

Weredragon: Underground

By ShadowSpyro

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After Shadow decided she'd had enough on her own planet, after the incident at the Prytchard Facility, she moved planets and got a job in an underground city.

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1 - Underground

"Not too small, not too big... Very nice."

"Take your hands off my chest, or I'll break 'em off." Shadow growled as she looked up into the bright green eyes of the tall, lizard esque man in front of her, his bright green mohawk seemingly glowing under the neon sign of Neon Junction that hung above their heads at the main doors.

Around them, different races dressed flamboyantly.

There wasn't a single business suit to be seen amongst the masses of studs, leather, brightly coloured hair and flashes of neon that made the gloomy industrialized underground city interesting to live in.

High above their heads, huge fans rotated lazily, sucking the pollution out of the shadowy city as clean, breathable air was pumped back in through a network of pipes throughout the city.

"One more squeeze?" He asked pleadingly.

"Ain't you got a show to do?" She grunted, batting a his hand away.

"Alas, I do." Ode said, raising his hands in a dramatic fashion.

"Then you better get a move on, we're about to open the doors up." Shadow said, her gaze flitting momentarily down the long, huddled que that stretched down to the end of the high up catwalk.

Behind them, the club's double doors swung open and a tall, well built Polar Bear - like man strode out onto the catwalk to stand opposite her. He was wearing a similar black leather jacket to her, but his black baggy trousers were plain, unlike her own which were stitched together with yellow thread.

Both bouncers wore the same black tees with the club's logo on them in neon green.

"Xan." Ode said, touching a finger to his forelock and vanished through the entrance between the two.

A few minutes passed, then Xan and Shadow propped the doors open, checking the punter's passes before they were allowed into the club.

Those without official Neon Junction passes were turned away, usually with a club membership application form. Those who refused to leave quietly or tried barging their way in, usually ended up being manhandled away from the club, sometimes resulting in a scuffle and someone falling over the edge. One of the many reasons why there were nets stretched across the twenty foot gap between the hundreds, if not thousands of catwalks, every few metres.

"Excuse me. Pardon me-- Ew.. I'm sure that's not meant to be like that..." Came an uptight voice from the gaggle of undergrounders still waiting to gain entry to the club.

"Thought I could smell Human." Xan grunted.

"So that's what that bad smell was."

Xan smiled shortly at Shadow then turned his attention back to the small, business suited man wrestling his way through the catwalk dominating crowd.

"Governor Meyark. What brings you down here?" Shadow said in a near growl and let two more punters past.

"That is not any of your business." He sneered testily and strode forward.

Xan nodded slightly slightly and Shadow grabbed the man by his collar and dragged him back onto the catwalk in one smooth motion.

The crowd, including Xan gave a short laugh then fell silent as a large, muscular man lurched forward, looming over Shadow, glaring down at her.

"Try it Twinkie, and I guarantee you won't live to see your next birthday." She snorted defiantly. The big man looked over at Meyark, then took a small step back when he gave a short shake of his head.

"Got a membership pass?" Xan said.

"I don't need a pass-"

"Appointment?"

"No-"

"Then you ain't getting in." Xan said shortly as a few more people scurried off into the darkness of the club.

"Now piss off back to the surface. We don't need or want the likes of you down here." Shadow growled. Meyark's body guard encroached on the Weredragon again, but she held his glare steady with her own.

"What're you looking at?"

He looked her over, his gaze pausing to study the small, dark blue scales that merged with her pale skin down the side of her body and hair line.

He grinned evilly, and before she could react, a large, cool hand was clamped around her throat, his eyes turning a watery blue.

"fracking Hydrars!" She spat between laboured gasps for air.

"Her life or my entry into this gods forsaken pit." Meyark said calmly, ignoring the angered noise behind him.

Xan's mind turned over the consequences of both actions, then relaxed a little as he saw Shadow's hand come up, hitting the Hydrar in his wrist with a sickening cracking of bones.

She punched him in the gut, making him double over in breathlessness and he let out a small yelp as she brought her knee up into his face.

He staggered backwards, the doubled safety rails of the catwalk groaning as they buckled under the weight of the big water Demon.

2 - Free Fall

The crowd of punters cheered as Meyark's body guard recovered from the swift beating Shadow had given him.

He lunged forward, snarling, his veins running blue under his tanned skin, but he recoiled as the Weredragon tackled him, sending them both over the edge of the catwalk and into the noise below.

Xan ran over to where his partner had vanished over the edge, leaving governor Meyark in the hands of the shocked undergrounders.

"Shadow!?" He called over the edge.

"I'm here!" She called back as she clinged onto an old pipe that jutted out from below the catwalk.

"What happened to the Hydrar?"

"Free fall." She grunted as Xan grabbed her wrist and pulled her up. "Thanks." She panted.

"He hit anything on the way down?" Said an eager punter with an orange jacket and a scaley face full of piercings.

"A few pipes, wires and a car or two. But definately no nets. I heard the splat."

She pulled herself upright and straightened her clothes as she walked back to her post on the left of the club's entrance.

"Murderer!" Meyark bellowed angrily.

"And what're you going to do about it? You ain't got no power down here, Human." Xan snorted.

Meyark gaped angrily at the two bouncers.

"I'll get to Bently one day." He hissed.

"That's what you said the last time." Xan said wryly.

"And the time before that." Shadow said, rubbing her wrist.

Meyark swore angrily and disappeared back into the crowd, leaving the two undergrounders to do their job.

"You okay?" Xan said when the crowd thinned out.

"Yeah. I think I did something to my wrist though."

"Go inside. I can handle this lot on my own."

Shadow opened her mouth to protest, but Xan cut her off.

