Reawakening

I floated in a dark abyss endlessly, my mind suspended in a state of blissful unawareness. I felt no fear, I felt no pain. Nothingness was my closest companion, holding me in its empty embrace like a blanket of comfort.

That was until nothingness suddenly left after what felt like centuries. Everything stormed in, taking away my lone comfort. Distant images blurring around in my head like a hurricane, suffocating me, drowning me.

One thought stood above the rest like a piercing spear driving its tip into my heart.

WAKE UP.

I felt it all come at once. My body coming into focus, my long crooked horn stabbing into something waxy and hard, and the stagnant cold air hitting my carapace.

I retched a foreign and warm liquid from my lungs and gasped in the dusty air around me. I hung over the emptying wax chrysalis like a ragdoll, catching a breath I had previously been unaware of. My long mane dripped with the thick fluid I'd just vomited up. I had been suspended in it, and somehow that felt… natural to me.

Looking up and around, I saw rusted metal all around me. I was in some kind of strange room, my chrysalis the only vaguely colored object present. Long-dormant screens and wires were attached to my former shell, some fraying from age and others that crumbled away when I emerged.

I sighed shakily and gingerly stepped out of the chrysalis with shaky legs. I stood tall, perhaps half the height of the strange room's average sized walls. I had a damp peacock blue mane and tail, with a bright shimmering blue carapace along my back. My stomach was also oddly colored, slightly glowing and plated with lighter blue chitin than the rest of my body. My four legs were smooth, coated in a flexible chitin that angled down into insectoid cloven hooves.

I could easily identify myself; a Changeling Proto-Queen… My name, Azenai, was the only other tidbit of information I could glean from my fuzzy mind. Though, the emptiness in my skull was quite apparent at the revelation of both my species and apparent name. I was without a hive. No drones answered a querying ping I sent through what was supposed to be an egregore full of life and bustle. A small pit in my stomach grew at that, but I swallowed my unease and examined the room around me further.

The room was certainly once full of functioning technology, though for what purpose I didn't know. The aged wires told me that perhaps I was being monitored by something… someone? My memories failed to provide me with the answer. I furrowed my brows and approached a large screen. I tapped it with a hoof, but it didn't respond. After another attempt, I sighed and turned to

exit the room. Somehow, the sliding door before me still functioned… barely. It creaked and scraped along until I could see what was beyond it.

A rounded, long-dead atrium of metal and alloy covered in rust, mosses and rubble awaited me. I carefully stepped out and gasped at the state of the area. Hundreds of other sliding doors, some permanently propped open and some sealed shut with age dotted the other levels. I curled my nose at the slight stench that permeated the area: magic, powerful magic. Something happened here… Long, long ago.

Why was I here? Was I being monitored for centuries? Millennia? It was hard to tell, and my memory once again failed me. Frustrated, I shook my head and walked along the edge of the level I was on. Looking down, it had to be hundreds of floors deep. Not even the sunlight pouring in from above could illuminate everything, and after a moment of squinting my slitted eyes, I gave up trying to peer down below. Most of the rooms appeared inaccessible, and a pulse of magic from my horn told me no lifeforms were nearby, save a few rats skittering about.

I looked at my carapace and eyed the two light blue gossamer wings that emerged. Though I was still damp from my chrysalis, I felt like I was at least strong enough to fly. I spread my wings and fluttered them a bit to test their integrity.

Sensing their sturdiness, I lifted from the ground beneath me and headed for the light.

As I rose, the air didn’t get any less stagnant. In fact, it felt like it was getting dustier. Once I broke into the pale sunlight, I squinted my eyes against the bright world as they adjusted. I landed on the surface of the large complex I had been inside of, and looked out at the wastes before me.

The sun was dull, as though saddened by the state of the world it watched over. The ground was dry and cracked, long-dead trees drooped and provided barely any shelter from the winds. Ancient shrubs devoid of leaves barely stood their ground against the breeze.

Though I was without memories of what was before, I still had an achy feeling in my gut that told me the world was broken. There should have been more than this, right? More than metal ruins amidst the cracked dry spans of land, more than just myself down there in a lone chrysalis…

I steadied myself. I needed to resolve a goal, and that goal was obvious. To rebuild what was lost. Yes… That felt right. Deep down, I knew that’s what I needed to do…

So I took my first steps into the world that was ripe for the taking, memories of the past forgotten but my mind set on the future.

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