked in pain but managed to hit a switch on the wall, causing a thick transparent shutter to drop down from the ceiling. He was now locked inside an emergency panic room minus his briefcase. Which was outside with me, hand still attached.

It all suddenly became clear to me, he'd come to this room hoping to safely lock himself away from the Infected, it was just a shame that the Infected had gotten there first. What I couldn't figure out is why he had decided to lock himself in there and not go with us. Inside the panic room Addler calmly pulled out a syringe from his shirt pocket and injected it into his wrist.

"What was that? What did you injected into yourself?!" I shouted as I pounded on the barrier.

"Who cares?! Just grab the briefcase! We need to get outta here whilst we still can!" Vulcan shouted from the doorway.

"Addler! Open this door!" I shouted as I slashed at the barrier, my blades causing little more than scratches. Addler just sat down calmly and ignored my demands.

"Eidolon, we have to go, more and more Infectees are getting onto this level and if we don't

leave now we'll never get out," said Vulcan as he grabbed me, pulling me away from the barrier.

"Hey! Maybe you want to die here, but I've got better things to do right now!" Shouted Vulcan as he tossed me over his shoulder holding me so tight that I couldn't break free. With his other hand he picked up Addler's briefcase and made a run for the elevator.

Once we were halfway back Vulcan put me down. Infectees were streaming into the level from the stairs. I picked up a machine gun from one of the GenFourier troops who had fallen in battle. Then alongside Vulcan we blasted our way through a good twenty Infectees before reaching the elevator.

"What took you guys so long and where's Addler?" asked KillSwitch who continued firing shots from his sniper rifle covering our retreat.

"He ain't coming," replied Vulcan. "He got infected and sealed himself up in a panic room. We've got his briefcase that'll have to be enough. Now both of you get in the fragging elevator. I'm taking command. Lazarus must have had rocks in his head to think you were ready to start building on your leadership skills."

"We can still complete our mission! I'll take KillSwitch back to hack into the panic room. We're not leaving without Addler!" I snapped at Vulcan. It wasn't the love of his life that had been turned, how could he understand what I was going through? In my opinion, if Vulcan hadn't stopped me... I could have gotten Addler out. If we had tried harder we could have completed our mission.

"Forget Addler! This whole building is falling apart, we're leaving," replied Vulcan as he got in the elevator. "Listen I know how personal this is for you, Addler designed the vaccine that cost you your husband, I get that."

"No! How could you possibly understand what I'm going through?!" I cried out in rage still angry that he'd pulled me away from my answers. I had spent the last few months coming to terms with Leon's death. I had to find out what Addler had been working on. Vulcan had taken me away from my one chance of getting the answers I needed. He claimed I'd lost perspective, bullshit, I hadn't lost perspective. I did everything in my power to secure Addler and if Vulcan hadn't stopped me we could have got him. We could have gone back with KillSwitch and got him.

"I lost my entire family to the Infected, I understand better than you could ever know. For the record, Leon and Anna we're more than just teammates. They were friends. But we're no good to anyone if we die here. I won't have it not now not ever," replied Vulcan in anger. I'd never seen him angry before, he's usually so calm and collected. He then pulled me into the elevator.

"KillSwitch take us up, we're leaving" ordered Vulcan.

"You got it," replied KillSwitch.

When the elevator reached the top level and the doors opened, we realised getting back to the ship wasn't going to be as easy as we'd first anticipated. The ground was littered with the corpses of GenFourier staff who had tried to escape, but had instead found themselves slaughtered by The Infected. There were about thirty of them ahead of us. All of them coming towards us and we had nowhere to run to and not enough time to shoot them all.

"Screw this!" yelled Vulcan as he activated the self destruct system on his pulse cannon and tossed it ahead of him, before hitting the button to close the elevator doors. The explosion tore through our ear drums and we could barely hear a thing for a few minutes. But when we opened the door we knew we had our chance.

We had made it halfway to the roof when Vulcan turned around and started firing with his assault rifle covering our retreat. "Go on without me, I'll hold them off so you can get out."

"No way! We're not leaving you!" replied KillSwitch as he turned around and started firing his revolver.

"Don't worry. He's got enough firepower to take out an army. He'll be fine!" I yelled as I grabbed KillSwitch pulling him away.

"You've got twenty minutes before this building blows sky high, there's an armory on the ground floor, you should be able to find signal flares inside. Set one off in forty minutes and we'll be able to track you down!" yelled KillSwitch as I used my blades to slice down the doors. With that we made it onto the roof and left.

Once on the rooftop we scrambled into the dropship. KillSwitch prepped for launch while I grabbed one of the machine guns from inside the ship. The Infected were hot on our tail. I held them off by firing from the hanger bay doors until the ship took off. KillSwitch closed the doors and the dropship sped away. Fifteen minutes later when we arrived at the Rendezvous point we heard the sound of the building exploding in the distance, not knowing whether or not Vulcan had survived.

"At this point I feel that it is prudent to tell you Ms. Xin that you were not responsible for the failings you had during the mission, it is my belief that you should never have been put in command in the first place." announced Graeves as he turned to Nate before continuing "Wouldn't you agree Mr. Parker?"

"The only thing I feel that we can agree on, is that in the future you would do well to avoid eating the first slice of your next birthday cake," he replied referring to an incident two months earlier when he had switched Graeves' birthday cake with one which had pieces of cactus baked inside. Some of the needles had pierced right through his mouth. Just thinking back to it lifted my spirits a great deal and almost justified retelling my failings as team leader.