"Don't argue. I'll be fine. Now go on, I'll see you at the end of the shift."

"Aw, cheers. I owe you big." She said and winced as a drunken, brightly clothed woman staggered out of the double doors and almost fell on her.

"Shorreh." She slurred and teetered off down the catwalk.

Shadow walked down the dark, featurless corridoor, listening to the deceptively quiet music slowly grow louder with each step she took. She passed through another set of double doors with a brightly coloured frame and into a dimly lit room with sitting areas built into several cubby holes along two of the gently curving walls. Rope lights and small spot lights were dotted about the room and the counter top of the bar along the far wall was glowing a gentle white from underneath.

Up on the stage, Ode and his band belted out another growling song for the wasted punters who all

seemed to be moving as one on the dance floor that dominated Neon Junction's main floor space.

Shadow weaved and dodged quickly through the throng of multi-coloured bodies and finally squeezed into a gap at the bar.

"Whassa matter Shads?" Hillary, a tall, thin, white haired Vampire shouted above the din.

"I need an ice pack and Bently!" Shadow shouted back, trying to shield her damaged wrist from the jostling around her.

Hillary raised a perfectly formed eyebrow, then her silvery eyes moved down to Shadow's bruised wrist.

"Well shoot!" The Vampire said and handed her an ice pack. "Bently's in his office! And I wanna know what happened out there, so no disappearing before closing time, got it?"

Shadow grinned, held the ice pack against her wrist and headed towards Bently's office, which was situated in the small room behind the stage.

3 - Closing Time

"I'm busy." Grunted the small, dark green man from behind a desk full of paperwork.

Though Bently's offices was in a room behind the stage, it was as quiet as it was in the dark entrance corridor.

"You might wanna hear this sir." Shadow said, putting her black leather jacket over the back of a seat and sat down.

Bently looked over at the pale Human-esque figure in front of him, her white pupilled eyes gleaming with the remnants of anger.

His gaze slid down to her partially blue scaled arm.

"What happened this time?" He said, no ounce of surprise apparent in his voice.

"Meyark. He won't give up. Brought one of his goons with him too."

Bently sighed and scrubbed his webbed hands over his face.

"We gotta sort this out." He said " Let everyone know there's an emergency staff meeting tonight."

He picked up the phone as Shadow grabbed her jacket and went back out into the thick atmosphere of the main room.

"Whassis about an emergency staff meeting?" Hillary said as she perched next to Shadow on the corner of the stage.

Xan and Hillary's sister, Tiffany sat on two bar stools next to them, looking just as puzzled.

"Neon Junction could be closing down." Bently announced, taking a seat at the head of the small semi-circle. "Where's Josh and John?" He said looking around at the various worried faces.

"Family emergency. Left as soon as they cleared up." Tiffany uttered automatically.

"What d'you mean, we could be closing down?" Xan growled.

"It's not for certain, remember? Meyark's still trying to shut us down." The small creature said smoothly.

"What? He ain't got any contacts down here! ... Has he...?" Tiffany added suspiciously.

"Only the one. The rest of his contacts are Human, so it shouldn't be too much of a problem keeping the club from going from Neon Junction to Tillie's Tanning."

"Who the frack is Tillie?" Hillary snarled angrily.

"Meyark's daughter. She want's to be just like her dad and build her own business empire. Though she wants the underground to be apart of it as well as the surface." Bently said.

"Tillie..." Shadow mused. "Spoilt, blonde twenty-something, throws tantrum if she doesn't get her own way..?" She hazarded.

"You know her?" Bently said, surprised.

Everyone turned in their seat and looked at the Weredragon expectantly.

"I got hunting on her land on a regular basis. Only caught glimpses though, not personally met her."

"Sounds like a right bint to me." Tiffany snorted.

"That's one way of describing her." Bently said.

"What'll happen if the Humans win?" Xan asked, dreading the answer, as was everyone else.

"We'll be out of our jobs." Tiffany said bleakly.

"Well, we could always do what every other decent citizen of the underground would do in a situation like this..." Hillary said, slowly stroking her one of her fangs with her tongue. "Make their lives hell and drive them out, and back up to the surface where they should be." The Vampire grinned.

"I could always give them a friendly warning..." Shadow said, with a grin as evil and hungry as Hillary's.

Shadow unlocked her door and stepped into what most surface dwellers would call an old, closed off section of sewer pipe.

It was thirty feet by twelve, which gave her just enough room to live comfortably.

A double bed and old wardrobe were pushed up against the far, flat wall. Everything had been made to fit perfectly into the cylindrical living space, even a metal floor had been installed to make moving around easier.

4 - Rare Cadavar

Shadow heard the shower running and she pulled back the heavy curtain that separated the wash area from the rest of the cylindrical concrete dwelling, and found Ode, his pale green scale dappled skick slick with water and soap.

"Didn't you shower at the club?" Shadow grunted.

"Neon Junction has three showers and there's five members of After Shock. And anyway, the club's showers are crap and mine still isn't fixed."

His green, slit pupilled eyes swivelled to look down at her swollen wrist.

"What the hell happened to you?" He said.

"Meyark's Hydrar crossed the line and I did it teaching the bastard a lesson." Shadow grunted.

Before she could walk away, Ode grabbed her and pulled her into the shower with him.

"What the fu-! My clothes are getting soaked!" She said in near dismay and fell silent as she watched his long, lizard-esque fingers gently trace across her wrist bone.

He slicked back a few loose strands of bright green mohawk and grinned inanely as Shadow moved her hand about without wincing in pain.

He wrapped his arms around her and lowered his head to lick her neck.

"I appreciate you healing my wrist, Ode, but not now." She said, pushing him off and stepping out of the shower.

"Aw. I always get my damned timing wrong."

"Sorry, but I really need to change."

She drew the curtain and pulled her wet clothes off. She felt her nones and muscles start to change as the dark blue scales on her neck and down her sides started to dominate her pale body, turning solid as they did so.

Three minutes later, and her change was complete.

She crouched in the middle of the floor with her wings wrapped around her, panting for breath. She stood up as straight as she could, flaring her wings slightly to try and keep her balance.

"Hey, you're getting pretty good at the whole bipedal thing." Ode said grinning at the hunched blue Weredragon.

She growled at him.

"Okay, fine. Sorry. Bring me back something good!" He shouted up into the long shaft in the roof which Shadow was quickly skittering up.

She pushed the metal cover aside and looked about, inhaling the sweet forest air deeply.

Just a few metres away, a herd of black spotted Deer were looking around nervously, fully aware of the presence of a predator, but not sure where it was.

Shadow licked her lips and carefully crept through the undergrowth, her wings curled in tight, and tongue flicking in and out of her maw as she tasted the air, closing in on her lunch.

The Deer suddenly became more skittish as something in another bush moved.

Shadow picked up the scent of another, smaller predator and took her chance, leaping into the herd, taking down a stag.

It bucked and kicked underneath her, but she had her fangs and claws dug deep into it's warm flesh. It cried out and fell to the forest ground in a growing pool of hot blood.

The smaller predator lept out from it's hiding place in the bushes and landed on Shadow's hard carapice.

She whipped the creature off her with her tail and roared at it as it recovered, blood dripping from her cruel teeth, sending the smaller creature racing off into the undergrowth leaving her to finish her meal in the night time hush of the forest.

She studied the carcass of the stag and bared her fangs in an evil grin as she looked into the dead, staring eyes of the mauled creature.

She flared her wings and hauled the remains of the bloody carcass into the air and made for Tillie's house which was half a mile away south, directly above the Neon Junction night club.

Several spot lights flickered on and alarms sounded as Shadow flew through the perimeter with the carcass in her grip.

She quickly and carefully slinked around the side of the big house and dumped the carcass on the front porch and took off, beating her wings as hard as she could to gain height fast.

Far below her, a scream of terror ripped through the night air making Shadow choke down a roar of glee and success, unwilling to let the Humans know that she was still in the area.

5 - Cheap Shot

"You did what?" Xan chuckled.

"Hey! She should appreciate that. Black Spotted Deer are very rare!" Shadow protested lightly.

"Is it true they taste like Chicken?" Xan mused after a moment's pause.

"Kinda, yeah." Shadow replied and Xan cracked up.

"It was entertaining, but I don't think daddy's too impressed." He said struggling to control himself and nodded towards Meyark as he stamped up the catwalk towards them.

Behind the business suited man, a thin, blonde haired woman with bright red lips, nails and a matching blouse and mini skirt scuttled after him, her heels clicking and scraping across the metal catwalk as she dodged the undergrounders, cursing angrily and brushing herself off whenever she made contact with any of them.

"I demand to see Bently!" Meyark bellowed, his face reddening with rage.

Shadow and Xan side stepped neatly in front of the Humans.

"Out of my way!" He growled angrily.

"Not unless either of you have an official club pass or an appointment."

As Meyark rummaged in his pockets, Tillie gave the bouncers a quick once over and dismissed their unearthly appearances with a disgusted grunt.

"Oh look. The guv's got a note." Xan said flatly. "Shadow, go with 'em."

"Great. I get stuck with the bint and her master." Shadow grumbled and got a glare off Meyark and his daughter.

"Aren't there any lights in here?" Tillie whined as they made their way down the entrance corridor.

"Don't worry darling, in a couple of weeks, all this will be yours to do with as you please." Meyark reassured her, opening the set of interior doors, releasing a wave of rhythmic noise and heat.

Shadow snarled angrily behind them as she listened to Tillie's plans of renovation.

"I know you were behind the dumping of that carcass on my daughter's door step!" Meyark snarled.

The small, dark green creature capped his pen and leaned back in his chair.

"I assure you, I did no such thing. If I wanted to do anything like that, I'd have done it in more taste and with more style."

He looked past Meyark's head and glanced quickly at Shadow who was trying hard to keep her composure.

Meyark and Tillie shot the smirking bouncer a glare and she immediately went straight faced.

"I know someone in this club was behind." Meyark growled.

"It was gross! It's gonna take me weeks to get rid of the smell of rotting flesh. And the blood has soaked into the wood!" Tillie whined.

She looked over at Shadow and caught her trying to force a grin back.

"It was you! You sick dog!" She squealed.

Shadow didn't say anything. She just raised an eyebrow.

"You got proof?" She said calmly.

"What about the murder of my body guard?" Meyark snapped.

"What about it?" Bently put in, calmly watching everyone from behind his desk.

Meyark gaped like a fish a few times, the vein in his forehead starting to throb.

He spun on his heel and looked down at Bently.

"I will have this club." He hissed menacingly and proceeded to shunt his daughter towards the door.

He paused at Shadow, looked her over and grunted. She flinched as he pulled a bit off fluff out of her dark, red streaked hair.

"Damn bouncers can't even keep themselves clean." He grunted and continued shuttling Tillie out of the office.

Bently looked over his desk at Shadow with raised eyebrows.

"That fracker just pulled a bit of my hair out!" She said in miffed anger.

"He's plotting something.." Bently mused.

"I've just been violated!" Shadow said, rubbing her head.

"Wonder what he's got up his sleeve this time.."

"Can't believe that.. Cheeky git."

"You're excused Shadow. I'll see you later." Bently said, snapping out of his ponderings and he settled back into his chair.

6 - Seeing Double

"You could've just settled for a verbal warning instead of snapping the guy's arm!" Xan said, horrified at the sudden action.

Shadow just gave the bouncer a sidelong glance and grunted.

It'd been a week since Meyark and his daughter Tillie came to Neon Junction over the sudden appearance of a Stag's carcass on Tillie's front porch.

"What the hell's gotten into you Shads? You've been acting really weird for days now."

She didn't say anything, she just continued staring ahead, at the brightly lit shops on the opposite catwalk.

She mumbled something to herself and walked into the club, leaving Xan stoop open mouthed on the club's door step.

"Where the hell have you been?" Xan snapped as he looked Shadow over, his grey eyebrows knitting together in a frown.

"I had a few days off, so I've been doing what I usually do in my spare time." She looked at her annoyed colleague. "What's happened...? The club ain't been sold, has it?" She said with wide eyes.

"Don't play that card with me. You've insulted near enough everyone and put two of our customers in hospital. I'm surprised you ain't had your arse kicked or been fired yet."

Shadow looked at him strangely. "Where's Bently? In his office?"

"You should know. You've been in and out of the building a few times in the past three hours, albeit in a slightly unconventional way..."

Shadow followed his gaze down to the emergency exit a few metres down to her left and frowned.

"Definitely weren't me. I tend to use the front door. And I only insult people when they deserve it. That and I've been away for a couple of days, remember?"

Xan looked at the Weredragon, puzzlement settling in his features.

"What....?"

"Club's full." Xan said, casting a barrier spell on the front door so that people could get out, but not in. The black double door shimmered an icy blue, signalling that the spell had worked and was at full strength.

"What're you doing?"

"Comming with you." Xan grunted and followed Shadow to the emergency exit.

Xan ran a large paw like hand across the the door and it clicked open, releasing a wave of hot, musty air.

Shadow stepped into the brightly lit corridor and inhaled deeply.

"This may sound stupid, but I can smell myself..." Shadow murmured. "But something's wrong..."

"I know what you mean. It's not as musky as what I usually pick up from you..."

The corners of Shadow's mouth curled slightly as Xan pushed past her and strode towards the interior door, opening it and releasing a wave of hot air, rythmicly throbbing with the beat of the music, into the corridor.

The two bouncers stepped into the writhing mass of people on the dance floor as they moved to the rhythm of the music that was being pumped out of hidden speakers dotted about the dimly lit main room of the club.

They split up and went in different directions, following the snatches of Weredragon scent that was quickly being mingled with those of the club goers.

The scent grew stronger as Shadow neared the bar. Sliding to the opposite end as she saw a twin of herself hunched over a drink.

In the blink of an eye, Hillary was in front of Shadow, demanding to know what was going on.

"... So that isn't you...?" The Vampire said, breaking her hypnotic gaze away from Shadow and glanced over her shoulder at the imposter.

"Where the hell did she come from?" Shadow hissed as she recovered from Hillary's trance.

Hillary shrugged. "Clonig...?" She offered helplessly.

Shadow remembered what had happened at the Prytchard facility and remembered Meyark's last visit.

She snarled angrily and stood up. "I think you just hit the nail right on the head."

Shadow came up behind her twin, taking her by surprise as she forced her head into the counter.

Those within earshot turned to watch what was happening as the clone scabbled to her feet, dark blood pouring from the wound on her head. The twin leaned on the bar, struggling to focus on her opponent, the crowd whooping and cheering as Shadow smashed her fist into the clone's face and watched as she slumped to the floor.

"Didn't see that one coming." Hillary said, leaning on the bar.

"No corpses on the door step." Bently said. "No matter how amusing it was last time." He added sternly.

"How can you kill her anyway? Even though she's an imposter, she's your own flesh and blood. She was created from you!"

Shadow regarded the limp body of her twin coolly as she lay unconscious on Bently's sofa in his office.

Bently was right. Even though the twin was created from Shadow, she was an imposter, here to bring Neon Junction to its knees. She wasn't about to let that happen, having already seen what damage to other independent businesses Meyark had done up on the surface, driving them out of business anyway he could, allowing his own to grow and spread across the continents like a disease.

7 - Dirty Little Secret

Shadow's twin stirred and quietly burred something before slowly opening her eyes to stare in horror at the three figures looming over her.

She looked from Bently's look of intrigue, to Shadow's cold, hard stare, daring her to try something. A male voice murmured something from behind the original Weredragon and she growled something back.

"Sorry. You're right. We gotta get rid of it, before it causes more trouble." He said smoothly.

The twin looked into the bright green eyes of the Reptilian Humanoid, then a sudden recollection of what had happened flooded her mind. She sprang to her feet and almost fell over when a pain flashed in her head.

She focused on the door behind the three, who were ready to pounce at any moment.

She looked warily at their faces, patiently waiting for the slightest sign of relaxation.

Before anyone knew what was happening, the twin had pushed her way past them and was at the door, her grip on the handle yanked free as Ode grabbed her arm, pulling her backwards. She swore angrily and brought her elbow up into the Reptilian's gut. She snatched her arm free as Ode bent over, huffing, and was about to open the door when Shadow tackled her from behind, splintering the door as they both collided with it.

Shadow wrapped herself around the clone, pinning her arms to her sides as she struggled and bucked beneath her on the floor, snarling, wisps of smoke curling from her nostrils.

"Give her back dead or alive?" Ode said laboriously as he slowly straightened.

"I say we kill her." Shadow grunted.

"I say we question her before we do anything of the sort." Bently said calmly, running a webbed hand across her head, smoothing down curling strands of black hair. "Stand her up please."

Shadow did as the small, dark green creature said and dragged the twin to her feet.

"Now, why are you here?" Bently asked politely, looking up at Shadow's clone as she and Ode held her. The imposter grunted defiantly and struggled again.

"Ode, go cover the bar for Hillary."

Ode nodded and cautiously released his grip on the twin before disappearing through the office door and back out into the darkened main room of the Neon Junction night club.

A couple of minutes later, Hillary sauntered into the room, her silver eyes aglitter with intrigue.

"Ode's already told me what's happened." She reassured and wheeled on the clone, the black of her pupils swallowing her silvery irises.

"Why are you here, child?" Hillary said, her voice now smooth and irresistibly hypnotic.

The twin blinked, unable to break eye contact with the Vampire, desperately trying to stop the truth from spilling forth.

"I - I was sent here by Governor Meyark to try and shut Neon Junction down." She said.

Hillary raised a perfectly formed eyebrow and looked from Shadow to Bently.

"If you two are gonna do a number on Meyark and his poor excuse for a daughter, Tillie, can I come with?" Hillary said, grinning with excitement.

Bently paused a moment before answering, then nodded.

"We're taking the body back with us."

"Awesome." Shadow sneered, and her twin's eyes widened with alarm.

Bently shuddered at the sound of cracking bone, but quickly regained himself and looked down at the limp body of the Weredragon's clone, lying at her feet, head at an awkward angle.

"Right," He breathed "I best let you know what we're going to do tonight."

Meyark was at his daughter's house. He always was on Thursdays.

Bently and Hillary stayed out of sight, letting Shadow navigate through the maze of security systems on the woman's property.

She dumped the body near the over grown pond around the back of the house, then headed back for Hillary and Bently who were waiting patiently behind a thick plantation of bushes near the front drive way.

Hillary took a firm but easy grip on Shadow's arm, giving the illusion that she was the clone. Bently rang the door bell a couple of times, the light, cheerful tinkling echoing through the huge house.

Eventually someone answered the door.

The maid stood in the doorway in her black and white uniform, open mouthed, a mix of fear and distaste spread across her slim, ageing features.

"Good evening miss." Bently said politely, taking his hat off. "I am Mr. Bently Mahdrick. This is my associate Hillary Larc. Is Governor Meyark here tonight? I presume he's here visiting his daughter, but I'm afraid this is important and cannot wait, because I have something of his."

Shadow grunted and wriggled on cue, playing the captured clone.

The maid gave a swift nod and scuttled back inside, leaving the three standing on the front porch. A few minutes later she came back and showed them into a small, well furnished side room where they were left to wait for Meyark.

"First time I've ever seen a Human move that quick." Hillary said with a grin.

Shadow looked over her shoulder at the Vampire and she returned the Weredragon's questioning look with a hungry smile.

"If either of you eat the maid, I will fire you both on the spot." Bently said from his perch on the edge of the deep red sofa.

"Ah, Bently. What is the purpose of your visit this time?" Meyark's voice drifted from the doorway.

"I believe this belongs to you." Bently grunted.

Hillary shoved Shadow forward and she swore as she nearly lost her balance.

"Ah." He said, looking Shadow over. "I see you found out about my dirty little secret."

"Or one of." Hillary snorted.

Meyark smiled stightly. "I take it my little infiltrator hasn't made you want to sell...?"

"Hardly. It'll take more than a cloe to scare away me and my customers Meyark. Your attempts have been weak to say the least." Bently sneered.

"Weak? HA! That's rich comming from the creature who's just brought me the real deal."

Bently cocked his head.

"This isn't the clone you fool!" Meyark cackled.

"I know. But I think you'll find that your little experiment is closer to home than you realise. Good Bye." Bently said smoothly and strode out of the room.

Shadow shuddered at the experiment comment and quickly followed Bently and Hillary out of the room, shouldering past Meyark on her way out.

"You realise I'm going to have to take what's rightfully mine by force, don't you?" The Human called from the door.

Bently stalled for a second, and without turning replied " It isn't rightfully yours, Meyark. I've signed no papers and the underground is non of you or your governing friend's business, problem or territory, so I suggest you stick to the world you know, otherwise someone could get hurt."

"Indeed..." Meyark finished quietly as the polished white front door clicked solemnly shut.

8 - The Trapdoor

"I got a nasty feeling he ain't finished." Hillary said from the doorway.

The two bouncers looked at her.

"Meyark don't give up that easily." The silver haired vampire continued. "He's got something else planned, I just know it."

The flow of customers had slowed down and the club was packed, leaving the two bouncers very little to do.

"I'd like to know what he's planning." Shadow said.

"I do too. But I suggest you watch your backs. I've been around long enough to know that he has a tendency to go after the guards first as a last resort in situations like this." She threw her cigarette butt on the metal floor and vanished back through the doors of the club, leaving Xan and Shadow on their perches on the reinforced safety rail.

"I'll see you tomorrow night." Shadow said to her co-workers and made her way down the catwalk. Ignoring the vacant taxis hovering patiently at their catwalk stations a little way from the club, she swung down the side catwalk she took each night to get home, where small coffee shops and bars lined either side. She looked down through the grating she was walking on and down at the maze of suspended catwalks below her, listening to the sound of chatter mixing with the sounds of the early morning traffic.

The underground city never seemed to stop, even when everyone on the surface was asleep. She put it down to the lack of natural light and rubbed the back of her neck as her muscles started to ache. She looked over her shoulder at a passing shadow then quickly rounded the corner. Shadow had almost made it to the end of the side catwalk when something solid hit the back of her head. The bright lights and noise of the surrounding city were swallowed in darkness as she collapsed to the floor.

The strong smells of damp, rot, dirt and stale air infiltrated Shadow's senses. She stirred and groaned as pain coursed through her body, threatening to render her unconscious again. She opened her eyes and almost panicked, thinking she had lost her sight, but calmed down somewhat when she managed to make out the silhouettes of some debris around the room. The dirt under her hand felt moist with what she thought smelled like blood. She inhaled deeply, her brain picking apart the tangle of scents with ease. Two scents caught her attention. Blood and rotting flesh. Her hand brushed something soft and flesh-like, and she snatched it back to her side, not wanting to know what it was. But she had to know.

She forced her wavering vision to focus, ignoring the gut churning smells and the pain in her muscles and ended up staring at a slumped outline opposite her. Then she knew what the various other shapes around the room were. They body parts. Her head jerked forward again at the sound of laboured wheezing and shuffling. The figure in front of her slowly rose, swaying and staggering. The stench of rotting flesh mercilessly invaded her sense of smell and taste.

Shadow coughed heavily, trying not to throw up, and the creature let out a bone chilling snarl.

When it came further into view, she could make out the single, dead staring eye. His other eye was missing, leaving nothing but a black hole. The soft tissue of his nose and ears had rotted away, and his features were locked in a permanent snarl with loosely hanging remains of his lips swaying as he lurched toward the Weredragon.

She scurried out of the zombie's way as he lurched forward, skinless fingers clawing at her. He swung around on a broken heel and hissed in gleeful maliciousness as Shadow stumbled and tripped over the bloody remains of a torso. She rolled over onto her back, eyes desperately searching the darkness of the small room for an escape route as the zombie continued his determined lurch towards her.

A boney, claw-like hand gripped her ankle and pulled. She screamed and jerked her leg back as her muscles spasmed painfully, sending the zombie over backwards with an angry screech.

Shadow's back arched and her scream of agony and terror turned into an inhuman wail which echoed around the dark room. Through the burning pain of her fear driven change, she felt the same claw-like hands grip at her body, trying to tear through exposed hide and flesh. Her flailing right wing got in the way of the creature's hungry scurrying and her left foreclaw shot towards him when he tore a jagged trail in her still forming wing leather, gauging three deep marks in the side of his head, sending him reeling in momentary pain and shock.

She rolled over onto all fours, taking in her surroundings as her dark sight kicked in, letting her see things in the pitch dark that her night vision wouldn't allow.

The zombie wheezed irritably behind her and threw himself across her back, screeching in rage as he impaled himself on one of her spikes.

Shadow wheezed a Dragon's chuckle and wheeled on the zombie as he detached himself from her back, butting him into the opposite wall, forgetting her fear as the Weredragon in her took over.

A creaking above her made her hazard a glance up into the roof. About ten foot above her was a large, wooden trapdoor. She looked back at the zombie as he struggled back to his feet and she jumped over him when he lunged, claws digging into the earthy wall and propelled herself upwards, splintering the wooden trapdoor.

She landed on a hard linoleum floor, her nails tapping as she dislodged torn pieces of clothing from her body, ignoring for a moment, the shocked faces around her.

"GUARDS!!!" Screamed a familiar voice.

Shadow craned her neck and looked over her shoulder and caught a glimpse of red heel disappearing through the open doorway of the large, dimly lit room.

A couple of men dressed too casually to be guards appeared and blocked the doorway, their small guns supported in both hands. The few other people in the room had backed themselves up to the wall, trying desperately not to be seen by the angry Dragon.

Shadow snorted impatience and a couple of smokey wisps curled from her nostrils.

9 - Predator

A hissing scream and the sound of scrabbling echoed from the dark depths of the pit, startling everyone but Shadow.

The Weredragon launched herself forward, landing on one of the guards. The man screamed as she brought a heavy claw down across his head, shattering his skull like an egg, sending lumps of gore across the hard floor, spattering everything in its way with red.

The other guard had thrown himself out of her way and opened fire, letting off five shots in a blind panic. Shadow roared as one of the bullets skimmed her leg, tearing some of the softer hide away. She left the limp body of the first guard and turned on his still living partner. She prowled forward, a quiet growl vibrating up through her throat and out into the room making the guard step backwards as she closed the gap between herself and him.

He lost his footing as he placed his left foot on the edge of the gaping hole in the floor and the others took their chances and fled the room as Shadow watched intently as the guard flailed and disappeared into the darkness below. She heard him hit the dirt floor with a dull, bone breaking thud, then turned around to search for Tillie as the screaming began.

Shadow bounded down the concrete passageway, ignoring the pain in her leg as she followed the woman's scent. She came to a narrow door and knocked it down with a bounding charge and shouldered her way through the narrow gap. She looked around at the large, brightly lit front hall of Tillie's mansion house. Spreading out to her right was the kitchen, the dining area and the living room and office. To her left was the large stair case that wound its way upward into the lofty vastness of the house.

Shadow inhaled deeply, but Tillie's scent was everywhere. She couldn't make out which was the most recent which frustrated her immensely and she let out a growling huff.

The maid who opened the door the other night strode out of the room opposite, feather duster in hand and a set of headphones pressed against her ears. Shadow watched intently as the woman paled and left back into the living room and slammed the door shut. The sound of furniture being dragged across carpet and wood filled the empty silence. Shadow grunted and spat a line of fire across the hall, melting through anything that it touched. She ran down the hall and bounded off the front porch, and with a strong, downward strike of her wings, she was airborne.

Each powerful beat of her wings took her higher into the dawn sky. She inhaled the sweet air and let out a roar that sent birds scattering away from her. Her roar echoed across the land and it was answered. She almost fell from her stride when she heard it. She caught the sound again and heard it as a roar of agony, not quite animal but not Human either.

She wheeled away and searched for one of the entrances to the underground city.

"They did what?" Bently sputtered from behind his desk.

The small dark green creature scrubbed his webbed hands over his face and sighed heavily.

"We need to take this to the Mayor." He said after a pause.

"What? Why?" Shadow said, her brow furrowing.

"Because, he has surface contacts. And he still owes me."

Shadow stood up and stretched her leg.

"How's your leg?" Bently asked.

"Better now Ode's worked his magic on it." She grinned.

"Good. Because if this creature you heard last night was another Weredragon and Meyark's got his grubby mitts on them, then I'm hoping you'll be gracious enough to help it however you can."

Shadow paused then nodded before heading back to the main doors of the club.

Three days had passed and the only thing Meyark had done was make a couple of angry phone calls. Bently set up a meeting with the Mayor of the underground city to discuss Neon Junction's ever growing problem and it's future.

The Mayor's surface contacts confirmed that Meyark was indeed involved with a Weredragon, but it had only recently turned up after one of Meyark's house keeper's went missing under mysterious circumstances. Few people knew about the house keeper's disappearance as the police weren't involved, so no one outside of the Governor's contacts knew about the current condition of the house keeper.

The Mayor set up a secret vote between his own contacts and those who make a living off the club.

Two options were chosen; Life imprisonment in the underground's prison or death.

All but two voted the more permanent option of death.

"So be it." The Mayor said after a brief study of the results. "Governor Meyark shall be executed under our own laws for multiple attempts at murder, the resurrection of a convicted murderer, conspiracy to plot, illegal experimentations and kidnap."

"Whoah. What a list." Ode murmured.

"As for this Weredragon and daughter of his," The Mayor continued. "the lycan will be destroyed by it's equal counterpart and his daughter will serve five years in the underground's prison for assisting in his plotting."

A murmur of agreement rippled through the large room as the Mayor stepped down from the stage.

"I take it you're the equal counterpart." Siad a smooth, feminine voice from behind Shadow and Ode.

They looked over their shoulders at Tiffany who was pulling her long, silvery white hair back into a tail.

"How'd you guess?" Shadow said with a slanted smile.

"Oooh, I dunno. I think the fact that there's very few Weredragons left in existence might be something to do with it..."

The crowd pushed towards the door, making bee lines to their chosen modes of transport.

"What about you?" Ode said over the rising din of chatter traffic.

"She's going to be back at the club, keeping an eye on things."

Everybody looked down at Bently.

"What!" Tiffany squeaked. "You mean I don't get a cut of the fun?" She frowned.

"Not this time, I'm afraid." The little man said.

"What about me?" Ode said hopefully.

"You and your band will be playing." Bently said smoothly. "I have arranged for a couple of good friends to act as bouncers for the night. That is all I'm going to say out here. I suggest you all head back to the club for more information." He finished and climbed into his private taxi, leaving the three standing on the catwalk outside the meeting hall.

10 - Equal Counterpart

While Xan, Bently and five of the Mayor's men went after Meyark, Hillary went after Tillie with three more of the Mayor's men as backup, leaving Shadow to hunt down and dispose of the other Weredragon before it struck.

The ground fog swirled and parted as Shadow swooped into a low, effortless glide across the fields. She flared her nostrils and flicked her tongue out as she tested the air for signs of the other Weredragon. The moon shone bright in the clear sky as she weaved gracefully across the fields, following the snatches of Weredragon scent that hung in the damp air.

She followed the scent towards an old farm, where it became stronger and more distinct. The other Weredragon wasn't fully mature yet. She could feel his presence. The feeling and scent grew stronger as she neared an old silo, then started to grow weak as she glided silently past it.

She wheeled and back towards the silo, head swinging from side to side, nostrils flaring and forked tongue flicking in and out as she searched for his exact location. Shadow caught a glimmer of bronze scales as she looked down into the broken domed roof of the old grain silo and hissed a challenge, baring her fangs. The bronze below her moved and a hiss echoed back up to her as she hung in the night sky.

The younger Weredragon clumsily launched himself upwards, talons and teeth gleaming white in the moonlight. Shadow folded her wings and dove out of the way, righting herself as mere few feet off the ground, using the momentum to barrel into the circling Dragon above, sending him flailing to the ground below with a screech of surprise.

He hit the moist ground hard, sending the ground fog swirling and billowing as he scabbled to his feet. He flared his wings but Shadow came down hard on him. He curled his neck around and snapped at the larger, dark blue Weredragon as she started ripping and clawing at his scales.

Shadow roared in pain as his teeth sank into her shoulder. The bronze writhed and bucked her off. Flailing his spiked tail, he caught her in the chest.

She rolled across the ground out of his reach and watched in momentary shock as a cloud of fire rolled towards her. Hot pain tore through her body, making her stand rigid as the fire enveloped her. She kept her eyes squeezed shut as the roaring of the fire subsided. When she opened them, the young bronze was stood staring at her, a mix of puzzlement and fear on his long features.

She blinked again and hazarded a look down at her foreclaws. The armour that covered her legs and claws were slightly charred, as was the rest of her armour. She remembered how she got the armour and grinned evilly as the fog hissed and steamed around her as it made contact on the hot armour plating of her body. She padded forward, fangs bared.

The bronze staggered backwards, hissing and growling, then flared his wings and leapt. Shadow darted after him, but he tucked a wing in and banked sharply out of the way before resuming his hasty retreat.

She followed him, keeping close, singing and snapping at his tail and feet. After a few minutes of fast flying, a large, mansion like house appeared on the horizon, surrounded by acres of land. It was Meyark's.

The bronze let out a roar and dove towards the house as fast as he could. Shadow could smell Xan's scent mixed with blood as she neared, eventually picking up snatches of muffled shouting. The bronze Weredragon wheeled the intricate dome in the house's roof and screamed in terror as Shadow dove on him from above, sending them both through the domed roof and into the main entrance hall below. They slammed into the polished marble floor, sending cracks branching out from under them. All other motion in the hallway stopped dead as the two Weredragons snapped and slashed at each other, the young bronze refusing to give up, but was quickly tiring as he squirmed under Shadow who had him pinned.

She slashed at the side of his head and sank her teeth into his exposed neck. His hissing screech of anger reverberated through the large house as Shadow yanked her head back, tearing his throat out, spilling his black blood across the grey marble floor.

She looked up as a scream of anger ripped through the following silence.

She roared, showing her long, bloodied fangs and Meyark stopped dead in his tracks, face white with rage. He wiped ineffectually at his nose as blood poured from it where someone had taken a swing at him.

Xan was stood behind him, Polar Bear-esque features locked in concentration. Everyone took a couple of steps back, the Mayor's men looking at each other in puzzlement as Meyark's skin began to blister and the smell of burning flesh filled the air.

Xan continued concentrating, his lips barely twitching as he mentally recited the incantation. Meyark yelled in confusion and agony as his body started burning. He collapsed to the floor and writhed, desperately trying to beat out non-existent flames. It only took a few minutes for Xan's spell to reduce the man to a black, smouldering corpse.

11 - Neon Junction

Shadow inhaled deeply and everyone ran out of Meyark's house, watching as the Weredragon ignited everything around her.

She unfurled her wings and launched herself off upwards, through the shattered dome in the roof of the large house as it burned.

She looked down on the retreating undergrounders as they made their way through the thick ground fog towards a hidden trapdoor buried in the undergrowth that skirted Meyark's property. She heard sirens in the distance, growing nearer and nearer. A short roar of warning sped Xan and the other men up and she circled back to her own surface trapdoor a few miles away where she'd left her clothing.

"Nineteen?" Tiffany said from behind the bar.

"Well, he was about that age anyway." Shadow said and took another swig of her drink.

"And the whole thing with the armour...?" Xan hazarded from beside her.

"Uh huh," Shadow said bleakly. "I'd rather side step the whole facility discussions, thanks."

Tiffany and Xan nodded.

"I have some good news!" Bently beamed from his office doorway from beside the instrument riddled stage. "Neon Junction is now officially in the mayor's protection!"

"What's the bad news?" Tiffany asked suspiciously.

Bently hesitated a moment, looking from face to face.

"He now owns part of the club."

"How much of the club exactly?" Shadow asked, leaning forward on her stool next to the bar.

"Well, technically, he only owns the stage, that cubby hole of seats and three bar stools."

There was a quiet chuckle when Bently took a breath.

"But on the upside, if anything goes wrong with the club, or if anyone tries buying us out with force again, the mayor will be directly involved from the start." He added.

"It won't have an affect on how the place is run, will it?" Xan asked.

Bently shook his head then jumped when Hillary suddenly appeared behind the bar.

Ode strode in and made himself at home on the stage as the rest of his band mates filtered in, disguarding their jackets and coats on the tall speakers.

"Now that we're all here, can we get ready to open the doors?" Bently said and walked back into his office, a slight bounce entering his usually motionless stride.

Shadow and Xan walked out onto the catwalk where a long line of punters were waiting to gain entrance to the club. The two bouncers took up their postions on either side of the double doors, propping them open when the florescent sign above their heads flickered on, bathing them and the first couple of undergrounders in the que in a neon green and red glow.

"New light?" Shadow said, squinting up at it.

"Yup. Arrived yesterday."

"Blindin'."

"Quite." Xan said and squinted up at it too, before returning to checking the passes.

"I wonder what's going on up there now." Xan mused after an hour of checking passes.

"We got five hours left. Want me to take a quick gander?"

Xan paused a moment, his eyes glazing as he thought about the proposition, then nodded.

"Be quick about it though." He said.

Shadow grinned and took off down the catwalk at a run.

Half an hour later, Shadow was in the air, leaving the smouldering ruins of Meyark's house behind. The police and fire brigade were still there, along with a couple of ambulances a large, unmarked black van, which was possibly due to the strange, six limbed remains that was once the young Weredragon.

Tillie's house had been cordoned off too, except there were two more unmarked black vans there. Were there more than one zombie hidden under the house? Shadow shuddered at the thought. Keeping to the low clouds, she wheeled back and made her way down to the underground city once she'd recovered from her change.

"You mean there could've been more than one of those things hidden under her house?" Xan exclaimed, making a drunked punter jump. "Sorry." He apologised.

"Sh'awight." She slurred cheerfully, her crystal blue plumage smoothing down again as she relaxed and continued to wobble off down the catwalk singing one of Ode's songs as loud as she could.

"Possibly." Shadow replied. "Could also explain what Meyark did to those who crossed him."

Xan blinked a couple of times and sighed.

"Glad it's all over." He said eventually.

"Yeah, me too. Now we can carry on like normal."

They looked across to the opposite catwalk and watched a brief spat between a small, feathered man in red, studded leather and a taller, heavy set man with long, split ears and a golden coloured skin in a knee length blue coat.

The small, feathered man flipped his opponent over the safety railing with ease and the two bouncers, plus a couple more spectators watched as the much larger man fell screaming onto a large net three levels down, where he lay spread eagled and wide eyed for a few moments before coming back to his senses, swearing bitterly and clambering back to the relative safety of the catwalks he'd fallen to.

".... Or what passes off as normal down here." Xan grinned, and they both returned to their posts on either side of Neon Junction's main doors.